

Subject: *God of the Second Chance*

Scripture: *Jonah 3:1-10*

Verse 1 says the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time. God gave Jonah a second chance. God also gave Nineveh a second chance. And God gives us a second chance and a third and even more. He gives us a second chance to obey and serve Him. He gives us a second chance to repent and be saved from our sins.

In chapter 1, Jonah is running from God. In chapter 2, he is running to God. Here in chapter 3, he is running with God. In chapter 1, Jonah is protesting. In chapter 2, he is praying. In chapter 3, he is preaching.

When people think about the story of Jonah, they know about Jonah and the great fish. Actually that is only a small part of the story. This book tells us about a great God and a great awakening. Chapter 3 records the greatest spiritual awakening in human history. The entire city of Nineveh repented and turned to God after hearing one simple sermon from one preacher. There was no invitation or altar call given, but the power of God fell and everybody turned to the Lord in repentance and faith. The greatest miracle was not Jonah being swallowed by a fish, but a whole city turning to God.

1. JONAH'S COMMISSION (vs. 1-4)

A. The opportunity (vs. 1)

God was gracious in giving Jonah another opportunity to do what he should have done. God is concerned about His workers and not just His work. God could have used somebody else to go to Nineveh.

B. The order (vs. 2)

God told Jonah where to go and what to preach. A preacher is not to invent the message he wants to preach. He is not to edit the message, but he is to speak for God and deliver His message. God told Jonah to preach the message and not add to it, take away from it, sweeten it, soften it, or alter it in any way. Preachers always have the same assignment.

Jeremiah 22:29 *O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.*

Acts 20:27 *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

2 Timothy 4:2 *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

C. The obedience (vs. 3)

This time Jonah did not run away, but he went to Nineveh. Someone said this about following God's will: "It's not enough to have the right aim in life. You've got to pull

the trigger.” There comes a time for action. He had a long, hard journey and a difficult task. Nineveh was a great city (vs. 2, 3), probably the world’s largest city at that time. “Three days journey” means it took at least three days to walk around it. Nineveh was not only great in size, but it was great in sin. It was known for its cruel treatment of prisoners and enemies.

But before Nineveh could obey God, Jonah had to obey God. God’s message is for all people, but God’s message must have a messenger.

Romans 10:14 *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

Can it be right for us to hear the Gospel over and over when so many have never heard it even once? The fact is that God is more willing to save the lost than we are to tell them about Christ and salvation. How else can we account for the fact that the vast majority of the world is unsaved and many people have never even heard the Gospel?

Verse 4 tells us what Jonah preached. The message was short and to the point, only 8 words in English. It was a solemn message. Judgment is coming. This was the message they needed to hear. It was a significant message because 40 is the number of testing in the Bible. It was a shocking message. It would have seemed unlikely or impossible for Nineveh to be destroyed because it was the capital of the impressive Assyrian Empire. It was a sure message (“Nineveh shall be overthrown”).

Billy Graham offered this advice to preachers: “Preach with authority, with simplicity, and with urgency.” Jonah did all three—he spoke with authority, simplicity, and urgency. This was no time to mess around...no time for a positive “feel good” message.

2. NINEVEH’S CONVERSION (vs. 5-10)

The whole city, even the king, turned to the Lord. Notice four things about their conversion.

A. Their faith (vs. 5)

The people of Nineveh believed God. They took the message to heart.

B. Their repentance (vs. 5-8)

All the people repented (vs. 5). Notice the king’s actions (vs. 6), his announcement (vs. 7), and his appeal (vs. 8). This is a picture of real repentance.

C. Their humility (vs. 9)

They didn't try to justify themselves. They knew God was in control and had a right to judge them for their sin. They had no right to His mercy.

D. Their actions (vs. 10)

God saw their works and how they turned from their evil way.

E. Their mercy (vs. 10)

When the people of Nineveh had a change of heart and repented of their sins, God had a change of heart and changed His course of action. God would rather pardon sin than punish it. He would rather save people than condemn them. He delights in mercy, not in judgment.

Jeremiah 18:7-8 ⁷ *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;* ⁸ *If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*

Isaiah 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Jesus referred to this story during His earthly ministry.

Matthew 12:41 *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.*

The people of Nineveh heard the message and they repented. They heard one message from one man and got right with God. What a rebuke to the people who heard Jesus many times and yet refused to repent.

You may be like Jonah, and God is giving you another chance to obey and serve Him. Or you may be like the people of Nineveh, and God is giving you another chance to believe Him, turn from your sins, humble yourself, and be saved.