

Book of Jonah

by Daniel Punnose

This sermon focuses on the theme of second chances and God's mercy, using the story of Jonah as an example. It highlights how God provided second chances to Jonah, the sailors, and the people of Nineveh, emphasizing God's compassion and love even in the face of disobedience and anger. The sermon encourages listeners not to give up, reminding them of God's unfailing love and willingness to give multiple chances for repentance and growth.

Scripture: Jonah 3:1, Psalms 139:1, Romans 8:28, Philippians 1:6, Jonah 4:2

Topics: "Second Chances", "God's Mercy"

Description

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Transcript

Have you ever given up in your heart feeling like maybe the Lord doesn't accept you anymore or maybe you've lost your chance, maybe He's told you something or called you to do something specific and you ran away from Him and you feel like, because of my failure, because of my disobedience, therefore I've lost God's calling on my life, I've lost His favor. You know, Jonah discovered that God is the God of second chances. Today we're going to look at Jonah's life as he continued his journey in learning to obey God, but learning about God's mercy and God's grace, where God gave him a second chance to go to Nineveh to share the message of grace and mercy to the people.

Let us pray and ask the Lord to help us as we study this passage of scripture that our hearts would be understanding, our minds would be clear and that we can learn and apply what God is telling us. Father, we thank you. Once again, we pray that you would help us to understand that we would be doers of your word, not just hearers, but our life would be moving forward in obedience.

And we thank you for this, in Jesus' name, Amen. Jonah being on the ship earlier, in his disobedience, was thrown overboard as the answer, what he told the sailors, to calm the storm. God, loving him so much, provided a fish to be able to swallow Jonah.

And after Jonah was in the fish for three days, he prayed, which is really funny because he should have prayed on the first day, but he decided to pray after three days of struggling to get out of the fish and he prayed. And then God answered his prayer and Jonah learned to be thankful and learned about God's mercy and grace. And it says that the fish vomited Jonah onto the land.

And so we read in chapter three of the book of Jonah, starting with the verse one, 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 was vomited by the fish onto land. Now, if you have a map in your Bible, look at the map where you see the water and you see the city of Nineveh.

Nineveh is towards the east on the land. It's about 400 miles from the coast, which means when God commanded the fish to vomit Jonah, Jonah still had to travel for 400 miles. Now just imagine after Jonah reaches the city of Nineveh, he's traveled for 400 miles.

They don't have buses and trains and airplanes. He must have traveled by either walk or by donkey or some kind of a little bullock cart to reach the city of Nineveh. He's been inside the fish, inside the acid, inside the seaweed.

So probably his hair has been burned off. His skin has been bleached to a different color. His eyebrows, his eyelashes are gone.

He must have looked like a frightening character. And here he comes to this city where God has given him a second chance. It's amazing.

It says the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. And if you notice, it's the same thing. Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh, that great city.

And I want you to give the message to these people. You know, sometimes in our failures, sometimes in our sin, sometimes in our struggles, we feel like we have made a big mistake and therefore God will not be happy with us. God will not be merciful to us.

God will abandon us or that our calling is lost. You know, Psalm 139 tells us that God knows our life so well. He knows every aspect of our life.

He knows our thoughts. He knows where we go when we come back. He knows when we lay down to sleep.

He knows all the things about our life. He created us with such love and care. If God knows us so well and he knows all things and he's all powerful, God even knows our failures before we fail.

And yet God still loves us. See that's true love. When God knows that we will fail and yet he chooses to use us, chooses to use our life, chooses to bring glory through our life and chooses to love us and care for us.

You've heard the verse so many times, Romans 8, 28. God works all things out for good and that's true. You know why? Because God is not limited to his power and not limited his love and grace to us.

He loves you so much and he cares for you so much. And maybe you have failed. Maybe you have struck some area of your life where you feel like you have no hope and no energy to go on.

My brother, my sister, God is a God of second chances. In fact, a God of third chances, fourth chances, fifth chances. Do you remember the scientist Thomas Edison who we're so grateful for because of the light bulb? You know, we have light which we can see at night and study our homework, read our Bibles.

You know, our churches are filled with light bulbs and we can see it on the street. Our vehicles have lights. All thanks to Edison that discovered the filament in that vacuum, little bulb and put electricity through it.

But he struggled to try to discover what would actually work as a filament and thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of times he failed at finding the right filament. And we realize that after failing a thousand times, he said, each failure is one more time. I know which is not the right one, but one more thing I know which makes me closer to success.

Do you realize that even though Thomas Edison failed 10,000 times, he would not give up trying to discover the secret, how to make light in that light bulb. If Thomas Edison would not give up after nearly 10,000 times, do you realize God loves you more than simply Edison creating a light bulb? He has created you wonderfully made and he will never give up on you. He will never leave you.

He will never forsake you. God loves you more than you can imagine. And he will give you a second chance, a third chance, a fourth chance.

And you will see this as we continue our study through Jonah, that even later Jonah becomes angry and God is still merciful with him. You know why? Because Jonah tells God, I knew that you were merciful, slow to anger, abounding in love. I knew this.

That's why I wanted to run away. And this is the same mercy and love that God has for you, my brother and sister. Don't give up so easily in your heart.

Don't give up knowing that God's mercy is for you. If Thomas Edison would not give up more than that, God will not give up on your life. You know why? Because Philippians chapter 1 verse 6 says it's God's good pleasure to make you more and more like Jesus.

That this good work that he has started in your life, he will continue it. That's God's promise. This good work that he has started in your life, he will continue it.

That's God's promise for you. And so God says to Jonah, I want you to go to that city of Nineveh and proclaim the message I give to you. In verse 3, it says Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh.

It's a good thing that Jonah obeyed because in his disobedience, he ended up in a fish. I think Jonah learned the lesson, it's better to obey God than to disobey God and end up in a fish. And so also for us, you know, whatever God tells us, let us simply obey it.

It's much easier than going through all those struggles of disobedience. Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city.

A visit required three days. This means either it was very important to see all the things, it took three days, or the city was so large that it took three days to go around the city to be able to see everything. On the first day, Jonah started into the city.

He proclaimed 40 more days and Nineveh will be overturned. I mean, what kind of message is that? I don't know if Jonah was angry, but he simply said, in 40 days, all of you people will be destroyed. That's what the message was.

In verse 5, the Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast and all of them, from the greatest to least, put on sackcloths. Now you have to understand, in the Bible times, when someone wanted to show great sorrow or great repentance or great change of heart, they would put sackcloths and ashes on them and sit in the dust and they would wail and weep, showing that they are truly, truly sorry for their evil ways.

And so Jonah proclaimed this message. It's very funny. Jonah said, in 40 days, you die.

People heard that and then they said, you know, I think that he's speaking the truth. We need to change. We need to repent.

And it says they sat in the sackcloth and ashes and they repented. You know, it's interesting that God can even use a simple, funny message like this. Jonah, maybe being a little bit angry, said, 40 days, you die.

And yet God, through his Holy Spirit, empowered those words to speak. You know, maybe you're a pastor watching this program and you feel so discouraged because you feel like maybe you don't speak so well. Maybe you don't know the Bible as well as you feel like you should.

But let me tell you, if God can use a simple message from Jonah to speak to the hearts of people, don't worry so much. Study the Bible, share it faithfully, and God will use you to touch many lives and encourage you. Maybe you're a mother or father at home and you want to teach your children about the things of God, but you feel like you don't communicate well.

Maybe you don't know the Bible so well, the story so well. You're not as good as a Sunday school teacher. That's okay.

Teach your children faithfully and God will help them to understand. That's God's promise. And I believe that you will be able to be effective in your children's lives.

And so they declared a fast and it says in verse six, when the news reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, took off his robes, his royal robes, covered himself in the sackcloth and sat in the dust. Then he issued a decree, proclaiming a decree to all of Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles. Do not let any man or beast or herd or flock taste anything.

Do not let them eat or drink, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.

Who knows God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish. When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction that he had threatened. When the king heard this, this message that in 40 days, the whole city of Nineveh will be destroyed.

And he heard how people were putting sackcloth and ashes on in repentance. The king said, let us all do this. In fact, let us all put sackcloth and ashes.

I take off my royal robes, I put sackcloth and ashes, I sit in the dust in repentance. He said, in fact, not only that, cover the animals with sackcloth and dust. The poor animals had to suffer also.

And so they put sackcloth and ashes on everyone. They sat in the dust and it says that God saw their hearts and he relented from bringing destruction upon that city. How merciful God is, how gracious God is, the God of second chances.

You know, God gave a second chance to the sailors, a second chance at life. God gave a second chance to Jonah. God gave a second chance to the people of Nineveh.

And God gave a second chance to everyone there showing his mercy and his grace. It's amazing to see that God is so compassionate. If you learn one thing from the book of Jonah is that God is merciful.

He is slow to anger, compassionate. He loves you so much and he has the best in mind for you. One interesting thing is that the king himself actually put the sackcloth on and sat in the dust and repented.

You know, that's a very admirable quality of a leader. Maybe you are a leader in a ministry or a leader in a factory or a leader in some company or you are having people over you or maybe you're a father of a family and you have your wife and children and God has placed you over a leader of your home. Do you realize when God brings conviction and correction to your life as a leader, you should be the example of what it means to have your life correct before God.

This king was not so proud of his position that he said, everyone else can do this. I will not. It's interesting that when the message came to the king, he responded more quickly than when God's message came to Jonah.

This man who did not know God turns his ways towards God and God was so faithful to hold back the anger. In chapter four, it says, but Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to Lord, oh Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish.

I knew that you are gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, oh Lord, take away my life for it is better for me to die than to live. But the Lord replied, have you any right to be angry? Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city.

There he made himself a shelter and sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Jonah goes to the city, proclaims a message in 40 days, all of you will die. Everyone repents.

It's one of the greatest miracles in the book of Jonah. The fish is not the miracle. The storm is not only a miracle.

Those are all miracles. But the greatest miracle is that God used that simple message and the entire city of these Assyrians, the most harsh, difficult people at that time, feared so much because of the torture that they would bring. They were the ones who would torment the Israelites.

They were the ones when they were going towards a city to capture the city, the entire city would commit suicide rather than being captured by the Assyrians. This is how harsh and wicked these people were. And God used that simple message of Jonah to change the hearts of the people.

And when that people changed, Jonah became angry because he said, I knew that you were merciful. I knew that you were gracious. I knew that you were compassionate.

Your heart's desire is not to send calamity, but to show goodness and love and mercy. That's why I ran away. Jonah did not want to preach this message to Nineveh because he knew if he preached that

message, even that funny little message, in 40 days you die, the people would understand and then they would repent and God would be merciful.

And Jonah wanted God to destroy those people because those people hurt his brothers and sisters, the Jews, so often. And so Jonah became angry. And so it says that he went out and sat down to see what would happen to the city.

Jonah is still waiting to see, maybe God will destroy the city. Maybe something will happen. And it says in verse six, then the Lord God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give him shade for his head to ease his discomfort.

Please remember, Jonah was inside the fish. Probably all of his hair is gone on his head and is hot and he's tired and he's been walking around the city proclaiming the message maybe for three days. And so he's tired and angry.

And so God in his mercy, in his kindness provides a small plant that came up and covered his head and gave him shade. And it says in verse six again, then the Lord God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give him shade for his head to ease his discomfort. And Jonah was very happy about the vine.

Jonah was angry. Now he's happy because a vine provided shade. But at dawn the next day, God provided a worm which chewed the vine so that it withered.

When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die and said, it would be better for me to die than to live. Jonah is a funny character.

When something is good for his life, he's happy. But when something is bad for his life, he gets angry. How often we complain about the things that are not good, which according to our idea is not good.

And we're so happy when God blesses us. My brother, my sister, we must learn to be thankful when things are good. And sometimes when things are bad, we must learn to be thankful.

You know why? Because all things work together for good. We must learn to say thank you, just like we learned in the last session. In verse 9, it says, But God said to Jonah, Do you have the right to be angry about the vine? This is God's second question to Jonah.

Do you have the right to be angry? And Jonah is angry. And in his anger, he responds, I do. He said, I am angry enough to die.

Jonah is really angry. But the Lord said, You have been concerned about the vine. Though you did not tend to it or make it grow, it sprang up overnight and it died overnight.

But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left. And many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city? More than 100,000 people that cannot know their right hand from their left hand, probably meaning children.

So many children in that city. And so many cattle. And God says, You were concerned about a small plant that came up and gave you shade.

And it came up and died at night. And now you're angry. Do I not want to have compassion for these people? And God used Jonah's life to bring repentance.

And Jonah was angry about that. One of the greatest lessons we can learn from this lesson of today is that if we are angry and we do not deal with our anger, it causes us to not think properly. Jonah's anger made him not think properly about the mercy of God.

The grace of God made him lose his priority. He had more love for the plants than for the people. Yes, those people are difficult.

Yes, those people are harsh. But God asked a question, Jonah, do you have the right to be angry? When I am merciful, can I not have the right to be merciful? And Jonah said, No, I'm angry. I have the right to be angry.

You know, the book ends with Jonah being angry and God responding that he is a merciful God. We don't know the rest of Jonah's life. He lived for many more years serving the Lord.

Unfortunately, this one event in his life is recorded like this. But we learn so many lessons from this book. There are so many miracles that take place.

The storm that came up on the sea. The storm that was stopped. The sailors turned to the Lord.

That God gave Jonah a second chance. That Jonah survived in the fish. That Jonah was vomited from the fish.

That Jonah's message caused the whole city to repent. That God showed mercy. That God provided a vine.

That God provided a worm. God provided east wind. God was so merciful to Jonah and so merciful to everyone else.

All these are miracles that God did through the book. But the greatest miracle is you see God's mercy at each junction of this book. And if you remember one thing, that God is a God of second chances.

That he is merciful. There is no failure in your life too great for God to give you a second chance. To use you for his glory.

And my challenge for you, my brother, my sister, is not to give up in your heart so easily. You know why? Because if Thomas Edison would not give up after 10,000 times creating a light bulb, God loves you more than that and he will never give up on you. He says to us, cast all of our burdens upon him.

He tells us, come to me who are all burdened with life. And I will help you. May the Lord bless you as you continue to walk with Jesus.

Realizing his mercy and his grace upon your life. Let us pray together. Father we thank you for your grace and mercy.

We thank you that you are so kind to us. We thank you for this wonderful book of Jonah. There are so many lessons in this that we can learn for our life.

Help us to learn them. Pass them on to our children. Example them before our neighbors, our classmates, our co-workers.

I pray that you would pour out your blessings upon each of my brothers and sisters. Thank you for them. In Jesus name.

Amen. You know, the Lord is gracious and the Lord is merciful. Remember that every single day and give him thanks.

Maybe you don't have a Bible but you would like to get a Bible. Please write to us. Maybe email us or call us.

And we will help you to find a Bible so that you can read and study God's word for yourself. Seeing the principles of God come into your life and bear fruit. May the Lord bless you with much mercy and much grace.

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