

JONAH

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Jonah 1.11-17

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I. Connecting With One Another

When was the last time you were surprised? When were you last genuinely taken aback upon receiving some news or information? How did you respond to this surprise?

Before continuing in this study, spend some time in prayer:

- a. Thank God that He has drawn and continues to draw us unto Him in worship,
- b. Thank God for the many children engaging the Scriptures in Good Shepherd's classrooms each weekend,
- c. For those leading our worship gatherings and time in our children's classrooms this weekend – that God's Spirit would guide their planning, preparation and leadership.

II. Introduction to this Study

Jonah 1.11-17 constitutes the fourth and final segment in the first "scene" of Jonah, which we have studied over the past few weeks (verses 1-3, 4-6 and 7-10). Before continuing, reread Jonah 1.1-17 to be reminded of the context of this week's periscope. What strikes you about the story thus far?

Try, for a moment, to disregard your knowledge of where this narrative is going. How does pretending you're reading this story for the first time alter your understanding of what is going on in this first "scene"?

Before continuing, notice:

- a. The continued progression of events, namely the increasing danger of the storm. Why do you think the narrator feels the need to communicate such details?
- b. The continued use of the word "great": Jonah is sent to Nineveh, "the great city," the LORD sent "a great wind on the sea," Jonah admits fault for "the great storm" and the sailors "greatly feared the LORD." Why do you think the narrator continues to use this word?
- c. In verse 11, Jonah and the crew swap places grammatically: Jonah – this son of truth, this dove, this representation of God's people – moves from subject to object, while the sailors move from objects to subjects. Why do you think this is? Did the author make a mistake – or is this intentional? What could our author be seeking to communicate?

III. Study the Text

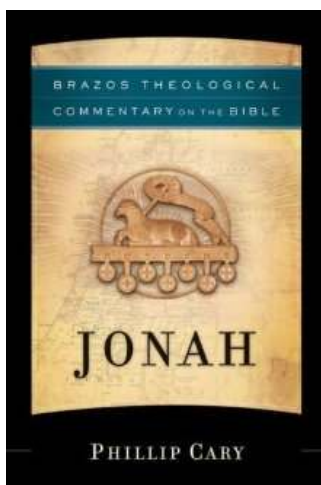
- a. In verse 10, the sailors ask, "What have you done?" (Hebrew scholars note that the original language reads more like an exclamation than a question). In verse 11, however, their response to Jonah has shifted. Instead of asking about – or expressing their anger toward – what he's done, they question him: "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" What does this reveal about their understanding of their relationship and interaction with "the gods"?
- b. Verse 12 reveals the first time Jonah admits fault. And yet, he does so not to the LORD, but to the sailors! Recall verse 6: The captain found Jonah below deck and said, "How can you

sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish." But, has Jonah done so? Why do you think he is unwilling to do so?

- c. With the storm growing increasingly violent around them, Jonah invites the sailors to treat him like the cargo they have previously *thrown* into the sea (after the LORD *threw* the wind!). How do you interpret Jonah's offer? Is he still feeling sorry for himself like he was below deck? Or is he sacrificing himself in a Christ-like manner in order to save them?
- d. We can sometimes fall into the habit of thinking God's election of Israel reveal His only offer of salvation. And yet, we're told that these pagan sailors, accustomed to sacrificing to the gods, were (at first) unwilling to throw Jonah overboard, later pray to the LORD that they would not be held accountable for his death and are, in a sense, converted. How does this alter our understanding of God's offer of salvation? Read Genesis 12.1-3, Isaiah 49.5-6 and Romans 10.9-15 to engage this question even more.
- e. Verse 17 states, "Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah." This use of the term "provided" is a little bit surprising, isn't it? Would you have used that word? Why do you think the author does?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Are there things you feel you have to do for God to make the seas of your life calm? What types of things do you feel like you need to do? Why?
- b. Have you ever admitted fault to someone but not to God? Why were you reticent to confess to our Heavenly Father? Read James 5.16 for his encouragement to confess to others and what we should do in response. Read Psalm 51 to see how David confessed his sin before God. Lastly, read 1st John 1.5-10 for the "beloved disciple's" encouragement to confess to God.
- c. Have you ever wanted to "sacrifice yourself" in a way, to appease God? If so, read Hebrews 9.23-28 and remember the good news that Jesus has offered himself, once for all to do away with the need for sacrifice!
- d. How does remembering that God does not desire the sailors demise, but rather their salvation, alter your understanding of the ultimate meaning of this book?
- e. How has the LORD "provided" a surprising escape for you when you least expected it?



In the *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*, Phillip Cary notes, "The picture of Jonah sinking into the depths shows what comes of God's declaration to never send another flood: the chosen one, the prophet who represents Israel and therefore the whole chosen people, precious in the LORD's sign and beloved like a dove, sinks into the depths of destruction after bestowing upon the Gentile sailors an inestimable blessing. The Gentiles know the LORD and are saved from death precisely because of the suffering and death of God's chosen.

This is why Jesus, the Savior of the whole world, identifies with Jonah, not with Noah. He does not come to save himself or even his own people. He thus fulfills the calling of Israel, which is chosen not for its own salvation but for the blessing of all the families of the earth. Yet as we are about to see, even in the depths of the sea the LORD does not abandon his chosen one. In that way too Jesus identifies with Jonah, being the fulfillment of his work." (page 72-73)