

Rebellion Against God's Mission / Jonah 1

Good morning church, if you have a bible go ahead and turn to the book of Jonah chapter 1.

For the next 4 weeks we are going to be walking through this short book that focuses on the life of the prophet Jonah and his calling to be a part of God's mission.

Most of us in the room have heard this story before. We are quite familiar with it, at least we are familiar with what happens to Jonah involving a large fish.

But as much as that element of the story remains with us, this story as we will see over the next 4 weeks is not so much about a big fish, or even Jonah, but instead it is about God and his mission.

This book, as we will see, displays the character of God but also displays the character of mankind.

It will show God's compassion and love toward sinners, but also show us our rebellion and self – righteousness.

In many ways this story is not one we look down upon in the words of scripture, but instead as a type of mirror showing us all the places we have rebelled against God's mission.

I think the book of Jonah serves as a warning to the nation of Israel as a rebuke for their lack of care and concern about God's glory and God's mission, and it can serve as a wakeup call for us as well.

I hope our time in Jonah awakes us to the reality of God's mission and our invitation to be a part of it in our lives.

So lets read Jonah chapter 1 and get started.

Jonah 1

Lets Pray

Madi Story / Spaghetti

I can remember one of my worst parenting mistakes I have made so far. It is important that when you tell your child something, especially when it comes to discipline that you do what you said you are going to do. You can't discipline with empty word cause kids will know you don't really mean what you say.

Well one day me and Amber were trying to get Madi to try spaghetti for the first time. She had never had anything like it really before and Amber had made it for dinner so we thought it was time to offer it to Madi.

One thing you have to know about Madi is that she is a real particular eater, but nonetheless we decided she needed to try this new food. And I made the mistake of saying, “we are not getting up from this table until you try this.” And unbeknownst to me Madi was willing to wait. She was determined not to try that spaghetti, her mind was set and there was nothing that could be done.

So 45 minutes later, I basically had to sneak a tiny taste of it into her mouth to finally say she had tried it and we could move on.

But from the beginning she was determined for it never to happen.

In a similar way with much but with worse consequences, we see this determination from Jonah to rebel against God’s calling on him to preach to those far from God.

So our first point covering verses 1-11 is...

#1 Rebellion Determined in God’s Mission v. 1-11

In verses 1-3 we see

#1. A Rebellion Decided v. 1-3

¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” ³But 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.

First we see the word of the Lord come to Jonah and call him to go and preach in...

Nineveh

This call for Jonah could have been terrifying and crazy all at the same time.

Nineveh was a growing city that would eventually become the capital of the Assyrian Empire, the same empire who were the main enemies of Israel.

It would be the Assyrians who would come and invade and sack the northern kingdom, Israel later in 722 BC, just after Jonah’s lifetime.

It was also not common for God to call prophets to go and preach judgement and repentance against enemy nations, usually prophets called their own people back to God.

But here God calls Jonah to call out their evil.

But Jonah rebels and the decision to rebel against this call of God on Jonah's life is apparent when he decides to go to Joppa and get a ride to...

Tarshish

Tarshish at the time was a port city in the complete opposite direction of Nineveh.

Tarshish would have been close to 2000 miles west of Nineveh.

For reference it would be like you being in Kansas and God called you to go to Cleveland, MS and instead you headed for Portland Oregon.

Jonah wanted to double his distance from Nineveh so that he could flee from the...

Presence of the Lord

In those first 3 verses that phrase is mentioned 2 times.

Jonah wanted to not only rebel against God's call on him, he wanted to remove himself from even the presence of the Lord.

The phrase presence of the Lord was more of an idiom that spoke to ones willingness and submission to be used by the Lord. To be in the "presence of God" was to be submissive to his will and calling.

Jonah knew God was not a God that had local power over a region or specific location, although that was a common belief in the ancient near east.

We know he doesn't think this because later in the chapter he explains his God, Yahweh as one that has created the water and land.

What Jonah is saying is that he wants to completely remove himself from God's work in the world.

He has fully decided to rebel not only in his mind and in his heart, but also in his actions, which leads to...

#1. B Rebellion's Destruction 4-6

⁴But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. ⁶So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

In Jonah's rebellion and running from God, we see God's wrath.

Verse 4 tells us that this great wind and storm arose on the sea and terrorized the ship and sailors. But we also see that this storm was brought about by God himself.

As Jonah's rebellion has caused this destructive wind to come upon the ship the sailors, who don't know Yahweh, Jonah's God, call out to their gods and begin to lighten the ship and throw cargo over.

They are terrified and are seeking anything they can do to survive this storm.

The crew would have likely been from all over the Mediterranean and would have also worshiped all types of false gods.

Meanwhile, Jonah is simply asleep in the bottom of the ship and the captain comes to him and in one question reminds Jonah that he has not escaped the presence of God.

He asks Jonah to call upon his god so that he might save them.

During Jonah's running from his God, a pagan sailor demands he call upon him for help.

The question mocks Jonah's belief that he can break the sovereign call of God.

Jonah has not escaped God's call on his life and all those around him are experiencing the destruction that comes with his rebellion.

As the storm rages on the sailors seek to find out who has caused such a terrible storm, and in verses 7-11 we see...

#1. C Rebellion Discovered 7-11

⁷And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" ⁹And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." ¹⁰Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

¹¹Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous.

The sailors all decide in verse 7 to cast lots to discover who is at fault for all this evil in the storm.

Although casting lots seems like a superstitious thing to do it was a pretty common practice for the Israelites and tool God uses to express his will.

We see the casting of lots in Joshua 7 to determine the guilt of Achan, in Joshua 18 to determine the distribution of land, and also in 1 Samuel 10 to select Saul as king.

Proverbs 16:33 actually says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.”

One way this would have worked is that they would have two rocks and or pebbles and they would be painted with one color that indicated “yes” and another color that indicated “no” and they would roll both of them and if both of them landed on the color for no, then the answer to the question was no, if yes then yes, then if they were different colors, they would cast again.

It could have been simply they rolled for each person on the ship and they all landed on no except for Jonah, therefore it was discovered that he was the one to blame for the terrible storm they were dealing with so they ask him a series of questions to see why the storm is happening.

He explains who he is and who his God is, the one that created the sea and dry land and this causes fear to overcome the other men and verse 10 tells us why.

They knew he was fleeing God’s presence, so in their mind they might have thought Jonah’s God was a local false god just like many of theirs.

But as Jonah points out, his God is nothing like there gods, he is the creator of the land and sea, and is therefore the force behind the terrible storm.

This the beginning of the sailors understanding Yahweh is unlike any God they have heard of, he is in fact the one true God.

So after the men get answers to their questions, they lastly want to know what they should do, how can they get the storm to stop what was brought by Jonah’s rebellion.

A destructive storm that was God’s wake up call to Jonah that he was not in charge and cannot run from God’s mission.

His rebellion is discovered by the fellow sailors but is also laid bare in from of Jonah himself.

Application

When we look at how this story is unfolding, we might think that Jonah is no way for a prophet to act.

How could he rebel against God’s call on him and run the opposite way?

But in reality, are we not like Jonah?

Have we not rebelled against the mission of God?

Well you might say, Andrew, Jonah had a word from the Lord, the Lord told him specially to go preach to the Ninevites.

That is totally different. But is it really?

Do we not have a word from the Lord?

We have 66 books of words from the Lord.

Not only that but we have a specific calling as well just as Jonah did in Matthew 28.

God calls us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing, and teaching them.

But unlike Jonah our rebellion doesn't look like getting on a boat to flee God's presence, it looks like silence.

We simply go to places where the lost are but we say nothing. And that church is rebellion against God's mission.

Alan / Gospel story

Some of you know that before Amber and I had children we hosted exchange students in our home and one year we had a student from China.

And we had the honor to be able to share the gospel with him and see him come to faith in Jesus and be baptized.

But when he finally came to a place of belief and trust in Jesus, he looked at Amber and I and asked, "Why have I never heard this before?"

And of course being in China it would be difficult to hear the gospel clearly in many areas in his life, but I wonder if we have people that are close to us but far from God here among us that might say the same thing?

People who know ABOUT Jesus, or they know stories from the bible, or they go to church because it's culturally expected in their family, but they don't really know the salvation God offers them in Jesus.

They've never really had someone sit down with them and lay out the good news of Jesus.

Let's be a people who embrace God's mission with sharing not silence.

Let's repent of our silent rebellion against God's mission and join him instead.

Next in verses 12-15 we see that when we are determined to rebel against God's mission, it leads us to distort God's mission.

#2 Rebellion Distorts God's Mission v. 12-15

Jonah 1:11–15 (ESV)

¹²He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." ¹³Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴Therefore they called out to the LORD, "O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you." ¹⁵So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

First in verse 12 we see...

#2. A Jonah's Misunderstanding v. 12

After the sailors ask Jonah what they need to do he tells them to simply throw him into the sea!

Instead of saying, hey maybe we need to turn around so I can obey God's call on my life, he would rather end his life than obey God.

This is the same God that has called Jonah to be a prophet and who wants to lavish grace and mercy on evil people when they repent, but Jonah would rather die than to repent himself and experience this grace and mercy from God.

This is a fundamental misunderstanding on Jonah's part.

In verse 12 It is obvious that in Jonah's determined rebellion toward God's mission, his rebellion has distorted his understanding of God and his mission.

#2. B Sailors Understanding v. 13-15

In verses 13-15 we see the pagan sailor's have a better understanding of God and his mission than Jonah does.

They are reluctant to do what Jonah has said, the passage says that they begin to row harder, showing their desire to have nothing else to do with helping Jonah flee God's call, but the storm proves to still be big and powerful for them.

Throwing Jonah overboard seems to be the only option they have. But even in doing that they fear the LORD.

They plead with God to not punish them following Jonah's instruction and as soon as they throw him overboard the sea calms down.

Application

One horrible consequence of rebelling against God's mission is that we begin to have a distorted view of God and his mission as well.

We forget that God delights in inviting us into what he is doing in the world and desires to use us for his glory and our good if we will simply obey him.

The more times we are silent in sharing the good news of Jesus and the more we turn from opportunities the Spirit gives us the more we basically forget that God has a mission.

We begin to believe the lie that our life is ours to rule and control, when in fact when we gave it to Jesus we submitted to his mission as well.

Jesus tells us just what he is going to do with us if we follow him in Matthew 4:19 when he tells the disciples, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

When we live a life rebelling against God's mission, we begin to make the mission about us.

God just wants me to go to church, God just wants me to give, God just wants me to be a good husband or wife, mom or dad.

Yes, God wants those things, but God's mission isn't about us just going to church, giving, or being a good person.

Its about Him. God wants us to multiply worshipers of Him, God wants us to be fishers of men, God wants us to make disciples of all nations.

Those truths are in this book right here, that is God's call on our lives as believers.

In the same way that a life of rebellion against God distorts our understanding of God and his mission, a life of obedience brings clarity and understanding to God and his mission.

If we would seek a life of obedience to God's mission, the good news of Jesus would be on our hearts and on our lips.

As we share the good news that we have been reconciled to God through Jesus we are rerepeating ourselves over and over of the goodness, grace, and love of Jesus over and over.

The more we obey God's mission we get a front row seat to his faithfulness and power and are reminded that our lives in Christ are about being with him as he works in this world.

Lesslie Newbigin, a British theologian and missionary from the 20th century explains being a part of God's mission like this.

“When Jesus sent out his disciples on his mission, he showed them his hands and his side. They will share in Jesus’ mission as they share in his passion, as they follow him in challenging and unmasking the powers of evil. There is no other way to be with Jesus. At the heart of mission is simply the desire to be with Jesus and to give him the service of our lives. At the heart of mission is thanksgiving and praise.”¹

To live a life obedience to God’s Mission is to live a life with Jesus.

Lastly, in verses 16 & 17 we will see that despite Jonah and his rebellion, God defeats his rebellion and continues his mission of salvation.

#3 Rebellion Defeated in God’s Mission 16-17

Jonah 1:16–17

¹⁶Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

¹⁷And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

#3. A Sailors Salvation

First in verse 16 God’s mission is shown successful as the once pagan sailors become worshipers of Jonah’s God, Yahweh.

The verse shows that they feared the Lord and offered sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to Him.

This is not just some religious ritual they are conducting, but instead these actions describe worship.

Through this experience they have seen God’s wrath and power, but also now as the sea instantly calms down they see his grace and mercy.

It is this experience that draws them toward God in belief and makes them worshipers of Yahweh.

So even in Jonah’s rebellion against God, God uses Jonah as his spokesman to share the truth of Yahweh with these pagan sailors.

God used his disobedience to accomplish his will and continue his mission of multiplying worshipers.

#3. B Jonah’s Salvation

But not only do we see that sailor’s salvation, we also see Jonah’s salvation.

¹ <https://mereorthodoxy.com/the-message-of-mission-leslie-newbiggin-on-the-mission-of-the-church/>

In process of rebelling against God, Jonah's vision of God and his mission is distorted, so Jonah would rather end his life than to submit to God's call on his life.

But as Jonah seeks to end his life and is thrown into the sea, God again, using extraordinary means and saves Jonah by having a great fish swallow him.

Even in Jonah's rebellion and desire to do anything but follow God's call, God still saves him, spares his life, offers him a chance to repent as we will see next week and sets him back on his mission.

Application

One main truth I think these verses show us is that there is nothing, not even blatant rebellion, that can keep God from continuing his mission.

But the question we need to wrestle with is will God's mission be accomplished through my life or around my life.

Will I submit to being in the presence of God and obey his call to share the good news with those close to me but far from God?

Will I simply hear stories of how God is working in the world around me or will I have stories to share myself?

Will my silence keep me from being able to experience the riches of being a part of God's mission and work in the world?

Oh how I hope we would be a people who want to be able to share stories of God's work in the world.

Apple Illustration²

In April of 1976 the Apple Computer Company was founded by three men. Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Wayne. All three worked together at Attari, the game company.

At its founding both Steve's owned 45% of the company and Ronald only owned 10%.

This was because he was added to give the company some balance and guidance.

Both Steves were in their 20s and they needed an older man as a part of the company to balance their young age and help them get contracts to begin to produce computers, so they thought Ronald would help them in that way.

² <https://www.businessinsider.com/ronald-wayne-third-founder-apple-computer-2017-2>

But after just two weeks with the Apple Computer Company, Ronald began to see that he did not really fit with these other two guys.

They were always talking about computers, technology, and innovation and that simply wasn't his wheelhouse, he knew they would go on to do something great and he didn't want to be just pushed to the mailroom while all this happened.

So after only about two weeks he sold back his 10% stake of Apple to the two Steve's for \$800.

Tragically, he missed out on one of the most successful investments in current history.

Because today 10% of the Apple Computer Company would amount to around 80 Billion dollars, making him one of the richest men in the world.

In a similar way I would hate for us to be given the opportunity to invest in something great like the mission of God and miss out on the amazing return we would get as we get to have front row seat of how God is working in the world.

We need to take some risk and have those gospel conversations, ask those spiritual questions, and obey the Spirit's leading.

Christ Connection

We do not need to be silent or passive in God's mission because our savior Jesus was not silent or passive toward God's mission.

It is only because of Jesus' obedience, not rebellion, that we can even be called to God and be invited into the mission of God.

Jesus committed to obedience in his mission to save sinners as 1 Timothy 1:15 tells us, Christ came into this world to save sinners...

In the moments when we want to rebel and remain silent or flee opportunities to engage in God's mission let us remember our savior, who in his love for us obeyed God's mission even unto death on a cross.

Lets Let Christ's obedience empower our obedience as we share with those who are close to us but far from God.

Lets Pray.

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