

- This morning we continue through the Book of Jonah in chapter 1 in a series we are calling “Rediscovering God”, why? Because Jonah is a prophet in ancient Israel who was raised with the knowledge of God, but who turns out to have created a god of his own making. He needed to be retaught who God is, and who he truly is.
- And his life becomes our lesson. Today, we learn about how to understand consequences, when we make decisions like him.

Jonah 1:4-17 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.

¹⁷ Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

- During the 2011 British general election, Prime minister Gordon Brown was speaking on live television with a woman about foreign workers in the UK. When he was finished, he got in the car... and that was the moment he ruined his chance of re-election.
- Forgetting his microphone was still on, he began complaining to his assistants in the car about the woman and how she was such a bigot. His remarks were quickly broadcast, creating a media storm. And No apologies could rescue the situation.
- I suppose there are two lessons. The microphone is always on. (Or, at least we should live as though it were!). But the other lesson is this: the media storm did not *create* the problem. It *revealed* it.
- In many ways, this captures the story of the prophet Jonah in chapter 1. What he thinks is a private decision quickly results in a public storm. But as we will also see, this storm did not *create* the problem; the storm *revealed* the problem.
- See, the storm in Jonah chapter 1 is a consequence of his decisions. And we, the readers, are meant to ask, “What is God saying to me about my choices? How am I to understand the consequences if they are bad choices?”
- Friends, these are essential questions. Because how you answer them reveals what you truly believe and where you are headed.
- On the one hand, this will be a word of warning to us, about the consequences of bad decisions. And I know it can be a heavy subject. But this will also be a word of comfort. Because even in the storm of consequences, there is mercy and grace for us all.
- Jonah is a prophet in ancient Israel. His role was to represent God to his people. But when he was called by God to preach a message of mercy to his enemies, he books a ticket in the opposite direction. He ran from God. And it took a storm to stop him.
- So, what does this storm mean for Jonah? And for us? We learn three lessons; What this storm reveals, removes and requires.

1. What the Storm Reveals (Jonah 1:3-6)

- a. Not all storms are directly related to a particular sin and not all of our difficulties are related to our specific disobedience.
- b. Many of the storms we have and will experience in life are the result of living in a broken, fallen world. And some of the storms we experience may be the result of *other* people's sins! Indeed, this is the case for the pilots of Jonah's getaway car.
 - i. It's important for me to say this up front!
 - ii. So much pain in the church has been caused by undiscerning people who assume that when someone else suffers, it's ***always*** because of their sin. (example)
 - iii. There are many examples in Scripture, like Job, which teach us *that there is such a thing as innocent suffering*.
- c. ***This*** storm, however, is a storm of consequences, and what does it reveal? Two things. First:
- d. **These Storms Reveal Our Sin**
 - i. We must recognize that there are times when our difficulties *are* attached to our disobedience. Sometimes storms are the result of our sin, and Jonah is the example.
- e. We are told that God brought the storm. And the connection to Jonah's decision to run from him could not be clearer.

Jonah 1:3-4 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. ⁴Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up

- f. As we see in the narrative, the result of Jonah's disobedience is so immediate and powerful that even the sailors discern its unnatural. This storm, this trial is God's wake up call to sin.

Jonah 1:5-6 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. ⁶The 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."

- g. Sometimes we read about God punishing sin directly, like society would punish a crime.
- h. At other times, it's the natural consequence of the sin itself, which is the punishment. Much like an addiction to a destructive substance is its own punishment.
- i. In either case, sin will always bring a storm. Again, not every storm is connected to our sin. But our sin will always bring a storm. It may not happen ***immediately***, or ***dramatically***, but all sin will ***ultimately*** lead to judgement before a holy and righteous God in the end. ***otherwise there would be no justice!***
- j. As it was for Jonah, so it is for us. If we have run from God, the following consequences are meant to reveal our sin and wake us up, like smelling salts to the sleeping heart.
- k. Now, that might feel heavy and harsh. Consequences can sometimes *feel* like a contradiction of God's love! But these storms of consequences not only reveal our sin...

I. These Storms Reveal God's Love

- i. God will never make it easy for us to sin. In fact, because sin is actually the most dangerous thing *in* our lives, God's warnings can be the most loving thing *for* our lives.
- ii. So, though consequences may feel heavy, and may even feel like a contradiction of God's love, know this:
Consequences are not a contradiction of God's love but rather an expression of God's love. Like an intervention!
- m. The consequences of our bad choices, they destroy the illusion that sin doesn't matter, or that it is not a big deal.
- n. Because sin will harden our conscience. The more we give into sin, the more we become numb to it. Or asleep.
- o. The most concerning thing is not the storm on the sea but the sin in the heart. And so, God will allow the storm of consequences to reveal our sin, and through it, his love.
- p. But this storm does more...

2. What the Storm Removes (Jonah 1:7-10)

- a. The storm not only has a revealing effect, but a removing effect. What can these storms of consequence remove?
- b. These Storms Remove Our False Sense of Security**
 - i. No doubt Jonah saw the availability of the ship as a sort of rubber stamp on his decision to flee to Tarshish
 - 1. “Oh look, this ship happens to be going where I want to go! Its available! I have money for the fare! Maybe God approves of my running from him?!”
 - ii. For a while it seemed that Jonah’s runaway trip was all going as planned. But it was only a matter of time before the storm on the sea removed his false sense of security.
 - iii. See, A false sense of security can drown out the voice of God and enable us to justify the direction we are heading!
 - iv. The same is very often true for us. We mistake ease of passage as justification for our bad decisions. And We mistake God’s momentary silence for his approval!
 - 1. “I’ve cheated on my spouse, but nobody has found out, so God must be good with it!”
 - 2. We confuse easy circumstances as maybe even God’s provision! When in fact, it is not God’s approval, it is God’s patience.
 - v. The Lord sent this storm in response to Jonah’s sin and it causes the sailors to cry to the heavens and descend into the ship to wake up their mysterious passenger.

Jonah 1:6-7 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.” 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

- vi. Any idea that Jonah had of being able to flee from the presence of God is removed when he is awakened by the storm-tossed sailors and his false security is removed.
- vii. But there is something else that this storm removes.

c. These Storms Remove Our Shallow Sense of Identity

- i. In an effort to figure out who is responsible for the storm, the sailors cast lots, which fall to Jonah. And their following interrogation causes Jonah to come clean about where his true identity lies.

Jonah 1:8-9 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?" ⁹He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land. 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.)

- ii. He told them he was running from God. But he did not tell them who he was, or what he was responsible to do.
- iii. The storm removes Jonah's false sense of identity. Notice the order of his answer: Before he says I am a worshiper of God, he says "I am a Hebrew". He reverses the order of the questions. Of course he was a Hebrew but the order shows that his national identity had become most primary before he was a worshipper. When anything, even good things, become more fundamental, it begins to skew your perspective. This becomes a part of the reason why it was hard for him to call other nations to God!
- iv. His national identity became most important, and so shaped his decisions, even while declaring himself to be a worshipper of God. His national identity came before his spiritual identity. And so he stayed as far withdrawn from the pagan sailors as possible.
- v. But this skewed sense of identity also effects our responsibility!
- vi. Notice... he answers all their questions... except for one!
He doesn't answer the question about his occupation.
 - 1. "Oh, I told you I was running from God, but I didn't tell you my job is to tell other people about God!"

- vii. See, when we have a false sense of identity, when something other than God becomes more important to us, we forget our primary purpose and responsibility!
- viii. Maybe we conceal these truths because it will only remind us that what we are doing is wrong!

1. Me on the phone with AT&T

- ix. And of course, this is what happens when we allow sin to rule: it silences our witness. **My Story...**
- x. And isn't it telling when even people who are not believers are coming and saying "Hey, why aren't you doing what you should be doing?"
- d. Are there ways in which our witness has been silenced by our decisions? The Storms of consequences reveal our sin and God's love. They remove our false sense of security & identity.

e. But what do we do with that? Lastly, we need to see:

3. What the Storm Requires (Jonah 1:11-17)

- a. As the storm of consequences does its work of revealing and removing, the narrative begins to show us what the storm requires begins to show signs of repentance.

b. These Storms Require Repentance

- i. What is repentance? It means to turn. And as Jonah responds, we begin to learn what repentance looks like:

Jonah 1:11-12 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."

- c. Notice, he takes responsibility and acknowledges God. And his response compared to the sailors actually shows us the difference between true and repentance and false repentance.
- d. Notice the sailors in verse 11 are only interested in getting out of the storm. But Jonah is dealing with the cause of the storm.

- i. False repentance only asks, “How can I get out of this mess?” False repentance is only concerned with the storm, with the consequences themselves.
 - 1. Is that true for us?
- e. But the main point is not getting out of the storm, it’s settling the matter with God.
 - i. Real repentance asks, “Since these consequences are the result of running *from* God, how can I be restored *to* God”
 - ii. The storm of consequence is calling us to look beyond the storm. It's a signpost beckoning for us to turn to God!
 - iii. Whenever God says “NO” it’s always for a greater “YES”
- f. Jonah has stopped making excuses. His false sense of justification and security are removed. He acknowledges his sin AND what it deserves!
- g. He says to the sailors “Look, throw me overboard. This is what my sin deserves. And my sin requires payment. And If I am thrown over, you will be safe, I will be a substitute for us.”

Jonah 1:13-16 Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. ¹⁴Then 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. ¹⁶At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

- h. You say “Great, so that's it? It’s all on me to make it right?”

i. These Storms Ultimately Require God’s Grace

- j. You say “well, where is the grace? Where is the mercy in this text?” Well, It’s already under the water. It’s found in verse 17

Jonah 1:17 Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

- k. Even while Jonah was running, being confronted with the consequences of his sin and reckoning with the cost of his sin, God had already provided a means to save him from his sin.

- l. God sent the storm. To wake Jonah up to the reality **of** sin. But God ALSO sent the fish, to provide mercy **for** his sin!
- m. Without knowing it, Jonah was a foreshadow of Jesus Christ, the son of God. But with a massive difference.
- n. Jesus fulfilled his mission perfectly through obedience. But to save us, he took the penalty for **our** disobedience when he went to the cross to die and pay for our sin.
- o. Jesus was the sinless substitute who said, "Throw me into the ultimate storm of consequences that your sin deserves, and you will never drown!" And like the sailors, we are safe.
- p. There is Grace for us. And it's already been provided!**
- q. So, if you trust in Jesus as your substitute, here is what that means. It means that though God allows the consequences of our bad choices wake us up, they can never make us drown!
- r. Because the ultimate consequence of our sin is eternal separation from God. But the sacrifice of Jesus has already made the payment and provided forgiveness. This means that the experience of my consequences will have a **purifying** effect, but they will not be **punitive** for those who trust in Jesus. You will be woken up, corrected and re-directed by the conviction of the Spirit and the consequences of sin. But you will not pay the ultimate price. Jesus did. And that's why these corrections and consequences are called God's loving discipline.

Hebrews 12:10-11 but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

- s. For those who are hardened... there is a wake-up call of love.
- t. For those who are burdened... there is mercy!
- u. And for us all, we can have the confidence to confess because we have the assurance of grace!