

## I Won't Go

Jonah 1

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, August 4, 2019

If you would, open your Bibles with me this morning to the book of Jonah. That's the book we are in today. And while you're turning there, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're starting a new series on Jonah called the "Whale of a Tale" series because that's what the book of Jonah is. It's a whale of a tale. It's one of a kind. There is really nothing else like it in the Bible. I told you last time that one thing you want to do in preaching, one thing you want is variety. You don't want to do the same thing every week or else you'll put people to sleep. And there's nothing more varied than the book of Jonah. It's a very different book in the Bible.

For example, it's got a whale in it. That's pretty neat, isn't it? Does anybody here like whales? I like whales. They spit water out of their head, that's pretty neat. Or a large fish, we don't really know what it was. The Bible doesn't clarify. Some think it was a whale or maybe a shark. Sharks are very common in the Mediterranean, so I think it's pretty neat to think of a man getting swallowed by a shark. That's pretty cool. Others have called it the Leviathan from Job or a sea serpent. You don't hear much about sea serpents today, but some of the old commentators called it that. Jesus called it a sea monster in Matthew 12:40. But whatever it was, it was unusual. That sort of thing is very different in the Bible.

Then you have a renegade Hebrew prophet who makes that necessary in the first place. You have a rebellious messenger who runs from the Word of God. You don't see that either. As far as I know, that's the only time you see that happen in the Bible, where God tells a prophet to do something and he flatly refuses. Prophets aren't supposed to run away from God. You guys get that? They are supposed to run to God. And they're not supposed to disobey, they're supposed to obey and teach other people to do the same thing. Jonah just gets it all backwards. He is a piece of work in this book.

And then the Lord sends him to Nineveh of all places. He sends him to the Gentiles, which is something that Jews didn't do. They avoided the Gentiles at all costs. But all this to say is that Jonah is a very unusual book in the Bible. It is one of a kind.

The famous Bible scholar, Matthew Henry once said that the book of Jonah contains remarkable instances of human infirmity in Jonah and of God's mercy in pardoning him, and it does it in a very unusual manner. It shows us that there is one Lord overall who is rich in mercy to people from every nation and He does it in a way that is different from anything else in the Bible.

I told you last time that Jonah falls into a part of the Bible that is known as the Minor Prophets. If you look at your table of contents in the Bible, you'll see the Old Testament is divided up into four sections. You have the Law, the History, the Poetry books, and then the Prophets. And the Prophets are divided up into two sections; you have the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. The Minor Prophets are called that because they're smaller. They're the smallest books in the Old Testament, and Jonah is among them. He's right in the middle of them. And as Matthew Henry says, the Bible paints him in a bad light. It contains multiple instances of Jonah's infirmity. If you

ever think, “God could never speak through me because I'm not perfect,” you need to read this book. This is an imperfect man.

There are some colourful characters in the Minor Prophets. You've got people like Hosea. You remember Hosea? He's a very colourful guy. Or Amos, the shepherd prophet, but they're nothing compared to Jonah.

We can say it like this, in the 1950s, a man named Edward Cooper became famous across America as Bozo the Clown. I don't know how many of you grew up watching Bozo the Clown, but he was the first Bozo the Clown. And at the end of every show, he would make a passionate plea to check for cancer. For whatever reason, Edward Cooper was very passionate about that. He would end every show by asking the audience to see a doctor to make sure they didn't have cancer. But the interesting thing about that is that Edward Cooper died of cancer at the age of 41. It killed him out of nowhere because he never got it checked out. Sin is like that, isn't it? Sin does that to us. It kills us with the very thing we warn others of. It destroys our lives with the very thing we hate.

That's what you see in the life of Jonah here. Jonah would never tell a man to run from God. He would preach against that with all his might. And he would never tell someone to complain to God about God's mercy. What kind of prophet would do that? He would never tell someone to tell a group of sailors to throw him into the sea. But that's what sin does to us. It messes us all up inside.

I remember talking to a friend of mine several years ago who was in the ministry. He was part of a Bible study we were in and he had fallen into sin, and he had been disqualified. And afterwards he told me, he says, “Man, I was sincere. I was not a hypocrite. I really wanted to serve God, but I just blew it. I just messed up.” That's the story of Jonah here. If you would talk to Jonah about what's going on in this book, that's what he would say. “I was sincere, I wanted to serve the Lord, but I messed up.” But the good news is that after that, God still forgave him. That's the message of the book of Jonah. God forgives if you repent and believe.

And as we read this story in the Bible, it falls into four chapters. And I want to give you an outline of the book of Jonah this way. So, if you want to write this down and if you're taking notes, here's the outline of the book of Jonah. This is how it comes together. Four chapters, each chapter goes like this: I won't go (chapter one), I will go (chapter two), I'm here (chapter three) and I want to leave (chapter four). I'll say that again for you. That that's the book of Jonah. I won't go, I will go, I'm here and I want to leave. Or to be more specific, “I want to burn this place to the ground.”

The book ends with Jonah climbing up on a hill, waiting for God to send fire down from the sky and destroy the city of Nineveh. It's quite a book. He's quite a torn man. Jonah is confused in this book. He bounces back and forth between right and wrong, between serving God and rebelling because that's what sin does to us. Sin confuses us. It makes us bounce back and forth between what we should do and what we shouldn't do. And maybe some of you can relate to that this morning. Maybe some of you feel like you're bouncing back and forth between serving God and

rebelling. You're like Jonah. You're saying, "I won't go, I will go, I'm here and I want to burn it to the ground now." And if that's so, I pray this book will encourage you this morning.

Maybe some of you are like my friend who said, "I am sincere, I'm not a hypocrite, but I just messed up. I blew it." And I hope this book will show you that God will forgive you. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning. Listen, if God could forgive a man like this, He can forgive you no matter what you've done. If God could still love Jonah after all of this, He can still love you today.

And with that said this morning, we're going to look at the first chapter of Jonah. We're going to look at the chapter where Jonah says, "I won't go" and we're going to do it with three places Jonah won't go to in chapter 1. So, if you're taking notes, this is our outline: three places Jonah won't go to in chapter 1.

This is great stuff because we've all been tempted to sin. We've all been tempted to run away from God. I don't think I'm the only one. We've all done that. But I'm guessing most of you haven't done it this blatantly, or if you have, you didn't write it all down. I mean, Jonah did this and then he wrote it down. That's pretty amazing, isn't it? If I was Jonah, you would never know of this story. It would have been forgotten. He's a humble guy. So, let's see some lessons that we learned this morning.

Three places Jonah won't go to in chapter one - the first one is Nineveh. The first place that Jonah says he will not go to is the city of Nineveh. Now, this really sets the tone for the whole book. It sets the stage for the whole story. But if you read in Jonah 1:1-3, it says this,

1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Just to point out a few things here, like I told you last week, if you notice, this is a short introduction to the book. And what I mean is it doesn't give you a lot of background. It doesn't tell you a lot of information about who Jonah is or where he comes from. It just starts off with, "The word of the Lord came to Jonah." That's what the book is about, that's what really matters here – "The word of the Lord." It's the job of a prophet to tell people the word of the Lord. That's his job. That's what he does for a living. So, that's how the book begins. As you read the Minor Prophets, they're all about the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord came to Hosea, the word of the Lord came to Joel, the word of the Lord came to Amos. But Jonah starts off, "The word of the Lord came to Jonah,".

And if you look in verse 2, it said, "Arise, go to Nineveh." But verse 3 says, "But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish." So, you got minor prophet after minor prophet after minor prophet obeying the word of the Lord, doing what it says. You get to Jonah and ... God told Jonah to go this way, Jonah went that way. God told Jonah to rise up and go to Nineveh and if you notice, it says, "Jonah rose up, he got up and immediately went the other way, to Tarshish." Verse 3 says that he

fled there. He didn't walk there, he didn't contemplate and think about it, he just bolted for the door and went as fast as he could.

We'll talk about the city of Nineveh later at another time, another sermon, and why he did that, but if you look at a map of the ancient world, you'll see that Nineveh is located in the modern-day country of Iraq. It's in the heart of the Middle East, and Tarshish is located in Spain, which is 3,500 miles away by land. If you go by sea, it's about 2,500 miles, maybe a little longer depending on the islands. There're islands in the Mediterranean there. But it was as far as it was possible to go at this time. You couldn't go any further than Tarshish. It's like the city of Hope. You just can't go farther than Hope. Just kidding. I haven't gone beyond all hope yet - just a little bit. In fact, the name Tarshish in verse 3 is repeated three times to remind you of this. It's almost as if the author is saying, "Tarshish, why would anyone want to go to Tarshish? Can you believe he went to Tarshish?" They didn't have planes, trains, and automobiles back then. The boundaries of ancient travel only went so far, so you couldn't fly over oceans and fly over continents. This was on another planet.

And if you notice, not only does he flee, but he plans it out. And verse 3 says he went down to Joppa. Joppa was located on the western side of Israel near the Mediterranean. It was one of the only harbours in Israel at this time from what I could tell. And he finds a ship going to Tarshish. Ships from Tarshish didn't come along very often because they were from so far away. So, the idea here is probably not that he was going to look for a ship going there, he was just looking for a ship going as far away and he just found this one.

And it also says in verse 3, if you notice, he paid the fare for this ship. He put his own money up. A boat ride 2,500 miles away would have been expensive. And if you're a prophet, you didn't make a lot of money anyway. So, this would've cost Jonah maybe all that he had. So not only does he sin, but he just keeps sinning and keeps sinning and keeps sinning for maybe weeks longer. And the point I'm trying to make here is sin is stupid, isn't it? Sin is stupid. This doesn't make any sense. This is just dumb. For Jonah to go to all this trouble to run away from God, is just dumb. I told you last time, you can't run away from God. Where are you going to go? Jonah sold his shirt off his back. He took weeks out of his schedule, maybe months and he ended up right back where he was to begin with. Because sin is like that; sin is stupid. We could also say it this way, sin is expensive. One pastor said, "Sin will take you further than you want to go and it will cost you more than you want to pay," which is what you see here. Jonah's sin cost him everything. He paid for the most expensive boat in the dock. In his commentary on the book of Jonah, Donald Grey Barnhouse had an interesting thought on this when he says,

It's always this way with sin. When you run away from the Lord, you never get to where you're going and you always pay your own fare. But, on the other hand, when you trust in God and obey Him, you always get to where you're going and He pays the fare. He provides what you need. But when you don't trust the Lord and you don't obey, He leaves you all alone.

And one way you get victory over sin is to remember that. One way you get victory over your evilness is to count the cost of it. You need to ask yourself, "Is this worth it? Whatever the sin is, pride, lust, anger, unforgiveness, is it worth the sin?" Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived,

God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he also reaps.” And the idea is that whatever you put into the ground, you get out of it. Whatever you put into life, that's what you get back. And if you put sin in, you get sin back. And is it worth it? I've talked with ... we have several doctors in our congregation, but some of them have told me, “I wonder how much of my patients’ problems is a result of sin.” I mean, maybe not all obviously, but just the effect of that on the body. I've talked with young men who are struggling with lust. They're struggling with pornography or some type of sin, and I've asked them the question, “Is this worth it? When you get to the end of your life, 10, 20, 30 years down the road (you're an old man sitting in a rocking chair), are you going to be glad you did this?” The answer is always no. That's how you defeat your sin. If Jonah would have stepped back for a moment and said, “What am I doing?” You wouldn't have the book of Jonah for one thing, or you wouldn't have the first two chapters. He would have avoided a ride in the sea, he would have avoided being swallowed by a whale. And that's one way you defeat sin this morning, is by remembering that.

You need to think of the line and not the dot. Do you remember that illustration from a couple of weeks ago? We talked about that. If you had a whiteboard up here on the screen and I put a dot on it, that would represent your life. It is short. You've got 70, 80 years and that's it. It goes by like that. If I could draw a line above that, it goes on and on forever, it never ends, it never stops and that's eternity. And the question you need to ask every day is, “Which one am I living for? The line or the dot?” Sin makes you live for the dot. Sin makes you live for this life, this moment, this incident, nothing else. And you'll never defeat it living like that.

Several years ago in a major football game in the States, the home team was losing. They were getting beaten badly but their fans were cheering. It was the weirdest thing in this football game because as the team was getting pulverized, the fans were cheering. And nobody could figure out why until they realized that the fans were listening to another game on the radio. While they were watching this game, they were listening to another game on their headsets where the home team was winning. In other words, they were cheering for the wrong thing. Life is like that sometimes. We can cheer for the wrong thing. The world cheers for sin. The world applauds behaviour like this here. The world will look at Jonah and say, “Way to go Jonah, be your own man. Be free.” God doesn't do that. One way we get victory over sin is to remember God's perspective on the story.

Which leads us to the next point that we see here in Jonah chapter 1. It leads us to the next place Jonah won't go to. The first one is Nineveh. We're going to talk more about Nineveh in the weeks to come. But Jonah did not want to go to that city. He wanted to avoid it at all costs. The Ninevites were very cruel people who had a terrible reputation. And this was the city that would later be part of Israel's destruction. And so, Jonah hated it, so he avoided it.

It leads to the next point, the next place Jonah did not want to go to, and that is the main deck of the ship. After running away from the city of Nineveh, after fleeing from the presence of God, the next place Jonah does not want to go to is the main deck of the ship. In other words, he starts fleeing from God and now he's fleeing from men. He wants to avoid that too. We don't know all this about Jonah because it's not given to us. But most Jews at this time probably would never have been on a ship this long or a ship like this that's traveling this far. It's pretty rare. And Jonah goes on the ship and after however long, he goes down into the hold of it. And if you read in

verses...the hold or the bottom of the ship, the smelliest part of the ship, I might add. That's where they would've kept all the food and all the drink and other things. And if you read in verses 4 through 6, it says,

4 The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. 5 Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. 6 So the captain approached him and said, "How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish."

To understand what's going on here, you have to understand that the ancient world was very superstitious. They were polytheistic, which means they had gods for everything. It was said that in some places, Egypt, it was easier to find a god than a man. So, they had gods for the sea, they had gods for the sky, they had gods for the land. And the thinking was that if the sea was upset that it must be because the sea god was upset. I mean, if the ocean was raging, it must be because the ocean gods were raging and mad at you and you had to appease them. And that's what you see here in this story. It's why verse 5 says the sailors cried out to their gods because they were trying to figure out which one was mad. But before we get there, verse 4 tells you which one was mad. It tells you which god was upset. It says, "The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea." Jonah's Lord, Jonah's God, the one he's running away from - that's who hurled the storm at the sailors.

The word "hurled" there means "He threw it." God tossed this wind unto the sea like you would throw a ball. And it was so bad that it began to tear the ship apart. I mean, we've all seen videos of ships being carried up and down by the waves and being torn and tossed and beaten and that sort of thing. That's what's going on here, which causes the sailors to panic. They cry out to their gods, and this is interesting. It says they start throwing the cargo off the ship.

The whole reason the ship went to Israel was to pick up cargo. So, to throw the cargo overboard means this storm, they thought they were going to die. I mean, that's your income. It's like throwing money overboard. That's how you got paid.

But if you notice Jonah's reaction here in the midst of all of this chaos and confusion, verse 5 says, "But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship lain down and fallen sound asleep." God is chasing after him, He's hurling a storm after him. The sailors who are familiar with the sea are scared half to death and Jonah is asleep. Sound asleep. The word for "sound asleep" or some of your translations have "sleeper" when the captain is talking to him in verse 6 - that's translated "snoring" in some translations, "snorer." He was in a deep sleep. He was totally out of it. Remember when Jesus was sleeping in the boat and the disciples were upset? Jesus was snoring because He was sinless, Jonah was snoring because he was in sin. Totally different thing here. And we don't know exactly what's going on. It could be that he doesn't care anymore. He's totally checked out on life. It could be that he was just tired. All the effort to get away has worn him out. But whatever the case, Jonah did not want to be among the other sailors.

Which leads to another thing sin does in our lives; it isolates us, doesn't it? Sin wants to get us all alone. Charles Spurgeon said that of all the men in the boat, Jonah is the last one who should

have been asleep. Of all the men in this vessel, Jonah is the first one who should have cried out to his god, but he didn't because sin had isolated him. It wanted to get him all alone. John Owen says that Satan is a coward and he attacks us the most when we're all by ourselves. And that's what you see here in the life of Jonah.

If you've been following the Christian news lately, you'll know that another (and it seems like you could say this every couple of months) leader has fallen into sin. I won't give you his name, but another leader is divorcing his wife. He's apologizing to the LBGT community for offending them. And it's because he's fallen asleep on God. I don't think it takes a lot of investigation to figure that out. He's checked out on God. He's leaving his wife, accepting another lifestyle because his heart is far away from the Lord. You saw that with my friend who I mentioned a moment ago, who said, "I was sincere, I wasn't a hypocrite. I really wanted to serve God, but I blew it." According to him, it was a slow process, according to my friend, he's like, "I fell asleep over time to the things of God. I fell asleep in my Bible, I fell asleep in the church, I fell asleep in prayer. And before I knew it, I was gone." Jonah did that here. This is a hard heart at this point. It gets harder in a moment. It's almost like he's saying right here, "I don't care if I die."

Another way to say this is that sin is lonely. Sin is a lonely thing. It finds you above the deck and it leaves you below the deck. Sin finds you out in the light, out in the company of others with the other sailors, and it leaves you in the dark all alone. Those men I've talked to who struggle with pornography or even any other sin (you can mention any sin in this), and they'll tell you that it just isolates you further and further and further from other people. You want to hide it more and more and more.

Several years ago, I was on a plane heading to Tennessee and they showed us one of those nature videos with a pack of lions hunting an elephant. We've got some people from South Africa here. When you guys hear that, you guys are like, "Yeah, that's my home." But I don't know why they show this on the plane because it was pretty violent. But if you've ever seen one of those videos, you'll know lions can't kill an elephant if it's in a herd. They're not strong enough. If it's in a pack of other elephants, the animals are too big. So, what the lions do is they find an elephant on the edge of the herd and they isolate him. They claw at him and swipe at him and annoy him to the point that he leaves to go fend them off. And when he leaves and gets far enough away, they just all pounce on him and kill him. That's what's happening to Jonah here. Jonah is getting further and further alone. He's left Israel, he's left the company of the prophets, and he's on a ship full of Gentiles (people that don't follow the Lord) and now he's not even hanging out with them anymore, because sin does that to us. And one way to fight it is to stay among others.

And it leads to one more point we're going to look at here in Jonah chapter 1. All this leads to one more place Jonah doesn't want to go to. Just to review these other ones, the first one is Nineveh. The Lord told Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh and he doesn't want to do that. He goes someplace else. Second, he doesn't want to go above the deck. He doesn't want to join the other sailors in crying out to God. They cry out to God, they pray. He didn't want to do that. He's not into prayer anymore. Instead, he's sleeping in the middle of the storm. I don't know about you guys, but if I'm in a storm on a ship or on the plane, the first thing I do is pray. Are you guys are like that? The turbulence starts hitting - some people laugh. I don't laugh at turbulence. I think we're going down. I'm praying, I'm like, "Lord, I'm about to meet you. I'm happy, I'm looking

forward to this,” and everybody around me is like, “Calm down. It’s not that big of a deal.” Jonah is not like that here. He doesn't even care. He doesn't even care.

It leads to one more place Jonah does not want to go to in chapter 1, and this is what it's all about really at the end of the day, this is the problem in this chapter. The one more place Jonah avoids in the story is the presence of God. He doesn't want to go into the presence of God. No matter how bad things got on the ship, no matter how terrible things were on the ocean, no matter how hard it was to get to Tarshish and all these things, Jonah just wanted to stay away from God. And if you read in verses 7 through 9, it says,

7 Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?” 9 He said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”

Just a couple of thoughts on this. The practice of casting lots was very common in the ancient times. If you remember, even in the Old Testament, Aaron cast lots for the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement. And it says the Apostles in Acts chapter 1 cast lots for Matthias, the newest apostle. And they would do this not as a form of gambling only (they would do it for that), but also as a way to make decisions. And the thinking was God controlled the lot. A lot was like a piece of bone from a sheep or a goat that had a marking on it, and you would throw them like dice. So, each person would have a lot tied to their name and they would throw it to see who was responsible for this mess. And Jonah’s lot came up.

And as a result of that, if you notice, in verse 8, it says that the sailors gave him a barrage of questions. They just pelted question after question on him. The ship is going down, they’re in a storm, it’s sinking, the lot fell on him. And here comes like five questions, one right after the other, just boom, boom, boom! And Jonah's answer is found in verse 9 and it's not much of an answer. He says, “I'm a Hebrew and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and dry land.” I mean that's something of an answer, but he doesn't say he’s sorry for this. There's no confession in that. Verse 10 says this, if you look in verse 10, it says, “Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, ‘How could you do this?’ For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he told them.” So Jonah did have some confession in all fairness. But you should read here that he breaks down weeping and you don't.

So, the story continues in verse 11 if you read on. It says,

11 So they said to him, “What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?”—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. 12 He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.” 13 However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. 14 Then they called on the Lord and said, “We earnestly pray, O Lord, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for

You, O Lord, have done as You have pleased.” (And just to round off the story here) 15 So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

There’s a lot in here and we won't get to all of it for the sake of time. But I want you to see the progression of the story here. I want you to see the progression of Jonah's sin. In verses 1 through 3, we start off with him running from God, Jonah flees from His word. Then in verses 4 through 6, he falls asleep. He passes out in the middle of a storm. Then in verses 7 through 9, the lot falls on him. It's another way of saying he was confronted over his sin. He’s called out, everybody knows about it now. And what does Jonah do if you look in verse 12? He says this, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea.” He doesn't say, “I'm sorry.” He doesn't say, “I was wrong.” He doesn't say, “I repent, I give in.” He says, “I would rather die than go to Nineveh.” Which leads me to say this, sin is deadly, isn't it? Sin is deadly. It will kill you if you let it. It will harden your heart to the point that you say, “I would rather die than give this up.” James 1:14-15 says, “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” That's what you see here. Jonah starts off sinning, he starts off running from God and he ends up dying or wanting to die. It's a downward spiral. It's like going down the rabbit hole. He just goes down further and further and further. He starts off running, he ends up drowning. He starts off fleeing, he ends up falling into the water because that's what sin does. It'll take everything from us. If you follow the story of that leader I mentioned earlier, you'll know he's an example of this. This guy lost everything. In the last year or so, he's lost his reputation in ministry. He renounced all the books he's ever written. He lost his family, and this particular man says he's not even a Christian anymore. That's what sin will do. It'll find you in the pulpit, it'll leave you away from Christ completely. It'll take you further than you want to go, cost you more than you want to pay because sin is deadly.

Jonah’s heart was very hard here. I mean, the trip to Tarshish wouldn't stop him. The words of the sailors wouldn't stop him. As a matter of fact, if you look in verse 13 when it says, “The men rowed desperately to return to land, to try to save Jonah.” The word “rowed desperately” there, it actually means they dug their oars in the water. They cut the water. They were rowing so hard and that didn't even stop Jonah. He's costing these men their lives.

And speaking of the sailors, if you notice, they do the right thing here. They believed in God as a result of all this. Jonah goes off the boat not believing in God, these men believe in him. Verse 15 says, “They threw him into the sea after apologizing, praying to the Lord for it, and then they feared the Lord greatly and offered a sacrifice and made vows.” Some have called these Jonah's first Gentile converts. These are the first pagans that believed on account of his ministry, no thanks to him. Even before he gets to Nineveh, even before he goes to that great city, these people believed and feared the Lord on account of what they saw. They know storms don't stop at an instant. They throw him in the sea, storm stops, boom! And so they start off worshiping many gods, and they ended up worshiping one God.

But the good news in this story is that God doesn't leave Jonah this way. The good news is that the mess he’s in in chapter 1 gets better after he’s fish food, after he gets swallowed by the fish.

Verse 17 talks about that, and we'll talk about that next time. But chapter 2 is Jonah's prayer of confession and repentance. So, the story gets better.

But all that leads me to this, it leads me to the question, how are you handling sin today? Are you giving into sin today? Are you acting like Jonah did? Are you running away from God? Are you fleeing from his presence? If you are, can I remind you of the lessons that we see here? If you're fleeing from him, can I remind you of the things that Jonah learned in this chapter? He learned first of all that sin is stupid. Sin is stupid, because you can't run away from God. You can't flee from His presence.

I've talked to people that are in sin and their solution is they want to move to another town. Well, you can do that, but your sin will go with you there. I've talked to other people, they want to change jobs. They're in a sinful situation in their job. They need to repent in front of their coworkers, and they don't want to do it. They want to change jobs. Well, you'll go to your other job and you'll sin with them. Sin is stupid, it doesn't make sense.

He also learned that sin is expensive. How much money do you think Canadians spend on their sin? What do you guys think? Trillions of dollars? Billions of dollars? For Americans is like zillions of dollars. Sin will cost you your money, sin will cost you your time, sin will cost you your life.

And one more lesson he learned here is sin is deadly. It'll take you to the point where you say, "Throw me into the sea. I would rather die than give this up." You guys have done this before. You're believers, so you've done this, we've all counselled people or met with people or try to love on people and say, "You've got to give this sin up, you got to quit." And they say to you in the nicest way possible, "I would rather die." He also learned that sin is lonely. He learned lots of lessons here – it will put you to sleep.

But Jonah also learned (and this is chapter 2)...Jonah also learned (I want to give you some hope here) that God is a God of hope. God is a God of mercy. If you've fallen asleep on God, God has not fallen asleep on you. If you've run away from Him, He's not run away from you if you're His child. God sent a storm after Jonah, He sent sailors after Jonah, He sent a fish after Jonah. Now, we could say it this way, God sent a fish after Jonah, but He sent the Lord Jesus Christ after you. If you're a believer here this morning, you have been given something so much greater than a Leviathan or a sea monster. You've been given the Son of God, which shows you God's heart. He wants to save. He won't let you drown today if you trust in Him. He won't let you die if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and call on His name and repent.

A lady was once confessing her sins to a pastor one day, and afterwards, she was really struggling with guilt. She really felt bad over her sins and couldn't get past that. And so the pastor said to her, "Do you know what Jesus does when we confess our sins to Him? Do you know what He says? He says, 'I don't remember them anymore.'" When we confess our sins to the Lord, the Lord says, "I've forgotten them like that." My friends, you can experience that today. Jesus will forgive and forget your sins. He won't remember them anymore. If you just come to Him and repent, He will throw them into the sea. He will pull you out of the sea and he'll throw your sins in there if you trust in Him.

You know the interesting thing to me about the book of Jonah? If I was writing this book after chapter 1 - in chapters 2, 3 and 4, if I was the Lord, I would bring up the fish or Jonah's sin over and over and over again. "Jonah, this is all your fault. You did this." He doesn't do that because He's a God who doesn't remember our sins anymore if we repent. Would you do that now if you haven't? Let me go to the Lord in a word of prayer with you.

Father, we do thank you, Lord, for Your forgiveness and Your mercy. And we thank you that You're a God that forgets our sins if we give them to You in repentance. Lord, thank you for the story of Jonah, just a humble man that would repeat this story for us to put down and study thousands of years later. We can all relate to this; every man, woman, and child. We've all wanted to run away from what You've commanded us to do. And yet, just the amount of mercy and grace You display here towards one of Your own, it's just incredible, Father.

And I pray that we would be encouraged this morning as we read this story. I don't know where everyone's at today in their own personal walk with You. But if we have those who are struggling with sin this morning, struggling with wanting to run, Lord, would they look at the story of Jonah and be encouraged?

And Father, if there's any here today who have never come to You in faith and repentance, and they've never confessed their sins, would You draw them to that Father? Draw them to the one who came to deliver them from death.

Thank you for Christ. Thank you that He is the ultimate Saviour and the ultimate deliverer, and may He be glorified as we continue our day today in You. We pray this in Christ's name, amen.