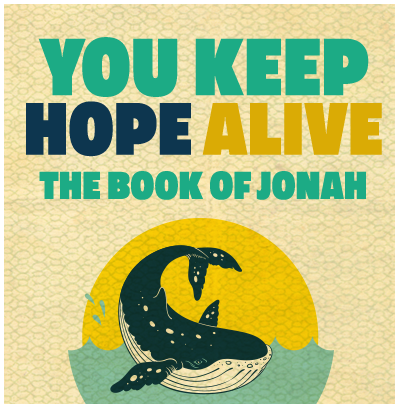




WEEKLY STUDY

Jonah - Week 3

Pastor Jacob shared from chapter 3 of the book Jonah. We heard that Jonah (after his major detour in the belly of a whale) finally obeyed God's command to go to Nineveh. All the details of this story (which lead to the repentance of a strong and mighty empire) are the point of the story. God is willing to show up again, even in the belly of a whale. God is working a bigger story in our lives, even when the thing we are facing right now seems like it must be the whole story. In the middle of all of it, we often find ourselves wrestling with God's mercy for others. We are living in a bigger story than we realize! May Jonah's story cause you to look at your life as part of the bigger story God is writing in human history. It's the story of God's redemption of this fallen world.

For those of you continuing to pray through the Psalms daily, you will read Psalms 99-105 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 anyone who seems too far off to receive God's mercy. Make a list of all of those who live in "enemy territory" and pray for them to hear the message of repentance.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: Jonah 3 (NIV)

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time:² “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

³ Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. ⁴ Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” ⁵ The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

⁶ When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. ⁷ This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

“By the decree of the king and his nobles:

Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. ⁸ But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. ⁹ Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”

¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

- Jonah received a second chance. The Word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time! Have you ever experienced a second chance with God? What caused you to drag your feet or run in the opposite direction? Some scholars call this the "recommissioning" of Jonah. God seems to be saying, "Are you done running yet?" The call is still the same. God still wants the Ninevites to have an opportunity for repentance. How does it make you feel to know that God’s will isn’t thwarted by your disobedience, but that he chooses to use you anyway?

- **Prayer Prompt: But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (2 Corinthians 4.7)**
- *God, I admit that I have run away from your will on more than one occasion. I may have figured that I had been decommissioned because of it. But instead you return to recommission me. Re-send me into the world today. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ROMANS 10.17-18 (NIV)

faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.¹⁸ But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:

*“Their voice has gone out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.”*

- Jonah knew what he was facing in Nineveh. He was going into enemy territory, and he wasn't sure he wanted the enemy to have an opportunity to repent. But as Paul teaches in Romans 10, faith comes from hearing the message. Have you ever felt inner conflict when God gives a second chance to someone who isn't deserving? Is it possible that someone else has thought that about you?
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- **Prayer Prompt: at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2.10-11)**
- *God, you have given us this image of every knee bowing to Jesus. I long for it. Sometimes it brings me to tears. Both the blessing of the promise and the anguish in seeing how far we are from that reality. Come soon and make it so. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: 2 CHRONICLES 7.14 (NIV)

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

- We might be tempted to have a narrow view of whom God would call “my people”. The call of Jonah to go to Nineveh stretches our imagination for who God seeks out in His mercy. Who are the people around us right now that would seem to be too far away from God to receive forgiveness? Groups of people in today's Middle East? A person on death row? The “other” political party?
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- **Prayer Prompt:** “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” (Luke 15.31-32)
- *God, thank you that through Jesus I have been “grafted” into your family. I have been adopted and accepted by you. Let me know harbor resentment for others to whom you offer grace. Amen.*

THURSDAY: EXODUS 34.6-7 (NIV)

Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD.⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

- These words from Exodus are from the story of God’s gift of a second set of the commandments. The first stone tablets had been broken, and things had not gone well. The God who is slow to anger created new tablets to help guide the lives of his people. It goes on to say that this loving God will not allow sin to go on forever. Its consequences would be felt for generations. We can be sure that God is abounding in love and faithfulness. Our work is to receive the gift and turn from sin. When have you experienced God’s grace that you did not deserve? How has his compassion impacted the way you live?

- **Prayer Prompt:** **Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.**
²³ **They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3.22-23)**
- *God, I long for a fresh taste of your love and grace. I have broken your law. Forgive me, I pray and free me from the constraints of sin. Amen.*

FRIDAY: PSALM 86.5-6 (NIV)

*You, Lord, are forgiving and good,
abounding in love to all who call to you.*

⁶ *Hear my prayer, LORD;
listen to my cry for mercy.*

- Like Jonah, we often struggle to pray a pure prayer when it comes to the forgiveness offered to others. But our ability to offer forgiveness to others should grow exponentially in light of how much we ourselves have been forgiven. God hears our prayers and offers mercy to his broken people in a broken world. How do you cry out to God for mercy today?

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- **Prayer Prompt: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4.32)**
 - *Merciful God, would you make me more like your Son Jesus today? Fill me with mercy for those I encounter today. Amen.*

SATURDAY: LUKE 11.32 (NIV)

The 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.

- Those who repented in response to the warnings of Jonah are now brought into the larger story of repentance. Those who were once far off from God are now a part of his story of salvation. The generation of church leaders and keepers of the Law were in need of a warning cry themselves. That's exactly what Jesus' ministry was and is. Something greater than Jonah is here! Would your story of repentance be used for future generations?
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- **Prayer Prompt: But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." (Luke 19.8)**
- *God, if you choose, would you use my story of repentance and faith to inspire one other person to seek your face? Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Use the questions below to guide your conversation.

1. Jonah 3 begins much like Jonah 1—the word of the Lord comes to Jonah again. After everything Jonah had done to run from God, what does this “second time” reveal about God’s character? How does it encourage you to know that failure does not have to be the end of the story?
2. Jonah obeyed God the second time and went to Nineveh—and his obedience became part of something much bigger than Jonah himself. Have you ever looked back and realized God was doing something through a situation that you couldn’t see while you were in it? What helped you recognize the bigger story?
3. The bigger story does not mean God is unconcerned with what we are facing. God was present with Jonah in the fish while also working toward His purpose for Nineveh. How does knowing that God cares about the story you are living and is working beyond what you can see affect the way you approach difficult or uncertain seasons?
4. Jonah was willing to receive God’s mercy himself, but he struggled deeply with God extending that same mercy to Nineveh. Why do you think it can be difficult to accept that God’s mercy is also for people we believe do not deserve it? What does this reveal about the depth of God’s mercy?
5. There was sin in Nineveh, but there was also sin in Jonah. God continued to call both toward Himself. Where might God be speaking to you again today—inviting you to repent, trust Him, receive His mercy, or extend that mercy to someone else? How can we pray for you this week?