

Remnant Life Church
August 21, 2022
Handling the Unexpected
Part 2
Jonah 1:4-11

Last week we asked two questions:

1. How do you handle the unexpected?
2. How should you handle the unexpected as a child of God?

But in whatever way you respond, you always have a choice!

We took some time to examine the familiar story of Jonah

- Jonah was a prophet to Israel around the 9th to 8th centuries BC
 - He was given a powerful dose of the unexpected in an assignment given by God
 - Go and tell the people of Nineveh that are going to fall under the wrath of God if they don't repent of their sin
- Nineveh, as you know, was the capital city of the Assyrians
 - These are the most ruthless, barbaric people of the day and Jonah knows what they are capable of
 - It is why he runs in the opposite direction as far as he can go at that time
- Of course, God had other plans not the least of was Jonah was going to Nineveh – whether he thought he was or not
 - The boat, the storm, the fish, three day, back on dry land and then he is headed to Nineveh

We then also discovered that the heroes of the story are also very unexpected

- It is the wicked Assyrian nation who heed the warning preached by Jonah and repent!
 - And what we realize at the conclusion of Jonah's account is that it was easier for 120,000 pagans to be obedient than it was for one man who followed the will of God and served Him
- And so, the Assyrian nation, from top to bottom, repented
 - But believe it or not, this is not what Jonah wanted
 - I have to think that he was saying to himself at this point, "Okay, with all that I have been through at least I'm going to have a front-row seat to watch the Assyrians get what they deserve!"

Jonah is a somewhat complicated man

- We first see Jonah's options in response to the unexpected predicament of spending 3 days in the belly of a great fish
 - He could have just given up and waited to die
 - Or, he could use that time to examine himself and cry out to God
 - He chose the latter and ultimately fulfilled the assignment God had given him
 - His prayer is the entire second chapter of the book
 - He asks to be delivered, and then thanks God before it even happens
 - Can we pray with that same level of expectation and faith?

- But then we see something very different from Jonah at the conclusion of His successful revival campaign
 - He turns into this grumpy, petulant, child
 - Yet, God does not give up on him
 - This demonstrates two of the many characteristics of God that we should be thankful for every day
 - The first is His care for all of His creation
 - From the evil Assyrian people
 - To the pouting prophet
 - *I Peter 5:7 - Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*
 - *Matt 10:29-31 - Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*
 - The second is His great patience and willingness to forgive
 - God could have punished Jonah for his unwillingness to forgive the Assyrians for the way they lived
 - For that matter He could have sent a Great White when he was thrown off the boat and that would have been the end of it
 - But He didn't – because of His great love that we truly cannot conceive of or understand
 - Forgiveness is God's to give but it is also up to us to participate as well
 - *Matt 6:14-15* are words that many Christians do not quote very often
 - *For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*
 - The difference between the way man thinks and the heart of God is further revealed in what happens at the end of the story of Jonah

READ – *Jonah 4:1-11*

- I want you to fully recognize what is happening here
 - This great prophet, powerful man of God, preacher to the masses, who speaks the words that brings a city-wide revival of pagans to their knees in repentance now becomes a little boy with his quivering lower lip sticking out, threatening to have a tantrum.
 - The first words that describe Jonah in the 4th chapter that Dave just read set the tone of Jonah's attitude
 - *...greatly displeased and angry*
 - Wait...what?
 - This is how he is acting after what God just did through him?

- Jonah's words to God are actually pretty amusing when said in the tone that matches his emotions...
- *Jonah 4:2 - He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.*
- But there actually isn't anything funny about Jonah's response or his attitude
 - And God immediately calls him on it
 - Because through it all God never gave up on Jonah

Jonah 3:1 has long been one of my favorite verses in all the Bible

- It is a beacon of hope for all who have made a royal mess of things and think we are a hopeless lost cause
- **3:1** – *Then the Word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time*
- But it took Jonah having some things about himself revealed

So, let's go back to our first question and ask again, when the unexpected comes how do you react?

- Do you see it as the hand of God moving in your life?
 - Or do you get angry and resentful that it has happened to you?
 - Are you aggravated because your life has been interrupted by something you did not plan on?
- Do you watch expectantly for God to protect and provide?
 - Or do you lash out at everything and everyone around you like a wounded animal?

We are the only ones who struggle with the unexpected

- That is not a word in God's vocabulary (if you will)
- Yet you must always decide how you are going to respond
- God knows the beginning from the end
 - He is never caught off-guard
 - And many times He is simply waiting for us, like He did with Jonah, to realize that it is His hand that orchestrates every circumstance of our lives

And so, handling the unexpected can be as easy or as difficult as you choose for it to be and we can learn how to handle it in the right way from our time spent with Jonah over these past 2 weeks

1. Go to God first!

- a. Jonah went to his own thoughts and feelings before anything else
- b. Our natural inclination is to try and immediately deal with whatever has jumped into the path of our life
- c. And we will do all that we can to solve, fix, or remove the situation
 - i. When I think of handling things the wrong way, I think of Samson
 - ii. When I think of the right way, I think of Joseph
- d. Just stop for a few minutes, take a couple of deep breathes, and then go to God

- e. Not only is your focus on the right place (off of yourself) but you can now experience the peace that passes all understanding (Phil 4:7)

2. Refuse to accept the fear, anxiety, and stress that satan wants you to embrace

- He wants for you to tackle it on your own
- To use your skills, your talents, your strength to fix whatever is happening
- IOW, just like the world and with the attributes they place such high value on
 - But your very best is rarely what is available when there is anxiety and stress present
 - **Prov 29:11** - *Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end.*
- But the love and power of God transcends every circumstance in your life
 - Through prayer
 - Through a calm that is not determined or dictated by the circumstances of your surroundings but by the presence of a loving, and caring Almighty Creator God

3. In humility, surrender your life and whatever it is that has come into your path

- Why must you surrender?
 - Because the solution or answer might not be what you would choose or desire
 - But a surrendered heart recognizes that God is infinite in His wisdom, goodness, compassion, and love for you
 - What is the difference between a life surrendered to God and a life that is not?

- The late Bruce Larson, a former associate pastor at The Crystal Cathedral with Robert Schuller and best-selling author tells how he helped people struggling to surrender their lives to Christ:

For many years he worked in New York City and counseled at his office any number of people who were wrestling with an important and sometimes potentially life-changing decision. Once, a powerful executive had made an appointment to talk about his control issues. After a while, Larson suggested that they walk from his office down to the RCA Building on Fifth Avenue. In the entrance of that building is a gigantic statue of Atlas, a perfectly proportioned man who, with all of his great muscles straining, is holding the entire world upon his shoulders. There he is, the most powerfully built man in the world, and he can barely stand up under this incredible burden. Now that's one way to live, Larson told the man, trying to carry the whole world on your shoulders.

He then led the man out and they walked to the other side of Fifth Avenue and in the front door of Saint Patrick's Cathedral. They walked in and down the main aisle and there behind the high altar stood a statue of the boy Jesus, depicted at perhaps eight or nine years old, and in His hand he is holding the world represented by a small orb. There is no struggle or straining on his face or in his body in fact He is radiating perfect peace. And it was in that moment that it occurred to the executive he had a choice. He could continue to carry the weight of the world in a constant struggle like Atlas, or, he could give control

of the world, his world, over to God and know His peace in the everyday occurrences of life.

- That is my prayer for each of you the next time you come face-to-face with the unexpected
 - Turn first to God, not yourself
 - Refuse to embrace the fear or anxiety
 - Surrender your life to God every single day and you will be prepared to receive what God desires for you in every circumstance
- I am fairly certain that Jonah's story would have been recorded very differently if he had done these three simple things
 - Don't make it necessary for God to send a great fish in order for you to learn this lesson
- He is loving, caring, compassionate, forgiving, and merciful
- I want for you to understand how those will all be seen in your life the next time the unexpected gets dropped into your path and you handle it, not like the world does, but like a faithful, surrendered, and peace filled child of God.