

The Book of Jonah

Jonah 1:4-16

Devotion

- **Opening Prayer:** Almighty God, our heavenly Father, without Your help our labor is useless, and without Your light our search is in vain. Invigorate our study of Your holy Word that, by due diligence and right discernment, we may establish ourselves and others in Your holy faith; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.
- **Small Catechism:** What benefits does Baptism give? Which are these words and promises of God?
- **Hymn:** God's Own Child I Gladly Say It (LSB 594)

Chapter 1:4-16

Read Chapter 1:4-16

Verse 4

- Up to this point, Jonah believed he had control over his life.
 - Jonah decided to flee the presence of the LORD.
 - He decided on the destination of Tarshish.
 - He decided to go by boat.
 - However once the storm hits, Jonah loses control. Yahweh now dominates the narrative.
- “Yahweh hurled” - גִּיהָזָה הַטֵּיִל
 - The verb “hurled” is used four times in this chapter (1:4, 5, 12, 15).
 - What’s interesting is that it’s used in a salvific manner:
 - sailors hurl cargo to save themselves
 - They will Jonah overboard as he instructed, in order to save.
 - Here, God hurls the storm upon the sea not to destroy Jonah, but to save Jonah from his own attempt to flee away, and to save the sailors through Jonah’s confession and the Ninevites through His preaching.
 - Additionally, we see that Yahweh is the one who hurls the great wind upon the sea.
 - This further reveals that Yahweh is lord over all things in the heavens and on the earth.
 - Next Sunday’s text is Matthew 8:23-27 – Jesus calms the storm.
 - In both these instances we see that God can cause a storm or calm a storm.
 - Because God is all powerful, Jonah can’t hide, travel, sleep, or put himself in such a situation where Yahweh can’t see him.
 - Yahweh saw Jonah’s heart.
 - Yahweh stirs up the great wind, not to inflict destruction but to cause Jonah to repent.

Verse 5

“Then the mariners were afraid...”

- Seeing that the ship was breaking and their lives endangered, these sailors were afraid.
- Desperate, they hurl cargo overboard to lighten the ship to keep it from sinking.

“...each cried out to his god...” - וַיִּזְעֻקוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אֱלֹהֵי יָוֵי

- These experienced sailors realized they needed supernatural help to survive this storm.
- Luther states:
 - “These sailors were not total atheists, for they called upon a god, but one whom they themselves devised.”¹
 - “Reason is unable to identify God properly; it cannot ascribe the Godhead to the One who is entitled to it exclusively. It knows that there is a God, but it does not know who or which is the true God...Reason never finds the true God, but if finds the devil or its own concept of God, ruled by the devil. So there is a vast difference between knowing that there is a God and knowing who or what God is. Nature knows the former – it is inscribed in everybody’s heart; the latter is taught only by the Holy Spirit” (AE 19:54-55).

“...Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship...and was fast asleep.”

- Again, we see the movement of “down,” continuing to highlight the movement away from God.
- Also, we start to hear the language of “inner” – like our Lord in the tomb.
- We see the contrast between Jonah and the sailors:
 - the sailors are trying to save the ship and fearing for their lives, Jonah is asleep and indifferent.
 - The sailors call out to a false God. Jonah knows who the true God is but refuse to listen.
- Ultimately, Jonah continues to care only for himself. He refuses to minister and preaching the saving word to others.

Verse 6

“arise...call”

- These were the same words Yahweh used earlier (Jonah 1:2) when He told Jonah to arise and call to Nineveh.
- Jonah hasn’t escaped the presence of Yahweh.
- God’s call to arise and call comes even through the mouth of a pagan captain!
- Jonah is being called back to duty, to the initial word that he received in the first place.
- Jonah, in a “sleep of death” sort of speak, is spiritually awakened, brought to life by the Word. The only thing that will spiritually awaken any of us.
- God is still speaking to him, even through a pagan sailor.

Verse 7

“cast lots” - וַיַּקִּיְלֵה גִּוְרָלוֹת

- This involved throwing some inanimate object in order to learn the divine will.
- This is well-known in ancient Israel and Near Eastern cultures.

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 19: Minor Prophets II: Jonah and Habakkuk*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 19 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 11.

- In the OT, it was used to:
 - Discover a wrongdoer (1 Sam. 14:36-43).
 - Choose a king (1 Sam 10:20-21),
 - Assign a tribe its inheritance (Josh 14:2)
 - The day of atonement – selecting the scapegoat – the goat not sacrificed but cast out/sent out into the wilderness (Lev. 16:8).
- In the NT:
 - Roman soldiers cast lots for the clothing of Christ (John 19:23-24)
 - The Eleven disciples prayed and cast lots to select an apostle to succeed Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26).

“the lot fell on Jonah”

- God, who controlled the storm also controlled the outcome of the casting of lots.
- This again reveals Jonah can’t run from the Lord.
- Like the day of atonement with the scapegoat, Jonah will be cast out into the sea in order to save these gentile sailors.

Verse 8

“Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us?”

- Notice the word evil. It was used first to describe Nineveh (Jonah 1:2).
- The evil is now in the ship.
- As the lot fell on Jonah, immediately he’s placed on trial by the terrified sailors.
- This is the third time Jonah is addressed and has nowhere to run now. He must answer.

Verse 9

“I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

- For the first time, Jonah speaks:
 - He doesn’t give his name
 - He doesn’t say his occupation
 - He doesn’t say where he’s going
- The only answer Jonah gives is in regards to his identity.
 - Hebrew
 - Confesses Yahweh to be omnipotent, all powerful making the sea and dry land.
 - He finally carries out his prophetic office
- Notice the issues with his confession:
 - He declares that he’s a worshiper of Yahweh, yet is fleeing His presence.
 - Doesn’t confess his sin.
 - Doesn’t mentioned he’s been called to be a prophet.
 - He’s running away on the very thing Yahweh made.
 - Jonah knows the true God, but is disobeying him.
- Jonah doesn’t confess the evil that is arising up in him.
 - We’ll hear more of this in chapter 4

Verse 10

- Hearing of the God that made the sea, the sailors were exceedingly afraid.

“What is this that you have done” – מַה־נַּעַתַּת

- Sounds like the Garden of Eden
- The men realize it’s the God of Jonah whose responsible for their situation.
- They react in a way more indicative of faith.
- Jonah is reacting in a manner we would expect from an unbeliever.

Verse 11

“What shall we do to you?”

- With the sailors reeling from the storm, their sense of urgency escalates.
- They press Jonah for a solution, realizing that he alone knows how to respond to his own God in such a situation.

Verse 12

“Pick me up and hurl me into the sea...” - שְׂאוּנִי וְהַטִּילְנִי אֶל־הַיָּם

- Again we see the word “hurl”
- Also, the language of lift up/pick up indicates what you do with sin.
 - You lift-up the sin offering.
 - Jonah, as the sinner, is lifted up and given over to death in order to appease God’s anger, so the waves would calm down and the sailors may live.
 - Jonah, God’s chosen one, is willing to sacrifice himself to save others.
- Jonah in this instance becomes a picture of Christ.
 - Christ is God’s anointed, chosen one
 - Christ, the sin bearer, was lifted up on the cross.
 - To die for the sins of the world.
 - He sacrifices himself.

Verse 13

“Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not...”

- By their own reason or strength, that is their works, their merits.
- Is this not a picture of the sinful flesh? We reject God’s word and try to obtain salvation by our own works.
- Yet, this is futile. We can’t save ourselves!
- A sacrifice must be made! If not, both Jonah and the sailors are doomed.

Verse 14

“O LORD” – אֱלֹהֵי־יְהוָה

- Notice how LORD is spelled? It’s the personal name of God – Yahweh!
- These pagans are now calling upon Yahweh! It happens twice in verse 14.

“O LORD, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it please you”

- Not only are the sailors saying the personal name of God but now we see they are praying to him!

Verses 15

- The sailor “hurl” Jonah into the sea to which it calms down.

Verses 16

“Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.”

- These once pagans are offering sacrifices and making vows to the Triune God!
- Yahweh, the personal name of God is mentioned two more times here.

Verses 14-16

- These three verses are incredible!
- Here, we see the sailors:
 - Pray to Yahweh
 - Fear Yahweh
 - Offer sacrifices to Yahweh
 - Make vows to Yahweh
- **Question: Where do show fear of the LORD through prayer, sacrifices, and vows?**
 - The Temple!
- This ship has become a little temple! Where the presence of the LORD is!
- The whole point of Jonah becoming a prophet is to preach God’s Word to bring people to repentance and faith!
- The irony is Jonah wanted nothing to do with bringing unbelievers to faith. Yet, God works through Jonah’s rebellion to bring about His good and gracious will.

Final Thoughts / Questions

- So, what does all this mean for us?
- In our sinful flesh, we resist God. We follow the false gods of our hearts.
- Yet, God still brings about His good and gracious will.
- Isn’t this what we pray for in the 3rd Petition of the Lord’s Prayer?
 - Thy will be done!
 - He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s name or let His kingdom come...
- Through the proclamation of the Word, we see that God’s good and gracious will is that all would repent and turn to him!
- For through Christ’s death on the cross He’s given us all good things – forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We thank you for this good gift that reveals for Christ sake you have had mercy on us. We confess that we don’t always delight in your word. We pray that you would forgive us our sins. As you are present among us today in your house, strengthen us through your gifts, that we may always hold your word sacred and gladly hear and learn it. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.