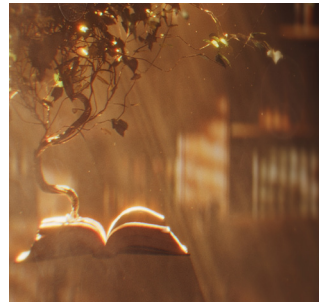

CONNECT GUIDE



**WALLACE MEMORIAL
BAPTIST CHURCH**



AS WE BEGIN A READING PLAN

WEEK 1

- Monday: Jonah 1
- Tuesday: Genesis 10:1-12, Nahum 1:1-11
- Wednesday: Matthew 12
- Thursday: 2 Kings 14:23-29
- Friday: Jonah 1

WEEK 2

- Monday: Jonah 2
- Tuesday: Psalm 31
- Wednesday: Luke 11
- Thursday: Isaiah 38
- Friday: Jonah 1-2

WEEK 3

- Monday: Jonah 3
- Tuesday: Jonah 3
- Wednesday: Nahum 1-3
- Thursday: Jonah 3
- Friday: Jonah 1-3

WEEK 4

- Monday: Jonah 4
- Tuesday: Luke 15:11-32
- Wednesday: Luke 11
- Thursday: Matthew 12
- Friday: Jonah 1-4

DAY 1

WEEK ONE: JONAH 1

The book of Jonah is a unique story among the prophets. In most books of prophecy we see the prophet as more of a mouthpiece for the word he receives from God. In Jonah, however, the story becomes more about the actions of the prophet and how he relates to God instead of a focus on the particular message he was given. In the Bible, when something breaks a norm like that we want to pay special attention to what it is trying to tell us.

When we look at why this story is different, we can see one thing jump out immediately. Jonah's reaction to God's message is to flee. We see other prophets struggle with or weep over the message they receive from God, but Jonah is the only one we see outright reject it. Although he is the only recorded prophet to do so, he is by no means the only person in history. In fact most of us at sometime or another hear a call from and reject it. We may not have received a verbal word from God with a destination attached like Jonah did, but the New Testament is clear that everyone is called to GO. Just like Jonah is told to GO to the great city of Nineveh, we are called to go to our community and around the world to share the Gospel.

So when we suppress the urge to share about Jesus with our co-workers we are running from God's call just like Jonah did. When we see poverty and oppression and decide it is "someone else's problem," we are running

from God's call just like Jonah did. When we put that mission trip off for another year, we are running from God's call just like Jonah did. So today, do not run. Listen to the pull of the Holy Spirit and accept God's calling.

- What verses from the New Testament tell us about the calling on a believer's life?
 - Is God calling you to something specific in evangelism, or missions, or serving the church?
-

DAY 2

You may have done today's reading and thought.. "Huh? Aren't we in Jonah?" Well, yes, but we also need to understand where Jonah was sent. The city of Nineveh was world renowned... and not in a good way. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire, which was known for their merciless conquest of other kingdoms in the region. They destroyed cities, enslaved whole cultures, and worshipped numerous false Gods. It is also crucial to understanding the book of Jonah that we know Assyria is one of Israel's greatest enemies.

We read the table of Nations in Genesis to see that Nineveh has been around for a long time. Because of its presence in Genesis 10 we can trace it back to Noah's sons. Then we also read the prophecy against Nineveh from Nahum so we understand that their sin and condemnation were not a one time offense. Nineveh is a repeat offender, enemy of Jonah's people, and later in the Bible they will also be the invading army that destroys the northern Kingdom. Jonah's anger with Nineveh could almost be understood, but God sent him as a messenger of mercy, not one of wrath.

Is there a place where you are harboring the same type of disdain today? The same type of generational anger Jonah had for Nineveh. Are you holding on to that type of hate for someone? Maybe even for an entire group of people? Another race? The "other" political party? Even a particular sports fanbase? One of the reasons God told us he was sending Jonah to Nineveh is so he could illustrate how his mercy is for ALL people... even the ones we do not like. So while it may not be easy, pray today and ask God to reveal who you might be holding this type of grudge against, and let him reframe what that looks like.

- What grudges or generational anger are you holding on to today?
 - Read Ephesians 2:1-6. How should our past failures and God's grace reframe our anger against people or groups in the world?
-

DAY 3

Just as a rule: If Jesus mentions it, then it is important. Which is relevant for us when we are studying the book of Jonah. As we read today in Matthew, after a long series of denunciations and warnings, Jesus tells those who ask for a sign that they will receive "nothing but the sign of Jonah." This may seem simple at first, but Jesus is reaching towards a much deeper point.

Yes, Jesus would spend three days in the tomb just like Jonah spent 3 nights in the belly of the fish, but that is not all there is to this reference. He also goes on to say that the "men of

Nineveh will stand up in judgment of this generation.” This is because Nineveh eventually repents, because they recognize God’s prophet and yield to his word. Most of Israel in Jesus’ time would reject him. In Jesus’ statement we see that Israel is being compared to Jonah as the disobedient recipients of God’s word! That is why this prophecy is grouped with such a long list of condemnations in Matthew 12. Jesus is not just telling them what he is going to do, he is making sure that everyone in the crowd understands what it means to reject the message of the Kingdom he is bringing. If you are anything like me, then you are more than ready to believe that first point, Jesus died, spent three days that way, and then defeated death so you and I could be saved. That second point, however, could be a tough one to swallow. Just like Jonah we have heard the message, and we have numerous people groups to go tell, but unlike Jonah we need to say yes and go. So today, let’s believe the sign of Jonah, get out there and tell someone Jesus fulfilled the prophecies.

- What types of behaviors, attitudes, and actions is Jesus condemning in Matthew 12?
 - As you look at your day and your week, would Jesus condemn any of the same in you?
-

DAY 4

Why would we read an entire passage about a king when it only mentions Jonah’s name once? Because it is necessary to see that Jonah was the only one being disobedient in his era.

Even the prophet was not an outlier, or just a "bad egg." Jonah's disobedience was a reflection of Israel and particularly of his King. Jeroboam II was pretty terrible as far as kings go, which could be said for most of the kings in his line. The account in 2 Kings tells us that he "Did what was evil in the Lord's sight and did not turn away from the sins of his fathers." What were those sins you might ask? Well the first was idol worship. Jeroboam claimed to worship the one true God, but did so by making offerings to a Golden calf (See Exodus 32 if you would like to know how God feels about that.), and not allowing any worship at the temple in Jerusalem. So he is directly rebelling against God, while pretending to be his follower.

The other two sins his lineage became infamous for were materialism and oppression of the poor. These go hand in hand, and the Bible warns kings often of living in excess while God's house is in ruin and the poor suffer. Jeroboam wanted to be hailed as a great warrior, but is instead described as an immoral oppressor who let the people starve while he took all they had for his conquest. All of Israel is condemned as complicit in Jeroboam's guilt, because when people see evil rulers, but overlook their sin in the name of their wealth and security then they too are just as guilty. God does not play human games of choosing "the lesser of two evils."

Is it any wonder then that such a king would employ a disobedient prophet? Would a faithful prophet have even been allowed in his court? 2 Kings 14:25 tells us that Jonah prophesied the defeat of his enemy, but then we see him reject God

when he offers mercy to others. As we seek to understand who Jonah is, and why he interacts with God the way he does, we have to take into account that Jonah was just going along with how things were in his day. In this way, Jonah is a warning to us. We all face times in which we are tempted to trade our integrity for wealth or our morals for security, but the warning of Jonah is that we are held to God's standard regardless of what everyone else is doing.

- What are behaviors we often tolerate out of leaders that the Bible would call sin?
 - How can you and I respect authority, yet still choose differently when the same authorities act unbiblical?
-

DAY 5

The book of Jonah was written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, and yet within the first chapter we already see several parallels to the life of Jesus. Both Jesus and Jonah received a mission from God to reach a group of people that had rebelled against God. The difference is that we see Jonah choose selfish disobedience while Jesus sacrifices everything to undertake his mission. Both Jesus and Jonah slept through the storm in the hold of a boat. (Matthew 8:23-27) Jesus did so because of faith, but Jonah slept due to his apathy. When awakened, Jesus calmed the storm and brought glory to God. When awakened, Jonah dishonored the name of God by telling the sailors his God wanted a human sacrifice. I think this point is often missed.

It is easy to see Jonah as a selfless heroic figure in this moment, but that doesn't fit with any of his actions in the rest of the story. No, Jonah isn't being a hero, he is not sacrificing himself for the good of the sailors, he is choosing to insult God and die rather than obey him. Jonah is proving in this moment that the slippery slope of disobedience will always end in doom.

Both Jesus and Jonah were given over to death, but in both instances, God proves that he determines the fabric of reality. Jonah chose death over responsibility, but Jesus died a death that was OUR responsibility and did so because of his love for us. Three days later they both walked out of their prospective graves. Jonah did so as a reluctant messenger, but Jesus did so as the victor over death and the savior of humanity.

We often come to the Bible seeking to be inspired by the acts of the people in these narratives, but what we get instead is a reflection of humanity. Disobedient, selfish people avoiding their mission. We need a better prophet than Jonah, we need Jesus.

- Has your reading of Jonah this week changed the way you see this story?
 - How would you describe the calling God has put on your life?
-

DISCUSSION GUIDE: APRIL 27, 2025

WEEK ONE: JONAH 1

I hope your reading this week helped you move past the commonly held interpretation that Jonah is just a book about a guy and a big fish. The first chapter of Jonah establishes several themes that will run throughout the book. We see that Jonah is a disobedient prophet who rejects the calling of God and brings dire consequences on himself and others because of his disobedience. In this, Jonah is a representative of Israel and their rejection of God's ways and his law. We will see themes of disobedience, consequences, and calling throughout Jonah. As you listen to the message today, make sure you pick up on how your pastor brings out these themes as well as the many other insights he found along the way.

ACTION STEP _____

How will I live out the action step this week?

Sermon Notes:

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: JONAH 1

- Have you ever been given a task you did not want to do? Did you put it off? Try to pass it to someone else? Did you ultimately have to finish the task?
- Jonah seems to have a lack of concern for everything around him. Whether It is God's calling, other people, or even himself. Go through chapter 1 and find everything Jonah rejects, or puts in harm. What does this tell us about consequences for our rejection of God's mission?
- Read Mark 4:35-41. How are the stories similar? How are they Different?
- Jonah was given a specific mission from God to take a message to Nineveh. Where in the New Testament do we, as Christians get the same type of calling to a mission. Split up into smaller groups and see how many commands for evangelism you can find, then share them with the larger group.
- Now that we know we have also been given a word from God the same way Jonah was, how can we act on that this week? Be specific! Who are you going to share the Gospel with?

Challenge: Examine your own calling by yourself. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you are running away like Jonah.

WEEK TWO: JONAH 2

DAY 1

You will notice, whether you read or listen, that chapter two is written in a very different structure than chapter one. That is because Hebrew writers expected their scrolls to be read out loud. At that time in history the literacy rate was only 5 to 7%. So even if they had, italics, or boldface, or all caps, it would not have mattered in terms of creating emphasis for the listener. When a Hebrew writer needed to grab attention or redirect focus they would switch genres. In this case we switch from a story or "narrative" about Jonah to poetry expressing Jonah's renewed desire to hear from God and his very pressing focus on not drowning in the middle of the ocean.

When we read Hebrew poetry we do not look for rhyme and meter like we do in English poetry. Instead we look for couplets that compare and contrast ideas. In this case Jonah is expressing his desire to be rescued, while comparing his disobedience to the power and faithfulness of God. In many cases throughout the Bible, the poems are prophecies of Jesus. Jonah was in the depths of the ocean because of his sin, but Jesus went to the depths of God's wrath because of our sin. After three days, both Jonah and Jesus left their grave, Jonah receives this mercy in spite of his disobedience, but Jesus is raised because he is worthy.

While I doubt that many of us are currently drowning in an ocean or being swallowed by a giant fish, I would say that most of us in the past year have felt like we are drowning in the events of our lives. The true personal application here is that regardless of what troubles you feel swallowed by, whether it is your fault like Jonah, or whether you are innocently suffering at the hands of others like Jesus, call out to God. He cares. He delights in showing mercy. He loves justice. Most importantly he loves you. Whoever you are, and whatever you are stuck in, call out to God.

- How is reading the poetry section different from the story section for you?
 - Think about your upcoming week. Where do you need mercy?
-

DAY 2

Today's reading should seem eerily similar to what we read yesterday. Jonah 2 and Psalm 31 are in fact so similar that we would almost ask if they have the same author. The answer is a little bit yes, and a little bit no. These two passages were probably written over 100 years apart by two different humans, but it is also important to understand that the Holy Spirit inspired both in the way. The Bible itself is truly a miracle. God inspired the mind of these authors in a way that allowed them to communicate exactly what he wanted us to know about him while using their own language, culture, and even personal style. It is a type of communication that only God can do.

It is also true that the author of Jonah was paraphrasing and making reference to Psalm 31 as he was writing chapter 2 of this book. It becomes important when we consider what this passage is about. Psalm 31 is believed to be written by King David. He is pouring out his fear to God in hope of divine rescue from the tumultuous world around him. Jonah is sinking in the ocean only to be swallowed by a great fish. In both situations we see someone in a desperate situation where they come to the realization that ONLY God can save them. Each scenario is wildly different but both exist for humans to see that this world will often confront us with circumstances beyond our control and the only reasonable option is to turn to God and cry out for protection and mercy. In both situations the Holy Spirit brought both biblical authors to the same conclusion. The question we should ask ourselves when we read these passages is: "Would my response be the same as Jonah?" By all accounts Jonah is a pretty terrible guy, but for a brief moment here he seems to have some clarity. He is facing a gruesome death and the one thing that comes to his mind is a Psalm he memorized years before. It is one of the few instances where I hope our reaction would be the same. When we are in trouble, what is our reflexive response? For me it is often anger, lashing out at the situation, and who I believe to be responsible. For others it's despair, distraction, resentment, or arrogance. Jonah didn't have a shining moment of character here though, he simply reacted based on his conditioning. Even a disobedient prophet would have memorized Scripture, and that is what came out.

This is why we take the time to memorize Scripture. This is why we do devotions and meditate on what we've read. This is why we make it a discipline even on days we don't feel like it. It's because when the trial comes we won't have a shining moment of character either, no we'll simply react in whatever way we've conditioned ourselves to react. This is why the Holy Spirit repeats so many themes in the Bible. Because he wants us to repeat it and condition ourselves to call out to God for mercy and protection.

- What type of situation causes you to abandon yourself and call to God?
 - Have you taken the time to memorize any Scripture so you can call out to God in an emergency? Why or why not?
-

DAY 3

Wait... didn't we already read about Jesus referencing the sign of Jonah last week? Yes, but last week we read from Matthew, and we needed to see the different angle and arrangement that Luke takes on this proclamation of Jesus. Matthew arranges Jesus' statement on the sign of Jonah at the end of a series of denunciations, but Luke arranges it with statements on prayer and obedience before Jesus denounces the hypocrisy of a generation. Is that a contradiction? Absolutely not. Each Gospel contains many of Jesus' teachings and interactions in a different order. Each author groups them thematically to show us a different aspect of what Jesus teaches us.

We study Luke's arrangement with Jonah 2 and Psalm 31 because it highlights what Jesus tells us about calling out for God's mercy. God does not just make his mercy and protection available, he instructs us to seek it as a matter of obedience. That is why this idea is central to Jesus teaching on the Kingdom of God. There is no middle ground or compromise when it comes to God's mercy and our ability. We can't do a little on our own and then ask God to pick up the rest. We cannot make a compromise on how much of our way will work before God's mercy needs to kick in. No, in fact any version of the Gospel that is not complete surrender and dependence is a false teaching and an outright rebellion towards God. Jonah's plight as he is sinking isn't one of give and take, it is grace and mercy or wrath and destruction. There's no third option. Jesus tells us in Luke 11 that the Kingdom of God is the same. Either we recognize our sin and our inability to overcome it, or we too earn Jesus rebuke of being a wicked and idolatrous generation.

In a world that constantly wants us to brag about our achievements and claim our own glory, the Bible tells us surrender is the only option. As we read this today it is important to take a self inventory of where we do the same. What part of our day to day lives are we telling God "I will do it my way," instead of repenting from our worldly ways? What are we holding on to because we think we know better than God? Even worse... in what part of our worldview are we embracing false teaching and rebellion all the while pretending that IS Christianity? For some of us it is anger or greed. For an overwhelming majority it is politics and economics. For so many it is

sexuality, and sadly for almost everyone it is a callous apathy.

Today, do the hard thing. Compare your view to what the Bible says, and repent. Recognize that you and I are sinking in an ocean of sin and we desperately need God's mercy.

- Where are you, personally, more likely to embrace false teaching? Is there a particular ethical subject where you struggle with the Bible teaching?
 - Where are you more likely to rely on your own ability instead of God's mercy?
-

DAY 4

Today we have another thematic comparison of Hebrew poetry. (See! That poetry unit from 8th grade language class is finally paying off!) In Isaiah 38, King Hezekiah has just been rescued from the kingdom of Assyria. That is right, Assyria, whose capital is Nineveh, the very city Jonah was called to. Hezekiah and his prophet Isaiah were both faithful to God and led the Kingdom to worship and follow Him. This stands in direct contrast to our book where Jeroboam and Jonah were both disobedient in their roles, leading the kingdom to worship idols, oppress the poor, and delve into prideful excessive behavior. Same kingdom, same offices, about

150 years apart. One pair is faithful, the other spiteful and rebellious.

Yet, two of our characters find themselves in the same situation for completely different reasons. Jonah is sinking to his death because he threw a selfish fit and chose death over obedience and now regrets it. King Hezekiah has remained faithful but just received a message from God that his illness will kill him. If you follow the word choice you can see that they both lament the fact that they stand at the gate of "Sheol." This brings us to a painful reality that we learn in this comparison. Our faithfulness to God, or lack thereof, doesn't exempt us from worldly suffering or eventual death. The message of the prosperity preachers is a lie. You cannot pay 19.95 for a prayer and get whatever you want in return. Jesus sums this up in Matthew 5:45 by telling us that God causes it to "rain on the just and the unjust." The sin, Our sin, that caused God to curse this world has ramifications for everyone.

In the end though the similarities of these stories are actually the most baffling part. Jonah the disobedient prophet, and Hezekiah the righteous king are both given mercy and allowed to live. They both surrender, cry out to God, and receive mercy that only He can give. Isn't that unfair? It would be if Jonah or Hezekiah were the focus, the main character, the center of the story, but they are not. They are both saved because God delights in showing mercy and HE receives the glory for their salvation.

Should this lead us to accept evil behavior because both the evil and the righteous receive the same mercy? The Apostle Paul would tell us absolutely not! (Romans 6:2) It should give us the same reaction as we have seen throughout our comparisons this week. It doesn't matter if you have done right or done wrong, cry out to God and seek His help. Moreover, when we tell the world of who our God is we offer his mercy to all, regardless of their character or their actions. God is glorified when he gets credit for giving mercy, and the Bible tells us explicitly that he loves to do that. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the greatest offer of mercy and salvation that will ever be made in the history of the universe and it is available to ALL! God wants to show you mercy through Jesus, and he wants you to tell the rest of the world the offer is for them as well.

- What type of transgressions do you have difficulty in showing mercy towards? (Greed, abuse, racism, waste?)
 - When we receive mercy, how can we make sure God gets the glory, instead of sounding self focused?
-

DAY 5

At the end of each week we will return to our immediate reading and put together each of the sections of Jonah. This helps us see how all the little pieces we study throughout the week fit together to form the bigger picture. Chapters 1 and 2 together begin to tell a story that we should know well. It is the story of someone who was called by God, instead

chose disobedience, found out that sin has consequences, and realized that only God Himself was strong enough to save.

The original audience that heard this message were probably Israelites in exile. For centuries God had protected them and sheltered them, but he had also called them to be a light to the nations. Israel instead rejected that calling and chose oppression, violence, and idol worship. They followed the greed and arrogance of their wicked kings instead of God. They wanted what God offered, but they wanted nothing to do with His mission. In the pain and depths of exile they knew they had messed up. They were face to face with the consequences of generational and national sin. The author however was making sure they knew that this did not have to be the end. God is merciful, even in the face of failure.

This message is the same for us today. Sin is not something that only applies to some people and not others, but a human condition that saturates our very existence until we cry out for God to save us. Every individual has messed up. At some point or another we have rejected our calling. It goes further though, sin doesn't stop at the individual level. Families, organizations, nations, yes even churches have corporate sin. That is why we study Jonah the man and how he represents ancient Israel as a whole. Just as sin has not changed, neither has the grace and mercy of our God. Today you might be like Jonah sinking in the depths and realizing that the rejection of the call has consequences.

You might be like Hezekiah feeling the unavoidable pain of a broken world. You may even be like Israel thinking you can take God's blessing without submitting to His authority.

The story is the same. From Genesis to Revelation. From Ancient Israel to the 21st century. From Adam, to Jonah, to each one of us. God gave us a mission. We messed up. There are consequences, but God loves to show mercy and grace. Jesus paid the price for us to receive that mercy and grace. So today let's call out to Him.

- Make a list of the places you need mercy in your life. How can you use those places to show your own vulnerability and witness to others?
 - Who else in your life needs mercy and grace? How can you pray for them today?
-

DISCUSSION GUIDE: MAY 4, 2025

WEEK TWO: JONAH 2

This week was very different from the first week in our book. Chapter 2 switches from a narrative (or story) to a song or poem. Hebrew poetry always gives us a comparison of how two things are alike and how they are different. This week we see a comparison of Jonah's sin with God's mercy. We find that even in the worst circumstances we can still call out to God for mercy. Then we learn that God loves to show mercy to those who call out to Him. We will see how this character trait of God is revealed and repeated throughout the book of Jonah. Call on God, because he loves to show mercy. Pay close attention to what your campus Pastor has to say in his message about calling on God, and about the mercy we will receive

ACTION STEP _____

How will I live out the action step this week?

Sermon Notes:

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: JONAH 2

- Have you ever been stuck in a terrible situation? Even worse... has it ever been your fault? What did that feel like? How did you end up resolving the situation?
- Hebrew Poetry is all about comparing and contrasting things to show us similarities and differences. Go through Jonah Chapter 2 and see what it tells us about humans, and what it tells us about God.
- In this chapter we see that God gives Jonah mercy even though he was in a situation caused by his own disobedience. This shows us God's mercy, but we also know that God lets no sin go unpunished (Exodus 34:7) How can we be committed to both mercy and justice to show the world who God is?
- Have someone look up the definition of mercy. Now have someone else look up the definition of Grace. How are they different? How are they alike? Why is it important that God shows us both through Jesus?
- What types of attitudes or sins prevent us from receiving, or even asking for mercy? What types of attitudes or sins prevent us from showing mercy? How are we similar to Jonah when we hold on to these

Challenge: Someone has probably hurt or offended you in the past week. How can you show mercy to that person to teach them about who God is?

WEEK THREE: JONAH 3

DAY 1

"The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time." This is a sentence that could easily be passed over as little more than a step forward in the story, but if we take a few moments to analyze the word choice we will realize some massive Gospel implications. Jonah already had the specifics of the message from God, the message did not change, and Jonah had not forgotten what God sent him to say. This is where we realize that "The word of the Lord," means so much to the prophets than just the details of the message. This means that the active will and Spirit of God returned to have personal fellowship with Jonah after he called out to God for mercy.

That is not all though, this phrase also tells us something about how God chooses to interact with humanity. God did not just save Jonah from the depths of the sea, he also restored him to his prophetic mission. If we stop and think about it, this is a pretty strange move from God. Jonah not only failed this mission before, he spitefully rejected it. If you and I did the same thing in our workplace we would be doing an exit interview, But God doesn't just save, he also restores. This drives home the Gospel truth that God is far more interested in the relationship he can have with you than he is in the effectiveness or efficiency of your actions. The word of the Lord returned to Jonah a second time because that is who God is and that is how he works. It is in this that we see a

prophecy of how Jesus will work in our lives. We were all created with a mission and an obligation to serve God in every way possible. Yet, because of our sinful nature we too spitefully rejected this commission and chose our own destruction. God, however, showed us mercy and grace in Jesus, and when we call out to Him, He saves us from the depths of our sin and sets us back on the mission to go tell the world about who He is and what He came to do.

- Have you ever messed up and had a second chance to do the right thing?
 - Where could you give someone a second chance in your life to show them what God is like?
-

DAY 2

Wait... Didn't we read Jonah chapter 3 yesterday? Yes, but there's a lot in this chapter we should talk about so we will be rereading it several times this week.

In verse 4 we see something incredible happen... Jonah actually did something good! He was actually obedient and did what God asked him to do, and he did not halfway do it either. The Bible says that the city was so large that it took Jonah 3 days to walk through. His preaching was bold and thorough enough the whole city knew the message. Has Jonah repented? Hardly, but we will focus on that in chapter 4. Did Nineveh just turn out to be a welcoming place with a bad reputation? Not at all. In fact this was one of the most violent and cruel cultures the world had ever seen. Ok... so what happened? Why have we gone from

destruction and disobedience to a bold and willing prophet?

Because that is what happens when we are overwhelmed by what God has done for us! We go boldly into dangerous places that we might not even like, because we have experienced what God can do for us and in that moment we are willing to do anything for him. So today we need to ask ourselves: Have we experienced the love and mercy of God in a way that is caused us to abandon everything and move forward on His mission? Walking an aisle, or getting emotional to a song might motivate you for a short time. An answered prayer or a close call might change your mind for a minute, but **ONLY** the saving power of Jesus can change you forever and make you live your whole life for something bigger than yourself.

- Has God ever answered a prayer that completely overwhelmed you? How did you react? (It is a repeated command to remember what God has done for us.)
 - How can daily spiritual disciplines keep us focused on what God has done for us?
-

DAY 3

One of the very important things we learn today is that Jonah's message was not the only warning God gave to Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Conflicts with them were foreshadowed in Genesis 10, Jonah was sent, they were the army that destroyed the northern Kingdom in 2 Kings, and

today we see Nahum's proclamation against them as well. Nineveh was a regular offender against God's people and against His ways. They were in many ways the pioneers of new tactics of slavery and oppression throughout the region. They were a culture that praised violence and cruelty. They worshiped idols and laughed at the one true God.

Yet He still loved them and chose to offer them mercy and the chance to turn from their sin. Stop, and read that sentence again.

It is no wonder that Jonah wanted to see them destroyed. In our age of petty squabbles we often wish worse on people who have done much less against us. That's not God's way though. So today we have to begin asking ourselves a very important question: Are we willing to show mercy where we have been wronged? Are we willing to share the message of Jesus in places we find disturbing? Are we willing to seek the good of those who seek to harm us in return? Because THAT is the way of God.

God is also a God of perfect justice. Nineveh, all of Assyria, and even Jerusalem itself would fall to Babylon a few years later. Every sin will be accounted for when the final day comes. We have to recognize that regardless of how bad we think someone else's sins are, we are all equally condemned without Jesus. Are you willing to share that message today?

- Have you ever wished harm on someone instead of mercy? Have you ever gone back and worked through that and repented?
 - Where do you struggle to be open about the message of the Gospel? How can you overcome that reluctance?
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DAY 4

Yes. We are reading Jonah Chapter 3 again. You may even have it memorized by the end of the week. We have talked about all the different players in the movement of the story, but we have not yet gone over the eventual outcome. In an absolutely shocking turn of events, Nineveh repents. The ancient and often enemy of God's people turn from their wickedness because they fear the Lord, and they believe that He is actually going to do what He says he will do. We have no idea why they do this, we just know that it is ev-eryone. From the King, to the leaders, to each and every citizen and servant, all the way down to the animals and livestock a full scale nationwide time of mourning and re-pentance is declared. God then, being who He is, relents from his destruction, shows mercy, and spares Nineveh.

Do not think for a second that there's also not a deeper agenda in this writing. The King of Nineveh hears one mes-sage of God's wrath and immediately turns. He then leads his people to do the same. The King of the "evil" enemy does what the King of Israel refuses to do.

Jeroboam has God's prophets in his court. He has written copies of God's law at his fingertips. He has the protection and blessing of God all around him, but Israel continues to live in excess, and immorality, while oppressing the poor and worshiping idols. The King of Nineveh listened and obeyed. How much greater is the condemnation of the one who had every opportunity to know and worship God.

I want us to ask ourselves a very sobering question today; Am I tolerating my own sin and mocking God's blessing? Am I judging others when I have all their sins AND my own hypocrisy to deal with? Am I sending out missionaries to preach a message I am ignoring? We could talk all day about whether or not the 21st century American church is in a good place or not, but I say we just skip that and stick with the message of Jesus. Let's repent, because the Kingdom of God is at Hand.

- Is there any place in your life where the Spirit is convicting you? Are you embracing that conviction or trying to block it out?
 - Are there any behaviors or attitudes in your life that you get frustrated with in others? Why and how do we justify our own behavior, but condemn others?
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DAY 5

Have you ever had a really important conversation with someone? You needed them to understand something because that one thing was going to be really important later on. If you were doing that then you would probably say that one important thing several times in the conversation. If it is that important you would not say it once then leave it. You would repeat it over and over. That makes sense right? Well that is how ancient writing works, particularly the He-brew writers of the Old Testament. The Bible gives us the most important things we can know about God and repeats them over and over until we understand.

When we put together the first 3 chapters of Jonah we start to see a pattern emerge that teaches us one of those really important things about God. God speaks to Jonah, he then flees and rejects God. God then speaks a different way, and Jonah is faced with consequences. Jonah cries out to God for mercy and God hears him and saves him. Then we see the same cycle of events takes place again, but in a different way. God speaks to Nineveh through Jonah, and consequences are looming. Nineveh cries out to God for mercy. God hears them, sees their repentance and gives them mercy. The pattern could not be more obvious. When God speaks one of two things is going to happen. There is either going to be judgment or there is going to be mercy. We see the patience of God with Jonah. We see His mercy with Jonah and Nineveh. We saw His justice and wrath in Nahum's

proclamation. When God speaks it demands an answer. Our answer depends on whether or not we believe Him.

God spoke the most powerful Word ever in Jesus. We rebelled against him like Jonah. We were all wicked like Nineveh. God gave everything to show us mercy and grace through Jesus. Whether we choose to experience the consequences of rejection or the safety of his mercy is all going to come down to whether or not we believe the word he sent by His prophets.

DISCUSSION GUIDE: MAY 11, 2025

WEEK THREE: JONAH 3

This week we finally saw the apex of the story. Jonah reluctantly preaches the message to Nineveh, and the entire nation repents. Every citizen, every ruler, even the animals for some reason, are all bound by the King to a time of mourning and repentance before God. Chapter 1 taught us about disobedience and consequences. Chapter 2 showed us that God is faithful and loves to show mercy. Chapter 3 now carries on both of those themes. Nineveh was destined for destructive consequences, but when they were obedient to God's command he showed them mercy. The author of this book is once again highlighting the character of God. It is not just the chosen people of Israel that He will bless, that He loves. It is everyone. He will be faithful to his word and show mercy to everyone who lays down their will and repents. Today your campus pastor will show you how this theme teaches us about the Gospel, how Jesus came to work in our lives, and about how we are sent on the same mission.

ACTION STEP _____

How will I live out the action step this week?

Sermon Notes:

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: JONAH 3

- Jonah Chapter 3 is essentially a story of a mission trip. He went somewhere other than his home to preach a message of consequences and repentance. Have you ever been on a mission trip? If you have, tell the group about your trip.
- What specific actions does Nineveh take to repent in Chapter 3? When we sin do we do the same? What actions do we normally take? Is there something else we should be doing? (Make sure your answer includes a chapter and verse from the Bible to explain.)
- Read Luke 11:29-32. Why does Jesus say that the men of Nineveh would condemn his generation? How is Jesus greater than Jonah? (Be specific, don't just say "Because he's Jesus. Come on. This is a discussion class.")
- Would the men of Nineveh also condemn your generation? Why or why not?
- We see that thousands of people were spared because Jonah was obedient. How can you share the message of repentance this week? What are the good consequences of being obedient in this mission? What are the negative repercussions if you avoid it?

Challenge: Jonah went on a mission trip, which is like the only good thing he does in the entire book. Have you been on a mission trip? Find out this week how you can get involved with missions at Wallace.

WEEK FOUR: JONAH 4

DAY 1

Jonah is a unique book in so many ways, but chapter 4 is the part that really stands alone among Old Testament narratives. The story should be over. God's message has been delivered and acted upon. God has revealed himself to demonstrate that he is both powerful and merciful. But then chapter 4 opens and we see that our "happy ending" is beginning to unravel. Jonah was greatly displeased and furious? Didn't he call for mercy and then follow God's instructions? Jonah is proving in the most dramatic way possible that a change in our circumstances cannot change our hearts.

God saved Jonah as he was sinking in the ocean. Used creation in a miraculous way to give him a second chance at life. Even entrusted him once again with his very own message as an agent of the Most High God, and the best Jonah can come up with is resentment. This story is just one more proof that our sinful nature runs so deep that we can never overcome it short of a supernatural spiritual change. Jonah is "Angry enough to die," because others received the same type of mercy as him. Let's not be polite here. Jonah was a racist. A nationalist. A warmonger. Jonah was all the things he hated in Nineveh and more. He wanted God's mercy, but only if it was exclusively for him. He wanted God's protection, but not God's sovereignty

Although some of the statements in this chapter are absurd enough to almost be comedic, we have to recognize that Jonah chapter 4 is one of the most brutal indictments in all of Scripture. Jonah is being put forth as a representative for God's people here. God is proving that our sin does not depend on our circumstances. Jonah had all of God's protection and blessing. All of God's patience and mercy. Yet it was not enough for him, because sin had corrupted his heart. Yes we desperately need all those things Jonah received from God, but more than that we needed a better prophet. One who could not only tell us the message, but change our hearts to accept it. Jonah chapter 4 proves the same thing as the rest of Scripture. We need Jesus.

- What prejudices are you struggling to overcome in your life? Jonah's was national and racial. How are you working through your own?
 - Have you ever resented someone for receiving some type of blessing? Maybe even the same type of blessing you have?
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DAY 2

If you have spent much time around church before then you have probably already encountered the parable of the prodigal son. The idea of betrayal, rebellion, cataclysm, and return tells us much about the Gospel, and could even be compared to Jonah's character arc in chapters 1-3. In chapter 4 however, Jonah is the mirror image of the older brother in Jesus' parable. The older brother should be celebrating that his brother has returned and is

receiving mercy, but he is only focused on himself. He is so focused on what he “deserves” that he comes to disdain the father’s mercy and grace.

In Jonah chapter four, he is angry that Nineveh received mercy. He is angry that a worm ate his shade plant. He is angry that God’s character is consistent. The wildest thing in Jonah chapter 4 is that he says nothing that is untrue about God. He basically affirms God’s character. In verse 2 he says “I knew that you were a gracious and compassionate God.” Jonah doesn’t have bad information. Jonah doesn’t have bad theology. Jonah has the wrong perspective, and Jonah DEFINITELY has the wrong view of himself. Jonah and the older brother both see themselves as deserving of blessing while they see others as deserving of wrath. They think their “works” have entitled them to some type of higher regard from God. Neither one views themselves as a sinner in need of mercy.

One of the greatest blessings we can ever receive is when the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. When God himself shows us how broken we are and how badly we need His grace. This is something that has to happen for us to receive the gift of salvation from Jesus and something that has to continually happen for us to grow spiritually. God is also merciful in that he doesn’t show us how bad we are all at once. If he did it would absolutely shatter us! (See Isaiah 6 for an example.) That is why we experience conviction just a little bit at a time.

So today as we read. You and I can repent from the places we feel like we have earned God's love and remember what grace actually is, and how badly we need it.

- Is there anywhere you tend to mistakenly feel like you deserve blessings from God instead of seeing them as gifts?
 - How can you celebrate when others receive mercy and grace? How can we reject our cultural narrative of "earning" everything?
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DAY 3

Early on in our study we read two key texts where Jesus references "the sign of Jonah." Now in hindsight, having studied the entire book of Jonah, we need to look back and see if we can grasp the depth of what Jesus is trying to communicate. Today we read Luke's account of Jesus mentioning Jonah. Armed with our full grasp of the context of what is going on in Jonah, we see how severe Jesus' criticism actually turns out to be.

Once again, the surface meaning is obvious to most of us. Jesus spent three days in the tomb, Jonah spent 3 days in the fish. Jonah was prevented from dying, Jesus overcame death. As satisfying as that comparison is, Jesus is making a statement that cuts much deeper in Luke 11. "Just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh,

so the Son of Man will be to this generation.” We have to remember here that Jonah came to Nineveh to preach their impending doom because God’s wrath and Justice was poised to destroy them. Jesus isn’t just predicting his death and resurrection, he is letting the crowd know that this message is the only chance any of them will ever have to avoid destruction for their evil ways.

Later in the same passage he states that the men of Nineveh will stand up and condemn this generation, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. This has to be one of the least flattering things Jesus says in the Gospels about those listening. He is essentially saying that the most barbaric, godless, idol worshipping culture to ever take up arms against Jerusalem had more sense and more awareness of God than the people in his immediate context. Not only did they hear and immediately repent, but they did so at the preaching of Jonah, who as we have discovered is a terrible prophet, dramatically self obsessed, and kind of an idiot. Compare that to the people in front of Him, who are hearing and rejecting the actual voice of God in the flesh.

Jesus makes sure they know this. He says “behold” something greater than Jonah is here. The message here is clear. If we miss or reject Jesus, the greatest prophet ever, the Son of Man, and the very voice of God, then just like Nineveh our destruction is at hand, because we have sinned against God. So don not wait, and do not wait to tell your friends. Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.

- Why do you think Jesus was so harsh in his criticism of the people he was speaking to in Luke? How do you think Jesus would correct the American religious culture of our time?
 - This text shows great urgency for repentance. Who do you need to share this message of urgency with today?
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DAY 4

Just like we went back for a deeper understanding of Jesus' mention of Jonah in Luke, today we recap for a deeper understanding of how it is arranged in Matthew. We have definitely covered Jesus condemning comparison of his current generation to the men of Nineveh, but today we have to look at Jesus' specific attack on the religious culture of the time. Now that we know the sad and kind of pathetic character Jonah possessed, Matthew's arrangement of the material becomes much more pointed.

In verses 1-8 of Matthew 12 we see that the Pharisees are trying to twist a law that God made for the good of man into an oppressive and draining ritual task. As people who were simply seeking to have power over others, the Pharisees cared little for the life giving rest and renewal a true sabbath rest had to offer. They were looking to find a fault to exploit, and in doing so it revealed their

desire to see others suffer, all the while bringing shame to God's law. In Jonah chapter 4 we see that Jonah preached repentance only hoping for destruction. He cared for a plant that shaded him, but not for the people that God had made.

In Verses 9-14 we see a similar story. Jesus breaks the sabbath common by healing a man. At the Pharisees' revulsion he doesn't even attempt to argue about the law, no Jesus questions the motivations of their heart. He doesn't call into question their Knowledge of the law, but the content of their character, which proves they never understood the law to begin with. This is the same thing he does to Jonah in chapter 4. He uses creation itself to reveal to Jonah that his heart is desperately wicked, and that he does not understand the character of God.

When we read these chapters, Jesus is asking the same of us. Do we love our rules more than we love people? Do we love our traditions more than we love the desires of God? Have we sold out God's intentions for our own power and comfort? We need to look deep within ourselves and make sure we are allowing the Spirit to illuminate the dark places of legalism and apathy that we all hang on to. It may hurt. It will not be fun. It is worth it though, because it ultimately leads us closer to Jesus.

- Do you have traditions or rules that you hang onto very tightly? How can we follow Jesus' example and still be faithful and righteous while putting people before the rules?
 - How do you react when the Holy Spirit convicts you of something? How can you lean in and accept the conviction of the Holy Spirit?
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DAY 5

I know that all four chapters may be a lot to read in one sitting, but on the final day of this study it's good for us to see how the whole story fits together. God calls a rebellious prophet, who then rejects the mission. God saves that same prophet as he cries out for mercy while drowning in the consequences of his own actions. God charges the prophet with the same mission, he reluctantly carries it out, and God is glorified because the people of Nineveh repent. Then in a strange and sad twist the prophet sulks, curses God, and wishes for his own death because he didn't get to watch thousands of people get massacred.

The author of this story had a clear message. God's people had lost their way. They wanted God's protection. They wanted God's blessing. They wanted no part however in making His name great among the nations. Their King wanted excess and spread idolatry and oppression. Their prophet was a coward who liked to throw dramatic hissy fits. They no longer cared about God or what he wanted for the world.

Jesus then appeals to Jonah to say much the same thing about his current generation. He tells them how He will die, and be raised again, but they plot to kill Him because He is a threat to their power and their tradition.

The most chilling part of how the book of Jonah ends? It is unresolved. There's no answer from Jonah in return to God's question. God asks Jonah if he no longer shares in compassion, or if he even hates how God cares for the people. Jonah's only recorded response is silence. This is intentional on the part of the author. It forces the reader to ask the same question. Do we love our rules, our traditions, our comforts, our kings, and the ways of this world more than we love God?

Even more importantly, the book of Jonah shows us that no matter how many miracles we see, no matter how many times God changes our circumstances it will not be enough. Jonah's heart was rebellious... Just like ours. We need Jesus to change our hearts so that we too will not be stuck with silence when God asks us the question of whether or not we love what He loves.

- What are your major takeaways from your study of Jonah?
- Do you understand the story differently now than when you first heard it? How so?

DISCUSSION GUIDE: MAY 18, 2025

WEEK FOUR: JONAH 4

Chapter 4 is not the ending that anyone expected. Often people who have grown up in church do not even know about chapter 4 because we focus so much on the part with the fish. This should have been a happy ending, but Jonah is angry that the people of Nineveh were not slaughtered. He then has compassion for a plant that he cannot summon for people only proving how self centered he is. In one of the most petty and dramatic moments of the Bible Jonah tells God TWICE that he is "mad enough to die." This is where all our themes tie together. God's mercy and compassion are highlighted in comparison to Jonah's callous corruption and selfishness. Jonah is still the disobedient prophet from chapter 1. Even if he changed his actions his heart remained corrupt. God is very clear to Jonah that he wants to show compassion and mercy. It is very clear to us that Jonah needs to change his heart. Chapter 4 should make us examine ourselves to see if our prejudices outweigh our compassion, but even more it should make us realize that we need the supernatural intervention of Jesus to break the corruption in our hearts. Listen carefully to how your campus pastor asks you to reflect, repent, and call on Jesus today.

ACTION STEP

How will I live out the action step this week?

Sermon Notes:

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: JONAH 4

- In chapter 4 Jonah uses the phrase “Mad enough to die,” twice. What makes you angry? Is it a small thing? An annoyance? Is it something about the world? How do you calm down when you get angry?
- Read Matthew 12:1-8. The Pharisees are twisting God’s law to oppress people. Why is the intention of the law important in understanding why God gave it? Are there any laws that we overuse or interpret poorly from the Bible that end up harming people?
- Now read Matthew 12:9-14. Jesus tells us how our care for others should shape our understanding of the law. How can we be faithful to do what is right and still always put people first.
- Finally read Matthew 12:38-42. Jonah and the Pharisees had the same type of corrupt demeanor. Clearly the sign of Jonah means that Jesus will rise after 3 days, but how does it also speak to the character of the Pharisees and religious culture of Jesus’ time?
- Ultimately Jonah was prevented from a relationship with God because his racial, social, national, and personal prejudices were more important to him. How are these same types of prejudices causing people in the church to lose sight of God today? In what ways are these same types of sins still our problem? How can we repent from these in a way that would show the grace and mercy of God?

Challenge: Jonah eventually falls away due to prejudice and hatred. Are there people you have trouble liking or interacting with? How can you overcome that and interact with them this week?

