



Senior Pastor: Kevin Flannery

“Mysterious-Outrageous Mercy: *Bad News Leads to Good News.*”

Jonah 3:5-10

**I. Family Ice breaker: Questions?!**

- Describe your dream vacation... *if money was no object.*

**II. Read the following scripture passage from today's sermon together:**

<sup>5</sup> The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” <sup>10</sup> 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. Jonah 3:5-10

**III. Questions & Applications for Discussion with your kids:**

Jonah has survived the traumatic rescue of the big fish and is now back on land. The word of the Lord comes to Jonah again to go to Nineveh and proclaim the Lord's message. Jonah is not given the freedom to craft his own message, but it is a message from the Lord to the people of Nineveh. The Ninevites heard God's message and believed!

- A. As you read the Scriptures, what stood out to you from these passages?
- B. Last week, we saw the gloomy message Jonah delivered to the Assyrians by the command of the Lord: “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” The Assyrians were one of the cruelest and most violent empires in ancient times, and God was bringing judgment upon them for their wickedness (1:2).

**Assyrians created an enormous empire. They mastered the art of war. Unfortunately for their enemies, the Assyrians mastered also torture techniques. And they bragged about it!**

**Pastor Kevin told us that the Assyrians were known to torture, dismember, and decapitate their enemies, among other horrible things. God saw the need for appropriate justice because of their wickedness. Justice is coming back in vogue where we see people crying out for justice for those who horrifically abuse their power to hurt others.**

- How did the Assyrians abuse their power and influence? How do we see those in our culture today abuse their power?

**Power is influence. We all have power to some extent, and we use that power to either negatively or positively influence others. It is part of our human nature to want glory and esteem for ourselves. But we need to be aware how we use our power to not abuse it. Abuse of power is sinful behavior that does not bring God glory.**

- C. The message was preached to the Ninevites, and they respond by believing God, proclaiming a fast, and putting on sackcloth. The text implies God's Word was preached with power, and their response was immediate.
- What influence, if any, do you think the King's response had with the people of Nineveh? How would you describe his leadership?



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Pastor Kevin shared three stages of the response of the Ninevites: inward, articulate, then outward.

- **Believed God – they accepted the message as true. However, believing does not necessarily result in a saving faith.**
- **The depth of their repentance allowed God to relent regarding his judgment He preached against them.**
- According to the text in verse 5, what was the response of the Ninevites? *Have you ever witnessed this kind of humility in the life of the church? If so, share with your family.*

*Note that sackcloth was worn to publicly express mourning, sorrow or regret. Someone wanting to show repentance would normally wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on their head. Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made of goat's hair, making it uncomfortable to wear (GotQuestions.com).*

D. The Ninevites had a trio of external actions: fasting, ashes, and sackcloth. These are meant to be signs of genuine inward repentance.

- Fasting is not to be used as a manipulation tool, but as a means of humility softening our hearts towards God.
- Read Isaiah 58:3-9. What kind of fasting does God require?

“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. <sup>4</sup>Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. <sup>5</sup>Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? <sup>6</sup>“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? <sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? <sup>8</sup>Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteous-ness<sup>[a]</sup> will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup>Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

E. When God saw their response to His warning, He relented and did not bring destruction to Nineveh at that time. Relenting is God staying true to His character – He is merciful!

- Discuss God's unchanging character - that He is the same yesterday, today and forever, and does not change His mind – and the shift from judgment to mercy.

Here are some scripture verses that talk about god's character. Read them together:

- **Numbers 23: 19** – “God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”
- **1 Samuel 15:29** – “He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind.”
- **James 1:17** – “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”
- **Jeremiah 18:7-8** – “If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, <sup>8</sup>and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.”

Sin requires everyone to call urgently upon God and give up their evil ways and their violence (Jonah 3:8). How we choose to live our lives really matters to God.



**PRAY:** Take time to pray together for what has been shared. Pray for those God has revealed to you who need to hear about His mercy and forgiveness.

**APPLICATION:** Take a few minutes to quietly search your heart. Evaluate your own heart and choices. What areas in your life is the Lord asking you to repent from? Sit quietly to reflect and listen to the Spirit.

By Katerina Simbo  
Kids Ministry Director