

# JONAH

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Jonah 3.1-5

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## I. Connecting With One Another

Have you ever faced a job or obligation of some kind that you felt half-hearted about? How did you respond to it? What was the outcome? Before continuing, would you pray:

- a. Thanking God for the families and children who have been able to connect with God at our new Saturday evening and Sunday morning gatherings, and grow deeper in knowledge of Christian faith through the Foundations Class.
- 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 use this study, this weekend's gatherings, and our continued communal life together to shape us into the likeness of Jesus.

## II. Introduction to this Study

Jonah 3.1-5 could be considered "Scene 3" in an on-going drama that began on board a ship heading to Tarshish (and away from Nineveh to which God asked Jonah to go), and continued in the watery depths of the Mediterranean Sea.

Jonah, the wayward prophet who turned and ran in the opposite direction in order to get away from God, finds himself thrown from the vessel into the sea, probably assuming this would be the end of his life. But, "the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah (1.17), and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." Jonah's response to God's gracious provision - Jonah's "Psalm of Praise" - rises from the depths of the sea.

After the fish deposits Jonah on the shore a new scene unfolds. God speaks again to Jonah, reiterates his call to him, and, to the reader's delight, Jonah heads for Nineveh.

### Study the Text

- a. Read Jonah 3.1-5. How would you describe 1) Jonah's response to God's command, and 2) the people and leaders of Nineveh in their response to God's message conveyed by Jonah?
- b. Compare Jonah 1.1-3 to Jonah 3.1-3.
  1. What is not found in chapter 3.1-3 that is in 1.1-3?
  2. What is not found in 3.1-3 that is in 1.1-3?
  3. How is Jonah's response different in 3.3 compared to 1.3?
- c. Jonah 3.1 states that the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. When you read this, what picture comes to mind regarding how God communicates with people?

This would be a good time to think about the ways God speaks to people today. Look at the following passages and describe how God "speaks" to people

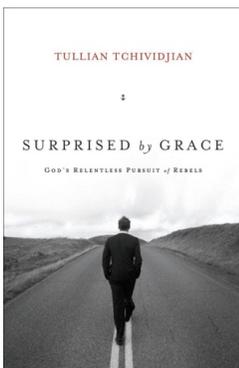
1 Samuel 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Proverbs 15.22 & 27.9 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 19 \_\_\_\_\_ John 1.1 and 14 \_\_\_\_\_  
Hebrews 1.1-2 \_\_\_\_\_ John 14.26 & 16.13-14 \_\_\_\_\_  
Romans 10.14-15 \_\_\_\_\_

- d. Jonah 3.2 captures God's second command to Jonah. Instead of "preach against it" (Nineveh) the word spoken is to go and "proclaim to it the message I give you." What do you think this re-phrasing suggests about God's intentions for Nineveh?
- e. Jonah 3.3 describes Jonah's response to the word of the Lord - stating simply "Jonah obeyed.. and went to Nineveh." Is it possible for a person to hear God's word without obeying it? What role does a person's will or volition have in responding to God's word?
- f. Nineveh is described as a "very important city." This suggests that it was both very large and very influential. It also suggests it was important to God. Look at Isaiah 42.1-10. What does this passage convey about God's heart for all peoples?
- g. Look at Jonah 3.4. Jonah enters the large, evil, troubled city and walks toward its center proclaiming a simple message - forty days... Nineveh will be overthrown." The reference to forty days is a reference to a season of time in which there is repentance and transformation. The term "overthrown" is from the Hebrew "hapek" that can mean overthrown or overturned as in **destroyed** or it can mean to be overturned as in **transformed**. What result from his preaching do you think Jonah has in mind? What result do you think God has in mind? Do you think Jonah's heart matches God's heart?
- h. Check out verse 5. The people hear the simple message and respond. What is at the very core of their response according to verse 5? Notice they believed God - not Jonah. Jonah communicates like the stereotypical street preacher whose message is venomous and loveless. He proclaims "destruction" but God seeks "transformation" to which the people respond. The response is belief, acceptance, and surrender to God.

### III. Reflect and Respond

- a. Are you willing to hear God's voice in scripture and the whispers of the Holy Spirit?
- b. Hearing calls for obedience to what is heard. How can you be more deliberate about hearing God's voice and responding in obedience?
- c. Are there people groups or nations you consider to be beyond the scope of God's love? Are there groups or individuals you feel this way about? How might God use you to communicate his love for them?



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

"All Jonah preached is doom and gloom. There's no mention of even the possibility of forgiveness, because he didn't want the Ninevites to be saved. He wanted them to die. He hides the fact that while our sin reaches far, God's amazing grace reaches even farther, and that God's willingness to forgive is infinitely bigger than our willingness to sin - something Jonah has just experienced. He's happy to receive God's rescuing mercy, but he is not willing to extend God's rescuing mercy." (page 96)