

REDEMPTION

— ONE AUTHOR. ONE STORY. ONE SAVIOR. —

SIDE A —

01 JOSEPH

02 JOB

03 DAVID & GOLIATH

SIDE B —

04 DANIEL

05 JONAH

06 NOAH



"He who has ears, let him hear."

MATTHEW 13:9

Relentless Mercy: A Virtue That's Hard to Swallow!

August 3, 2026

INTRO: Questions about Jonah are more about how Jonah could live three days in the belly of a great fish than questions about the mercy of Jonah's God and the lack of mercy of God's prophet.

The Life and Times of Jonah the Prophet

- Prophesied in the early to mid-8th Century BC.(circa 785 -746 BC)
- Prophesied under the 14th king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam II, during a time of prosperity and expansion.

2 Kings 14:25 ²⁵ *He (Jeroboam II) restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher.*

- The Word of the Lord: Go to the great city of Ninevah in Assyria (Iraq) of 120k to prophesy against them of their evil which God states, *"Has come up before me."* (1:2)
- Though Assyria was at one time a much stronger country, they were going through a time of inner political turmoil and the result was Israel's time of expansion. (this would be before the close of the century end)

Jonah's Merciful God

What would the prophet Jonah have known about the character of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? (Just about everything...in his HEAD!)

- As a prophet to the King, Jonah knew the Torah and early historic/poetic traditions.
- By Jonah's time, the OT would have contained dozens of verses on God's mercy.

Exodus 33:19 ¹⁹ *And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.*

Psalms 103:8-12 *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.⁹ He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

But that mercy is just for us "chosen people", right?

Psalms 22:27 *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.*

Genesis 12:3b *...in you (Abraham) all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*

God's Merciless Prophet

Jonah, the man called by God to be his voice to the people, flees because he only wants to say what God wants him to say if he agrees with what God wants to say!

Jonah 1:1-3 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So, he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah was not so much fearful of the Ninevites killing him, which they were all too capable of doing; And Jonah feared, not failing in his efforts to preach to Nineveh, he feared he'd succeed! He didn't want them to repent!

Jonah 4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly and he was angry. ² And he prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." ³ Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴ And the Lord said, "Do you do well to be angry?"

Law #2: And who is my neighbor? (Certainly not those barbaric Ninevites!)

Luke 10:29-37 ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

The heathen sailors were more merciful than the man whose God is the Lord!

Jonah 1:12-13 He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea, then the sea will quite down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you. Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to the dry land, but they could not..."

Jonah, the “Down in the Mouth” Prophet, Until...

Jonah 1:15 *So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.*

Jonah 1:17-18 *And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.*

And then Jonah prayed...

Jonah 2:2, 7, 9-10 *“I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol (Psalm 139:8) I cried, and you heard my voice. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.⁸ Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.⁹ But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!”*

Jonah realized God is sovereign and will do as he wills with the Salvation that is only his to give. And though he turns back to the Lord to go physically to Nineveh, his heart was still not turned fully to God nor to the Ninevites.

“Salvation belongs to God alone, to no one else. If someone is saved, it is wholly God’s doing. It is not a matter of God saving you partly and you saving yourself partly. No. God saves us. We do not and cannot save ourselves. That’s the gospel.”

Timothy Keller, Rediscovering Jonah, p. 80.

The Prodigal Prophet

Now vomited up, Jonah had lots of time to think as he headed to Nineveh.

Jonah 3:3 *So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. ...And the people of Nineveh believed. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. And the word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes and issued a proclamation...*

- *Nineveh repented...*
- *God relented...*
- *Jonah vented...*

Jonah 4:1 *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry (and gave God an earful about His character of mercy. And his consternation continues to the end of the book.*

Terrace seats; a large covering; an expectant prophet; disappointed at the outcome!

"In the first half Jonah plays the 'prodigal son'... who ran from his father. In the second half... Jonah is like the 'older brother', who obeys his father but berates him for his graciousness." Timothy Keller from his preached message on Jonah

The issue to God is never the sinner or the depth of his sin, but God's own compassion and the depths of His mercy. No one sinner is worse than another, though his sins may be more heinous. Dead is dead and unrighteous is unrighteous. One spiritually, lifeless sinner is no more difficult for God to raise from their spiritual deadness than another; and by his mercy, he will do so, for He will have mercy upon those whom he will have mercy.

"Jesus is the prophet Jonah should have been. Yet, of course, he is infinitely more than that. Jesus did not merely weep for us; he died for us. Jonah went outside the city, hoping to witness its condemnation, but Jesus went outside the city to die on a cross to accomplish its salvation." Timothy Keller, Rediscovering Jonah, p.124

A Prophet Greater than Jonah

Matthew 12:38-42 ⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

When Jesus Christ came to earth, he was leaving the ultimate comfort zone, in order to come and minister not just to a people who might harm him, but to a people who would. And to save them, he would have to do much more than preach, he would have to die for them. While the original Jonah was merely thought to be dead, Jesus actually died and rose again. It was what Jesus called the sign of Jonah.

Timothy Keller, Counterfeit Gods, p. 151

The "Word of the Lord" to us, calls us to leave our temporal comfort zones to surrender to Him who is Mercy, be saturated with Him who is Mercy, so that *"Whatever we do in word or deed, we do it all in the name of Jesus (who is Grace and Mercy) , which shouts to a dead in their sins world: HE IS WHO YOU NEED: THE GOD who is grace and mercy! (Col. 3:17)*

Matthew 10:8b Freely we have received, FREELY GIVE!

Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, to die is gain.

- If truly in him we have received mercy, we therefore extend mercy.
- If in him we have been forgiven, we therefore forgive as we have been forgiven.
- If truly in him we have life, we desire for others to do so as well.

The "sign" that we have truly received mercy, been forgiven and found the merciful life is that we live out the merciful life that we have received! Perfectly? No. We are all Jonah's. But we strive according to the power within us, and that power is the presence of the God of mercy, Himself!

[illegible]

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What is your favorite seafood dish or restaurant and why?

2. Growing up, how did you view this famous story of Jonah in the belly of a fish? Did you believe it was literal, allegorical, or completely fictional?

3. Would anyone like to share a story about a time when you had a complete meltdown over a seemingly small inconvenience?

4. Share any light (seemingly insignificant) or heavy (really challenging) experience you have had where you, so to speak, ended up in the belly of a great fish and how you got there?

- **Did it take you more than or less than three days to be vomited up? Why?**
 - **Did you follow through with the “Word of the Lord” that came to you?**
-

5. If there is a specific “Nineveh” individual or individuals in your life that the Lord has directed you to pursue, whether believer or unbeliever? Who is it or are they?

- **Are you motivated to now obey the Word of the Lord and go?**
 - **If not, why not? If so, when will you go? (PRAY TOGETHER ABOUT THESE)**
-



ONE AUTHOR. ONE STORY. ONE SAVIOR.

"He who has ears, let him hear."

MATTHEW 13:9