

Honoring God when all is not well.

Jonah 1:7-10

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⁷ And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” ⁹ And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” ¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly 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.

PRAY

Last week, we began a series in the book of Jonah. We saw that God gave Jonah a mission. Jonah’s mission was to go to Nineveh and warn them. Jonah needs to go and tell the Ninevites that God has decided to bring disaster on them. Why? Verse *two* “because their evil has come before me”. But Jonah, instead of going to Nineveh goes to Tarshish.

And we saw that Jonah wants to run and hide from. Jonah goes in the opposite direction and then he hides under the deck of the ship. And then we see him sleeping.

But God is not done with Jonah yet. God sends a storm. Everyone is terrified. They begin calling out to their gods. And the captain of the ship tells Jonah to call out to his God too. However, Jonah doesn’t call out to God.

In the meantime, the people on the ship are trying to figure out why such a storm is happening?

Let’s look at verses *seven* and *eight*.

⁷ And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?”

They interpret the storm as misfortune, as evil.

Not every storm is to be interpreted as evil. You don't want to over spiritualize every misfortune as an evil. These people on the ship thought the gods were angry at them.

Imagine you were on a road trip and you have flat tire. And you interpret the flat tire as an evil thing. That would be over spiritualizing.

In this particular case, we are told specifically that God caused the wind and the storm. Now the people on the ship are not the same background as Jonah. They don't know that Jonah is a prophet of God. They don't know that Jonah's God made the seas and controls the weather. So, what do they do in their distress?

It's what we are all good at doing. Find someone to blame. Adam was very good at it and from him it comes to us in our nature.

So the people in the ship cast lots to see who to blame. Now, casting lots is not a good idea at all. To roll a dice or cast lots to see who is responsible for causing this storm. But that is all they know.

And the lot falls on Jonah. Jonah is already singled out at the man who doesn't pray. And with the lot falling on him, all eyes on him.

And they begin the interrogation. Who are you? Where are you from? What is your occupation?

One thing they don't say is they don't blame him for the storm yet.

Verse eight: *Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us."*

Jonah is on the hot seat. Jonah thought he could escape God's mission for him but here is Jonah who has to give an answer. What does he say?

Verses 9 and 10.

⁹ And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." ¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly 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.

What Jonah says here is absolutely true but it sounds a little pompous. Here is why. Jonah is a Hebrew. He is a prophet of God. His God is the God who made the sea and dry land. Jonah's God is our God too. Our God controls the weather. He is Sovereign over nature. He is worthy of worship, of fear and honor.

Jonah's knows all that. However, Jonah's statement that he fears God sounds self-defeating because if he feared God (to the fullest extent) as he appears to claim he wouldn't not be walking away from his mission. The word 'fear' is the same word as worship or honor. The Bible tells God is the one we should fear and honor. "*But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread*". Isaiah 8:13. And there are so many blessings in living life in the fear of the Lord.

Jonah's claim that he fears or honors God is really a bad testimony considering what he has been doing and what others are experiencing.

Jonah's worship of God does not reflect in his actions. His professing statements contradict his actions. His deeds and words are at odds.

The Bible tells us that we are to be doers of the word. Not just hearers only. James 1:22

Jesus tells us what is true blessedness. "*Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!*"

Luke 11:28. The apostle John tells us we ought to walk in the same way that Jesus walked. 1 John 2:6.

This is discipleship. Saying Jesus is your Lord has implications. You are expected to follow, obey. And we are not talking performance kind of obedience. Discipleship is a want to obey than a have to obey.

So Jonah gives his answer and upon hearing the answer of Jonah, the people were even more afraid. And what do they say to him? *What is this that you have done?* They knew more than they asked for. Jonah is not just responsible for the chaos around him. They come to know that Jonah is running away from God. They also now know that the God Jonah serves is also the one who rules the seas and wind. That's what makes them exceedingly afraid. They realize they are dealing with a much bigger issue than the storm itself. If the storm makes them afraid and has caused enough distress, knowing that Jonah's God controls the sea and weather is a much bigger cause for fear.

You remember when the disciples of Jesus were on a boat on the sea of Galilee? And Jesus was with them sleeping after being tired from ministry. And suddenly there was a storm. And the disciples are so afraid. But they know who to go to. Jesus. And what do they say in their distress? Jesus, do you not care that we are going to die. We are going to sink. They were afraid alright. Who wouldn't be if there is a storm and your ship is ready to sink. And when you go through the storms of life, its ok to be like the disciples than like Jonah.

But you know what made the disciples even more afraid?

"And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And

they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” Mark 4:39-41

You see Jesus is able to calm any storm in your life. And, yes, Jesus tells us to walk in faith. But it is Jesus who we must go to for help.

I was going through my devotionals this week and saw that during Abraham’s time, God tells a king that Abraham was a prophet and God hears the prayers of prophets. Jonah was a prophet of God but walked away from his mission.

Unlike Jonah, Jesus did not walk away from the mission by the Father. Never for a moment Jesus’ words were at odds with his actions. Jesus honored his Father. Even when it was difficult for him. Jesus Christ is our true Prophet, Priest and King. And God the Father hears the prayer of Jesus Christ His Son. The sailors asked Jonah, “what have you done?” Jesus said, “It is done”. It is completed. It is finished.

What did Jesus say he would do?

“..Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. ³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.” Luke 13:32

What did Jesus actually do?

“But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” Luke 24:1-7

May the Lord Jesus Christ give us strength to honor him.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Honoring God when all is not well?** Jonah 1:7-10

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What does indicate Jonah's response indicate about his practice of faith and profession of faith? 1 John 2:4-6

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. How does God bless when we fear or worship him? Psalm 25:14, 33: 18, 34:7, 103:17, Proverbs 1:7, 10:27, 15:33, 19:23
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: What can we learn from Jonah's confession and the response of the sailors? Verse 10