

Remnant Life Church
July 6, 2025
Jonah – Part 1
Running Away From God
Jonah 1:1-16

Last week we examined the actions of a prophet who is likely the least familiar of all the OT prophets

- He was not a prophet like the others because he was not giving prophetic words to the people
- He was having a dialog with God
 - And he was complaining to God
 - First about the sins of the people and why God was allowing it to continue
 - Then about the method from which God was going to deal with the people
 - Namely through the Babylonians
 - A wicked, godless people who Habakkuk thought were unworthy to be used of God
- And God assured Habakkuk, as He does us today, that He is in full control of what is happening
 - Nothing takes place without His hand upon it
 - And the sin of the wicked will face His righteous judgment

This morning we are going to the opposite end of this spectrum and look at perhaps the most familiar of all the OT prophets

- His story is so familiar that people who don't even go to church know his story
- But the strange nature of his story can often prevent the fullness of what we can learn from being realized
 - Because the focus is on the most unusual part of the story
 - The big fish!

Of course, I am speaking of Jonah

- Now we are not going to review his entire story in what is going to be a series of messages through this month
 - I am confident that you are familiar enough with what happened
 - Instead, we are going to focus on one particular aspect of Jonah that is a reoccurring theme in his story – running

I do, however, want to take just a few minutes to look at the man himself as we try and understand why he did what he did – run from God

- Jonah is only mentioned one other time in the OT
 - In **2 Kings 14:25** it identifies him as the son of Amittai
 - And that he was a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II
 - That places his life around 800 to 730 BC
- He lived in the region of Galilee

- In a town just a few miles northeast of Nazareth
- What you realize is that Jonah lived in almost the exact same area as Jesus
- The name Jonah means “dove”
 - But as we will see, his character and personality might suggest a more fitting name would have been “hawk”
 - This is because Jonah was an ardent nationalist and believed in isolationism for his people
 - And the assignment God gave to Jonah to preach repentance to the Assyrians would have been abhorrent in Jonah’s eyes

READ – Jonah 1:1-3

- Picture in your mind a person or people who you find the very most difficult to love
 - These are people you wish to avoid at all costs
 - The reasons are certainly varied but your response to them is the same
 - Now imagine that they have declared themselves enemies of God
 - You would likely feel more justified in your feelings toward them
 - And it might even intensify your disdain and even hatred for them
- This is the place Jonah finds himself here in the first chapter
 - Verse 1 - *The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai*
 - So for, so good
 - As a matter of fact this opening is very similar to many of the other prophetic books as it establishes the gift these men have been given
 - And it also validates and affirms their authority as a spokesman for God
 - But even as Jonah is reveling in this encounter with almighty God, the other shoe drops in the very next verse
 - V 2 - *Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.*
 - Now at first glance that would seem to be something Jonah might be interested in
 - Jonah was a very zealous man for the mercy, love, and grace of God – but only for the Hebrew people
 - This is actually the second assignment Jonah received from God
 - In 2 Kings 14:25 we read that God spoke through Jonah to King Jeroboam II telling him that he was going to restore the territory of Israel
 - And it happened
 - Jonah was thrilled about this because it was a blessing to God’s people
 - But the Assyrians were anything but God’s people
 - They were actually the great enemies of God’s people
 - They were ruthless, cruel, and barbaric
 - So his first question might be why would God care about these people enough to send me to preach to them?
 - But it says he can preach against them, right?
 - Does that mean bring the wrath of God?
 - Call down fire from heaven like Elijah?

- The literal translation of God's instructions is for Jonah to proclaim to them
- What is Jonah being called to proclaim?
 - That the people must repent of their sins
 - Or suffer the wrath of God
 - But what else does that mean?
 - That God could spare them
 - Jonah had no interest in Nineveh being spared
- Later in the account Jonah lays his cards on the table when that is exactly what happened when the city repented
 - **Jonah 3:10 – 4:1-2** - *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. But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 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.*
 - This is the reason Jonah ran from God
 - The last thing he wanted was to become an agent for the salvation of his arch enemies
 - Jonah was a strong-willed man who became involved in a power struggle with God
 - I didn't say he was smart, just strong willed
 - And if we were honest with ourselves, might there be a bit of Jonah that resides in each of us?
 - Think back to that person or those people who you just can't stand
 - What if God told you to go to them, confront them with their actions, and encourage them to repent so that they would be saved?
 - Could you do it?
 - Or would you dig your heels in in resistance or, like Jonah, just run away?
- And run he did
 - To the farthest place from Nineveh he could get to – Tarshish
 - To get to Nineveh Jonah would have traveled northeast a distance of about 700 miles
 - So not only is he being told to preach to this terrible group of people
 - But it was going to take him several weeks up to a month to get there
 - Tarshish, on the other hand, was on the opposite side of the Mediterranean Sea
 - As far west as he could go

- Jonah thought he was finished with God on this matter, but God was not finished with Jonah
- Again, you know the story
 - They set out on the boat to cross the Mediterranean
 - **V 4** – *Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.*
 - The word sent in this verse is not particularly accurate
 - The words hurled, threw, or cast down would be better
 - We cannot assign human emotions to God but I can't help but picture His response as something like...
 - “Oh, really? You think a little 3-hour cruise is going to get you where you want to go?”
 - Maybe a little bit of extra wind in this storm
 - But so much that these professional sailors were terrified
 - Willing to try anything to survive
 - Jonah is asleep below deck
 - What other nearly identical event does this bring to mind?
 - In **Mark 4** we read of Jesus asleep in a boat as the disciples are battling a fierce storm on the Sea of Galilee
 - Jesus and Jonah may have been doing the same thing but for two completely different reasons
 - Jesus slept with the peace of the knowledge of His Father's protection
 - Jonah slept in the guilt of running from God and just trying to pass the hours as quickly as he could
 - They try everything they can until finally Jonah confesses, tells them what they must do to calm the storm, and they toss him overboard
- Not only is Jonah running from God and directly defying God's directive on his life
 - But as a result he is not being who God created him to be
 - Jonah missed an incredible opportunity to minister to and in all likelihood lead these men into the Kingdom
 - What would have happened if Jonah had immediately repented, confessed his sin to God and called on Him to save him, the men, and the ship and quiet the storm
 - I think there is a very good chance that is exactly what God would have done
 - And the men on that boat would have witnessed the power of the One, True God
 - But Jonah did not do that
 - And as a result all the cargo was lost, the boat was likely damaged, and Jonah got a very uncomfortable 3 day vacation in the worst hotel imaginable.
- Now, contrast that to Paul and his journey to Malta in **Acts 27**

- Paul is sailing to the Island of Malta which is about 120 miles south of Sicily
- A terrible storm comes up but Paul does not panic nor shrink back from telling the sailors what would happen
 - He told them that God was with him and they would all survive
 - Because God had a mission for Paul to complete in Rome
 - Paul was going to obey God and complete his task and no storm was going to prevent that from happening

Running from God was Jonah's first mistake

- He learned a hard lesson on that journey but he brought it all on himself because he was unwilling to submit his will to the authority of God's will
 - The results of running from God carry the same consequence today as they did in Jonah's day
 - God's will is going to be accomplished regardless of what we choose to do
 - He will use whatever means necessary
 - And it leaves us with a choice
 - Do I obey God or do I run from him?
 - Jonah ended up where he was supposed to but the detour was no fun
 - And neither was getting out of the fish back onto dry land

While we may all find ourselves at one time or another running from God He doesn't change