

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (FOR MAY 9, 2021) For Community Groups or Personal Study

On this second Sunday in May we continue focusing our attention on the prophet Jonah. For five weeks we will “dive in” to this 2500+ year old fish story trusting God to provide insights and instruction that will help us individually, and help us collectively here at Grace of Christ.

Jonah was a prophet of God. He received clear directions from God ... and turned and ran in the opposite direction. He fooled himself into thinking he could run from God's presence. But wherever Jonah went God was right there with him. Whyever, and wherever, we run, God is with us. Wherever, and whatever, we try to hide, God knows all about it, and all about us.

The book of Jonah is a fascinating story of God's call to go, our responsibility for how we respond to that call, and God's kindness along the way ... sometimes His kindness involves a BIG fish!

Jonah is a story of redemption and second chances, not only for prophets but for individuals 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 1:7-16

⁷ And they (the sailors on the ship) said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, 'Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?' ⁹ And he said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.' ¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, 'What is this that you have done!' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

¹¹ Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?' For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. ¹² He said to them, 'Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.' ¹³ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Therefore they called out to the Lord, 'O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.' ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows."

Jonah 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 and several references in the New Testament (all from Jesus). Jonah is a fascinating character: wrestling with God, disobedient, headstrong, and then encountering the mercy of God for the citizens of Nineveh, and for himself too.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. In these verses what is the state of mind of these sailors? What are they thinking about their future? Why were they ultimately willing to throw Jonah overboard, after trying to solve things themselves by "rowing hard"?
2. What was it about Jonah's response to their question, "on whose account has this evil come?" that made these sailors "exceedingly afraid"?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. The sailors cast lots (like dice) to figure out who among them was the cause of their problems (the violent storm)? What does this tell you about how the sailors viewed God and the world? Are there people today who see life the same as these sailors? Did God direct the lot to point to Jonah?
4. What does Jonah's solution (hurl me into the sea) tell you about his relationship with God?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

5. How do you respond to the storms that come into your life?
6. What is God's involvement in this world, and in your life, when the storm beats against your life and all seems lost?
7. When was the last storm you were in (and maybe you still are)? What provided (provides) you with the most help?
8. What vows have you made to God?

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 to be at peace when everything around you is in chaos, beating against your life. Ask God to reassure you of His presence when you are in the middle of the storm. He will help us (you) because He loves us (you).