

# The Book of Jonah

*Jonah 3:1-10*

## 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 is Confession? What sins should we confess?
- **Hymn:** God's Own Child I Gladly Say It (LSB 594)

## Chapter 3:1-10

*Read Chapter 3:1-10*

### Review Previous Class

- See worksheet

### Verses 1-2

- QUESTION: What are some similarities and differences between these verse and Jonah 1:1-2?
  - Differences:
    - No mention of Jonah being the son of Amittai.
    - Mention this is the second time.
  - Similarities:
    - Word of the Lord.
    - Arise and go...
    - Nineveh that great city.
    - Call out against it.
- Review:
  - "The Word of the LORD"
    - The Word of the LORD drives this whole narrative.

- When we hear this phrase we simply think the prophet is just sitting there, then all of a sudden from out of nowhere God speaks, or he’s having a vision or dream.
    - I think we should understand “the Word of the LORD” as the preincarnate Son of God – the Second Person of the Trinity standing before Jonah. He is speaking directly to Jonah.
  - “Arise, go…”
    - We see again these words
    - Jonah is receiving a direct call by Yahweh.
  - “Nineveh, that great city”
    - These books emphasize Nineveh’s role as the symbol of the Assyrian Empire, the enemy of Israel.
    - It was a city of cruelty, prostitution, materialism, arrogance, and ultimately opposed to God.
  - “and call out against it”
    - Jonah as Yahweh’s called prophet, was to go and proclaim God’s Word to these people. To call them to repent of their sinful ways.
- Additionally:
  - There’s no mention of Jonah’s sin.
  - God’ has forgotten it.
  - The salvation that belongs to Yahweh has given Jonah a fresh start.

Verse 3

“Jonah arose”

- Jonah’s overall movement in chapter 1 and into chapter 2 was characterized by the verb “to go down,” away from Yahweh, down toward death.
- Now, we’re seeing the opposite.
- Jonah’s action now is characterized by “arise…”
- It’s as if Jonah has been reborn from the dead.
- All by the Word of the LORD!

“So Jonah arose...according to the word of the LORD.”

- He doesn't go of his own accord, but according to God's Word.
- Jonah has God's divine word and command.
- Luther states:
  - “Thus both the office and the Word employed in the office must be comprehended in the divine command. If that is done, the work will prosper and bear fruit. But when men run without God's command or proclaim other messages than God's Word, they work nothing but harm.”<sup>1</sup>
- Both the Word the office are divine and are commanded by God. Yahweh (re)call Jonah into the office, and He promises to give him the very words to say.

“...Nineveh was an exceedingly great city...”

- We already spoke of how this is a pagan land.
- Yet, notice how God continues to include the description “that great city.”
  - It's mentioned 1:2, 3:2, 3:3, and 4:11
- What we know of Nineveh up to this point is that it's a city of sin.
- However, in 4:11 the full extent of God's compassing for the city is revealed.
- The city belongs to Him. They will be brought from death to life.
- Because of He is gracious and merciful, we can rightly call it “a great city.”

“...Three days...”

- We can't help be draw a connection between this and:
  - Jonah's three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish.
  - For three days Jonah was dead.
  - Now, he's walking around city that is full of death and needs to be brought to life by the Word of the Lord.
- Christ's laying in tomb three days after His crucifixion and death.

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<sup>1</sup> 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), 83.

Verse 4

“And he called out”

- By the Word of the LORD, Jonah calls out.
- He speaks/proclaims God’s Word.

“...Forty days...”

- Forty days is a standard biblical number that includes both testing and hope.
- QUESTION: When we hear of 40, what comes to mind?
  - Forty days in Noah’s ark (Gen. 7:12).
  - Israel’s forty years in the wilderness.
  - Forty days of Elijah on the run brings him out of the dangerous threats (1 King 19:8).
  - Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness
  - The apostles spend the forty days of “Eastertide” with the risen Christ before his ascension (Acts 1:3).

“Forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

- Jonah is preaching the word God gave them.
- The word overthrown here also mean overturned.
- The word itself lends itself to one of two outcomes:
  - Nineveh be overturned, meaning they’ll harden their hearts further and ultimately leading to their destruction. OR
  - Nineveh be overturned, repenting of their sin leading to new life.
- We know Jonah doesn’t like these people. He’s probably going around happily proclaiming Nineveh will be destroyed.
- Yet, at the same time we know that God is gracious. The Word of the LORD turns people around, from death to life.
  
- Luther explains that this verse briefly summarizes Jonah’s preaching.

- He says, “We are still in the habit of summarizing a sermon today, saying, for example: “He preached on sin,” or, “He preached on the Mass.”<sup>2</sup>

### Verse 5

- Verses 5-9 represent the next section that falls into three parts:
  - The people’s response to Jonah’s preaching (3:5).
  - The king’s personal response (3:6).
  - His royal decree (3:7-9)
- “And the people of Nineveh believed God...”
  - Through the proclamation of the Word of God:
    - The Ninevites, these Gentiles were brought from unbelief to faith in Yahweh.
    - Like the Gentile sailors on the ship, they believed, trusted in God’s salvation.
    - They were brought to saving faith in God.
- “They called for a fast and put on sackcloth...”
  - Upon hearing the Word of God, immediately declared a fast and put on sackcloth.
    - These are signs of mourning, sorrow, and repentance.
    - The Ninevites even had the posture of repentance, putting on sack cloths and fasting.
    - They implored God for mercy.
    - They left their future in God’s hands.
    - The narrative doesn’t indicate that the Ninevites confidently knew God would be merciful toward them, but we see that He is.
  - Small Catechism
    - This is what we read today under confession.
    - Consists of confessing our sins and then receiving absolution, that is forgiveness.

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<sup>2</sup> 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), 85.

- “...greatest of them to the least of them.”
  - All people repent! From the lowest peasant to the king.
  - We’ll hear next time of the king repenting. It will extend to all people and all animals.
  
- In regards to this verse, Luther states:
  - “I hold that none but saints inhabited the city and that Jonah rightly called it “a city of God.” Show me another city in the wide world comparable to Nineveh, even if it were the holy city Jerusalem. Just look at this city! Jonah preached only a day’s journey, and not every citizen heard him; yet they were all converted. Neither Christ nor all the apostles and prophets were ever able to bring Jerusalem to that point by means of their words and their miracles, though they ministered to it for a long time and preached from one end of the city to the other.”<sup>3</sup>
  - “...at the time of Jonah Nineveh was the best and greatest city on earth, a city without equal.”<sup>4</sup>

### Verse 6

“The word reached the king of Nineveh...”

- This verse describes the king’s personal reaction.
- As the head and representative of his people, his penitence dramatizes that of the entire populace.
- This unnamed king is driven to repentance merely by hearing a secondhand report of Jonah’s sermon.
- Yahweh’s Word of repentance was going forth.
- Luther states:
  - “Here we see what I mentioned before about the power and effectiveness of the Word preached by Jonah. Although this king had not heard Jonah preach in his

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<sup>3</sup> 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), 85.

<sup>4</sup> 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), 85.

presence, nevertheless, after he had been informed about Jonah's preaching, he also preached..."<sup>5</sup>

"...arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes..."

- Throne and Robe
  - Symbols of earthly power.
  - He is casting these things off.
  - The Magnificat states:
    - "He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones..." (Luke 1:51-52).
- Sackcloth and fasting, torn clothes and ashes:
  - Expressions of mourning and repentance
  - This pagan king is repenting, turning to Yahweh just like captain of the ship, like the pagan sailors.
  - He's being made low.
  - QUESTION: Where do we hear of similar things in the OT?
    - Genesis 37 – Jacob tears his garments and wears sackcloth after hearing Joseph is dead.
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 12 – David fast and lays after being called to repentance.
- Ultimately, this reaction by the king is remarkable since OT Assyrian kings are:
  - portrayed as arrogant
  - pagan, they defy Yahweh
  - threaten Jerusalem
  - Argue that their power is greater than Yahweh because they have been able to defeat Israel (2 Kings 18-19).

### Verse 7-8

"And he issued a proclamation..."

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<sup>5</sup> 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), 24.

- The focus now shifts from the king’s reaction back to the city’s response.
- The king and his nobles issue a joint decree to people and animals.
- This encompasses all life in the city, from the king and his court to the common man and their live stock.
- Including the livestock is interesting:
  - We understand that through man’s fall into sin, not only man interested sin but all of creation is corrupted.
  - This shows God’s concern even for animals, which takes us back to his creation of them in Genesis 1-2 and
  - to his provision for their preservation from the flood by means of the ark.
- Ultimately, “This is the most comprehensive repentance recorded anywhere in the OT or NT.”

“Let them call out to God...”

- Here’s the last use of the verb “to call”
- Like the sailors called out, like Jonah was to call out, the Ninevites are to call out in prayer to the one true God.

“Let everyone turn from his evil ways...”

- The verb “to turn,” is used one here, twice in 3:9, and in 3:10.
  - The hope is that if the people turn from their evil, God may turn from his anger.
  - This turning is a good visual of what repentance is.
- The king knows that fasting, sackcloth, and prayer is pointless if people persist in evil and violence.
- Their repentance expressed itself through both faith and good words, which is a result of faith.

### Verse 9

“Who knows...”

- The turning of the Ninevites and their animals does not in itself guarantee the turning of God.

- The king knows that Yahweh is not obligated to turn away from his righteous judgment.
- Yet he is hopeful that the God of Israel will respond in grace.
- In this way, grace remains grace.
  - The forgiveness of sins isn't grounded in human repentance, but
  - rather in God's attributes of mercy and compassion (Jonah 4:2).
  - This is ultimately rooted in the atonement of Jesus Christ: "He himself will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).
  - Christ is the source of the grace shown to OT believers just as surely as he is the found of grace for NT believers.
  - St Paul states in Romans 5:8, "For while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
  - AC V – Concerning the Office of Preaching, states:
    - "Through these (the Gospel and Sacraments), as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ's merit."

"God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger..."

- Jonah knows this about Yahweh.
- Jonah knows there's forgiveness for those who repent.
- It's why he didn't want to come to Nineveh in the first place.

### Verse 10

"God relented..."

- The punishment the Ninevites justly deserve, God relents.
- These pagans and enemies of Israel, God doesn't pour out his wrath.
- Is this not a picture of how God's Word works?
  - It reveals our sin – our violence and evil ways.
  - It reveals how because of sin we deserve nothing but temporal and eternal punishment.
  - Yet, God's word reveals for us our savior.

- Who bore our sins, carrying them to the cross, where He would suffer our punishment and God's wrath.
- Through Christ work, we are given forgiveness of sins.
- God no longer pours out his wrath upon you but his grace for Christ's sake.
- Your sins have been forgiven.
- You're righteous for Christ sake.
- This is how our LORD works.

**Final Thoughts / Questions**

**Closing Prayer**

Almighty God, grant that we, who have been redeemed from the old life of sin by our Baptism into the death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, may be renewed by Your Holy Spirit to live in righteousness and true holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.