

God's Unrelenting Grace Series
Our Need for Grace
February 4, 2018

Jonah 1:1-4, 7-8, 15-17

1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: **2** "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." **3** But Jonah ran away from the LORD **4** Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.

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 do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" **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** But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights. NIV.

Introduction:

For the next several weeks we are going to be studying the book of Jonah together. It's a fascinating book of the Bible about a reluctant prophet. But just before we look at the text from that perspective let me tell you about a little girl and her pastor's discussion about the book of Jonah.

A little girl was observed by her pastor standing outside the pre-school Sunday School classroom between Sunday School and worship, waiting for her parents to come and pick her up for "big church." The pastor noticed that she clutched a big storybook under her arms with the obvious title, "Jonah and the Whale."

Feeling a little pernicious, he knelt down beside the little girl and began a conversation. "What's that you have in your hand?", he asked." This is my storybook about Jonah and the Whale," she answered.

"Tell me something, little girl," he continued, "do you believe that story about Jonah and that whale to be the truth?" The little girl implored, "Why of course I believe this story to be the truth!" He inquired further, "You really believe that a man can be swallowed up by a big whale, stay inside him all that time, and come out of there still alive and OK? You really believe all that can be true?" She declared, "Absolutely, this story is in the Bible and we studied about it in Sunday School today!"

Then the pastor asked, "Well, little girl, can you prove to me that this story is the truth?" She thought for a moment and then said, "Well, when I get to Heaven, I'll ask Jonah." The pastor then asked, "Well, what if Jonah's not in Heaven?" She then put her hands on her little hips and sternly declared, "Then YOU can ask him!"

I want to make it clear – I believe the story to be true!!! But focusing on the whale swallowing Jonah alone misses some of the important messages and principles God wants us to understand! You see not only is it about a reluctant prophet is most importantly it is a picture of God's Unrelenting Grace towards mankind. Studying the book of Jonah, we ought to see...

We are in need of God's unrelenting grace because

- I. **We try to run from God (v.3)** ³ **But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish.**

I heard the story of a lawyer who was trying to deliver an important paper to someone. Thinking it was some kind of a subpoena, the intended recipient avoided the attorney constantly running from him. But this was a very persistent attorney, and he would not give up. This went on for 14 years, until (more about the until in a moment. Read more at <http://www.wnd.com/2017/01/running-from-god-good-luck-with-that/#wr8RTdA8SmCWi1FA.99>)

I think Jonah's running from God reveals the truth about all of us when we run from the Lord its for one of two reasons. First, we run from the Lord

1. Because we don't like what he says (v.2) The back ground of this is that Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because they were a ruthless, wicked and cruel people! They in a nutshell were his enemy and he wanted nothing to do with them!

For us it could be...

- one of his commandments
- a direction he has given – witness to someone at work, a neighbor, an enemy
- a call of God

This leads to the second reason we run....

2. Because we allow fear to control us (v.2)
You and I were created to operate by and in faith not fear! Jonah feared what the people of Nineveh would do to him. It's kind of humorous when you think about it that Jonah feared Nineveh more that he feared God, that is until we realize we do the same!

Someone said in well when said, we all have our reasons for running:

- We run because we're scared.
- We run because we're prideful or rebellious.

- We run because we've been hurt.
- We run because we believe the lie that God's presence is not what is best for us.

But the truth is that the only real joy can be found in God's presence. **Ps 16:11** You have made ^e known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. NIV

Remember the man running from the attorney who avoided him until? Well the man ended up in a hospital bed, dying of cancer. As he was lying there, the lawyer wheeled up next to him with the paper. The man said, "I don't even care anymore. I'm dying of cancer. Give me the subpoena."

"What subpoena?" the lawyer asked. "I have a document here to prove that you've inherited \$45 million dollars!"

You see we are in need of God's Unrelenting Grace because at one time or another we find ourselves running from Him.

The next thing that Jonah teaches us is that we are in need of God's unrelenting grace because

- II. **Running from God is Futile** (v.4,17) **4** Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, **17** But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

Say this with me this morning – you can run but you can't hide! Are you as amused as I am with criminals who try to 'out run the police?' I mean how in the world do you out run a radio system and network of 100's of police cars? Or how can you think you can out run a helicopter – once they get that bird in the air and have an "eye in the sky" running is futile!

You and I need God's grace because when we run from him ...

a. You can run but you can't hide

- Let me call to your memory Ps. 139:7-9
7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? **8** If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, ^a you are there. NIV
- If David is the author of this psalm I have to wonder if he might be thinking about the prophet Nathan's encounter? David thought he had out run God by a conspiracy of lies and deception – yes, he ran from God but he discovered he could run but not hide. Because of God's unrelenting Grace David's sin was uncovered! God saw the sinful moment in bed with Bathsheba, God's saw the lies and deception to Uriah, and God was the conspiracy and murder of Bathsheba's husband.
 - God has tasked be to remind you today that you can run but you cannot hide sir, lady, teenager. He saw those moments of sin and

rebellion and if you will not come clean with him in repentance in his unrelenting grace he will pursue you attempting to bring you to repentance.

The truth is ...

b. *You can run but you will be miserable*

- Notice at first Jonah is comfortable in running! He is asleep in the ship while the storm rages. But because of God's Unrelenting Grace and love God doesn't allow the comfort to continue.
- God provides a great fish – imagine the cramped, smelly darkness! Have you ever been sea sick? (Miserable with a capital M !!!)

This leads us to the last thing I want to point out this morning. Jonah teaches us is that we are in need of God's unrelenting grace because

III. **Running from God has its consequences (v.7)** 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.

I want to be careful here – because not every storm, calamity, crisis, is the result of my running, rebellion or sin. At the same time, we need to realize that some clearly are and running from God is NOT without its consequences! The tragic thing is that most of the time the consequences are two-fold! Notice that Jonah's running brought consequences ...

a. *For others around us* (v.8) **who is responsible for making all this trouble for us?**

- Can you think of a time in the Bible when it relates someone's sin/running that it affect them alone?
 - Eve's affect Adam, Cain's affected Able, David's Uriah, Bathsheba and the nation, and on and on
 - It will effect our families, friendships and those around us

b. *For ourselves* (v.15) **and the lot fell on Jonah.**

Ultimately the consequences of running from God are to get us to run towards God! They are meant to spare us from the great consequences to come.

Conclusion:

This morning I'm talking to just two groups of people those who are not running towards God and those who are running – regardless of which group your in God's Unrelenting Grace is pursuing you!

First, hear me if your running away from him. His Grace has been relentless in his pursue!