



Rock Creek Baptist Church
Nov 5, 2017

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"The Lord Provides" Jonah 1-4
Come find out what this ancient prophet has to say to the religious people of his day...and ours...about one way the Lord can provide for us.

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During the fall, around Thanksgiving, we are reminded to be thankful for the numerous ways that the Lord provides for us

Psalm 23:5

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

In the fall, even as things begin to die, the creation shows us things of beauty like the turning leaves. We can appreciate beauty in the midst of death and hibernation because we know that fall and winter are not forever, with spring comes new life!

God prepares our hearts for harvest and for the renewal of all creation

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Jonah was a prophet and a prophet often made statements to the religious experts that was hard for them to hear and often resulted in the prophet being kicked out, beaten, even killed. His job was to show the "church people" how they might be neglecting or even rebelling against God. Since this book still speaks to us today it's worth asking the question:

"What behavior or thoughts might God seek to correct within us through His Word in this book?"

Jonah 1:1-16

The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD. Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish." Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.) The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you." Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, LORD, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, LORD, have done as you pleased." Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.

1) God has provided opportunity...that gets ignored

2 Kings 15:29

In the time of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maakah, Janoah, Kedesh and Hazor. He took Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria.

740 BC - the Assyrian king plunders Israel leaving only Samaria

735 BC - new Assyrian king attacks Samaria, finishing off Israel

700 BC - new Assyrian king goes after Judah

Nahum 3:1-3

Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims! The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots! Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses—

1) God provides opportunities to tell people about Him

Do you ever accidentally miss the opportunity to show people Jesus? How about intentionally...

Missed opportunities: could have had an easier trek to Ninevah. Missed most of the "boat revival."

The Lord provided a fish to swallow Jonah

Jonah 2:1-10

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. You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.' 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. "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.' " And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

In providing a fish, Jonah is kept from drowning and set back on course

2) God provides course corrections for us to get back on track

Have you ever had a time when you know God was getting you back on track in His will?

Jonah 3:1-3

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. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it.

3) God provides for repentance and deliverance

Jonah 3:3-10

Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals 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 relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

The people fast and put on sackcloth...and even the animals are involved!

Jonah keeps missing opportunities from God. The pagans on the boat and in Ninevah take God's invitation almost immediately!

Jonah is sure by chapter 4 that the people will reject the message and he "pulls up a seat" to witness the destruction of his enemies

Jonah 4:1-11

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a

shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant 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." But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead." But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

Jonah is worried about the plant. God is worried about people.

What does this book say to us today? How might we be like Jonah?

Are we more concerned with our comfort than with other people? About getting even? Do we listen to God initially or only after repeated prompts? Do we love our enemies or watch for their downfall?

We can adjust our attitude by looking at God's provision in this book:

He guides, helps us course correct, uses lessons to realign our priorities, and gives us more grace than we give to others

By showing that even the animals are mentioned, the symbolism is that not just people but all of creation awaits redemption by God.

Romans 8:18-21

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

Many years after Jonah worried about his tree on a hill, Jesus died on a "tree" on a different hill. While we cared about stuff, Jesus cared about people.

Like Jonah was in the fish for three days, Jesus was in the ground for three days

Like the outsiders got it in Jonah's day, the outsiders got it most in Jesus' day

Like we see beauty in death with the changing leaves, we see beauty at the cross in a different kind of crimson... We celebrate because we know that Jesus raised from the dead and death was not the end!

Romans 5:8-10

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

We were like those Ninevites, blood on our hands, corpses of people we've harmed in our hearts, but Jesus raised from the death in resurrection shows us that even to us unworthy people...

The Lord Provides