

## Sermon Transcript for January 30, 2022

Grace, mercy and peace from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All right, so obviously we have two very contrasting storms going on. First, the one that Jonah is under, and that is very much because of his disobedience. And then we have the one with Jesus and His disciples, which is more there just seeming like, to test the disciple's faith, to test where they stand. And to some degree that's also where Jonah is, so I guess maybe they're not as far apart as we might seem.

Now, as I was studying the book of Jonah, I was reading some commentaries, and one of them said that Jonah really is a book of satire. It's a book of satire. Now that does not negate the fact that this is indeed a true story and it did happen. We must always remember this. Jesus Himself said that the sign of Jonah was going to be the sign of His death and resurrection. That just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days, so also will the Son of Man be in the tomb for three days. Jesus believed this was a real event.

But even though it is a real event, this does not negate the fact that this is satire. No matter what Jonah does, he seems to do the wrong thing. And he brings disaster upon disaster upon disaster, upon himself. In spite of the fact that he says, when asked by the people in the boat, "Who are you? And what are you doing? What's your job?" And he's like, "Well, I'm a prophet of God, but I'm running away from Him."

What? How can that be your job to be a prophet of the Lord most high and what you're actually doing is running away? And it says that "I fear the Lord, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land." Really? This is how you act, out of fear and respect and reverence for the Lord? You run away and do the exact opposite of what He's telling you to do? Jonah does have faith. He is a child of God, but he is the quintessential wayward child. He is the black sheep of the family. He is doing everything he possibly can to do the exact opposite of what the Lord wants him to do. And in spite of his rejection and running away, God still uses him, everywhere he goes, to proclaim the message of His grace and His mercy. It's almost as if God is using Jonah in spite of Jonah himself.

I mean, he's in the boat with all these men, as the boat is being crashed around, and everybody's praying to a different god. These are not, also, fellow believers. They're all praying to different gods, hoping that one of them is actually going to listen and do something. Whereas Jonah, who's supposed to be the man who fears God, who knows the true God who made the heavens and the earth and the sea that they happen to be upon, he's asleep, not doing anything. And yet, the captain wakes him up, and is convinced that if he prays to his God, maybe something will happen. The captain, the heathen, expects more from the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, than does Jonah.

Now, why? What is Jonah's issue? What is Jonah's problem? Why is he running away from the Lord? Well, he's running away from the Lord because he doesn't like what's going to happen. He doesn't want to talk to those idiot Ninevites. He wants to see them suffer. He thinks they deserve the punishment that they're going to get. He doesn't like them. So he runs away from God. Even, even after having been thrown into the sea, I mean, swallowed by a fish for three days and being spit up, Jonah's still not that repentant. He still doesn't want the Ninevites to repent. He does finally preach to the Ninevites, but then he goes back on the top of the hill and he waits for the destruction of God. In fact, he's excited to see it. And then he is mad at God when He forgives the Ninevites. Jonah is not the greatest example of a servant of the Lord. And a lot of the issues that come his way are a result of his own rebellion against the God that he supposedly loves, and worships, and fears.

Now I'm not saying that everything that we suffer is a result of our own disbelief and behavior, but, we do have to admit that there are times when the things that we suffer are a direct result of our own rebellion against God, that we have created the disaster that we're in because we have failed to trust in the Lord. Now, again, I'm not saying everything that happens to us, but when we fail to listen to the Word of Lord, sometimes the Lord causes some things to happen to get our attention, that we might see that we are lost, and without hope, except for the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in our lives.

And as Christians, we can consider that everything, all of the suffering that we face in this world, both the physical suffering and everything else that we face, we can consider everything that we receive as a gift from God, because in all of our suffering, even the physical suffering, even the chaos of this world, in everything that we face, we have the opportunity. We have the opportunity to pray to our Lord and walk in faith, trusting Him to reveal Himself to us and bring us safely through to the other side.

Our natural response to suffering pain, trials, tribulations, almost anything that we face, is why me? Why is this happening to me? Why do I have to go through all of this? And when we do that, our focus is upon ourselves and what we think is the right thing that should be happening to us. But God is telling us, in all circumstances, the suffering of this present age is not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

You see, God, in our Gospel, has demonstrated that He has the authority over the winds and the seas, that even they obey Him. If that is true, and it's also true that He loves us, that He cares for us, and that He gives us all good things, then why do we not believe that to be true? Why are we anxious? Why do we fret? Or sometimes why do we act like Jonah and actually are trying to negate the Gospel rather than preach it to the people who should hear it? How often do we think, "Oh God can't work here. Or they're not going to believe. Or this isn't the..." No! How often do we fail to trust?

In one sense, everything that happens, God is giving to us, so that we might learn His faithfulness in our lives. As Christians, we can honestly say, "God, I know that you are bringing this upon me for the strengthening of my faith, and for the praise of Your Name." On the other hand, we also know that God desires no evil for us, and that He desires only to give us that which is good for us, and for His kingdom.

And so we walk in faith in good times, and in bad. And hopefully we take a lesson from Jonah, and when the bad things happen, not run away from God, but to turn to Him in trust, knowing that Jonah could survive three days in a whale, or a fish, and be spit up, and survive, and still serve God in all these circumstances. All of the men on the boat who were praying to the other gods, as a result of Jonah's disobedience and God's action through that, and God's chastisement of Jonah, even in that, God caused His glory to be made known. And all of these men worshiped the Lord and made vows to the Lord. In other words, they became believers in God in spite of Jonah's rebellion.

If God can work in spite of His prophets, how much more can He work for those of us, and through those of us, who actually desire to serve Him. Let us serve the Lord with gladness, and seek His face in all circumstances, and trust that no matter what we face, be it storms, or tempests, or trials and tribulations of another other sort, that He is with us always, to the very end of the age, and He loves us even when we are wayward, and He promises to be with us always to the very end of the age.

May His grace and His mercy and His peace be and abide with you always, now and forever more, unto life everlasting. Amen.