**Blain Bargo’s Sermon Notes: Run Jonah Run**

Passages:

First Scripture: John 20:26-31

Second Scripture: Jonah 1:1-3

Additional Scriptures for reference: Genesis 10:10-12, 2 Kings 14:25, Nahum 3:1-4, Micah 5:6, Matthew 12:40-41, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 11:30

Prayer

Back in the mid 90’s a movie came out that received 13 Academy Awards and 6 Oscars. The movie presented us with a young boy that received braces on both of his legs to help straighten his back. Although this young boy was slow intellectually, he never thought of himself as a disadvantaged person, but he was not treated well by his peers and on a walk home with his friend Jenny found himself being bullied by several other boys on bicycles. Jenny encouraged him to run. While this was difficult with his leg braces, he started to run the best that he could with stiff straight legs. As the boys on bikes got closer to him his friend Jenny screamed to him, run Forest run! The encouragement from Jenny along with the fear of the bully’s chasing him caused him to dig deep with-in to run, and the braces snapped from his legs. Forest ran fast enough to escape being chased on bikes.

In preparing to introduce our next series on the book of Jonah, this movie came to mind. Forest and Jonah ran for separate reasons, or maybe in each of their minds it may have been for the same reason. At least for Forest we know there was some fear.

In discussion with Pastor Tim about the weeks following Easter it was determined that the next few weeks of sermon series would be on the book of Jonah. I am humbled today to be asked to introduce Jonah and some of the history around him to you to begin this series. Jonah is one of the minor prophets tucked away in late pages of the Old Testament found between the books of Obadiah and Micah. Jonah consists of only 4 chapters with a total of just 47 verses, easily read in one sitting. So let us get right into our introduction by looking at the first three verses of chapter 1 together.

**[[1]](#footnote-1)**[**Jonah 1:1-3**](http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/online-bible/niv/jonah/1/) 1The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." 3But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

As we begin this series on Jonah it is important for us to realize that Jonah was a real person and that the events recorded are real historical events. This is the same Jonah that is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25.**[[2]](#footnote-2)**This Jeroboam restored the boundary of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word that the LORD, the God of Israel, had spoken through His servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher.

Note the last portion of this verse and verse 1 of Jonah, “Jonah son of Amittai”. This is the same Jonah. In researching for this morning, I found that Jonah was not a common name and in fact is the only Jonah mentioned in the Bible. We’ll look at a few of the other references shortly, but what we want to establish now is that Jonah was a prophet, he spoke the words of God to the people. [[3]](#footnote-3)A prophet’s primary function in the Old Testament (OT) was to serve as God’s representative or ambassador by communicating God’s word to his people. True prophets never spoke on their own authority or shared their personal opinions, but rather delivered the message God himself gave them.

We find in this 1st verse of Jonah two directives that God gave. Go, and Preach. Jonah is a man who as a prophet understood when God was speaking to him. Can you visualize with me for just a moment? Remember the TV commercial that had the person listening to 2 little voices setting on each shoulder and trying to discern which one to follow? Jonah in his heart knew what God was instructing him to do and this little guy sitting on his shoulder is whispering in his ear, No Jonah, run Jonah run! You do not want to go there. How often are you and I in that same situation? We have a good idea of what we are being called to do, but that little deceiving voice in our head is coaxing us that it will be okay just this one time.

Jesus made direct reference to Jonah as noted in several New Testament Passages. Let us take a quick look at just a few that will show the significance Jesus saw of Jonah as a prophet.

[[4]](#footnote-4)Matthew 12:40 “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Matthew 12:41 “The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here.”

Luke 11:30 “For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation.”

In these few passages, Jesus refers to Jonah as a person by name, unlike in any of His parables. He goes as far as making comparisons of Jonah and Himself. If we are believers in the words of Christ than we must believe that the circumstances that are found in the book of Jonah are real, true, and historical, and Jesus uses them as examples in His ministry.

I am hopeful that we can agree based on scripture that Jonah’s story is a true and actual time of events in his life, but why was he called to go to Nineveh? To give warning and for the Ninevites to seek repentance of course as we can read, but why Jonah? Let’s take a look at the map presented. We can see that Nineveh is 550 miles northeast of Joppa, and Tarshish is 2500 miles due west of Joppa. Now Joppa was roughly 75 miles south of Gath-hepher where Jonah resided putting Nineveh roughly 475 miles to travel to deliver the message God wanted for the people of Nineveh. Instead, Jonah decided to go in the opposite direction roughly 2575 miles, as far from Nineveh as he could. We can find in scripture some of the conditions and practices that were common in Nineveh.

[[5]](#footnote-5)Nahum 3:1-4 Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims! **2**The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots! **3**Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses— **4**all because of the wanton lust of a prostitute, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft.

Nineveh is the capitol city of Assyria and was the center for worship of Ishtar, the fertility goddess. In Genesis 10:10-12 we find that Nineveh was founded by Nimrod who built the Tower of Babel and led the nations into a rebellion against God. The Assyrian armies had been creating havoc for the Israelites over many generations. Nineveh was known as the capitol of sin and evil and was the largest city of it’s time. It used its’ size and strength to wage war against the surrounding nations to expand its’ own territory.

Jonah was very aware of the actions of the Assyrian people and what they stood for. He also knew the faults of his own people, a people who have been called on many occasions by several prophets to repent and return to God.

I am going to stop there with an introduction as I’m not sure what Pastor Tim will be planning to share with us in the coming weeks with Jonah. But I do want to try to make some application of Jonah’s call to Nineveh and his running away from God’s direction to us today. Jonah is a Jewish prophet being given directive to go to a non-Jewish nation to give warning. The Israelites are the chosen people of God, and yet God was calling one of His own to go to a gentile nation to give warning and to give them a means to repent and turn to Him.

We as Christians join with the Israelite nation as chosen by God as His own. The sacrifice of His life and resurrection that we remembered in celebration last week is for all who believe. Jonah ran for many reasons, but a notable one was that he did not want God’s grace to fall on the people of Nineveh. These people did much harm to the Jewish nation. His feeling was that they did not deserve God’s grace, his concern was for the Jewish nation and their own repentance, so he ran.

Today in our world there are many who are lost and running from God. Maybe it is someone close to you. Some may be our enemies just as the Ninevites where enemies to the people of Israel. Some are so deep in the sins of this world just as the nation of Nineveh that they feel they must run. Some are in the back yard of our communities. And then there’s us, Christians who run in the opposite direction of God’s call. We at times act and think that we know better than God what is best for His kingdom and ignore what he has laid out for us to do, sometime very plain and simple.

Our nation has been in turmoil over the past months and years as we get behind one political party’s ideas or another. We show our patriotism to the cause of America and what we feel it stands for. We share our support for one party’s agenda and our concerns for another’s, and both sides turn into turmoil and anger dividing us and affecting our nation. As a nation who claims to be under God we have moved in the wrong direction. We have placed our patriotism first to our nation instead of in God. We as a nation have run from God and His call for us to share his message to the world. In fact, we are steadily removing God from our own people. We need to repent of our own faults as a nation and individuals and turn on our heels and run towards God. The world is watching us. Are we able to show that God’s grace is for all? Just as the world is watching our nation, there are those with-in our communities that are watching you and me. Are we showing them God’s grace? Are we sharing His message of the cross that He bore to our neighbor? (See notes below inserted here Sunday morning) God is calling you and me to run towards Him, to give Him our first love, and to be in ministry where He calls each one of us without hesitation.

Matthew 28:18-20 So Jesus came to them and said, "All authority (power) in heaven and on earth is given to me. So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach those people to obey everything that I have told you. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of the world."

Our lives are much more joyful when we are in the will of God!

Shall we pray:

Benediction: As we leave today, may we go in God’s grace and peace. May we go sharing His love and grace to our neighbors. May we be joined together in service to our 1st love, Jesus Christ, to take His message into the world around us. Let us love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of His Spirit. And may God’s blessing be upon us and remain with us always. Amen.

Additional notes shared Sunday morning:

[[6]](#footnote-6)But remember-the world starts at our doorstep, and that’s where we are to begin serving the Lord. That’s the pattern Jesus suggested in Acts 1:8: “You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and to all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Our influence should begin in our own Jerusalem-our own home and our own hometown.

We can reach foreign nations “right around here” on our doorstep, sometimes just by staying the course, being honest and loving to strangers, as Jesus was. If you can’t cross the ocean with a passport in your hand, perhaps you can cross the street with a pie and a smile.

In serving the Lord, you don’t have to be anywhere but where you are right now. Look around. God is present right where you are-right around here.

Don’t be overwhelmed by the world, but be burdened for your neighborhood. It’s full of diamonds in the rough-people who need to be discovered and loved. They are in your backyard.

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2. The Berean Bible ([www.Berean.Bible](http://berean.bible/)) [Berean Study Bible (BSB)](http://bereanbible.com/) © 2016, 2020 by [Bible Hub](http://biblehub.com/) and [Berean.Bible](http://berean.bible/). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. NIV Zondervan Study Bible, general editor, D. A. Carson. Copyright © 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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6. Turning Points Magazine & Devotional, April 2021, Right Around Here, David Jeremiah [↑](#footnote-ref-6)