

## Seeking a Gracious & Compassionate God

### Jonah Series #3

Jonah 1:17-2:10

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Today we continue the series in Jonah. We're actually right at the middle point of this preaching series through the book and the third of five messages. We're at the point in the story everybody seems to know about—the part where Jonah gets swallowed by the whale, or the great fish as the text says. This is a compelling story of a guy swallowed whole by a fish, surviving three days and three nights, then being spewed out on dry land. Isn't it good to know that projectile vomiting is in the Bible?

I've always found this a compelling story. It's interesting. I loved it as a kid. The picture on the screen is the cover of one my favorite kids' storybooks about Jonah. I love this picture. It cracks me up because everybody is smiling here except Jonah. He looks a little concerned. It makes me laugh. Even the fish is smiling like, "This is going to be a lot of fun." People have found this story captivating and compelling throughout the ages. Children love hearing it. Adults love to have it recounted. I'm excited to be preaching about it today. And folks have love this story throughout the ages.

### 1. The Fish Story

In 1891, there was a whaling ship off the coast of the Falkland Islands. As the crew was trying to harpoon this large sperm whale, several of them ended up in the Atlantic. The report was that one of them, [Mr. James Bartley](#), was swallowed by the whale. It was later reported that when the whale was found and dissected, Mr. Bartley was found unconscious, but alive. Apparently this was confirmed by a couple of French scientists. News spread through several newspapers about this modern day Jonah. However, several years later, the widow of the captain of the ship said she did not know of such an occurrence. No one had ever gone overboard from one of her husbands' ships. In more recent years, [Dr. Edward Davis](#) at Messiah College in Pennsylvania has done really extensive research on this story and concluded that there is not enough evidence to confirm its reliability.

So the story that we have in our Bibles about a man caught by a fish is still the only occurrence and the most compelling and captivating story of its kind. And yet, it's not just another fish story. What exactly makes this story so compelling, so captivating? Number one, it's true. Maybe you're having a hard time this morning believing that a guy could be swallowed by a fish and then live through that. But if you will believe in a God Who is real—a God Who created the heavens and the earth even as Jonah said in [chapter one](#)—then God's ability to create a fish that could swallow and sustain a guy for three days in that fish is not so hard to believe.

Another reason we ought to be captivated by this story is because Jesus was. As [was mentioned last week](#), Jesus looked to the story of Jonah and pointed to it and said, "Listen." About Himself Jesus said, "...*something greater than Jonah is here.*" ([Matthew 12:41](#)) "*For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" ([Matthew 12:40](#))

But why did Jesus connect Himself to Jonah? What is it about this story that we should be so amazing to us? What, if anything about it, should we find hard to believe? I want to focus our thoughts in that direction. As we look at Jonah 2, we're actually looking at the last verse of [Jonah 1](#) and all of [Jonah 2](#).

Let me again ask God's blessing on the preaching and hearing of God's words.

Heavenly Father, we ask for Your help now this morning. There are some here who need help believing that something like this could happen; that You're real, You're big, that you're involved in the affairs of human kind and that You do direct those things like what we're reading about this morning. Father, others of us need Your help to concentrate. There are all kinds of things going on in our lives and focusing in on Your Word is a real struggle right now so I pray Your grace for those who need it. God, all of us need Your help to understand what You want to communicate to us. We need spiritual eyes to see it and spiritual ears to hear it. So Holy Spirit, would You do that work for all of us who are listening? I pray that You would give me a supernatural ability to speak Your Word so that it will be Your Word and not mine. May You be glorified through this and may Your kingdom come more fully in each one of us and in our church because of the ministry of Your Word today. I pray this in Jesus name, Amen.

## 2. The Big Picture

I want to begin by giving us an overview of where we are in the story. We're going to be looking at the last verse of chapter one and all of chapter two. At this point in the storyline of Jonah, we're right in the middle. We're really at the high point in many ways. And within our larger text this morning, we're going to get a sentence that I believe is the theme of the [book of Jonah](#). We're at a high point.

What went before in terms of Jonah, the main character, is not very flattering toward him. Although in the story God calls him to go preach to Nineveh, he doesn't want to do it. He runs. He's running away from God. He tells people he's running away from God. He ends up getting thrown into the sea. In other words he was saying, "God, I would rather die than do what You're asking me to do." It doesn't look very good.

On the other side of our text beginning in [chapter three](#), Jonah obeys God and does what He says but as we get into [chapter four](#), we look back and wonder if he was all that sincere about it. By the time we get to the end of the story, Jonah seems like he's in pretty much the same spot he was at the beginning of the story. He's upset, he seems arrogant, he's pouting, and he's basically telling God, "I would rather die than be involved in what You're doing here with the Ninevites." This is really the high point, especially in terms of what is going on in the life of Jonah himself. That's sort of the overview of where we are.

In terms of the text itself, you'll notice that we're beginning in verse 17. And verse 17 and verse 10 are basically narratives. They're information.

By the way, if you happen to have a Hebrew Bible on you this morning, you will notice that verse 17 is Jonah 2:1. In other words the chapter divisions are different in the Hebrew Bible. You may even have a footnote to that extent in your English copy there. Just remember, chapter and verse markings came later on. It was not inspired—not part of the original text. It's sort of a judgment call where you break things off. I would suggest this is a better place to break things off.

What we're looking at today is a unit. It forms a sandwich sort of—a unit with Jonah 1:17, 2:2 and verse 2:10 being summary statements, information. There are similar types of summary statements talking about God's sovereignty over nature and using creation for His purposes and plans. Look at Jonah 1:17, "*And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*" Pretty straightforward information. No fireworks going off; no exclamation points even though

it's a pretty amazing statement being made about a guy in the belly of a fish, "...for three days and three nights."

Notice God is in control here. He's working through His created order. He appointed a fish. He designated or ordained a specific fish for this purpose. Then as we skip to the end of chapter two and go to [verse 10](#), we have a very similarly structured sentence. "*And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.*" Again, God is in control. He's using His created order to fulfill His purposes. He spoke to the fish. He communicated to it somehow. God must know fish language. There is no reason why he wouldn't. So the fish does what He says and Jonah is on his way to Nineveh. And, as far as a storyline goes, we could take out Jonah 2:1-9 and it would all flow just fine. We'd have a story.

By the way, isn't it odd that Jonah is one of the prophets? A prophetic book, but it's mainly story. It's mainly narrative. If we look to the left at [Obadiah](#) or to the right at [Micah](#), we have all this prophecy. There's not all that much prophecy in Jonah. There's just a lot of story about the prophet.

### 3. The Prayer

Then there's this section in chapter two which isn't prophecy or story narrative. It's a prayer. It's Jonah's prayer. But it's a prayer in a very specific and a very crafted form. It's a psalm. In many ways it rivals the [prayer in the book of Psalms](#) that was read earlier that ends with the same line, "*Salvation belongs to the LORD!*"

Some people have given Jonah a hard time about this. Saying, "Oh Jonah, he sort of cut and pasted it. He's not sincere because he took a bunch of stuff from the Psalms and kind of put it together so it's probably not a sincere, heartfelt expression of where he's at." There are a lot of reasons to be hard on Jonah in this book but I'm not sure this is one of them because we do it all the time. I did it when I prayed. I prayed some Scripture. Using Scripture or Biblical language in our prayers is actually a good thing. I don't think we're looking for theological originality when we pray. We want to pray truths that are consistent with God's Word. So I don't think that critique of Jonah is fair. I think this prayer is the expression of Jonah's heart in Jonah 2.

But notice that verse 10 and verse 17 are sort of like the bread of a sandwich. This prayer is the meat (tofu if you prefer)—the heart of the thing. Let's look at Jonah's psalm—the psalm that is the story of his rescue. I'm going to divide it into three pieces as we look

at it. First, Jonah's going to give a summary of what happened. When we last left Jonah, he was as good as dead. In fact the sailors just assumed he was dead. They threw him off. They didn't want to at first but threw him into the drink, as my dad would say, and they figured he was done. It's over for him. He's as good as dead. But he summarizes here his rescue. That's part one. He makes a summary statement.

Part two, we're going to see if this picture is accurate or not about Jonah sinking into the sea. And then we're going to hear about Jonah being saved. He's going to tell us about his rescue. So look at verses one and two of chapter two: *"Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying, 'I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.'"*

### **A. The Summary**

First of all, we learn again in verse one that this is a prayer that Jonah prayed. Notice that he prayed it within the belly of the fish. So God uses this fish to rescue him. He spends three days in there. And in three days, you've got time to design a well-crafted prayer. And then in verse two Jonah makes this summary statement of what he's about to tell us in the rest of the chapter. Here's what happened, *"I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice."*

Now, don't get the imagery confused with the actual physical belly of the fish. He's simply saying, "I was in the belly of Sheol." This idea that the Hebrews have—the abode of the dead—is a place you are not coming back from. It's close to our biblical understanding of Hell. The abode of the dead. This is where dead souls go and they don't come back. And Jonah's saying, "the kind of rescue I experienced from God when I cried out to him is that kind of rescue. I was being rescued from a place where I had no ability to get myself out."

The rest of this chapter is actually in poetic verse. Verses three through six talk about how he sunk to the bottom of the deep, deep sea.

*<sup>3</sup> For you cast me into the deep,  
into the heart of the seas,  
and the flood surrounded me;  
all your waves and your billows  
passed over me.*

*<sup>4</sup> Then I said, 'I am driven away  
from your sight;  
yet I shall again look  
upon your holy temple.'*

<sup>5</sup> *The waters closed in over me to take my life;  
the deep surrounded me;  
weeds were wrapped about my head  
<sup>6</sup>at the roots of the mountains.  
I went down to the land  
whose bars closed upon me forever;  
yet you brought up my life from the pit,  
O LORD my God.*

Jonah was really sunk. When you look at verse three, he hits the water. This is the story of the sailors throwing him overboard and in verse three, he hits the surface of the water. But the surface of the water is surrounding him. He says, “*the flood surrounded me.*” The currents surrounded me. “*Your waves and your billows passed over me.*” Now wait a second, it says “*You cast me into the deep...Your waves...Your billows.*” Is Jonah blame-shifting here? I thought it was the sailors he asked to throw him in the water who actually threw him into the water. Is he blaming God saying, “God, You got me into this!”? I’m not so sure. I don’t think so. I think what we’re starting to see are some signs of spiritual life in Jonah. He’s beginning to recognize that God is very much involved in this whole predicament he’s in. Try as he may to get out of it, God is going to, in the best way, get His man. He’s not giving up on Jonah and Jonah is starting to awaken, I believe, to that truth. But he’s not in a good place right now.

In verse four, he starts to go under the water. “*I am driven away from your sight.*” Isn’t that what Jonah wanted in the first place? “I want to be away from the presence of the Lord.” But what a scary reality that is. In [Genesis 4](#), Cain is driven away from the presence of the Lord. It’s a scary thing and he begs God that it might not happen.

Jonah wanted it and he’s about to get it as far as he knows. “*I’m driven away from your sight.*” Another sign of spiritual life is when he says this statement of faith, “*Yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.*” It’s like he’s saying, “Even in the midst of this, God, I don’t know how it’s going to happen but I’m beginning to believe that I could again be on dry land and worship You. I could look toward Your holy temple. I could bow myself toward Jerusalem as I used to do.”

But he’s still in trouble. Verse five says, “*The waters closed in over me to take my life.*” He’s saying, “There’s no doubt about it. I can’t save myself at this point. My life is going to be taken from me. The deep is surrounding me. The weeds are wrapped around my head. I’m at the root of the mountains.” What a picturesque way to say it. The mountains have roots that would be deep down into the earth—down to the bottom of the

sea. I think we're getting close to where Jonah is here. Only if I could adjust this picture on the screen a little bit, Jonah would be down here in the seaweeds before the fish gets him.

Verse six has a sense of foreboding about it. *"...the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever."* Forever. That's a long, long time. Jonah clearly understands that he's in a predicament that he cannot get himself out of and it has eternal consequence. That's where Jonah is when he sinks. So he is going to need some kind of radical rescue, some kind of radical salvation in order for him to be restored. And God, in His grace, supplied it in the form of this fish—a fish which Jonah never even mentions in his own words. We sort of get fascinated by the fish and want to know what kind of fish it was. Was it a whale? Was it a fish? Was it a special fish? What was it like? I don't know. The most important thing, the thing that Jonah emphasizes, is that it was an agent of God's rescue. It was the vehicle God used to save him.

## **B. The Salvation**

That's what happens beginning in the second half of verse six. Here's Jonah's story of rescue: *"Yet you brought up my life from the pit [or the grave, a place that otherwise there's no coming back from], Oh LORD, my God."* O LORD, my God. I think this is the point where Jonah is crying out. He says in his summary statement in verse two, *"I called out to the LORD out of my distress."* I think this is where it happened. He was at the bottom. He was resting at the bottom of the sea and he cried out to God. *"O LORD,"* he uses God's covenant name, "O Yahweh, my God."

Do you remember what Jonah said when the sailors asked him about who he was on the ship? He said, [\*"I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."\*](#) As we hear that, we sort of cringe and say, "Oh Jonah, you can't be serious because it sure doesn't look like it!" There he's talking about Yahweh, his covenant-keeping God. Here he's crying out to Yahweh, his God. *"O LORD, my God."* And God saves him in verse seven. *"When my life was fainting away."* Notice he is that far from being done. *"When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple."* "My words came before Your presence, God, and You saved me."

There's an important lesson for us here. We all recognize that Jonah should have turned to the Lord much sooner. When the sailors asked him, when they figured out it was somehow his fault that the whole storm was going on, they asked him, "What should we do

to you to make the sea calm for us?” And Jonah said, “Throw me into the sea.” They didn’t have to throw him into the sea. What Jonah should have said was, “You guys don’t have to do anything. But what I need to do is get down on my face in repentance and ask for God’s mercy.” He wouldn’t do that then but he does it now.

So what do we learn about God? We learn that we serve a God Who hears us when we cry out for mercy. It’s not based on our deserving it. It never is. Maybe you’re here today and you’re saying, “You know what? A long time ago I should have come to God with that issue. A long time ago I should have turned and repented of my sin. I’ve been holding on to this issue for so long and I keep refusing to bring it before God. I should have done it a long time ago.” Listen! It’s not too late! The Bible says, *“Now is the day of salvation.”* Yes, you should have. Yes, if you could go back, I hope you would have and I hope I would have. But today is the day of salvation. We serve a God Who will meet those who will come to Him in repentance and humble faith. And He did that even for Jonah.

So Jonah makes this declaration at the end of this portion in verses eight and nine. This is really the theological center, the doctrinal center, of this chapter and of the entire book of Jonah. He says (this is his profession of faith), *“Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!”* Salvation belongs to the LORD. Jonah is saying there are basically two ways to live.

You can regard worthless idols. You can honor created things rather than your Creator. And the result is that you forsake any hope of steadfast love. I like the way the NIV puts this verse: *“You forfeit the grace that could be yours.”*

Or you can worship the Living God. Come to Him in thanksgiving with a grateful heart. The result is that you can rest in Him as your source of salvation. *“Salvation belongs to the LORD!”*

#### 4. The Theme

Salvation belongs to Yahweh! That is the central theme of this passage. That’s the central theme of this book. That is the message God has been wanting to get through to Jonah the whole time. “Salvation belongs to Me! I can send you to the Ninevites because salvation belongs to ME. I can save you, even though you don’t deserve it, because salvation belongs to Me.”

Salvation belongs to the LORD. In Hebrew this is simply two words. *“Salvation to the LORD.”* Deliverance is from God. Rescue belongs to the LORD. What should we be amazed by in the story of Jonah? What should we even find hard to believe? It’s that the God of the universe is holy, holy, holy, and would rescue an arrogant rebel who is unholy and who fully deserves to go down to that land and whose bars would close around him forever. Of all the people in the Old Testament whom Jesus could identify with by name, Jonah is among the most unlikely. Based on Jonah’s performance—the performance of Jonah the man—there’s no compelling reason why Jesus would identify with him. But based on the central message of the book of Jonah, there is every reason for Jesus to identify with Jonah, because Jonah’s message is Jesus’ message: *“Salvation belongs to the LORD.”* This is why Jesus came! This is why Jesus gave of His body and gave of His blood for salvation!

Remember what He said to Zacchaeus? *“Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* Jesus is in the business of saving. *“Salvation belongs to the LORD.”* This is why Jesus identifies Himself as the One greater than Jonah. This is precisely the kind of rescue He came to secure for sinners like you, like me. How much greater is His rescue mission than Jonah’s? Not from a watery grave but from the Lake of Fire, a bottomless pit of God’s Holy wrath against our unrighteousness.

So Jesus identified with Jonah and with sinners like us by dying on a cross and receiving the fury of God’s wrath and by being put into the earth for three days. But rising again, God put His stamp of approval on Jesus’ death saying, “That is payment in full! I receive it as payment for all the sins for everyone who would ever come to Him in repentance and faith.” God raised Jesus to new life so that all who would trust in Him would know eternal life!

Do you know this salvation? Have you experienced it? Have you come to the One Who is greater than Jonah? Have you come to Jesus Who is greater than Jonah? Friend, if you have not, God’s message to you is simply, “Salvation belongs to Me. And I sent my Son to die on the cross so that all who would come to Him would know eternal life.” Come to Him today!

In the remainder of the time we have this morning, I simply want to ask two questions about this theme, *“Salvation belongs to the LORD.”* How does Salvation belong to the LORD? And then, So what? So what if salvation belongs to the LORD?

## A. Salvation Belongs to the LORD

First, how does salvation belong to the LORD? In what way? What does it mean exactly that salvation belongs to the LORD? First of all it means that salvation comes from God. God is the source of salvation. Salvation comes from Him and Him alone. This is why in the New Living Translation the rendering is, *“Salvation comes from the LORD alone.”* He is the only source of salvation. We need to have resolve in this whole truth living in a time when the idea of pluralism—many ways to God—is so prominent. We are living in a time when we might be thought to be intolerant to say that Jesus Christ is the only way. We need to lovingly affirm the truth of Scripture that *...there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* Salvation is from the LORD alone.

But I think more personally in our own lives we need to remember that salvation is in Christ alone. It's never the result of anything that we bring to the table. This is something we affirm. It's something we sing about and yet there is this tendency to somehow smuggle in some of our own righteousness, some of our own good works into our salvation. We need to be reminded that God saved us only by His grace. The work we do for Him is a work of gratitude and worship. He is glorified in it. Salvation is the LORD's alone.

## B. Salvation is God's Prerogative

Secondly, what does it mean that salvation belongs to the LORD? It means that salvation is God's prerogative. It's the result of His sovereign, initiating grace. It must be this way if we are truly dead in our sins as [Ephesians chapter two](#) says. Listen, God didn't throw Jonah a life preserver in the hope that Jonah had enough sense to grab onto it. God, in His wisdom, came along when Jonah was at the bottom of the sea, not far away from eternal death, and He brought in a big old fish that just swallowed him whole. Then He gave him three days inside the fish to figure it out theologically. And Jonah got it right. *“Salvation belongs to the LORD.”*

I know that sometimes we talk about God's sovereign, initiating grace and people focus on the exclusivity of God's grace and argue that it's not fair. That means God chooses to save some and He passes over others. But I think to argue this is to miss the point of this truth. It should boggle our minds that God would save any of us. He is under no obligation. The story of Scripture again and again is not the limits of God's grace but the largeness of God's grace. That He is continually saving people who don't deserve it. Take

Jonah as Exhibit A. Would any of us have put up with Jonah's rebellion and his arrogance the way God did? Patiently forbearing with him? And yet in His sovereign grace He got His man. And Jonah is now praising Him for it.

### **C. Salvation is God's Business**

Thirdly, how does salvation belong to the LORD? Salvation is, I'm not quite sure how to say it so I'm going to say it a couple ways. Salvation is God's business. It's His trademark. It's His greater glory. It's what He's all about. He has the corner on the market here. He saves. This is what God does. It's what He's known for. It's His defining characteristic. Jonah knew that. Dan Leeper pointed this out in last week's message.

In [Jonah 4:2](#), the whole reason he doesn't want to go to Nineveh is because he knows God is merciful and gracious and that if these guys repent, God will save them. Jonah doesn't want to see that happen for this group. He knows that's what God is like. It's part of His character. It's in His name. God declared this when Moses asked for God's glory to pass before him in [Exodus 33](#). In verse 19 God proclaims His name and He says, *"And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."* "That is just Who I am." It's in His name. It's in Jesus' name. The name Jesus in Hebrew—Joshua or Yeshuah—means "God saves." It's a derivative of the word salvation in Jonah 2:9. It's in Jesus' very name. It's what He does. It's what He's about.

So what difference should it make? So what if salvation belongs to the LORD? What difference does it make? First of all, because salvation belongs to the LORD, idolatry is self-defeating. Now we might be tempted when we hear the words idol or idolatry, to dismiss them as something primitive. "That doesn't apply to me. I'm not tempted to carve anything and bow before it." Yet this is a major theme running through Scripture. In the Old Testament God's covenant people are constantly being drawn away and enticed to worship something or someone other than Himself. Then we go to the New Testament and read Paul's words in Romans about what the essence of sin is. What is the base line sin? We find that sin is misdirected worship. It's honoring something created, something made, rather than the One Who made it. Idolatry is when we look for our comfort. We look for something else other than God to be our fortress. We run to something else for our satisfaction. Again, those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could have been theirs.

I have a friend who was a very good athlete in high school—especially a good golfer. He told me the story of his senior year in golf when his team made it to the state championship round. This was in Michigan and they played the state championship round in early November when the weather is rather precarious. This was a horrible, horrible day for golf. It was raining, cold and windy. As his team began this championship round they got a few holes into it and his coach said, “I’m throwing in the towel. This isn’t worth it. Let’s all go back to the clubhouse.” Well, my friend was having a very good round so he said, “I’m going to stick it out and I’m going to play through this.” And he did. He played well. He played very well. In fact he had the best round of anybody that day which made him the medalist for his class and the state championship golfer. However, because his team pulled off the course, he was disqualified even though he finished the round. He forfeited what might have been his.

Now, when he told me that story probably 20 or 25 years after it happened, I had the sickest feeling inside of me! That’s what forfeiting does, doesn’t it? It makes you sick. “I could have had something. I should have had something and now I don’t.” God’s Word is saying, “Listen, when we run after those things we think will bring us comfort, when we run after those things we think are going to solve our problems for us outside of God, we’re forfeiting something that could be ours—God’s grace.”

There’s a great word in this text that gets translated as “*steadfast love*.” I think outside of God’s name, it’s probably the most important word in the Old Testament. It’s the word “[hesed](#).” God’s covenant love. It gets translated in many different ways because there’s no way to get your arms around it. It’s His covenant love. It’s His loyalty. It’s His faithfulness. It’s His initiating grace. This “hesed” is forfeited when we cling to worthless idols.

Secondly, because salvation belongs to the LORD, worship is our identity. Because salvation belongs to the LORD, worship is self-defining. We find our identity through or in worshipping God. Again in Jonah 1:9, he takes pride in the idea that “I am a worshiper of the true and living God.” But here he’s actually worshipping: the true and living God. Look again at how he worships in Jonah 2:9, “*But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to You.*” Thanksgiving. That ought to be the base line or the current running through all our worship. Everything I have is a gift from God and I ought to be thankful for it. Our worship here in this room or any other place we worship ought to rise up with a spirit of thanksgiving and gratitude toward our God.

He says in verse 9, “...*I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice...*” There’s active worship. For Jonah, that was going to mean sacrificing a literal animal or some other Old Testament sacrificial requirement. Obviously we don’t do that anymore but we do remember Christ’s sacrifice. As we’re instructed in [Romans 12](#), we lay down our lives as living sacrifices. Not the dead sacrifices of the old covenant, but the living sacrifices of Jesus’ new covenant. Then Jonah says, “*What I have vowed I will pay.*” In other words there’s commitment, there’s consecration.

I just want to mention one thing in the area of commitment and consecration. In two weeks we’re going to have a baptism service, LORD willing, in this room. I’m sure there are folks here who are trusting in Jesus Christ, professing Him as their Lord and Savior, but have not followed Him in baptism. The sacrament of baptism symbolizes Jesus’ death and His resurrection—newness of life, similar to the death of Jonah and his resurrection. I just want to ask you, if that’s you, why haven’t you gone ahead with following the Lord in baptism? If you take this communion remembrance, this sacrament—which is the ongoing nourishing of our souls as we remember Jesus’ broken body and His shed blood—but haven’t followed Him in the other sacrament, the other remembrance that we celebrate (that of baptism), is that congruent? Is that the way it should be? I encourage you to read the article on the church blog entitled, [“The importance of Baptism.”](#)

Thirdly and finally, so what? What difference does it make that salvation belongs to the Lord? Because salvation belongs to the Lord, useful service is possible. Useful service is possible because salvation belongs to the Lord. If it’s about me, if it has to do with my abilities, I don’t have the ability to serve God. I can’t get much done. But if salvation belongs to the Lord, if He is doing that work, then I can have great confidence. Notice that when Jonah figures this out then God sends him back on the road to Nineveh.

We need to remember that salvation belongs to the Lord and that God’s grace is reaching out to all kinds of people. We ought not to withhold the gospel from anyone because we think they’re somehow beyond the reaches of God’s grace. Jonah had a prejudice of some kind against the Ninevites. He thought they were beyond God’s grace. He thought they were not worth redeeming or maybe not redeemable. Maybe there’s somebody in your life about whom you think, “He’s a tough nut to crack. I don’t know how that person is ever going to come to Christ.” Listen, if salvation belongs to the Lord, you can forget about it because God can do whatever He wants. He can save people like you and like me and like Jonah.

That is the central message of the book of Jonah. That “*salvation belongs to the LORD.*” It’s also the message of the Lord’s table. That He is the One Who purchased our salvation with His broken body and His shed blood. So it’s fitting for us as we move toward the close of our service to remember this through communion. As we prepare our hearts for communion, we’re going to sing [Surrender All](#). I want to encourage you to make this song truly an act of preparation that it might be a song of confession. Confessing that there are idols that we cling to. There are treasures and cravings we have. There are fleshly indulgences and worldly ambitions that we follow. I want to encourage you to make this your profession of faith. We’re going to sing,

“Take all I am Lord and all that I cling to  
You are my Savior I owe everything to.”

Sing that if this is the cry of your heart this morning. I want to encourage you to make this a song of consecration. The final line we are going to sing is that we desire,

“Search me and know me I want to bring to you  
A life that is holy and sanctified through You.”

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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