

- We are in a short teaching series on the book of Jonah.
- This little book has 4 chapters.
- If you haven't been here, we looked at Jonah 1 the first week. God instructed Jonah to go to preach to Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian empire, a wicked and violent empire, to tell them God was going to punish them for their sinful ways.

1:1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:

- Jonah had no interest in this job and ran away. He disobeyed God and the result was a really bad storm and the result of that storm was Jonah being thrown overboard. We ended chapter 1 with God commanding Jonah to be swallowed by a great big fish.

1:17 Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

- We saw that God pursues people because he is a gracious God.
- Last week, Bob Bowman unpacked what happened next because a full ¼ of this book records the prayer of Jonah from inside the fish.

2:1 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God.

- Even though he had no knowledge of what would come next and probably thought he was done for, he appealed to God. To at least some degree, he repented and changed his mind and we ended chapter 2 with God commanding the fish to spit Jonah out on the land.

2:10 And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

- Now we begin chapter 3 as kind of a reset. A do-over.

Jonah 3:1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." 3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. 4 Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." 5 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. 6 When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." 10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

- Have you ever been given a job or task to do and you decided to put it off, or worse, ignore that job or task altogether?
- Most of us can think of things in our lives we know we should have done and we ignored them. We did the opposite. We disobeyed. We chose poorly.
- Sometimes the consequences were no more than a grounding. But I wonder if other times we wonder that our choices and disobedience have disqualified us for a season, or even for the rest of our lives for something amazing.
- We did not do something and we feel stuck. We feel lost. We believe that God cannot use us.
- Remember that this entire story of Jonah is not so much about Jonah or Nineveh. It is about God. Chapter 3 shows us the incomprehensible mercy and grace of God toward those who were undeserving.
- Jonah had rebelled and disobeyed and deserved to face punishment.
- The Assyrians of Nineveh were barbaric and violent, having no desire for the true God.

- The Lord could have judged Jonah and Nineveh, and would have been just and right in His actions. Rather than dealing with them as they deserved, God chose to extend mercy and grace.
 - **GOD IS A SECOND CHANCE GOD.**
 - As we said, chapter 3 is a story reset.
- 3:1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”*

I. God continues to pursue.

- Bob said it this way last week: “We’re meant to be on this earth for as long as God has something for us to do on this earth.”
- God still had a mission for Jonah. His original call was still on him.
- God is not a once-and-done God. He extended grace to Jonah beyond what he deserved, and he graciously invited Jonah back into his plans.
- It is incredibly encouraging to know that God did not give up on Jonah. Not only that, he was not telling Jonah to do something on his own.
- He was telling him where to go and what to say.
- This week marked the 75th anniversary of D-Day. When the invasion was planned, set up and then 160,000 men attached with thousands injured and killed in the matter of hours. All directed by General Eisenhower from back in the relative safety of the main force.
- We sometimes picture God like this, as God sending us out and waiting for us to report back, but that is not God. He goes with us. He goes alongside us. He directs us step by step. Even when he is clear on the direction, we never walk it alone.
- Jonah had clearly run away and God was giving him another chance. It is symbolic of the repeated chances he was giving Israel to listen and obey. They kept ignoring him and he kept on giving them another chance.
- The question facing us this morning is this: “Is there an area of my life where I am being disobedience to God?”
- This often happens when God gives us instructions and we don’t like them, and we ask him, “What else do you have?”
- God has little interest in giving us a new task or responsibility when we ignored the first one.
- God will allow us to try to run away.
- God will allow us to rebel.
- But God will NEVER conform His will to ours!
- He is never intimidated by our rebellion, He is never bullied by our hostility, He is never over a barrel by our resistance.
- When you stubbornly resist God, you don’t make it harder for him, just you.
- **GOD IS A SECOND CHANCE GOD** because:

II. God seeks an obedient response.

- God is extremely interested in our level of obedience. He did not give up his life for us so that we can do what we want. He wants us to follow.
- Compare the start of Ch3 with Ch1.

Jonah 1	Jonah 3
1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:	1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time:

2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."	2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."
3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish.	3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh.

- All God was doing was giving time to get Jonah's attention, to re-adjust his vision, so to speak, to get him to "repent".
- Our problem is that our obedience and response to God's sovereignty is selective.
- We love when God is involved in our lives for our protection, blessing when he provides or heals. But then he leads us to do something, to give up something, and we balk.
- Somewhere along the line, we must come to the conclusion that God expects obedience.
- When we do, do it now. This is an encouragement and a warning.
- Encouragement: It is never too late to obey. Just because you missed it the first time around, does not mean you cannot obey the next time. If you've missed it, or did not listen, then resolve with Jesus to obey.
- Warning: Do not procrastinate. Do not say that you will start tomorrow. Or next Monday. Or next month when things settle down. Do it now. Do it completely.
- **GOD IS A SECOND CHANCE GOD.**

• So Jonah obeyed this time.

3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. 4 Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

- Jonah traveled the 500 miles to to to preach in Nineveh. He still did not know what to expect.
- Now Nineveh was huge. It had an inner and outer wall.
- Going a day's journey simply means he began preaching on the first day he entered the city.
- He preached for three days and then we know he left and went east of the city.
- I wonder if there was more to Jonah's message than we read because if not, it is the worst sermon ever given. Jonah's message was curt. He was not loquacious.
- The sermon as recorded in the original language was only 5-6 words.
- He does not give detail on what the Ninevites should do, how they should respond or why God was angry with them.
- Yet despite all this, they responded.

5 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. 6 When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

- These wicked and evil people, people who you would never expect to respond, responded.
- The key is in v 5. "The Ninevites *believed* God." It does not say they believed Jonah. They heard the message for what it was and they responded.
- They fasted, went without food. Everyone put on sackcloth – it is a coarse cloth, rough and thick, often made of goat's hair.
- Sackcloth was a sign of repentance, and in this case, a public one.
- Sat down in the dust – a sign of humility and repentance.
- The king issued a proclamation.

- He wanted the people to act as one people to respond to God.
- He wanted everyone, including the animals, to fast and be covered in the sackcloth
- It seems strange but was not unknown in the Near East. It showed the seriousness of the people in terms of their remorse.
- There is something about Jonah's response and about the response of the people of Nineveh that reveals something to us.

III. We cannot move past our current level of obedience.

- You will not experience God or grow in him beyond your current level of obedience.
- You cannot disobey and expect intimacy, joy and effectiveness.
- I find it interesting what the king's edict tells him people to do. He tells them to do three things.
 - 1) They recognized their disobedience. (v7-8)
 - It was more than a matter of feeling bad. They were to recognize their own disobedience. The sackcloth was to understand and know their actions.
 - Until we call our actions for what they are, we are stuck. As long as we make excuses about the influence of others or blame another person, we will not move.
 - 2) They focused on God and called on him. (v8)
 - They sought God. They changed their focus. They acknowledged what they recognized to God. They threw themselves on the mercy of God.
 - There is a sense of helplessness that is important here. You cannot change on your own. It is only throwing ourselves on the mercy of God that works. If the first step is to own our own actions and disobedience, then second is to bring this to God, to acknowledge it to him and our willingness to change (not necessarily desire – desire comes later).
 - But if we stop here, we cannot and will not experience God like we desire.
 - 3) They changed how they lived. (v8)
 - Up until now it was all intellectual and emotional. They were to “give up” their evil ways. They were called to change. To move from disobedience to obedience.
 - **GOD IS A SECOND CHANCE GOD.**
 - We cannot move past the level of our obedience. When you feel stuck, ask God to reveal any areas of your life where you are not listening or obeying. Then more on it.
 - God saw their response. He saw their new desires
- *10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.*
- He did not do what he had threatened.
- It was unexpected. Yet God wanted Jonah to obey regardless of what happened.

IV. We are responsible for our obedience, not its results.

- We are not responsible for the results of our obedience – only God takes ownership of that. The results do not determine whether or obedience was appropriate or not.
- We also don't know the extent of the impact of our obedience.
- We can parse what motivated this repentance.
- Was it fear of God? Was it simply fear of potential consequences?
- Compare their response to the sailors in ch 1 to the city in chapter 3

1:6 The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god!

Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”

3:9 "Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

- Was it a true turning to God and trusting Yahweh as the only true God?
- Historically, whatever revival this was did not appear to be long lasting. 40 years later they came and destroyed Jerusalem.
- But at least for now, they responded in obedience to the message from God.
- In this case, the result far outstripped what he did because God's Spirit was at work.
- When we obey, we can relax and let God deal with what comes from it.
- When we disobey, the reverse is true.

ILLUSTRATION

I read about a pastor who conducted a funeral for a beautiful three-year-old. She was a first child and the first grandchild in their extended family. Unfortunately, she was spoiled. While visiting the little girl's home one day, he observed that she loved to ignore her parents' instructions. When they told her to come, she went. When they said, "sit down," she stood up. Her parents laughed, finding her behavior cute.

One day their front gate was inadvertently left open. The parents saw their child escaping out of the yard and heading toward the road. To their horror, a car was racing down the street. As she ran out between two parked cars, they both screamed at her to stop and turn back. She paused for a second, looked back at her parents, then gleefully laughed as she turned and ran directly into the path of the oncoming car. The parents rushed their little girl to the hospital, but she died from her injuries.

- **GOD IS A SECOND CHANCE GOD.**
- Where are you at this morning?
- There are some of us that need to repent of our disobedience.
- There are some of us that have been resisting God's call.
- Some of you are resisting God when he tells you to stop with a destructive or sinful behavior.
- Some of you are resisting God as he wants you to start doing something.
- Some of you are unwilling to step out and trust him.
- The entire account of Jonah and Nineveh is God's lesson to his people.
- He was so ready to have compassion on a wicked but repentant people and to withhold threatened destruction.
- Why?
- He was showing Israel that her coming judgment at God's hand was not because of His unwillingness to forgive but because of her unwillingness to repent and obey.
- The issue in our lives is never with God's willingness to have compassion, but on our selfishness in pursuing our own agendas.
- **GOD IS A SECOND CHANCE GOD** but the sobering news is that unfortunately, Israel did not listen and 40 years later God's promised destruction happened because of their disobedience.
- God is a second chance God.
- He is seeking obedience.
- We will never grow past our level of obedience.
- We are responsible for our obedience, not the results of it.
- V10 should be a wonderful end to this story.

10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

- The book could end here. God reached his intended audience.
- Jonah obeyed.
- People repented.
- All is well.
- Except that it doesn't end here.
- Ch 4 starts with this word, "BUT . . . "
- Come next week as we explore the conclusion of the story of God as found in Jonah.