

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (FOR MAY 2, 2021)

For Community Groups or Personal Study

On this first Sunday in May our attention shifts to the prophet Jonah. Over the next five weeks we will “dive in” to this 2500+ year old story, trusting God to provide insights and instruction that will help us individually, and help us collectively here at Grace of Christ. Most, even those unfamiliar with Christian faith, have heard of Jonah ... and the whale (actually “a great fish”). Jonah was a prophet of God. He received clear instructions from God ... and turned and went in the opposite direction.

The book of Jonah is a fascinating story of God’s call, human responsibility, God’s grace and God’s power. It is a story of redemption and second chances, not only for prophets but for countries and nations that seem far from God.

Jump in ... swim around ... and get to know Jonah, some sailors, a giant fish, a foreign king, a plant, and the intent and heart of God.

LESSONS FROM JONAH SERMON PASSAGE: JONAH 1:1-6

“¹ Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.’ ³ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

⁴ But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. ⁶ So the captain came and said to him, ‘What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.’”

As you read the opening verses of the book of Jonah put yourself on the deck of the ship. All is calm one minute. A routine voyage. The next you are holding on for dear life. The wind and waves are frightening even for the most seasoned of sailors onboard. It looks so hopeless that the crew gets religious. Each one begins to cry out to their god asking for help. Nothing. The wind and waves keep thrusting the boat here and there. There is real danger the boat will break apart.

Jonah, according to 2 Kings 14:25, was a prophet of God during the reign of King Jeroboam II (700’s BC). Outside of the book of Jonah there is only one Old Testament reference to him (above) and several references in the New Testament (all from Jesus). Jesus referred to Jonah in historical terms. Jonah is a fascinating character: wrestling with God, disobedient, headstrong, and then encountering the mercy of God for the Ninevites, and for himself.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. What do we learn about Jonah from Jonah 1:1-6?
2. From this passage what do we know about the city of Nineveh? (From historical records we know Nineveh was a major military power located in modern Iraq (near Mosul).)
3. Who caused the storm? How did the sailors respond to the storm?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. What does Jonah’s response to God’s command teach us about God’s call, and our responsibility to that call? Compare Jonah’s call and response with Annanias’ call and response in Acts 9:10-19. Similarities? Differences?
5. Why would God send His prophet Jonah to Nineveh, a city and nation not part of God’s chosen people? (The Ninevites, Assyrians, were often an enemy of God’s people.)
6. What was the outcome of the prayers of the sailors?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. Have you ever experienced a time where you were in the middle of a storm (real or metaphorical) and you feared for your life? What did you do?
8. Does God care about those who are still far from Him?
9. Has God ever called you to do something and you did the opposite? What is God calling you to do now?

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a minute or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don’t know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. Ask God to help you hear His voice ... and then have the courage and strength to do what He is calling you to do. Ask God to increase your compassion for those who are far from God. Pray for them. He will help them (you) because He loves them (you).