**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 4-18-2021**

**Man Overboard!**

I remember years ago that there was this coach in youth baseball that would say “never give up”. Sometimes it was a little comical when the team was getting severely blown out.

But never giving up is a good attitude to have. You play hard to the end and sometimes the game can turn around in your favor.

Now, I do not know about you, but I am very thankful that the LORD has a ‘never give up’ attitude towards people. The Lord has always had good plans for everyone and if there is still a sliver of hope that they will turn to Him, God will continue to pursue them with the good news of Jesus.

Truly, the Lord does not give up easily. And this is not only true with His pursuit of the lost, but also His pursuit of those that have fallen into sin in some way.

And this, friends, was the case with Jonah. As brother Blain shared last Sunday, Jonah was a well-known prophet of God. He had been faithful to God and He had been privileged to announce God’s Word that the Lord was expending Israel’s territory.

But then God came to Jonah with a more difficult assignment. An assignment to go to Israel’s enemy, Assyria --- and particularly, Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, with a message of repentance.

And Jonah was so determined to not make this announcement that he went the complete opposite direction of Nineveh.

Perhaps you have felt like Jonah at some point, when the Lord has called you to do something and you are basically like ‘no thanks. I don’t want to do that. I want to go there. I don’t want to say that. I don’t want to take part in this.’

Whether Jonah said anything, that was what his actions were clearly saying to God. He wanted Israel’s enemy to be judged by God, not to turn to God and receive God’s mercy.

So Jonah was running, or in this case, sailing.

But it was not smooth sailing for Jonah. The Lord was not giving up on Jonah. ‘never give up, never give up.’ Maybe the Lord was saying that to Himself.

And so as we turn to this morning’s Scripture, we will see just how determined the Lord is with His plans coming to fruition.

Let us now turn again to Jonah and our text today is Jonah 1:4-16.

**4Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. 5All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.**

**But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. 6The 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.”**

**7Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”**

**9He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”**

**10This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)**

**11The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?”**

**12“Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”**

**13Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. 14Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.” 15Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 16At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.**

So here is Jonah on a boat sailing away from Nineveh. But God would not easily give up. Not on Jonah and not on the people of Nineveh.

So what does God do? **First, the Lord sends a great wind on the sea**. We know from the Bible that the Lord sometimes *stills* storms. But we learn from Jonah that God sometimes *sends* storms as well.

And this storm begins to batter the boat carrying Jonah. This storm was so powerful that the boat looked like it could begin to break up. Something similar happened in Acts 27. This was a severe storm, called a Northeaster, which was pounding the ship that Paul the Apostle was on. And like Jonah’s boat, Paul’s ship looked like it was falling apart.

And the sailors on Jonah’s boat knew the sea. They knew that this storm could take their lives. So they begin to each call on their god. These sailors would have likely been from all over and each may have had their own idol that they worshipped.

But we see that these idols are powerless to help against this God-ordained storm.

Then, the sailors begin to throw cargo into the sea in hopes that they would be better able to survive the storm if the boat was lighter.

Now, you may be asking, where’s Jonah through all of this. He was sleeping below deck. It appears that rebellion against God was making him in like a spiritual stupor and when one is in a spiritual stupor, it often leads to them being in a physical stupor as well. So here’s Jonah, in a deep sleep through this storm.

In fact, the captain goes below deck and is basically like, how can you sleep through this? Call on your god! Maybe he will take notice and we will not all perish.

The sailors are trying to make sense of why this storm has come upon them. They probably knew that this storm was highly unusual. It wasn’t an expected seasonal hot spot for storms. There had to be another reason for this storm. And they were right. This storm came from God.

So they cast lots, which is basically like rolling dice. And wouldn’t you know, the lot falls on Jonah.

God, in His sovereignty, can work through the rolling of dice or the drawing of straws.

And the Lord was using that to again confirm to Jonah that this storm was the result of Jonah’s disobedience.

Then, the sailors begin to ask questions to Jonah. “**Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”**

In other words, why are you on this boat? What are you up to that brought on this storm? And where are you from?

And Jonah’s response is profound. He says to them **“I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”**

Basically, Jonah is telling them that the Lord his God is the one who made everything. The heavens, the earth, the sea.

The pagan sailors would have understood their gods as ruling over certain places, but the Lord claims rule over every place.

But the true God is Lord over everywhere. The psalmist writes, if I ascend to the heavens, you are there. And if I made my bed in the depths, you are there also.

In other words, we cannot escape His presence, as much as Jonah or anyone can try to run from Him.

And this terrified the soldiers, because Jonah was admitting that His God, who made the sea, was responsible for bringing about this storm. And they asked him what he had done that he was running away from the Lord.

And as the seas were becoming rougher and rougher, they asked him, “**What should we do to calm this sea down?”**

And here Jonah’s words are very disheartening. He tells them to throw him into the sea and the sea would calm down.

Basically, Jonah was asking for assisted suicide. His mind has been so clouded by his hatred towards the Ninevites that he thought that his own demise would be the best solution.

But the answer God was looking for was a repentant heart. But repentance wasn’t yet on Jonah’s priority list.

And so Jonah tells them to throw him overboard in order to calm the sea. But the sailors were not jumping on this idea. And tried even harder to row towards land. But the harder they tried, the wilder the sea became.

Reluctantly, the sailors gave up hope of making their way to land and so these men begin to cry out to the LORD, saying,

 **“Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.”**

**15Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 16At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.**

As we will continue next week, there is much more this to story that is yet to come. But I would like for us to consider just a few key takeaways from this text today.

**First, thank God that He doesn’t give up on people easily**. He doesn’t give up on the lost easily and He doesn’t give up on the obedience of his children easily.

God was willing to send a storm to literally and figuratively wake Jonah up from his stupor before God.

And God is willing to go to great lengths to bring about His purposes.

Perhaps you can think of your own journey. Most, if not all of us, have tried to run away from God at some point. But in God’s love and mercy, He pursued us. He drew us to Himself.

And even as Christians, sometimes we choose to not follow God’s leading in our lives. The Scripture says that the Lord has prepared good works for us to do.

Maybe you are feeling the Lord tugging on your heart to do something in His Name. I strongly encourage you to trust and obey.

As the old hymn teaches us **“Trust and obey, trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”**

**Second, this passage reminds us of God’s sovereignty**. His sovereignty over weather. His sovereignty over seemingly random actions of chance. This does not mean that God micromanages everything in the weather or the rolling of the dice, in my opinion, but He can and He has.

So in light of this, this should cause us to stand in awe of God. He is the One who made the heavens and earth and the sea. He alone is the Creator of everything seen and unseen. And we are to stand in awe of Him and place our hope completely on Him alone.

He sees everything. He is sovereign. He is at work everywhere. All of the earth is His.

He is not a localized deity. His presence isn’t limited to a certain geography. He is as much God in Israel and in America and in Nineveh and in the middle of the sea.

So do not try to hide from Him, like Adam or like Jonah. But run to Him. Run to Him in prayer. Run to Him in submission.

And this leads to our last takeaway. **Third and finally, choose repentance when we are in error or sin**. The Book of Jonah is a series of surprises. Throughout this passage, who is doing the repenting? Who is changing and conforming their beliefs to line up with God’s? It is the pagan sailors. By the end of the story, these men are offering sacrifices to the LORD. They had seen how the storm suddenly abated after Jonah was tossed into the sea. They had seen the power of God. Hopefully they are all in heaven today because of their response to the reality that the Lord is God and rules over the sea. The Lord is not confined to a certain geographical region. He rules over all.

But in contrast to these sailors, Jonah’s heart was not yet willing to repent. The one who God was living the most godless of them all. But as we will see next week, God still did not give up on Jonah.

So as the church today, may we always remember that as long as we are on this earth, the Lord has assignments for us. And when we are yielded to Him, we can be vessels whom He can use powerfully. And perhaps the most amazing thing is that even when we are not obedient, the Lord can still draw people to Christ through us, as He did with Jonah. Let us not aspire to disobedience, but thank God that out of self-made lemons, the Lord can still make lemonade.

For the Lord continues to say “**Never give up. Never give up.”**

Sources:

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