

Jonah 3:1-5,10 3 Epi Sermon 2024
Mission Sunday sub-emphasis

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ²“Get up, go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.”

³So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh just as the word of the LORD had commanded. Now Nineveh was a great city to God. It required a three-day walk. ⁴Jonah walked through the city for a day, and he called out, “Forty more days and Nineveh is going to be overthrown!”

⁵The men of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least.

¹⁰When God saw their actions, that they had turned from their evil way, God relented from the disaster which he said he would bring on them, and he did not carry it out.

Jonah 3:1-5 3Epi Sermon 2024

Commanded, Corrected and Committed... we are Just like Jonah.

Negatively when we commit a crime, break a command, we are sent to a place of correction.

Positively Jonah was corrected but then committed to a place by God's command.

You and me. We...

We are just like Jonah. We are more like Jonah than we'd like to admit. Hesitant, rebellious, and requiring God to cut us down to size. We are just like Jonah in that we internally and sometimes externally complain about the call that God gives to all believers. We say that what God is asking, telling and commanding is impossible. And to be honest ... it is a lofty charge. God sent a big fish among many things into Jonah's life to help him spit out his pride, we need the Word of the LORD to do the same for us.

Pastor... that's impossible.

How can a man survive inside a fish underwater for three days?

Pastor ... that's impossible.

How can Jesus expect those sinful men to handle his precious Gospel and go fishing for souls with it?

Pastor ... that's impossible.

Pastor... that's impossible.

How can we expect to do the impossible with a shortage of pastors and yet open up 100 new churches in 10 years?

Pastor ... that's impossible.

Maybe instead of complaining about the impossible, we could be praying and encouraging and supporting what we might think is impossible for us and yet for God it is possible.

Jonah said it plainly because Jesus said it plainly.

We need to, like Jonah, listen to the message God gives and share it how God commands. No fuss, no fluff, no fanfare... straight talking law and straight talking gospel. "**Whoever does not believe will be condemned**" – how much different is that than, '**forty more days and Nineveh is going to be overthrown.**' It's the same message the same strong warning, the same angry promise. When God says something it may seem to feel impossible but it is not. When God says something we may doubt it but despite us – God will do it. When God says something that he intends to do – He intends to do it. God doesn't do half-way stuff - like you and me. God doesn't procrastinate doing what he says – like you and me. God doesn't say one thing and then do another – like you and me.

You and me – we say things that we can't do all the time. Empty thoughts, empty promises, empty words are what we are good at doing, but not God. Jesus is divinely serious when he says, "**whoever believes and in Baptized will be saved.**" Those are no mere mortal and empty words – those are words from a God who will absolutely do what he absolutely says. And we need it to be that way. The Holy Spirit is the one who calls, enlightens and sanctifies us through the means of Grace. That means he is the one who causes us to believe through absolute, powerful, honest, serious and wonderful words spoken by God and done by God.

God says what is the hardest and does it as only he could. But he involves us to play a role in sharing his powerful words that move heaven and earth. We repeat what only God has first said – God is the one changing, causing, creating, converting dead human hearts into hearts that believe and are Baptized by him.

Boy, Jonah had a tough call from God and he knew it.

Boy, can we have a tough call from God too.

Does God allow us to be corrected in some creative ways? Does God allow us to veer out of his way and then be driven back? Is God's will always done when it involves our calling to be just like his disciples and go

'fishing for men' ? Does God command a type of swallowing fish to help us repent, be corrected to repent and be committed to serve? Yes, I think he does.

Time and again God's Word comes to us **calling, enlightening, sanctifying and keeping us in the one true faith.** Why? Why does God let us stay here after we are Baptized, after his gift of faith converts a dead heart? Why and what?

What is our purpose while we live, and move and have breath? What is the meaning and purpose of this time of grace that God so generously gives?

In the pursuit of purpose and meaning Ponce de Leon **explored** for the fountain of youth.
In the pursuit of purpose and meaning Albert Einstein **invented** his Theory of Relativity.
In the pursuit of purpose and meaning Albert Schopenhauer **pondered** the meaning of life unfortunately without Jesus.
Some famous and infamous explorers, inventors and ponderers pursue purpose and meaning.
Everyone wonders about the same question: What is the meaning of life?

Purpose and meaning came to correct and commit Jonah from wandering away from God's lofty charge. What do you do when the Word of the LORD comes to you? Do we run like Jonah, excuse like Moses, or control like Abraham? Simply put Jonah learned his lesson out at sea, he listened to the Word of the LORD and followed God's instructions to speak simply, plainly and clearly.

Jonah was corrected by a fish sent from God – the Word of the LORD says to everyone “**Forty more days and Nineveh is going to be overthrown.**” I can only imagine what might happen if I preached that in downtown FDL.

Even if these were the only words Jonah said to Nineveh – he got to the point.
Notice that the people of Nineveh believed God – not Jonah. The Word of God is **commanded**, does the **correcting**, and then **commits** believers to sharing Jesus' gospel.

Faith is only as good as the one who gives it. Grace is only as good as the one who gives it. Meaning and purpose are only as good as the one who gives it. Unbelievers who feel that they have meaning and purpose are merely chasing shadows. True, spiritual meaning and purpose is given by God who brings warnings and threats of which he means to follow through with all of them.

How can God relent, how can God seem to change his mind?
There is a big difference between God relenting and people repenting. Even though those words sound similar they are not. When God relents his promise to punish must still happen. When people repent we don't turn God's anger away from us on our own. God can relent from overthrowing Nineveh because Jesus was overthrown in its place. God can relent from the strong warnings because Jesus was strongly punished for us in our place. He carried out his anger and justice on Jesus as a substitution. Jesus/God changed his own mind through his own price, with his own body/soul.

People repent but Jesus still had to carry out what he had to do. When people repent we admit that we've taken God for granted, we've taken his grace for granted, we need a wake up call like Nineveh to take God's threats seriously. And just as seriously do we also take God's promises.

God has purpose and meaning for Jonah, Jesus has purpose and meaning for those disciples, God has purpose and meaning for all who believe that we all take to heart God's Words that we are honored to believe, trust and share. Tell them plainly, share God's love honestly. We also repent and with the people of Nineveh have a generous God who relents from the disaster promised. Jesus' life, death and resurrection

causes God to relent for the sins of the whole world, if only more of the world believes in Jesus the Word of the LORD.

The purpose and meaning of our earthly life is to serve the one who gives us life eternal. The purpose and meaning of our pilgrimage here is to share with others the Word of the LORD and the grace of God given. God carries his salvation to others through you and me who like Jonah are forgiven, are restored and are given a lofty charge of sharing the Word of the LORD with others.

(Travel)

The love of Christ compels us to follow Jesus' call to share his salvation with as many as we can. Jonah traveled far to do that – we may not need to travel far but we do have opportunity to support those who can travel to places we cannot. The Word of the LORD is God's grace given. The Word of the LORD calls us to serve. The Word of the LORD causes faith given by God's honest, sincere and promise of life in heaven.

Jonah said it plainly, I repent.
Jesus said it plainly, I forgive.
With Nineveh we can just as plainly repent.
From the Cross, Jesus plainly forgives... and God does!

Why would God include us as messengers sharing his Words of power and grace? Purpose and meaning are part of it. I do know that he does call us to be 'fishers of souls' for the sake and the name and the purpose of Jesus Christ our Savior. The Command of Christ commissions us, the Love of Christ compels us and the Grace of Christ motivates us to make sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel.

Maybe God can allow something even bigger than a big fish to cause us to swallow our pride and repent with Jonah and be forgiven with Jonah by Jesus.

You and me, we...
We are **Just like Jonah**, we've got some important work to do for Jesus' sake.
You and me, we..
We are just like Jonah. We are loved, forgiven and saved by Jesus alone. Amen

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Kids
2 Cor 5:14 love compels
(push someone)

Sin pushes and shoves
Love compels and motivates