Preparing for a Move of God

9.22.19

Jonah Series

Message 5

Jonah 3 (CSB)

**JONAH’S PREACHING**

**3**The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: **2**“Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and **preach the message that I tell you**.” **3**Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the Lord’s command.

Now Nineveh was an extremely great city,, a three-day walk. **4**Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and **proclaimed**, “In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!” **5**Then the people of Nineveh **believed God.** They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least.

**6**When word reached the king of Nineveh, **he got up** from his throne, took off his royal robe, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes. **7**Then he issued a decree in Nineveh:

By order of the king and his nobles: No person or animal, herd or flock, is to taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. **8**Furthermore, both people and animals must be covered with sackcloth, and everyone must call out earnestly to God. **Each must turn** from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. **9**Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish.

**10**God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

# Introduction:

 A. When I look around our city and country, I see a lot wrong.

1. I’m not talking about infrastructure, stock-market, and those kinds of things.

2. I am really concerned with the current spiritual atmosphere of the United States.

 3. But this is nothing new.

 a. There has always been sin.

 b. There has always been evil in our world.

B. It is the responsibility of every generation to seek God for themselves.

 1. In the case of Nineveh, God spared them for a generation.

2. But eventually, God’s judgment did fall upon them through the hands of the Babylonians.

 3. God has undoubtedly blessed our country in the past.

4. If we desire to see that blessing continue, there must be confession of sins and repentance.

 a. I want to see a move of God in my generation.

b. I don’t want my life and journey to be merely a rehashing of what happened in days gone by.

c. I want to see God move in my generation and in the generation to come.

5. To those of my generation:

a. To those who are now in the workforce, raising kids, and leading careers.

 b. It is time for you and I to seek the face of God.

c. We can no longer depend upon our parents and grandparents and their religious experiences.

d. It is time that we rise up as a mighty force for God, to influence the world that we now are creating.

e. So how do we prepare for a move of God?

f. 4 ways from the example of the Ninevites:

# 1. First way we prepare for a move of God is by receiving a Word from God.

 A. God sent Jonah to bring Nineveh a message from God.

 1. This was the only way this was going to happen.

 2. Jonah couldn’t use social or mass media.

 3. A letter would not have been enough.

4. God sent His prophet to these people to warn them of coming judgment.

 B. We have something that Nineveh didn’t have.

1. We already have a Word from God, warning us time and again of the consequences of our sins.

2. The Bible is the most printed and sold book in the history of humanity.

3. Today, we have access to unprecedented levels of teachings and communications at no cost to us.

4. Unlike Nineveh, we have the ever present ministry of the Holy Spirit.

 C. And God’s Word is declaring that sin has a price, but God has a gift.

 1. The “wages” of sin is death.

 a. The rightful payout of sin is death.

b. Not just death of our bodies, but a complete separation from God in the present and in the life to come.

c. This is what we are owed and what we deserved, that is why Paul said the “wages of sin” is death.

2. But the “gift of God” is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

 a. You don’t earn gifts, you receive them.

 b. Gifts originate in the heart and mind of someone else.

c. Long before you were a good person, God determined to give you the gift of salvation if you would accept it.

 3. This is what God was doing in Nineveh.

 a. He had Jonah declare that judgment was coming.

b. But Jonah, knowing God’s grace and compassion, knew that there was a chance that God would change His mind and relent in His anger.

c. Long before Nineveh had ceased her cruel and barbaric activities, God had a Gift of Grace and Mercy ready for her if she would repent.

 D. God has a gift of Grace and Mercy ready for each of us.

 1. We call this salvation.

 2. And this gift is already paid for.

 3. So what do we do with the Word from God?

# 2. Second, we prepare for a move of God by believing the Word of God.

A. The people of Nineveh believed Jonah’s word that judgment was coming.

 1. They didn’t know about God’s grace and mercy yet.

 2. But they believed in gods and gods bringing judgment.

3. So they believed that this Prophet of Israel, who spoke on behalf of the God of Israel, was telling the truth.

 4. Verse 5 says, “And the people believed God.”

 B. Isn’t this where everything begins for us?

 1. How do we experience the life God has for us?

 2. How do we break the bondage of sin in our lives?

 3. How do we change the course and direction of our lives?

 4. Do we not begin by believing God and His Word?

 C. You will never make it if you don’t believe God’s Word.

 1. I believe in reading the Bible intelligently.

2. I study and diligently search the Scriptures and I often question my understanding of what I am reading.

 3. But I do believe what it says:

a. That I have sinned and fall short of God’s glory and plan for my life.

b. That, without salvation, I am destined for an eternity that will be forever full of pain and separation.

c. I also believe that God sent His perfect, sinless, Son to pay the wages of my sin.

d. I believe that Jesus’ sacrifice is God’s gift toward me and to everyone I meet and that I am responsible for believing and receiving that gift into my life.

D. My life started to change the moment I started believing God’s Word.

 1. My life is not perfect, nor am I.

 2. I still have my share of struggles and frustrations.

3. But my life is radically different because of what Jesus has done for me.

 4. And it all began to change the moment I believed.

5. This is what happened in Nineveh and this is what happened in my life as well.

Belief always requires action. So the next step…

# 3. Third, we prepare for a move of God by repositioning ourselves before God.

A. *Notice how important physical action and movement is in this narrative:*

**5**Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and **dressed** in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least.

**6**When word reached the king of Nineveh, **he got up from his throne,** **took off** his royal robe, **put on** sackcloth, and **sat** in ashes. **7**Then he issued a decree in Nineveh:

By order of the king and his nobles: No person or animal, herd or flock, is to **taste** anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. **8**Furthermore, both people and animals must be covered with sackcloth, and everyone must **call out** earnestly to God. Each must **turn** from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. **9**Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish.

**10God saw their actions**—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

 1. Believing God cannot be limited to a mental exercise.

2. When we believe God, we will change our attitudes and our actions.

3. The people and leadership of Nineveh expressed their belief in the Word from God through several actions:

 a. They changed into clothes of mourning.

 b. They sat in ashes.

 c. The king got off his throne and humbled himself.

 d. They called out earnestly to God.

 4. What does it say? God “saw their actions”.

B. Because judgment and salvation are for the whole person, it is important for the whole person to respond.

 1. It is good for you to lift hands in worship.

 2. It is good for you to kneel before God in prayer.

 3. IT is good for you to come to an altar.

 4. It is good for you to cry.

5. It is good for you to respond to God’s Word in a way that includes the whole person.

C. The people of Nineveh demonstrated their belief in God through their actions.

1. If we want to experience God’s moving again, we are going to have to move.

2. If we want to see God’s mercy move across this nation, we are going to have to act like we believe God.

 a. Our actions will have to follow our beliefs.

 b. Our beliefs must be modeled by our actions.

3. I believe God is wanting to move in a mighty way in our town and in our nation.

 a. But we are going to have to hear from God.

 b. We are going to have to believe God.

c. We are going to have to act on our convictions and act on such a great salvation that is before us.

# 4. Lastly, we prepare for a move of God by changing directions.

A. We cannot expect to receive God’s mercy and grace when we have our backs towards Him.

1. The king of Nineveh said that “each person must turn from their evil ways and wrongdoings”.

 2. And God’s response was that He turned away from His wrath.

 3. The word “repent” means to change directions.

 4. To no longer do what you had been doing.

 5. Nineveh made a drastic change in direction, and experienced the mercy and grace of God.

B. For us to experience the fullness of God’s grace and mercy, we are going to have to turn towards God.

1. Actions and attitudes that have become acceptable are going to have to be repulsive again.

 2. Decisions are going to have to be undone.

 3. Confession is going to have to be made.

 4. We will not see a move of God unless there is repentance.

# 5. The Ball Is in our Court.

 A. The choice is before us to receive God’s mercy and grace.

1. If we want to see our communities changed, we are going to have to be changed first.

2. Jonah brought the message to Nineveh; it was up to them to respond.

3. God has brought us salvation through Jesus, it is up to us to respond.

 B. Today, if you are concerned with the direction of your country:

 1. If you are concerned about the future of your family,

 2. If you are in doubt about your eternal life,

3. There is something you can do today that will impact your tomorrow:

 a. That is to get with God and pray.

b. Get alone with God and repent for your sins and the sins of those around you.

c. Take the audacious step and throw yourself upon God’s mercy and receive His love and His power.

C. This morning, I invite everyone who will join me today to make the actionable step of coming around the front and praying today.

 1. Pray for yourself, your family, your friends, your country.

 2. Pray and ask God to change you and to change us.

3. Pray and ask God to deliver us from the judgment that seems imminent.

 4. Whatever the case, let us pray today.