

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: A Resistant Prophet

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-12

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- The Book of Jonah tells us of a prophet whom God instructs to go to a place called Nineveh (a large port city in Assyria, located above the upper Tigris River) and to preach to the people there and warn them of their destruction. Jonah did not want to go because he hated the people there and tried to run from God.
- In Verses 3-6, Jonah ran from the Lord's call to him and boarded a ship heading for Tarshish to flee from God. God sent a "great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up." (v.4). The crew grew terrified and prayed to their gods and threw over the cargo to lighten the ship's load. Jonah went to the bottom level of the ship to get away from the chaos and go to sleep. In verse 6, the captain finds Jonah and says "...How can you sleep? Get up and call your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish."
- In an effort to figure out why this was happening, the sailors aboard the ship cast lots to see who was responsible for this storm. The lot fell to Jonah and they asked him (in v. 8) who is making this happen to them, who he is and where he is from. Jonah answered "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land. " The crew was terrified!
- In verses 11-12, Jonah insists being thrown overboard in order to calm the storm. We are not sure as to why he suggested such a thing, but the sailors instead sought to save his life (and theirs) and "...did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew wilder than before." The crew grew desperate, and cried out to God (even though they themselves were pagans), and then ultimately gave in to Jonah's request to be thrown into the sea. The storm then ceased and the water calmed down. "At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him." God saves Jonah by sending a large fish to come and swallow Jonah. There, Jonah remained inside the fish for three days and three nights!

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- This begins a new series on the Book of Jonah. Jonah is one of six “minor prophets” and is deemed minor due to its brevity.
- Jonah is different from other prophecies in that it does not contain biographical information and is also cited in 2 Kings 14. He was a prophet during the reign of king Jeroboam II. Jonah supported the policies of this king (where prophets Amos and Hosea did not).
- Jonah is known as a highly politicized, partisan nationalist!
- Jonah means dove, which is a symbol for Israel. He is lifted not as a hero, but as an example of what to avoid. He is seen as one that resisted the difficult task that God has called him to.
- Resistance: when God called Moses, he responded with five excuses as to why God should not be calling him to lead. When God calls, we often resist.
- Our instinctive response sometimes to God’s call in our life is resistance. So it was with Jonah (see Jonah 1: 1-3). When God tells Jonah to go east (Nineveh), he disobeys and goes west (Tarshish)! He disobeys and resists God!
- Tarshish was considered a far off, idealistic port city. In the Hebrew mindset, Tarshish was considered a paradise and a place to “escape” from the world. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the nation that was at war with Israel They were a cruel and ruthless people. The Hebrews considered them terrorists.
- Jonah wants vengeance on Nineveh and did not want to preach repentance to these people whom he despised. In seeking to avoid preaching to Nineveh, Jonah instead went to the paradise of Tarshish. Jonah wants revenge but God is calling him instead to preach repentance and reconciliation.
- Consider the similar story of Dr. Martin Luther King jr. He wanted to resist his call and pastorate in Montgomery, Al but a voice told him to remain.
- Life is truly not a battle of skills but a battle of wills!
- Surrender: If we spend as much time surrendering to God as we do resist God, the world will be a better place!
- We should be blessed to have God consume us so that our resistance will be overruled and submit to God’s will. Surrender to God, as this is our one and true safe space!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What may have caused Jonah to be angry with God's compassion and love for others (i.e. those whom Jonah despises in Nineveh)? Why do we do the same?
- What call from God do you find yourself running away from or resisting? Why?
- After reading this, please read 1 Samuel 15:22. What does it mean for "Obedience" to be better than a sacrifice to God?
- In what ways can you surrender your life to God?

