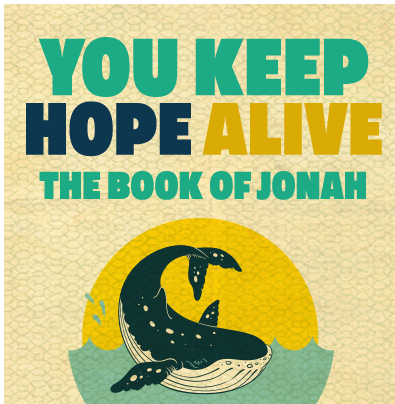




WEEKLY STUDY

Jonah - Week 2

Pastor Jacob taught from chapter 2 of the book of Jonah. It contains a Psalm-like prayer from the belly of a great fish. Many writers will find a little time away to focus on their craft. But Jonah did some pretty amazing work from what must have felt like his tomb. His prayer is both beautiful and very real. May you join your prayers with his this week.

For those of you continuing to pray through the Psalms daily, you will read Psalms 92-98 this week.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for someone who feels swallowed up by life's circumstances right now. Pray that they would have the words to pray and cry out to God. And that they would receive the gift of salvation.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: Jonah 2 (NIV)

From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.² He said:

*"In my distress I called to the Lord,
and he answered me.
From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help,
and you listened to my cry.*

3

*You hurled me into the depths,
into the very heart of the seas,
and the currents swirled about me;
all your waves and breakers
swept over me.*

4

*I said, 'I have been banished
from your sight;
yet I will look again
toward your holy temple.'*

5

*The engulfing waters threatened me,
the deep surrounded me;
seaweed was wrapped around my head.*

6

*To the roots of the mountains I sank down;
the earth beneath barred me in forever.
But you, Lord my God,
brought my life up from the pit.*

7

*"When my life was ebbing away,
I remembered you, Lord,
and my prayer rose to you,
to your holy temple.*

8

*"Those who cling to worthless idols
turn away from God's love for them.*

9

*But I, with shouts of grateful praise,
will sacrifice to you.*

What I have vowed I will make good.

I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'"

¹⁰ *And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.*

- This prayer was prayed from inside the fish (vs.1) at a time of impending death, and yet this prayer is not a prayer of petition, rather it is full of praise and thanksgiving. For all of his faults, Jonah was a man of deep faith who remained confident in God's salvation. Can you think of a time when you remained faithful under pressure?
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- **Prayer Prompt:** Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. **(James 1.2-4)**
 - *God, I confess that I don't always respond well under stress. But you are faithful and patient with me. Amen.*

TUESDAY: HOSEA 8.7-10 (NIV)

*“They sow the wind
and reap the whirlwind.
The stalk has no head;
it will produce no flour.
Were it to yield grain,
foreigners would swallow it up.*

⁸

*Israel is swallowed up;
now she is among the nations
like something no one wants.*

⁹

*For they have gone up to Assyria
like a wild donkey wandering alone.
Ephraim has sold herself to lovers.*

¹⁰

*Although they have sold themselves among the nations,
I will now gather them together.
They will begin to waste away
under the oppression of the mighty king.*

- The “swallowing up” of Israel was clearly of her own doing. They had returned to their worship of idols, and had wandered into the influence of other nations. God allowed the “mighty king” (vs.10) of one of those nations, Assyria, to oppress them. They kept their religious practices but were hypocritical. Jonah in the belly of a big fish is a symbol of this very thing—swallowed up. Where is sin in the world today, creating situations for people to be swallowed up by the consequences?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. (John 8.34)**
- *God, I know what it feels like to be swallowed up by something far bigger than me. May I learn to worship you in truth and unrivaled devotion. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: JEREMIAH 51.34 (NIV)

*“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured us,
he has thrown us into confusion,
he has made us an empty jar.
Like a serpent he has swallowed us
and filled his stomach with our delicacies,
and then has spewed us out.*

- Babylon would eventually vomit out the captive people of God. God’s people would be released from their exile. While that release from captivity would be a cause for celebration, their sin and the abuse of their captors would remain in their collective consciousness. As Jonah was spit out by the big fish, we’ll pay attention to what parts of his captivity in the belly he carries with him towards Ninevah. Pay attention to what from your past you carry with you as you move into a life of freedom.

- **Prayer Prompt: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners (Isaiah 61.1)**
- *God, I am grateful for your Son Jesus who proclaims my full freedom in his grace. Allow me to live free in him today. Amen.*

THURSDAY: PSALM 42.7-8 (NIV)

*Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.*

8

*By day the Lord directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.*

- The Psalms are filled with prayers that sound a lot like Jonah's in chapter 2. There is a calmness expressed here in Psalm 42 that is also present in Jonah's prayer. Many times, our description of what is happening to us is filled with hyperbole, but Jonah really was swallowed up and in the depths of the heart of the sea. But even when our prayers are filled with exaggeration and dramatic interpretation, God knows the desperation in our hearts. So go for it, let God know what it feels like to live in this world with your set of circumstances. But consider closing with verse 8 from Psalm 42. It's 100% true.
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- **Prayer Prompt:** *By day the Lord directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life. (Psalm 42.8)*
- *God, I know that you see right through any heightened sense of calamity I might be going through. And you sing your song over me. Direct your love towards me! Amen.*

FRIDAY: MATTHEW 12.39-42 (NIV)

"A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴²The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.

- Jesus had given signs of God's activity to the religious leaders, yet they demanded more. Their demand meant that they were effectively rejecting all of the signs that had just been shown by Jesus. He knew that there was one sign left, but this one was for the whole world to see and to know. It was the sign of Jonah. Jonah spent three days in the heart of the sea, Jesus would spend three days in the heart of the earth. Those who repented in the days of Jonah will be in a position of judgment over the generation that was challenging Jesus. The Queen of Sheba had traveled to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. Both the Ninevites and the Queen had shown hearts of humility in repentance. They were to be commended for their response to the signs given them by Jonah and Solomon. But now "something greater" than either of them was standing in front of the crowd. And resurrection was the only sign they would need. How does the resurrection of Jesus practically serve as a sign of God's salvation in your daily life?
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- **Prayer Prompt: For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. (1 Corinthians 15.3-5)**
 - *God of my salvation, Forgive me for times when I would rather continue looking for signs when the greatest sign has been given in Jesus Christ. In that gift, I know everything I need to know about you and your love for me. Amen.*

SATURDAY: 1 PETER 3.17-22 (NIV)

For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹ After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

- God's patience is a key theme in the story of redemption. There is a real consequence for those who reject the call to repent because it leads away from the life God desires for us. But God was patient in the days of Noah, leaving time for the ark to be built, and God was patient in the days of Jonah making it possible for Nineveh to hear the cry of the prophet even after his long delay. God even chose to have the risen Jesus proclaim the truth to those souls who were in the grave. The consistent theme of water all throughout the redemption story leads us to the waters of baptism. A God who would delay judgement sits by the waters and invites us to repent and be made new. Write a prayer expressing gratitude for God's persistence with you.
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- **Prayer Prompt: The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3.9)**
- *God, your mercy is all I need. Thank you for sending your Son at just the right time. I long for his return. Come Lord Jesus! Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Use the questions below to guide your conversation.

1. Jonah went from the **belly of the ship**—asleep, numb, and running from God—to the **belly of the fish**—awake and crying out to Him. Why do you think difficult seasons often wake us up to our need for God?
2. Jonah's prayer begins with honesty: *"In my distress I called to the Lord..."* What do you think keeps us from being that honest with God when we pray?
3. As you read Jonah 2, it's hard to miss that God is the One acting—He hears Jonah, He rescues Jonah, and He provides for Jonah. How does remembering that God is the main character of the story change the way you think about your own circumstances?
4. Throughout Jonah 2, we see that even in the darkest place imaginable, God was present and at work. Looking back on your own life, have you ever recognized God's mercy in a difficult season? What did that experience teach you about who He is?
5. Jonah cried out to God from the darkest place he had ever been, and God heard him. Is there an area of your life where you sense God inviting you to stop carrying the burden alone and simply cry out to Him? How can we pray for you this week?