

**Sermon Series:** The Minor Prophets

**Sermon title:** Book of Jonah

**Scripture reading:** Jonah 1:1-3

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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**Introduction:**

*[Parable of The Unforgiving Servant: Matthew 18:23-33]*

**23 “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him [a trillion dollars] ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him [\$4000] a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow**

servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'

**\*Let's pray together.**

We come today to the book of Jonah. Definitely one of the most famous books of the Bible; one of the most famous stories of the Bible. But I wonder today, **how many of you have read the book of Jonah in its entirety? Do you know what the book is really about beyond just knowing about 'Jonah and the whale'?**

So, I am going to do something quite odd in today's churches (but not at all odd in the Bible or church history). As Paul instructed Timothy to 'devote himself to the public reading of scripture' I am going to read aloud the entire book of Jonah. [*Deacons please block the door so no one can leave:*] It will take just about 6 minutes. But I think it is important for us to see the whole story.

**[ME: Read the book of Jonah (Time-6:48)]**

## **I. THE CHARACTER OF JONAH**

There is no other book in the Bible like Jonah where a person is portrayed so negatively and so honestly. What is Jonah like?

- **Jonah is disobedient to God. He's a sinner.** God tells him to do something and he runs the other way; as far away as he can go. He tries to run, at least.
- **Jonah is quite emotional.** He wants to die 3 times in this story. He asks to be thrown overboard by the mariners. As gracious as that sounds to the mariners, it would certainly mean drowning for him, barring a miracle. And 2 other times in chapter 4 he wants to die. He also goes from exceedingly glad about the plant to wanting God to kill him in 24 hours.
- **Jonah is angry at God.** We see this is why Jonah flees in a ship away from God. But what is he angry about?
- **Jonah is a racist.** He hates the Assyrians and their city of Nineveh. They're bad people. They don't deserve mercy or grace. God calls him to love his enemies by giving them a 40 day warning to repent. In Jonah's mind, God is wrong for caring, wrong for loving the Ninevites.
- **Jonah knows God but has some theological issues.** He says that he *'fears the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land'* yet strangely he

says these words in the midst of a storm on the sea that God is sending on him for thinking he can run away from God. He knows God is the creator and Lord over it all...in his head, but in his practice he is treating God like a local deity confined to the land of Israel. Jonah has shaped God in his own image; what he wants him to be. He doesn't like who God is and so he has *customized* God to his liking.

This is how the book portrays Jonah. And we are a lot like Jonah. We think we know more than God. We customize God to our liking. We don't agree with him. We run from him. We get angry at him. We receive a lifetime of grace and blessing from him...even demand and beg for his mercy and grace upon US, and then whine, cry, complain and even get angry at God for blessing others or being merciful to others. We get angry when God doesn't give us what we want. We think we know more than God does and when God doesn't dance for us or perform to our liking, we get mad. Think about it! **Aren't we like Jonah?** That's one of the main messages of the book....**DON'T BE LIKE JONAH.**

Well, that's Jonah's character but we need to see something else.

## **II. THE CHARACTER OF GOD**

God could've let Jonah go but he didn't.

God could've let the sailors kill Jonah but he didn't.  
God could've let Jonah drown but he APPOINTED a big fish to save his life. The fish wasn't God's judgement on Jonah....it was his life boat...it was his deliverer.  
Remember that the next time something bad happens. Our default is to think God is harming us because it seems bad when really it's his deliverance.

How do we see God in the book of Jonah? Quite in contrast to Jonah.

- He is concerned enough about mankind that he has spoken to us. He didn't have to do that. But he has, because he is loving.
- He sees the evil that man does. It doesn't escape him. He is omniscient.
- Man cannot flee from his presence. He is omnipresent.
- He rules over wind and sea.
- He is Lord over even the roll of the dice.
- He is Lord over the fish of the sea.
- He decides to use man in his purposes to save or to judge.
- He is merciful and relents when Nineveh repents. He doesn't have to. He could have destroyed the city and wouldn't make him NOT good. But he's merciful.
- He is gracious, slow to anger, Jonah is quick to anger. God is abounding in steadfast love.
- He is patient and gives second chances to rebellious Jonah.
- He is Lord over the plants.

- He is Lord over the worms. He speaks to a worm and the worm obeys.
- He is Lord over the weather. He can create a high pressure system to appear over Jonah's so that he gets hot.
- He can turn the heart of the king of Nineveh or China or the USA.
- He knows the state of whole cities and cares about their welfare. He is even concerned for the cattle in Nineveh.

So, this is a God you can trust. You can trust him even when you think he's wrong, even when you think he is evil.....he can be trusted. He is good.

God is a God that you can obey...without fear...you can obey him. Jonah thought it was stupid and wrong to go to Nineveh and speak out against it. Surely, they wouldn't repent. But they did! We can and should obey God when he tells us to do something even if it seems impossible, wrong or even ridiculous.

The message of the book of Jonah is this: Don't be like Jonah. Don't run from God. Don't be angry at God. Instead trust in God and submit to his will.

Are you running from God?

Are you angry at God?

Have you shaped God to fit your liking?

Trust him. Turn away and turn back. He is good.