When I was Drowning, God Heard my Cry

9.8.19

Jonah Series

Message 3

Jonah 1:17–2:10 (CSB)

**17The Lord appointed** a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

**JONAH’S PRAYER**

**2**Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish:

**2**I called to the Lord in my distress,

and he answered me.

I cried out for help from deep inside Sheol;

you heard my voice.

**3**You threw me into the depths,

into the heart of the seas,

and the current overcame me.

All your breakers and your billows swept over me.

**4**But I said, “I have been banished

from your sight,

yet I will look once more

toward your holy temple.

**5**The water engulfed me up to the neck;,

the watery depths overcame me;

seaweed was wrapped around my head.

**6**I sank to the foundations of the mountains,

the earth’s gates shut behind me forever!

Then you raised my life from the Pit, Lord my God!

**7**As my life was fading away,

I remembered the Lord,

and my prayer came to you,

to your holy temple.

**8**Those who cherish worthless idols

abandon their faithful love,

**9**but as for me, I will sacrifice to you

with a voice of thanksgiving.

I will fulfill what I have vowed.

Salvation belongs to the Lord.”

**10Then the Lord commanded the fish**, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

# 1. Chapter 2 of Jonah is different.

A. The other 3 chapters take the form of prophetic narrative.

1. It is telling the story of Jonah’s call and ministry to Nineveh.

2. It is written in what we call “prose”.

B. Jonah 2 is not prose but poetry.

1. It has the same kind of feel that the Psalms does.

2. In fact, Jonah’s prayer to God in Jonah 2 contains a lot of the same themes and phrases found in the book of Psalms.

C. Jonah 2 is the heartfelt commemoration of the time that Jonah almost died because of his sins, but was given a second chance.

1. This could have been written while in the belly of the fish.

2. It also could have been written afterwards or a combination of both.

3. What is important is the sincere praise and thanks Jonah gives to God.

4. Jonah recognizes that he not only messed up, he has sinned but God was gracious.

D. In this, we are all like Jonah.

1. We haven’t just made a mistake, we have sinned.

2. Mistakes don’t lead us to hell, but sin does.

3. Mistakes don’t separate us from God’s presence, but sin does.

4. To call our sin a mistake is to lie and to be deceived.

5. To call our mistakes a sin is to bury ourselves in legalism.

6. Sin cannot be managed, it must be killed. Lance Ainsworth

E. In Jonah’s Psalm, Jonah is confronted with his sin.

1. He represents,

2. And is given mercy and a second chance to be obedient.

3. This morning, we look at Jonah’s Psalm with this theme:

4. When “When I was drowning, God heard my cry!”

# 2. Jonah was dying.

A. Jonah is describing the waves crashing over him.

1. He is no longer able to keep afloat and sinks to the bottom.

2. Seaweed wraps around his neck and the bottom of the sea is realized.

a. I’ve always pictured Jonah being thrown into the water and a large whale jumps up and takes him into his mouth.

b. But Jonah describes his struggle for life in the water and the waves.

c. Jonah is dying.

B. But God appointed a large fish (Jonah 1:17).

1. This fish was not an accident but a divine appointment.

a. First, The Lord first sent a storm.

b. Then he sent a fish.

2. The fish was God’s tool of restoration for Jonah.

a. This storm and this fish were uniquely created by God for this one purpose: to redeem Jonah.

b. The appointment of the fish gave Jonah the time needed to pray and redirect.

3. Being swallowed by the fish was an uncomfortable blessing for Jonah.

a. It was God’s mercy and redemption wrapped in a smelly package.

b. God’s redemption, mercy, and blessing don’t always come in shapes or forms we like or want.

c. Because God is the creator of everything, He can use anything to bring about his mercy and redemption in His time.

4. That’s why we can’t curse the tool of God’s choosing.

a. For Jonah, the tools of God’s choosing were a large storm and a large fish.

b. Some of you are going through some stuff right now and wondering why?

c. Sometimes, what we are dealing with are God’s tools to get our attention and to bring us to repentance.

d. **How we respond determines if the Storm and Fish brings us to our redemption or to our destruction!**

C. **Maybe** you feel like you are drowning right now.

1. Your family is driving you nuts.

2. Your job is frustrating you.

3. Your finances keep you up at night.

4. What should we do when we feel like we are drowning?

3 things we are called to do when we feel like we are drowning, from the example of Jonah.

# 3. What should I do when I feel like I am drowning?

First. **Call** out to God with all you have. Jonah 2:1-2

Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish:

**2**I called to the Lord in my distress,

and he answered me.

I cried out for help from deep inside Sheol;

you heard my voice.

A. Prayer is the difference maker because God is the difference maker.

1. It isn’t just the act of prayer that has power.

a. One of the things that make practices like yoga and meditation so dangerous is they promise to bring peace and calm without the presence of God.

b. Anything that attempts to replace our connection with God is not from God.

2. There are no substitutes for calling out to God in our distress.

a. Jonah knows this, because he is a prophet!

b. Jonah has called out to God before and heard Him answer.

3. As Jonah is descending to the depths, he calls out to God.

a. When he is in Sheol, which represents the furthest from God Jonah could be, he called out to God.

1. Sheol represented an eternal separation from God. This is the ultimate punishment upon humanity.

2. The greatest horror of Sheol or Hell is not the physical suffering but the separation from God’s presence with no hope of return.

b. The Psalmist knew what it was like to call upon God in his distress when he wrote in Psalm 18:6.

Psalm 18:6 (CSB)

**6**I called to the Lord in my distress,

and I cried to my God for help.

From his temple he heard my voice,

and my cry to him reached his ears.

B. When I feel like I’m drowning, I have to call upon the one who can save me.

1. If you are ever drowning, don’t call me because I can’t swim.

a. There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors.

b. There is encouragement being connected to the body of Christ.

c. There is perspective by hearing the stories of others.

2. But Jesus is the only one you can save you when you are drowning.

a. That friend of yours can’t take your place as mom, or spouse.

b. They can’t get you up in the morning and sustain you through the day.

c. So often we offer prayers to people and organizations to save us and neglect God in the process.

3. When you are drowning, don’t waste your breath.

a. We talk about our problems.

b. We gripe and complain to others.

c. We gossip and sow descension.

d. Then we don’t have the breath left to pray to the one who has the power to save us.

4. When you and I feel like we are drowning, give the next breath to Jesus.

a. And call out to Him with all you have.

b. Prayers of desperation are marked by intensity.

c. Don’t be afraid to pour your heart out to God.

d. He can handle your emotions.

Second: **Remember** past miracles and experiences.

Jonah 2:7 **7**As my life was fading away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, to your holy temple.

A. When we forget what God has done in the past, we forget what He can do in the present.

1. Jonah was a prophet.

a. He had seen miracles.

b. He had experienced God’s presence.

c. But along the way, Jonah chose to forget about that.

d. He hadn’t forgotten for long, but for long enough.

2. It required Jonah almost dying for him to be brought back to a place of remembering.

a. You have heard of people talking about hitting rock bottom before they change.

b. Sometimes, that rock bottom is the tool that God uses to get our attention.

c. For Jonah, it was the bottom of the sea and the belly of a fish.

1. For others, it is cancer, divorce, loss of job, or many other things.

2. Sometimes, we are a lot like Jonah:

3. We quickly forget what God has done in the past and it requires a dramatic moment to remind us.

B. *So when I feel like I am drowning, I have to take time to remember what God has done for me and others in my past.*

1. I can’t forget God.

2. And He can’t forget me.

3. Do you believe that the God who knitted you in your mother’s womb is capable of forgetting about you now?

4. History serves as a reminder of God’s continuing presence.

5. So when I am down and feel like I’m drowning, I reflect on what God has done and believe He will do it again.

Lastly, When I feel like I am drowning, **Sacrifice** to God withThanksgiving

**9**but as for me, I will sacrifice to you

with a voice of thanksgiving.

I will fulfill what I have vowed.

Salvation belongs to the Lord.”

C. Why did Jonah write he would “sacrifice to God with a voice of thanksgiving?”

a. Because when you feel like you are drowning, our instinct is to save our breathe, not sacrifice it.

1. Jonah thought he was dying.

2. But during that moment, he sacrificed one of his last breaths to give thanks to God.

3. We know that Jonah isn’t going to die, but he didn’t.

4. Jonah makes a 180 and makes a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

b. When you are dying, struggling, and fighting for your life, it doesn’t make tactical sense to give thanks to God.

1. But God doesn’t play with the same weapons we play with.

2. Only God can send a whale to save you when you are drowning.

a. Only God could have warned Noah to build an ark when It has never rained.

b. Only God can help a kid kill a Goliath.

c. Only God can take a prisoner like Joseph and put him in a palace.

d. Only God can make a cross and a grave symbols of life and resurrection.

3. You can give thanks to God during your battle because your story isn’t written yet.

a. Your day isn’t over yet.

b. Your life isn’t finished yet.

c. Your battle isn’t won yet.

d. So even though everything around me looks hopeless, I will not be afraid.

e. I will not fear.

f. I will trust in the God who creates whales to save wayward prophets and crosses to redeem lost sinners.

# Closing: Today, even though you feel like drowning, you have not been forgotten.

A. This morning, I want to invite everyone who feels like they are drowning to join me across the front so we can pray and seek the face of God.

1. Call out to God today with passion and intensity and desperation.

2. Call out to God and remember what He has done and trust He will do it again.

3. Call out to God with expectation that He has not forgotten you, and He has not forsaken you.

B. Let us pray today because even when we feel like we are drowning, God hears our cries!