

Outline

"The Challenge of God for my Life"

October 14, 2007

Intro: The Book of Jonah

- A. Chapter 1 -- Running *From* God
- B. Chapter 2 -- Running *To* God
- C. Chapter 3 -- Running *With* God
- D. Chapter 4 -- Running *Ahead* of God

I. Running With God

- A. God of second chances *Jonah 3:1*
 - *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."*
- B. Repentance – changing direction *Jonah 3:3*
 - *Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh.*
- C. Nineveh -- What is our great city? *Jonah 3:3*
 - *Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days.*
- D. Believing God *Jonah 3:5*
 - *The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.*
- E. God Spares the City *Jonah 3:10*
 - *When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction*

II. Running Ahead of God

- A. Jonah's anger *Jonah 4:1*
 - *But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry.*
 - *"Do you have any right to be angry?" Jonah 4:4*
- B. God paints a picture *Jonah 4:5-10*
 - *"Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" Jonah 4:9*
 - *Should I not be concerned about that great city?" Jonah 4:11*
- C. "Gimmicky" ... OR ... driving a deeper truth home?
 - *Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. Matthew 13:34*

III. God's Challenge for My Life

- A. Doing a job ... OR ... Loving the people?
 - *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36*
 - *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Matthew 14:14*

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Monday - The Book of Jonah started when God said GO and Jonah said NO. Has there been a time in your life like that? Have you found yourself in a whale of trouble because of it? Read Jonah *chapter 3* to start our study and be thankful that we serve a God of 2nd Chances! God said to go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim the message that I give you. Jonah changed his direction from Tarshish and went to Nineveh! That is repentance. The direction of your whole life is changed. Some scholars point out that Jonah is like a play about 'running,' written in 4 acts. Chapter 1 is Jonah running **away** from God; Chapter 2 Jonah is praying inside the fish; he is running **back** to God; Chapter 3 is when Jonah follows God's command; he is running **with** God. Chapter 4 details Jonah's anger because God does not do what *he* wants God to do; he is running **ahead** of God. Pray a few minutes about your life...where are you in the 'running'?

Tuesday - Nineveh was first excavated in 1845. While the city proper was not all that large, the 'greater Nineveh area' encompassed 27 miles with a population of 120,000. It was the capital of Assyria, one of the most brutal regimes in all history. Jonah was fearful, but he went, and proclaimed a short, simple message: "40 more days and Nineveh will be overturned." (*Jonah 3:4*) Note the careful wording of *Jonah 3:5* "The Ninevites believed God." They may not have believed in Jonah, but they believed God! Sunday we learned about God's great compassion; apparently even the King of Nineveh has heard of it (*Jonah 3:9,10; Joel 2:13*). Sure enough, God relented and spared the city.

Wednesday - Read chapter 4; some may wonder why we even need it. The mission is accomplished! What's the problem? Jonah is the problem. In chapter 4:1 we see that Jonah isn't just mad, he is 'exceedingly angry!' The prophet Jonah was well aware of Judaism's understanding of God's compassion, patience, and his slowness to anger (*Nahum 1:3; Psalm 145:8; Psalm 103:8; Psalm 86:15; Nehemiah 9:17 Numbers 14:18; Exodus 34:6*) In verse 2 we see that Jonah prayed, but it really wasn't a prayer; notice the first few words, in effect, "I knew..." His starting point caused him to be unable to see God's ultimate perspective. Ever happen to you?

Thursday - Read again very carefully the creative, amazingly visual chain of events beginning with verse 5-10: Jonah takes a seat to watch the destruction (which doesn't come); for shade he builds a shelter; God causes a plant to grow to give more shade; it makes Jonah happy; then God causes a worm to eat the plant and makes Jonah angry. Do you think the Bible's use of all these visuals and this creative imagery is to be "gimmicky" or to teach deep truths? Why do you think we use the same techniques here during worship? Focus on the deep truths in verse 10; God used 'props' to communicate! See also, *Matt 15:32 Mark 1:41 Luke 15:20* and a host of other parables and teachings.

Friday - In *Jonah 4:11* It seems God said something like: "I saved Nineveh because I am in the saving business." Compassion is the signature of God! Read *Isaiah 49:15, Jeremiah 31:20, Matt 9:36, Matt 14:14. and Colossians 3:12*. It was the signature of Jesus...what is your signature?