

## **Jonah: The Mercy of God and the Actions of Man**

### **Week 5 – God Keeps His People**

#### **Jonah 1:11-17**

God mercifully turns His face toward His people to keep them from spiritual death

Action: We will praise God for keeping us and hearing our prayers and pleads

#### **Series Graphic (SLIDE 1)**

#### **Opening Idea**

A drought devastates a region! There has been no rainfall for 3 years. This extended drought triggers a famine where man and animals are suffering. During this drought, a man is at risk, and his life is in danger. He is sent to the desert to live off the land. He finds a small brook that provides him with water and, fantastically, birds bring him food. The brook runs dry, and he leaves. He, fantastically, finds a woman, a widow with a son, who is suffering from the famine and is making her last loaf of bread and expects to die from starvation. The man asks the woman to bake him a loaf of bread. She, fantastically, finds that as long as she is baking the man a loaf of bread, she continues having enough to bake her and her son a loaf. The widow's son dies, but fantastically, he is brought back to life. The widow bakes until the drought ends, rain falls, and the famine is over.

The situation is risky for Elijah (I Kings 17), the widow, and her son. But God is directing the steps of Elijah and provides for him while the drought and famine occur. Providing for Elijah, God also provides for the widow and her son. In the midst of calamity, Elijah, is in God's hands. Elijah must completely depend upon God and God provides. In providing for Elijah, the widow and her son experience God's benevolence. Being kept by God is the best place to be.

We continue studying the account of Jonah. God commissions Jonah and commands him to take God's word to the Ninevites. Jonah flees from God's presence and God pursues Jonah, correcting him and revealing his sin, so Jonah can reconcile and obey God, participating in God's salvific work. Let's see how God keeps Jonah while also provides for those around Jonah.

#### **Merciful Reminder: Do You Do Well to be Angry? (SLIDE 2)**

#### **Series Graphic (SLIDE 3)**

#### **Read**

#### **Jonah 1:11-17 ESV**

**(SLIDE 4)** **11** Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. **12** He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great

tempest has come upon you.” **13** Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

**(SLIDE 5)** **14** Therefore they called out to the Lord, “O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.” **15** So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. **16** Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. **17** And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

### **Series Graphic (SLIDE 6)**

#### **Now What Do We Do? (v. 11)**

The lots have revealed Jonah and Jonah has told the sailors that he is the cause for the trouble in which they find themselves. Their fear has grown as their knowledge has grown. In their state of exceeding fear, they ask what they are to do to Jonah in order that the tempestuous seas may calm down. It is not clear what the sailors think their options are at this point. While they are casting lots and interrogating Jonah, the seas continue growing angry, increasing in their fury. Since Jonah is responsible for the situation, they must do something. What must they do? They don't know. So, they turn to the man with whom the Lord God is angry and ask Him. Surely, he must know what to do to appease his God. The crew turn to the man who is causing their problems to provide a solution and bring them peace and salvation.

#### **Throw Me Into the Sea (v. 12)**

Jonah provides the crew with a solution to bring peace and salvation. He tells them, “Throw me overboard!” Those are not his exact words, but this is basically what Jonah tells them to do. Jonah's solution is for the crew to pick him up and toss him overboard. Jonah does not have a word from God to direct this action. The passage doesn't tell us what Jonah is thinking or what his motivation is to direct the sailors to throw him into the sea. Jonah believes that this action will bring peace and calm the storm. Jonah states, again, that he knows that he is the cause of the storm and the fear that the sailors are in. The crew are at risk of dying because of Jonah.

#### **Man's Will Vs. God's Will (v. 13)**

The crew show compassion on Jonah. They appear to not want to throw Jonah into the sea, so they turn to their own strength again. There are a few assumptions made in the story so far. At this period in maritime history, there would be several ways to propel a boat through the water. There are no internal combustion engines at this time, so moving a boat through open waters, not close to shore, would take either canvas or wood. Canvas would be cut and sewn to make sails, and the sails would harness the wind and power the boat at various speeds. Wood shaped into

oars would be attached to the boat and men would pull the oar to then power the boat. On a voyage of this length and with cargo in the hull, sails would be a likely choice on the open water. As the storm appears and increases in intensity, the sails would be dropped and secured. Too much wind would capsize the boat or break the mast (structure securing the sails), and the boat would be damaged and sink. They would be forced to use oars to maneuver the ship. The ship is still seaworthy at this point, and the storm is still raging and increasing in strength, so the sails would be secured. The crew turns to their strength to row out of the storm or to the safety of a harbor. The men take to the oars to row to dry land and safety. Their strength is no match for God's power. It can be assumed that the one who directs the winds to blow, the waves to crash, and the sea to storm is causing the storm to push against the work of the crew. God want's the boat in this predicament and the men cannot change that. The crew rows and rows, but the storm grows more tempestuous. The crew, at this moment, are doing what Jonah has not done. They consider the life of another man important and strive to preserve it. Jonah has not done this since the moment God commissioned him with a message and commanded Him to give it to the Ninevites. Sin is affecting Jonah to selfishly care only for himself at the expense of those around him. Man's will continues submitting to the Will of God!

### **This is God's Plan (v. 14)**

We do not know what Jonah is doing at this moment, but when the crew realize that they cannot row the boat to safety, they call out to the Lord. They clearly see that they are working against God, and they will not row the ship to shore. They give up their efforts to save Jonah. The crew realize that Jonah's words are true, and they must throw him into the sea. They are afraid of angering the Lord God and suffering His full wrath for taking the life of His man. At this point, they seem to know that Jonah's fate is sealed with God, so they plead for their own lives. The plead for God to not let them perish or cause them to perish due to Jonah. They also plead for God not to take vengeance against them for taking the life of an innocent man. The reality is, Jonah isn't innocent. He is guilty of disobeying God, fleeing from God, acting like a person who doesn't know God, declaring a Fear of God, but not obeying Him, rejecting God's call and commission, putting other people at risk due to Jonah's disobedience, and being spiritually asleep. The crew then make a profound statement that they hope will save them from the wrath of the Lord God. They declare that this is the Lord God's will, and He has done as it pleased Him. Jonah is in God's hands, and they are part of God's work to do to Jonah as God sees fit.

### **Problem Solved (v. 15)**

The crew of the boat pick up Jonah and hurl him into the sea. There is no description that they did anything to Jonah to prepare him for his overboard adventure. There is nothing written that they bind his hands and feet and attach a stone or anchor to him to take Jonah to the depths of the sea. There is nothing indicating in the passage that they provided Jonah with a flotation device or

with any food and supplies to help him survive in the water. It appears that they grab him and throw him overboard and deliver Jonah into the hands of his God. The moment Jonah is thrown into the sea; the dreadful situation stops. The winds cease blowing with frightful energy. The waves settle and are no longer breaking over the ship. The ship stops threatening to break apart. The fear of dying at sea immediately ends since there is no longer a threat. The one causing the threat is gone and the threat of dying from the storm is gone with him. The silence and peace are overwhelming and powerful. They are saved! Jonah is gone.

### **We Are Done For (v. 16)**

The crew encountered the Lord God and He is most powerful! They do not fear Jonah. They do not fear another man in this moment. They clearly fear the Lord. Their fear is a feeling of terror that comes over them as the toss Jonah overboard and the storm ceases. In that moment, their fear grows again. “The Lord God, creator of seas and dry land” is at work and has the power, opportunity, and justification to destroy them. They are undone! These pagan sailors act similarly to Isaiah when in his visionary dream, he realized that he was in the throne room of God and standing in God’s presence. Isaiah became keenly aware of God’s perfection and holiness while also being painfully aware of his own sinfulness (unclean lips). Isaiah, in that revelatory moment declares, “Woe is me! For I am lost; I am a man of unclean lips”. These pagan sailors realize the truth of God, and it causes them to fear Him. Jonah, again, declares that he fears the Lord God, yet he stands before God in the midst of the storm with arrogance, indifference, and a lack of fear. Now Jonah is in the water by the hands of the pagan men, and he continues being at the mercy of God. The sailors do what only what they know. They perform sacrifices and make vows. This moment of sacrifice and vows is a glimpse into the return of the King, Jesus (Philippians 2:9-11). When Jesus returns, every person will see the event, realize that Jesus is the great King of the universe, and react to His coming with bent knee confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord. This isn’t a declaration of universal salvation, but a revelation of universal understanding. Not everyone who bows and declares in that moment will be saved (words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21). We see that a group of people have realized that the Lord God exists and they respond with acts of worship. There isn’t anything that reveals more than that. We do not have confidence that they have faith or are justified with God. These sailors have encountered the Lord God, and they have experienced His awesome and terrifying power. They respond with sacrifices and vows. The sailors hope that their feeble acts of worship will save them. God saves them from the storm.

### **God’s Mercy in a Big Fish (v. 17)**

Verse seventeen is fascinating. We can address and clarify a few things in this small passage. One, in our English translations, verse seventeen is the end of chapter one. This isn’t the case in the Hebrew text. According to commentators Smith and Page, verse seventeen begins chapter

two in the Hebrew text. Another interesting part of the text is the statement that the Lord was at work. The word in the ESV is “provided” is also translated appointed or assigned. This fish appearing to come and swallow Jonah isn’t in response to Jonah being tossed overboard. The fish had always been part of God’s plan. Another interesting aspect of the fish is that the Hebrew word used here for fish is the Hebrew word “dag”. This is a general term for fish, but it is also the classification for any animal that is in the ocean. Our modern classification (Linnaeus Taxonomy) was not established until 1735. A biblical classification of fish would identify any animal that lives in the sea. That includes both fish and mammals. Therefore, the term “fish” doesn’t create a conflict with other passages that might identify the fish as a whale, which we classify as a mammal. The passage reveals that God caused a “huge fish” to come and swallow Jonah as he languished in the sea. The huge fish devours Jonah, but he is alive. Verse seventeen reads that Jonah lived in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. God demonstrates His mercy toward Jonah by causing the fish to swallow Jonah alive and keep Jonah alive in the belly of the fish. He may not be “sound” or living in comfort in this three-day conditions, but Jonah is safe and alive. God continues pursuing Jonah and causing him to participate in God’s work. Note, again, that the fish is obedient to God without question or pause. God commands and directs animals and they fully respond.

**> Trying to explain or find ways in which the fish swallowing Jonah could be a normal or explainable thing can cause a problem. This act of a fish finding Jonah at the bottom of the sea, swallowing him, and Jonah surviving for three days is completely attributed to God’s work rather than trying to explain how something like this might be able to happen. This book is a reliable historical account of God working to cause God’s man to participate in God’s redemptive work.**

## **God Mercifully Keeps His People (SLIDE 7)**

### **Preserving Them (SLIDE 8)**

Salvation

To Himself

### **Psalms 37:28 ESV**

**28** For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.

### **Protecting Them (SLIDE 9)**

From Themselves

From Sins Destruction

**Psalm 5:11 ESV**

**11** But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.

**Posturing Them (SLIDE 10)**

To Obedience

In Righteousness

**Ezekiel 36:26-27 ESV**

**26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

**\*The Storm, the boat, the waves, and the lots were always under God's control. He never lets these things carry out His wrath against Jonah and the crew. In verse 14 & 17, we see that God's plan was in action, and the "great fish" was perfectly in His control. When Jonah was tossed into the sea, he was still in God's hands.**

**Merciful Action**

**We will praise God for Mercifully Keeping Us (SLIDE 11)**

Bless Us

Be Gracious to Us

Shining His Face Upon Us

Give Us Peace

**Read**

**Numbers 6:24-26 ESV (Aaronic Blessing – read this as a prayer) (SLIDE 12)**

**24** The Lord bless you and keep you; **25** the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; **26** the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

## **Series Graphic (SLIDE 13)**

### **Daily Readings**

#### **Week 5 – God Keeps His People**

##### **Day 1**

##### **Numbers 6:24-26 ESV (Aaronic Blessing – read this as a prayer)**

**24** The Lord bless you and keep you; **25** the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; **26** the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

This passage is known as the Aaronic Blessing. God commanded Aaron and his sons to pray this over the Israelites. This prayer emphasizes that it is God that you depend upon for blessing, keeping, grace, and peace. Take a moment and pray this prayer to God. Your sin is the cause of suffering, working to separate yourself from God, turning away from God and pursuing dark places, bringing about disgrace, and seeking chaos. Ask for and receive His forgiveness and plead for God to mercifully shine His face upon you!

##### **Day 2**

##### **Psalm 37:28 ESV (Preserve)**

**28** For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.

The Psalmist writes that it is God's just love that causes Him to remain close to His people (saints). This love and remaining keeps God people (preserves). You belong to God and His love will cause Him to remain close to you, even when you try to abandon Him. Pray and ask God to preserve you, even against yourself. God mercifully keeps you!

##### **Day 3**

##### **Psalm 5:11 ESV (Protection)**

**11** But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.

God directs His people to take shelter in Him. Those who depend upon God for protection will continually rejoice forever. What an amazing thing for you. When you shelter in God, there is joy. When we lack joy, we're protecting ourselves. Sin deceives us that we can protect. God is

the only shelter that is true and sure. When you take shelter in God, grow in love of His name and person and we dwell in victory. God mercifully protects you!

## **Day 4**

### **Ezekiel 36:26-27 ESV (Posture)**

**26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

A corrupt and hardened heart is a result of sin. This causes our position to God to be one of risk and suffering. We don't risk losing our salvation, God preserves us, but we risk being ignorant and rebellious. God declares that through faith, you have a new heart and a new spirit. He takes a hardened heart that is ignorant and rebellious and softens it making it responsive to Him. God removes the human spirit of rebellion and gives us the Holy Spirit. This changes our position and posture towards God. God causes us to walk in His decrees and give great attention to God's commands. God's words, statutes and rules, are precious and good. You belong to God and want to bring God joy and find your joy in doing what He directs and tells you to do. This changes our posture. God looks upon you. God lifts your face to see Him. You grow less rebellious and more obedient. You are weighed down less by the burden of sin, and you stand on firm ground in righteousness. God mercifully postures you toward Him!

## **Day 5**

### **Luke 8:24 ESV**

**24** And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.

The storm that Jesus and the disciples are in is different from Jonah's storm. Jonah's storm was God correcting and revealing Jonah's sin. The storm that Jesus and the disciples are in reveals Jesus' authority and power as God and glorify Him. Jonah and Jesus are both asleep in a storm, but their sleep is not the same. Jonah was spiritually ignorant due to his sin and rebellion. Jesus was perfectly obedient and is at peace having all authority over nature. The same God who commanded the wind, waves, boat, and lots to expose Jonah's sin, commanded the waves and wind to cease and bring peace. Jesus mercifully keeps you in God!