

“A Stormy Situation”
Jonah 1:4-17
Mercy Hill Church | May 1, 2022

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

Recap of Jonah 1:1-3

- God’s Word to Jonah (vv.1-2)
 - God’s Command to Jonah
 - God’s Commission of Jonah
 - God’s Compassion Towards Nineveh
- Jonah’s Response to God’s Word (v.3)
 - Jonah’s Disobedience
 - Jonah’s Fear of Nineveh
 - Jonah’s Lack of Compassion Towards Nineveh

1. Jonah’s Apathy (vv.5, 9, 12)

- The word that comes to mind when describing the condition of Jonah’s heart and soul is “apathetic.”
 - Apathy defined: “Lack of interest, concern, feeling; impassiveness.” Jonah doesn’t care.
- **Desensitized: Jonah feels at “peace” even while living contrary to God’s will. (v.5b)**
 - In the midst of this storm, how and what is Jonah doing? He’s sleeping... “peacefully”!
 - Jonah seems to be at “peace” – even though he’s living contrary to God’s will: Jonah has ran away from God, disobeyed God’s mission for him to go to preach to Nineveh.
 - Sometimes we can reach a point in our running away from God that we become “okay” when things are not “okay” with God or we might feel “right” when things are not “right” with God.
 - Implication: Feelings can be a guide or indicator of how we are doing (spiritually) – but feelings can also deceive.
- **Hypocrite: Jonah does not live by faith even though he identifies as a believer (v.9)**

- Jonah is apathetic in his faith. While Jonah acknowledges (and fears?) the LORD as creator of everything (v.9), every indication of his current situation seems to contradict his statement.
 - In this stormy situation, Jonah doesn't seek or pray to God. Never at any point in this passage does Jonah even acknowledge or address God *personally*.
- Instead of being a blessing and proclaiming God's word to Nineveh, Jonah, because of his disobedience and running away from God, is the cause of all this drama, danger and difficulty for these sailors!
- **Stubborn: Jonah does not repent even though he understands he is guilty (and at fault) (v.12)**
 - Jonah knows the reason for this storm is because he is running away from God's mission -- for Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh.
 - Jonah fully acknowledges and understands -- but does not repent!
 - We know Jonah doesn't repent because if he did, he would call out to God and pray to God – and possibly ask the sailors to turn around and head back east toward Nineveh.
 - Repentance is making a “u-turn” – realizing you're heading the wrong direction (i.e. away from God) and turning around and heading back (i.e. toward God)
 - Tragic that Jonah would rather die (!) than repent. He would rather be killed than turn back to God. He would rather drown than go to Nineveh (to preach the Gospel message to them).

2. The Sailors' Sensitivity (vv.5a, 6-8, 10-16)

- In this stormy situation, the pagan sailors and captain's great sensitivity (towards God and Jonah) stands in stark contrast to Jonah's apathy.
- **The Sailors Pray (vv.5, 14)**
 - They realized this was a storm unlike any other – beyond their ability to handle – and start praying to their respective god(s). They are desperate for divine intervention vs. Jonah who is sleeping.
 - Upon discovering Jonah's God is the source or cause of this storm, the sailors show more sensible faith than Jonah.
 - v.10 “What is this you have done?” – “Why in the world would you disobey this Yahweh, God of heaven who made the sea and the land?”
- **The Sailors Show Mercy to Jonah (v.13)**
 - Jonah tells the sailors to kill him to save themselves (v.12) – but the sailors don't! They make every possible attempt to avoid having to throw Jonah overboard (v.13)
 - But when they realize they can't make it, they pray and beg for mercy from God in prayer as they throw Jonah overboard. These rugged, pagan sailors' compassion towards Jonah stands in stark contrast to Jonah's apathy – someone who would rather die than have God show mercy towards the people of Nineveh
- **The Sailors Worship God (vv.5, 10, 14-16)**
 - Jonah's apathy stands in stark contrast with the sailors' awe (fear) of God.
 - Because of their sensitivity, they encounter God and His power (the calming of the storm)...which Jonah missed out on since he's heading toward the bottom of the ocean.
 - It is unclear whether these sailors became believers of God – were they worshiping God as the one true God or just one of many gods?
 - Regardless, what is clear is that these sailors were one step closer (or possibly stepped over the line) to God while Jonah continues to be distant from God.

3. **God's Character (vv.4, 7, 15, 17)**

- As we see the contrast between Jonah's apathy and the sailors' sensitivity, we could stop here. But there's one more person here in this story: God. God is the primary character in the Bible – all of which ultimately points to Jesus.
 - In every story, every passage, every book of the Bible, the Bible is ultimately about who God is and what He has done. When reading the Bible, we always ask, who is God? What is God like? What is He doing? How does this point to Jesus and the Gospel?
- **The Sovereignty of God**
 - We see God's sovereignty (His power, His control) over something as vast as the wind (waves, and storm) (vv.4, 15), over something as minute as the lots the sailors cast (v.7)...and something as large as great fish (or whale) (v.17)
 - One truth and picture reiterated over and over and over again in Scripture is the sovereignty of God.
- **The Mercy and Love of God for All (People)**
- God's Relentless Pursuit of People (Jonah, the sailors, Nineveh)
 - Why doesn't the story of Jonah end in v.4 with the storm destroying everyone on board right away? Or why doesn't the story of Jonah end in v.16 with Jonah drowning to death? – instead gets swallowed up and rescued!
 - Why doesn't the story of Israel in the Old Testament end with King David committing rape and adultery with Bathsheba – or countless other sins by the kings who followed?
 - Why doesn't the story of the disciples in the New Testament end with Peter's denial of Jesus and the rest of the disciples abandoning Jesus?
 - We are reminded here in these verses (and throughout the Bible) God is not only sovereign, but that God is, "a God who runs after runaways"... a God who relentlessly pursues *all* people (Jonah, the sailors, Nineveh-Assyrians...me, you!) *because of His mercy and love*.
- Difficult circumstances often reveal the true condition(s) of our heart and soul. However, it is in those circumstances we need to know and be reminded of God's sovereignty and mercy to us through Jesus – God continues to pursue us!
- We see the contrast between Jonah -- the disobedient, apathetic prophet of God – being thrown overboard to calm God's storm on Jonah (leading to the worship of God by the sailors) with Jesus – the perfect, obedient son of God – and his sacrifice on the cross to satisfy God's judgment and wrath not because of Jesus' sins but all of humanity's (leading to centurion and others around Jesus' crucifixion acknowledging in awe that Jesus truly was the Son of God, cf. Matthew 26:54)
- We see God's mercy and love made manifest in Jesus. God pursues us not from a distant but entered into this world, lived in this world, died on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for your sins and mine, was resurrected on the third day and is now seated in heaven.
 - When we doubt God's love – how much does God really love us? We remember Jesus' outstretched arms on the cross
 - When we wonder and questions whether God is merciful and forgiving? We remember Jesus' outstretched arms on the cross

Big idea: Difficult circumstances often reveal the true condition(s) of our heart and soul. However, it is in those circumstances we need to know and be reminded of God's sovereignty and mercy to us through Jesus.

Reflection Questions

- In what ways might you be like Jonah in his apathy towards God and the people around him – in general, but also specifically in regards to God’s commission for us to make disciples of all peoples?
- Jonah’s attitude and behavior looks even worse when compared with the actions of the sailors. Sometimes our behavior doesn’t measure up even to the standard of those around us who aren’t Christians. Are there any areas of your life where this is happening at the moment?
- Do you see any of your non-Christian friends, family, coworkers, classmates, etc. showing a particular sensitivity to God or spiritual matters? Who? Spend some time praying for them that like the sailors they might worship Him!
- In what ways do you need to be reminded of God’s sovereignty? Even when it comes to redeeming and using your sinful (disobedient) past for His glory and the spread of His gospel?
- How does this morning’s passage point you back to Jesus and the Gospel this morning?