

JONAH

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Jonah 2.1-10

Prepared by Curtis Bronzan
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

I. Connecting With One Another

Think of the last time you were given a gift. How did you feel? How did you respond to the gift's giver? Before continuing, spend some time in prayer:

- a. Thank God for the families and children who have been able to connect with God at our new Saturday evening gathering,
- b. For those leading our worship gatherings and those with Good Shepherd's children in their classrooms – that God would guide their planning, preparation and leadership,
- c. That God would guide this study, this weekend's gatherings and our continued communal life together.

II. Introduction to this Study

Jonah 2.1-10 begins a new "scene" in the story of Jonah, the wayward prophet. After being called to go where he didn't want to go to do what he didn't want to do, Jonah turned and ran in the opposite direction, in order to get away from God. Recall 1.3: The narrator tells us that Jonah sailed for Tarshish to "flee from the LORD." Has he been successful?

Recall the LORD threw a great wind onto the waves, prompting the sailors to throw not only their possessions, but Jonah, overboard, into the Mediterranean. While the sailors, and most probably Jonah, assumed this would mean the end of his life, we read in 1.17 that "the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

In this new scene, then, we see Jonah's response to God's gracious provision, communicated in poetic form, a skill common to prophets of his day. While the literary genre is quite different from that which has preceded it, Jonah's psalm includes a number of connections with other events within this story.

III. Study the Text

- a. Read Jonah 2.1-9 aloud. What stands out to you the most? Why?
How has Jonah's outlook changed from the first scene, where he disobeyed God's call and refused to pray, instead inviting the crew to throw him overboard like their cargo? What is the cause of this newfound perspective? How does this new outlook change his actions?
Imagine you're telling this story to someone who has never heard it before. How would you explain Jonah's change of heart?
- b. Last weekend's message made a lot out of the word "provided" in 1.17. From his psalm in chapter 2, do you get the impression Jonah would have used this word? Why or why not? What word would you have used?
- c. Notice verse 3 again. Who does Jonah say "hurled him into the deep"?
Reread Jonah 1.11-16. Who does the narrator say threw Jonah overboard?

Is this a contradiction? Why or why not? To ask it in another way, what does Jonah's statement in 2.3 tell us about his theology? Does Jonah picture God up in the clouds, set apart from human activity – or not? How, if at all, should this reform our understanding of God's activity in the world?

- d. Do you think Jonah's psalm is "original"? That is, do you think he composed it entirely on his own? Notice these parallels with some Davidic psalms (some specific words may be slightly different due to translation):

"In my distress I called to the Lord" – Psalm 18.6; 30.2; 120.1

"From deep in the realm of the dead" – Psalm 18.4-5, 16

"All your waves and breakers swept over me" – Psalm 42.7

"I will look again toward your holy temple" – Psalm 5.7

"The engulfing waters threatened me" – Psalm 69.1-2, 14-15

"But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit" – Psalm 30.3; 86.13

"When my life was ebbing away" – Psalm 142.3

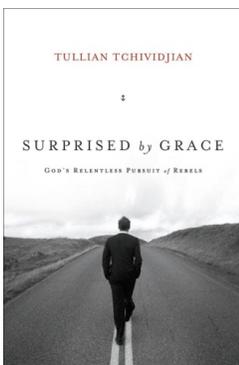
"I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord'" – Psalm 3.8

How, if at all, does it change your perception of Jonah's psalm if he was inspired by these psalms? Have you ever prayed the psalms? If so, how has it benefitted your spiritual life? If not, how do you think it could?

- e. At the end of his psalm, Jonah declares, "I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'" Has he done so thus far in the story? Considering his original commission in 1.1-2, what should saying "salvation comes from the LORD" look like as the story continues? Do you think he will do so? Why or why not?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- How have you been "provided" a new perspective before? How has it changed your actions as a result?
- How has God used other people in your life? Have you acknowledged your thankfulness to *Him* for doing so?
- What types of setting helps you pray most effectively? Certain times of the day? A particular place? Special texts from the Scriptures? Other words that God has used from songs, books, movies, etc.?
- How could you best declare "Salvation comes from the LORD" to those with whom you work? Go to school? Live with? Have you done so? How could you be best equipped to do so?



In his book, *Surprised by Grace*, Tullian Tchividjian writes,

"The Lord – extending a mercy that is unspeakably amazing – enables Jonah to see his situation with clarity. The fish's belly was not Jonah's prison or death chamber, but only a temporary hospital for his soul and a protection for his body from the ocean depths. It's *good* for Jonah to be here. God ensures that his unworthy servant is made fully aware of this undeserved deliverance. Jonah at last is thinking more clearly, after all his absurd maneuvering to flee God's assignment and God's presence. He's reconnecting with some essentials of spiritual life, embracing them more deeply than ever."
(pages 69-70)