

“God’s Faithful Pursuit” Jonah 1:1-3

This morning we are continuing in our series “God is Faithful”. We are looking at the story of Jonah. In this story we will see God’s faithful pursuit of a running prophet and a wicked people. God’s grace and genuine love for all people is amazing and hard to understand at times but that is what makes our God great. He is faithful to speak to us, discipline us and faithful to forgive us when we turn to Him in repentance. He is a God that we can trust!

The story of Jonah is a familiar story that many of us have heard as kids. To some it may even seem like some type of fairy tale but there are no fairy tales in God’s word. We read in 2 Timothy 3:16 that “All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” We will get to see this in the story of Jonah. We must know God’s word and allow it to be the final authority in our lives. Even in this short book there are some powerful lessons that God wants to show us about Himself and His faithfulness. His desire to want to fellowship with us and even use us for His Glory. His desire to show mercy on all people. His own, those who are against Him and those running from Him. Our God is faithful to pursue us even in our sin. Rom. 5:8. He is faithful to discipline us because He loves us. Heb 12:6. He is faithful to restore us when we turn to Him in humility and repentance. 1 John 1:9

Jonah is one of the minor prophets. They are not called minor because they are less important but because of their length. Heb 1:1 “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.” (angels, visions, dreams, miraculous signs) God spoke through the prophets. Their job was to say exactly what God told them to say. Their goal was to change human behavior. They spoke about the past, present and future. They sought to bring God down to earth so that we can actively experience His presence in our lives. So that God would become real to us. Much like preachers of today.
God Speaks

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: Jonah was a prophet.(one who is called, one who calls) In 2 Kings 14:25 God used Jonah to tell King Jereboam to strengthen the borders of Israel. Even though he was an evil king God showed him grace and mercy “in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through His servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher”. Jonah knew God as a God of mercy.

God came to Jonah with His message. Jonah’s job was to proclaim it. To refuse is disobedience and sin. Consequences. We have been given the same responsibility with the Gospel. Experiencing God: God still speaks to His servants today. By the Holy Spirit and through His word. When God was about to do something He always came to one of His servants. How God speaks is not the most important issue it is that God speaks that is important. God speaks to reveal His will, His purposes and His ways. Individually and corporately. *Quote: “If a Christian does not know when God is speaking, he is in trouble at the heart of his Christian life”* John 10:27-28 “My sheep listen to my voice: I know them, they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.” Comfort and accountability to obey no matter what. When God speaks the only correct response is obedience. When God spoke they knew it was God and they knew what God was saying. So did Jonah

God reveals His will-plan, His heart

Go (Arise, not a suggestion) **to the great**(powerful, fortified walls, big) **city of Nineveh and preach** (cry out for divine aid, sense of urgency) **against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.** (certain judgment because God judges sin) We see a merciful God who does not desire to judge and wants to send His servant to warn them.(missionaries) The last thing that Jonah wanted to hear. Nineveh was the capitol of the Assyrian empire, Israel’s enemy, 200 miles north of modern day Baghdad. The prophet Nahum says of Nineveh: *“the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims,... many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without numbers, people stumbling over the corpses.”* Ninevite soldiers were known for their brutality and cruelty. For Jonah to go there was like asking a Jew in WWII to go to Germany because God has a heart for them. We are all

called to preach against sin and wickedness even if we will face persecution. In America we don't know what persecution is. We think that what God has called us to do is hard. Stay with our spouse, stay at our job, stay single, be content with what we have, step up and lead our family, take a position in the church. I can't do that! Moses. God will provide what you need. He will be with you.

Jonah's response-Crisis of belief

But Jonah (last week Sherman talked about the implications of what it meant in scripture when it said "but God" when God is involved everything changes for the better. Here we see a contrast where Jonah imposes his will on the situation and begins a snowball effect of sin and disobedience) **ran away from the** (presence of) **Lord and headed for Tarshish.** Total opposite direction. As far west that you could go. Jonah didn't even consider that God was possibly already at work in Nineveh and just needed a missionary to go and proclaim His word. He didn't care that they were going to be judged. That is what he would have preferred. He was only considering Jonah. Our lack of involvement in preaching the Gospel to the lost and dying says that we don't care either.

God's motives in what He calls us to do is always shaped by His love for all people and for His glory. It is not about us. When we get self-centered we are running from the presence of the Lord. We have told God to shut up.

Running from the Lord

Jonah's running proved that He did not trust God and that he wanted no part of His plan.

We have all ran from the Lord at some point in our lives.

We run from God because we do not trust that His will and plan is always best. We feel like doing God's will restricts us in some way. It is the total opposite. God's will set's us free. Being on mission with God is the greatest calling we could ever have.

We run because of fear, fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of what God may ask you to do. Like Jonah. Running from God is forfeiting God's best for your life!

When we run from God we begin to lose His heart for ministry and mission. When we see what God has called us to as a burden

we have lost the understanding of the privilege we have to even be involved in God's work. We lose His heart for the lost. We conform again to the world. When you are right with God, you will want God to do for others what He did for you. You could be sitting in church every Sunday and still be running from God. You are fine with your complacency. **He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port.** When you are running from God the devil will be glad to help you out. Open doors seen as God's provision. You can find many people who will agree with you and even encourage you in your sin. You will find yourself gravitating to them and away from the church, community group, cut out early at church, won't take calls **After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the** (presence of) **Lord.** Again we see provision in the midst of rebellion. (side note) God provided the money so it must be His will that I go. When your heart is set on greed and materialism and your desires you will say that God blessed you with things, God blessed me with a great deal.

As I evaluate this story I see that Jonah had a wrong perspective of who God is and what it means to be called by God and that God is ultimately in control. The fact that he even thought that it was possible for him to run from God shows me that he did not fully understand who God is. For the believer you can't run from something that is inside of you. All of the activity of God in our life is designed by God to reveal Himself more clearly to us and to use us to advance the Gospel. God wants us to trust Him even when it doesn't make sense. God knew that Jonah was going to run when He asked him to go to Nineveh but He pursued him anyway. God knew what He wanted to teach Jonah. Next week Jonah is going to find out what God has taught many of us. That we can't run from God without consequences. I praise God that He is a faithful God of discipline, Grace and second chances not only for me but for all people.

God knows all about us and still chooses to want to use us. Praise God for His faithfulness even in the midst of our unfaithfulness. Close read Psalm 139