

PICTURE OF ONE FOR WILMINGTON EVENT

Prayer

Good Things, Little Packages- Jonah, Chapter 2, Prayer of Surrender

Recap: Unique prophet, he doesn't have it altogether, he is a fellow struggler. Jonah holds a mirror to our own lives. We are Jonah! Matthew 13, Jesus declares himself as the greater Jonah- that Jonah pointed to Him, Jonah was disobedient, Jesus was fully obedient, Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish for his own sins, Jesus was three days in the grave for the sins of mankind. And so when we read this story we should must also read through the lens of the New Testament interpretation.

Word of God came and told Jonah to go to Nineveh, he instead goes to Tarshish. Opposite direction. [Show Map](#)...He attempts to run away from God. Much like Jonah we are all runaways- *Isaiah 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way...* We all have moments, seasons, some long, extended periods of time where we are running from God's commands. We learned two principles: **1) Running from God is dangerous.** But God pursues Jonah, he sends a storm to speak to Jonah, to get his attention, to rock his boat... When we run from God it brings nothing but destruction, sorrow, disappointment. **2) God Pursues Runners!** God brought the storm, Not to punish him, but to win him back. Much the same way as a good parent would bring discipline into the life of an obstinate child, that's the loving thing to do, God brings discipline into Jonah's life. The most unloving thing God could have done was stop pursuing Jonah and give him what he wanted. God brings storms of Grace in our lives so that we would surrender and turn to him. How might God be calling you to surrender?

Pick up the story, remember what happens? Jonah tells the sailors to throw him over the boat, reluctantly they do it...Jonah seemingly goes from bad to worse- from the belly of a rocking boat, to the belly of a stinking fish! But Scripture tells us that this was not fish sent to condemn and kill...this wasn't Jaws, but one that the Lord provided as a vessel to save him.

Jonah 2

¹ From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. ² He said: "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

³ You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. ⁴ I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'

⁵ The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. ⁶ To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit.

⁷ "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. ⁸ "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.

⁹ But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'" ¹⁰ And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

The word to describe Jonah in his situation is DESPERATE- means: in dire need of help. A desperate man, in a desperate situation, prays a desperate prayer...and God listens! You may find yourself feeling like Jonah today. You are in a desperate situation, with your health, with your finances, because of bad choices, addiction fighting, with your job, with your marriage, with your kids...I want to give you hope from God's Word today, that God listens to the prayers of desperate people, even when they have created the problem themselves.

But I also want to speak to the rest of you who feel like they have their stuff together for the most part today. Desperate? That is a word you would never use to describe yourself. Do we see ourselves in dire need, spiritually? Do we see ourselves in dire need of God's grace every day, every moment in our lives? Do we recognize God's provision for us, that it is his breathe in our lungs? That without the Gospel of Jesus we are utterly lost? That without the Holy Spirit's empowerment we so easily slip back into our old ways and habits? The danger of affluence is that we forget who we are and our dire need for him. God speaks to the affluent church of Laodicea-

Revelation 3:17-18

You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

We are Laodicea, we are Jonah. We are desperate people, in a desperate spiritual situation and I want to challenge us to pray like it!

Today we want to challenge us with **6 Truths About The Power of Desperate Prayer**

1) God Responds to Desperate Prayers

Jonah 2:1-2

From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. ² He said: "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

Notice that this is the first time it is recorded that Jonah prayed. Maybe you picture God with his arms crossed saying, "Oh you get yourself into some deep trouble and

NOW all of a sudden you want my help?" Maybe because you believe this about God that you don't cry out to him when you are going through distress. You feel like you've messed up too much, it's too embarrassing. But in desperation of his own creation, Jonah cries out to God and God listens and answers!

Psalm 51:17

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

We need to stop believing the lie that God treats us like we treat others. God treats us with grace. At the moment we cry out to Him he is listening, moving, responding. This leads us to the 2nd truth about desperate prayer.

2) Desperate Prayer Closes the Distance with God.

Jonah was running from God in the opposite direction. He thought he ran so far from him and yet in his dark hour of desperation, the moment he turned to God he found him right there. See, we can run from God but we can't outrun God.

Ex: Hard heartedness during my sabbatical, felt so far away from God, listening to song- God broke me and I called out to him, I experienced his presence immediately.

This separates Christianity from every other religion which say that God is up there in heaven and we are down here. This great distance between us. But Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us."

Hebrews 4:15-16

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

3) Desperate Prayer Transfers Control to God

Jonah thought he was in control when he boarded that ship to Tarshish. "God's not in control of my destiny. I'm my own captain! I can do what I want." Nothing quite like being swallowed by a fish that makes you feel helpless. Listen to the language he uses to describe his situation.

Jonah 2:3, 5-6

³ You **hurled** me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents **swirled** about me; all your waves and breakers **swept** over me.

⁵ The **engulfing** waters **threatened** me, the deep **surrounded** me; seaweed was **wrapped around** my head. ⁶ To the roots of the mountains **I sank down**; the earth

beneath barred me in forever.

Trapped...Jonah was utterly helpless, not in control, not the captain...and at the mercy of God. Some of us can relate to that feeling right now. But, some of us here are control freaks, some of us embrace the American independent spirit too well and we think we are in charge of our own destiny. For you, your worst fears are feeling helpless and an uncertain future. Sometimes God will figuratively speaking wrap some seaweed around your head to loosen your grip of control. He may need to convince you that you don't have as much control as you thought. So that we simply say, "You are God, I am not."

1 Peter 5: 6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Ex: My experience at Brandywine

God Responds to Desperate Prayers
Desperate Prayer Closes the Distance with God
Desperate Prayer Transfers Control to God

4) Desperate Prayer Reorients our Worship

Jonah 2:8

Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.

Jonah isn't just preaching, he's speaking from his experience. Jonah became aware of his idolatry. When you run from God you are running to something whatever it is you are running represents an idol. Something that you love too much in place of God. Jonah was running from God to something- maybe his idol was control, comfort. Maybe it was nationalism. But he's saying from his experience that when we cling on to our idols we forfeit the experience of God's love, because we are so focused grasping for love from something else that will ultimately disappoint us.

Ex: I love my wife and kids- but they can become idols if I desire their love more than God's. I love you, church- but you can become an idol if I desire your praise and love more than God's.

While desperate circumstances have a way of ripping idols from our lives, we don't need to wait until we are in desperate circumstances to reorient our worship to its rightful place in God. Every day I start off my day with a desperate prayer. "God I need you today!" Do you start your day with a desperate prayer to God? If not, who is really in control?

5) Desperate Prayer Leads to Obedience

Jonah 2:9b

What I have vowed I will make good.

Jonah finally comes to the end of himself at the end of this prayer. The end of his rebellion and surrenders to God's will. Jonah recommits himself to obedience. He didn't get it right, but he was committed to making it right. Prayer is not about changing God's Will. He is not a genie in a bottle. He is not a concierge service. One of the primary purposes of prayer is to get our will aligned with God's will. Jesus in the garden modeled this.

Have we wrestled with God through desperate prayers to align our will? I have many times gone into prayer not submissive to God yet, still arguing with Him...but resolved that at the end of the prayer I'm aligned.

6) Desperate Prayer Brings Deliverance

Not only does God listen to Jonah's desperate cries, he responds.

Jonah 2:6b

But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit.

Jonah 2:9b-10

Salvation comes from the Lord. And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

God in his grace brought him through the dark night, from distress, from the brink of death and delivered him. Sometimes God delivers us from our circumstances like he did for Jonah. He delivers us from strongholds and addictions, from the brink of financial ruin, from a health issue. Sometimes God doesn't deliver us from our circumstances but delivers us from fear, control, hardness of heart and rebellion... some bondage we are in. In other words, he may not change our circumstances but he changes us through our circumstances.

Recap:

- 1) God Responds to Desperate Prayer
- 2) Desperate Prayer Closes the Distance with God.
- 3) Desperate Prayer Transfers Control to God
- 4) Desperate Prayer Reorients our Worship
- 5) Desperate Prayer Leads to Obedience
- 6) Desperate Prayer Brings Deliverance

When is the last time you cried out to God out of a heart of brokenness, surrender, desperation?

John Newton- Amazing Grace, was a man who understood prayers of desperation. Newton was a fellow runner like Jonah, like us. He abandoned his faith as a teenager and got involved in the slave trade. He was a gambler, a drinker, a blasphemer. But it

was in a boat in a stormy sea much like Jonah that God got his attention. Out of a place of desperation he cried out to God, who answered Him, and spared his life. While this seed of faith began, he had many more moments of sliding back in his faith until he gained solid footing. But he never lost his own sense of desperation and need for God's grace. "What a poor creature I am in myself, incapable of standing a single hour without continual fresh supplies of strength and grace from the fountain-head."

Are you in a desperate situation but too proud to call on God? Or afraid that He won't listen? I promise you, turn toward him in humility, in true brokenness of heart and he will be right there ready to minister to you in your time of need.

Have you been getting of the danger of affluence in not seeing your spiritual need? May the Lord open the eyes of your heart to see your great need for him every day.