

Jonah 1-2

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, ²‘Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.’ ³But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

4 But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. ⁶The captain came and said to him, ‘What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.’

7 The sailors said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸Then they said to him, ‘Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?’ ⁹‘I am a Hebrew,’ he replied. ‘I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’ ¹⁰Then the

men were even more afraid, and said to him, ‘What is this that you have done!’ For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so.

11 Then they said to him, ‘What shall we do to you, that the sea may quieten down for us?’ For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. ¹²He said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quieten down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.’ ¹³Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. ¹⁴Then they cried out to the Lord, ‘Please, O Lord, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.’ ¹⁵So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

17 But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

2 Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, ²saying,

‘I called to the Lord out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.

³ You cast me into the deep,

into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.

⁴ Then I said, "I am driven away
from your sight;
how shall I look again
upon your holy temple?"

⁵ The waters closed in over me;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped around my head

⁶ at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever;
yet you brought up my life from the Pit,
O Lord my God.

⁷ As my life was ebbing away,
I remembered the Lord;
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.

Big Idea

God won't run away from runaways.

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. Have you ever gone "on the run" from a call or sense of what you were supposed to do? What happened? What did you learn?
3. Have you ever felt like God was sending a storm into your life to grab your attention and redirect you? What happened?
4. Have you ever found yourself at rock bottom (in the "belly of Sheol")? Who or what did you find there?

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Context

The book of Jonah defies categories. It doesn't fit neatly into any genre of literature. And Jonah is unlike any other prophet: instead of preaching to a stubborn people, he is stubborn. Instead of talking back at God to resist his call, Jonah runs away from God (well, tries to...). In this short and timely tale, we glimpse the relentlessness of God bent on a mercy that Jonah cannot stomach, even as it stomachs him.

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