

THANKSGIVING IN THE WILDERNESS (3)

FINDING GRATITUDE WHEN LIFE IS HARD



Who is Jonah?



- Old Testament Prophet
 - The son of Amittai (Jonah 1:1), who came from Gath Hepher in Zebulun.
 - Prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23–28), who ruled in Israel (the northern kingdom) from 782 to 753 BC.
 - His story is set against the backdrop of conflicts between Israel and the powerful Assyrian Empire, which controlled the city of Nineveh.
- Jonah in the Bible
 - Jeroboam II recovered the territories of Israel between Lebo-hamath and the Dead Sea, just as the LORD had promised through Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25, NLT).
 - A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:39-40; Matthew 16:4).
 - This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation (Luke 11:29-30).

Jonah's Story



- Jonah flees from the Lord (Chapter 1)
 - Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it...But Jonah ran away and headed for Tarshish (Jonah 1:2-3).
 - The LORD sent a great wind on the sea...All the sailors were afraid, and each cried out to his own god... But Jonah had gone below deck, fell into a deep sleep (Jonah 1:4-5).
 - They took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm...Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah (Jonah 1:15-17).
- Three times of prayers
 1. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. 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” (Jonah 2:1-2).
 2. When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and **my prayer rose to you**, to your holy temple (Jonah 2:7).
 3. 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 (Jonah 2:9).

At the Bottom of the Sea Jonah Prayed

- Jonah considers the fish an answer to his 1st prayer
 - “In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead (Sheol). I called for help, and you listened to my cry” (Jonah 2:2).
 - God answered me: Being swallowed by the fish (God’s immediate and faithful response).
 - At the bottom of the sea near the point of death (He realized it is over), Jonah cried out to the Lord and God was attentive and heard his voice.
- Immanuel God
 - If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there (Psalm 139:8).
 - You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas...(Jonah 2:3).
 - God is considered the one ultimately responsible for Jonah being cast into the sea. Only God had forced this situation to occur.

When Jonah Lost All Hope



- Jonah changing his thinking
 - The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. 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. When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple (Jonah 2:5-7).
- His trauma of sinking and drowning in three steps
 - The engulfing waters (top of the sea);
 - Seaweed was wrapped around his head (middle of the sea);
 - The roots of the mountains (bottom of the sea).
- In the last moment what Jonah has done
 - When my life was ebbing away (when I had lost all hope, TLB): He remembered the Lord & prayed to the Lord (2nd prayer);
 - The holy temple: The place where the house of God was, the presence of God. He was reminded to seek God first.
 - Jonah remembered God had a purpose in his life. It is only in distress many times that we find the purpose of our life.

Jonah in the Belly of the Fish

- Jonah thanking God in his hard time (3rd prayer)
 - Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. 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' (Jonah 2:8-9).
- Those who cling to worthless idols (those are spared from tragedy)
 - Sailors; Jonah himself; and Ninevites.
- Jonah made a vow to God in a state of distress
 - His vow: 1) To offer thanksgiving sacrifices to God; and 2) to carry out God's will for him, including preaching to the people of Nineveh.
 - Jonah reflected on his situation, acknowledged God's power, and pledged to fulfill his promise upon being saved.
- Fulfillment of the vow
 - Jonah deliverance is complete. He can now start again.
 - The LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land (Jonah 2:10).

Sacrifice of Praise



- Offering a sacrifice of praise
 - I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you (Jonah 2:8).
 - Making a conscious choice to praise God out loud, even when he is in a difficult or desperate situation, rather than complaining.
 - Bring your voice in gratitude to God, fulfill a vow made in a difficult time, and commit to Him even when you don't feel like it.
- A sacrifice of praise is an act of worship
 - The act of "sacrifice" is to consciously put aside negative feelings and circumstances to express praise, honor, and thanks to God.
 - It's not about how you feel, but what you choose to do—to open your mouth and declare God's praises.
 - It demonstrates faith that God is good and trustworthy, even when things seem hopeless.

The Second Chance

- Second commission

- Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah **a second time**: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” **Jonah obeyed** the word of the LORD and **went** to Nineveh (Jonah 3:1-3).
- This second opportunity highlights God's merciful nature, showing that He is eager to forgive and restore those who have disobeyed Him.
- God offers second chances not only to Jonah, but also to others, providing them with opportunities to turn back, obey, and receive His forgiveness.
- Failure does not have to be the end of God's story for your life.



Finding Gratitude When Life is Hard

- Acknowledging distress
 - Jonah cried out to God in his great trouble and called for help from the depths of the fish's belly.
- Remember God's presence in your darkest moments
 - 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 (Jonah 2:2).
 - In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me (Psalm 120:1).
- Gratitude in all circumstances
 - Even in the belly of the fish, Jonah expressed gratitude.
 - Cultivate a heart of gratitude, regardless of our circumstances.
 - Give thanks **in all circumstances**; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- God is faithful to His promises
 - God kept His promise to deliver Jonah, just as He keeps His promises to us.
 - God is trustworthy and will keep His word and fulfill His commitments to His followers.