

2nd July 2023

Jonah 1:1-16

Jonah Flees From the LORD

1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: **2** "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

4 Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. **5** All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. **6** The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish."

7 Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. **8** So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

9 He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

10 This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.)

¹¹ The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So, they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"

¹² "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

¹³ Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. ¹⁴ Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, LORD, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, LORD, have done as you pleased." ¹⁵ Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. ¹⁶ At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.

Matthew 28:16-20

The Great Commission

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Sermon: You can't hide from God (Jonah 1:1-16 and Matthew 28:16-20)

Please have your **Bibles** open at **Jonah 1:1-16**

You should have a **sermon outline** to take notes if you wish.

Let me **pray** first...

Intro

Before my **grandson Cruz** started school – he used to come around to our place every Monday.

His **favourite thing** was to **play hide and seek** with me.

However, **he couldn't hide very well**

He'd hide **behind the curtains** – and I could see his **feet sticking out** of the bottom of the curtains

Or he'd **hide under a table** with his **bottom sticking out!**

Or he'd **hide somewhere really good** – only to **start giggling or talking** when I **came near!**

One day – I found this **fantastic place where I could hide** – and he spent **nearly 20 minutes** – **before he found me**

When Cruz saw where I was hiding – he said **“That's ridiculous Poppy!”**

That's **the point of today's story** – like Cruz – **Jonah can't hide properly from God** – and **it's ridiculous to think he can!**

So as Jonah runs from God – what **lessons can we learn from him** – after all **Jonah is in the Bible because he's just like us!**

We can't hide from God (Jonah 1:1-3)

Slide – 1st Lesson

1st lesson – **we can't hide from God** – see verses 1 to 3

God calls Jonah to go and **preach** to the great city of **Nineveh**.

Nineveh at the time of Jonah was one of **the largest cities in the ancient world** – and the **capital** city of Israel's arch enemy – **Assyria**.

Nineveh was **renowned** for its great **wealth, power and wickedness** – and had **many temples for false gods**, including Ishtar, the Assyrian goddess of love, war and fertility.

To be fair – it might be the same as God calling one of us **to go and preach repentance in Afghanistan or North Korea!**

So instead of heading East to Nineveh

Jonah goes as far West as he can possibly go – to Tarshish

But we can't run and hide from God - He is all-knowing, all powerful and everywhere – as Psalm 139:7-8 says:

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;

if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

Maybe WE'RE running away from God's calling?

Is He calling us to serve in a particular ministry – teaching scripture, Jaffa, evangelism, serving on Sunday, bible study - but we're ignoring Him?

Or - Is he calling us to talk to our neighbour/friend/family member about Jesus— but we're avoiding that conversation?

Or maybe we're not physically running away but emotionally or spiritually we're running away — by hiding a sin we've committed — like Jonah — a sin that no one else knows about — but God knows about it — we can't hide anything from Him. Again, as Psalm 139:1-4 says:

*¹ You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.*

*² You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*

*⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.*

So, God knows our innermost thoughts and even what we're going to say — before we say it!

(pause)

Or maybe we're writing people off — like Jonah wrote off the Ninevites by saying they're too wicked to repent

But we shouldn't write ANYONE off.

We can't limit God.

No one is too bad that they can't repent and turn back to God
(pause)

We must not sleep on the job as Christians (Jonah 1:4-6)

Slide - Lesson 2

Back to Jonah

2nd lesson – ***we must not sleep on the job as Christians*** – vv4-6

Jonah is **on board the ship** and sailing to **Tarshish** – as far as he is concerned – there's **no way** he's **ever** going to **Nineveh** – and he **settles in for a nice Mediterranean cruise**

But - **God is sovereign in all things** – - see **v4** – **God sends a great wind** – and a **violent storm** threatens to sink the ship.

God sending the wind and the storm is **God's way of disciplining Jonah**.

It's **God's simultaneous - wrath and love**.

How can God be simultaneously sending wrath and love?

Well, isn't that what **loving parents** do? – they **punish their child for disobedience** and **at the same time love them** - **knowing the punishment is for the child's long-term benefit**.

God singled out Jonah for discipline.

And **we should be thankful to God when** He **singles us out for discipline**.

He **could have left Jonah in his sin** – and **left him on his cruise**!

But no! **God loves Jonah enough** **to pursue him and deal with him**.

But Jonah's asleep – whilst the storm rages around him and the boat is tossed from side to side.

How can Jonah sleep when he's run away from God – when he's the reason for the storm?

How can Jonah sleep when he's failed to do his job and tell the people of Nineveh that they need to repent and seek forgiveness from God?

Maybe we're no better than Jonah though?

The storm is a picture of the world we live in today – tossed about by wave after wave of wickedness and sin.

And perhaps - as a church - or as an individual – we're like Jonah - fast asleep – whilst the storms of this world and its sin and wickedness rage around us.

How can WE sleep – when the world is like this? (pause)

The thing about sleep is – we don't even know we're asleep until we wake up.

Have you ever sat on the lounge for a 'rest' – and you doze off.

When you wake up – you look at your watch – and you've been asleep for an hour.

And you say – '*Did I fall asleep?*'

We must not sleep on the job as Christians!

We need to be reaching the storms of this world and its sin – and offering them the forgiveness that Jesus gives by His death on the cross.

Meanwhile the **sailors** (v5) are so afraid – they **call to their own gods** who can't help them. So, they **resort to throwing cargo over board** to try to stabilise the ship!

Maybe we're like the sailors - sometimes we try to fix the problem ourselves – by “throwing the cargo overboard” so to speak! – instead of - **turning to God and asking for His help.**

Is God our first port of call – or our last resort?

Meanwhile – **Jonah's oblivious** to all this.

There's a **prayer meeting on deck** – and **Jonah's fast asleep** (v6)

The **Captain has to wake Jonah up** – and even the captain knows the best thing to do is for Jonah to pray to Jonah's one true God and ask for His help.

What's it going to take to wake us up from our slumber and do the job that God intends us to do?

Does the world have to wake us up – like the captain woke Jonah?

Does the world have to come to us for the answer to their sin?

Or are we going to tell them first?

(pause)

After all **God didn't have to send the storm to wake Jonah up!**

He could have finished Jonah off right there!

And God could have finished us off – for our sins too!

But He didn't – **he gave us a remedy for our sin** – by sending Jesus – to die for our sin – and give us forgiveness to replace our disobedience – and **to give us love and eternal life.**

Meanwhile **WE** say thank you to God – by sleeping on the job...

We must not hide our identity as Christians (Jonah 1:7-10)

Slide 3-Lesson 3

3rd lesson – ***we must not hide our identity as Christians*** – vv7-10

The **sailors** are **running out of ideas** now

They suspect someone is responsible for bringing this calamity upon them – so **they cast lots** – v7.

It's a bit like **drawing straws** to see who has the **shortest straw**

And coincidentally – (or God incidentally) – **Jonah draws the short straw.**

And notice in v8 – the **sailors ask Jonah** – what kind of **work he does** and where **he comes from?**

Jonah has been **hiding his identity** from them!

How about us – do the people we hang out with – **know we're Christians?** – or do we hide that from them – **so we can be accepted?** Or **so we don't get challenged or ridiculed?**

In v9 – Jonah answers their question and says **he is a Hebrew and He worships the Lord, the God of Heaven, who made the sea and dry land.**

In Jonah's day – everyone **knew about the God of the Hebrews** who had done amazing things – and the **Hebrew God was feared and respected.**

There used to be a time **when Christians were respected** –

But the world today sees Christians **as weak, or needing a crutch, or as being hypocritical or even irrelevant.**

Today many people see **Christians just as one of many religions – all worshipping the same God** – with just a different name – and they all end up in some sort of paradise!

But - the **sailors' gods were not the same as Jonah's God.**

And notice in v9 – the Hebrew word for Lord is not the same as the Hebrew word for God.

Jonah says - *I worship – the Lord (Hebrew is YHWH = I AM) the God (Hebrew is Elohim) of Heaven*

So v9 – “*I worship YHWH the Elohim of Heaven*”

Whenever we see LORD [capitalised] in the OT – it is the special name for God – YHWH – the word used for God when the Bible is talking about God and his special personal relationship with His people.

The world today – whether Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim – may worship god or gods – but they are not the same as YHWH God - the God who wants a personal relationship with His people – and whom God wants Jonah to tell the Ninevites about.

In John's gospel Jesus said – ‘before Abraham was born, I AM’ (John 8:58).

What Jesus is claiming is that He is that same - YHWH I AM God -

And Jesus said later on in John – “*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me*” (John 14:6)

What makes Christians unique is Jesus.

For years we’ve been trying to be friends with the world – and merge and be relevant – **when we must maintain our difference – and not water down Jesus – as just another way to be right with God – Jesus is the ONLY way to be right with God!**

People must see there is **something authentic and different about us.**

That’s what the sailors realized about Jonah in v10 – they ask Jonah what have you done?

When they knew that he was running away from the Lord - **they see that Jonah’s God is real and alive and active in the world –** and pretty angry right now! And they are not just afraid – **they are terrified!**

The world today has no fear of God?

They are **not in awe of God** like the sailors were.

The sailors were afraid – because - **Jonah TOLD them about the God he was running away from.**

We must TELL people about the God who loved us so much He sent his only son Jesus to die for the sin of the world.

It's not good enough for us to say – God is in control of everything – He controlled the storm that He sent to Jonah on board the ship – so he can get people to believe in Jesus!

No - God expects us to be His instruments in telling people about Jesus!

(pause)

Admitting our sins is a great witness to unbelievers (Jonah 1:11-16)

Slide-Lesson 4

4th lesson – *admitting our sins is a great witness to unbelievers* – vv7-10

With no sign of the storm abating, the sailors in awe of Jonah's God – in v11 ask 'what should we do to make the sea calm down for us?'

The sailors were **not moved by Jonah's good behaviour** but **by the fact that he was disobedient to God.**

So, in v12 – **Jonah tells them to throw him overboard** and **the sea will become calm.**

Why was **Jonah willing to be thrown overboard?**

Was he suicidal?

No!

Jonah rediscovered something important about being a believer.

His life and our lives are not our own.

Jesus said – *“whoever desires to save his life will lose it – whoever loses his life will save it”* (Mark 8:35) – and the Apostle Paul said *“You were bought with a price you are not your own”* (1 Cor 6:19)

Jonah wanted to save his life – so he ran away.

But then he was willing to lose his life by being thrown overboard - to save everyone else.

Which is precisely what Jesus did – He lost his life so we could be saved.

If there is anyone here this morning - who is not a Christian

You need to understand that - You cannot receive Jesus as your Saviour without also receiving Him as your Lord – Lord and master of your life.

You can't have the benefits of his shed blood and his resurrection without Jesus owning you, and keeping you - and doing what he wants with you and He will!

Jonah – at that moment - **realized that God loved him so much he was willing to track him down.** Jonah got a glimpse of God's glory right there and handed his life back to God – Jonah realized he was owned by God.

Isn't that how missionaries work? – they see God's glory and that He owns them and like Isaiah – they say – '*Here I am Lord, send me*' – and they have little regard for their life.

Are we willing to be thrown overboard - and let God do what He wants with us?

One reason for God allowing this storm to continue was because Jonah needed to learn more lessons.

But the second reason is **so that the sailors could believe**.

By Jonah admitting his sin – **it was a great witness to these unbelieving sailors**
– so what did they do?

They called upon the one true God – (Romans 10:13 – whoever calls upon my name will be saved – and there is no other name Acts 4:12)

The sailors saw God's mercy when they threw Jonah overboard in v15 and the sea grew calm –

And the sailors' response in v16 – **they made a sacrifice for their sins** (whatever form that took) and **they made vows** (promises) to God.

Embarrassingly - sometimes unbelievers can **show us what we are doing wrong** as Christians

Sometimes - God works things out – **DESPITE** our sin and disobedience and wrong choices – **NOT BECAUSE of them!**

God calls us to go to Nineveh too (Matthew 28:16-20)

Slide 2-God calls us

To finish up then – **we are just like Jonah**

And God calls us to Nineveh too

In our NT reading from Matthew 28:19-20 – **Jesus commands His disciples to -**
go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Our Nineveh – might not be **Afghanistan or North Korea**

Our Nineveh might be – **Toukley, Gorokan, Noraville and Canton Beach**

But nevertheless, as Jesus' disciples - **WE** are called to go and make disciples.

It doesn't have to be - **doorknocking** – or **handing out Bibles and tracts on**

Canton Beach or Toukley Green

It might be as simple as - **talking to your neighbour over the fence – chatting to your friend at the gym – the club – or at work – or on the train!**

Or as simple as – **showing Christian love to a neighbour.**

Slide 2a-A COMMAND

But when Jesus says - ***go and make disciples of all nations*** - It's a **COMMAND** – **NOT** - a **suggestion**...

Let's pray...

Father God, help us to realize that we can't run away from you and that we can't hide anything from you.

Thank you that you come looking for us – when we do try to run!

Forgive us for the times when we sleep on the job and we don't share the Good News of Jesus with others.

Forgive us for the times when we hide our identity as Christians from others.

Help us to be your instruments in sharing the Good News of Jesus.

Father, provide us with opportunities and equip and enable us to share our faith with others effectively.

In Jesus Name. Amen.