

Jonah: Cruise Ship or Aircraft Carrier?

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Have you ever been on a cruise? I’ve never been on a cruise, so I enlisted the help of Pastor Jim & Diane to help me.

Diane Lloyd says: “I like the ship better than the destination. The entertainment, the food, you don’t have to pick up your stuff and move to different hotels, you can eat whenever you want.”

Pastor Jim Lloyd says: “You are catered to. They make you feel special.”

So here we are at the beginning of summer and I’m going to give you a choice today, of where you would rather spend a summer get-a-way: Would you rather be on a cruise ship or an aircraft carrier?

Today we will look at Jonah chapters 1-4 to learn some lessons from the Life of Jonah.

Read Jonah 1-4

- 1. When you run from the will of God you run from the protection of God.** In Jonah 1:3 it says that Jonah wanted to “go with them to Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord.” Jonah was fleeing God’s presence which caused him to be inside a great storm, so great that the ship was about to be “shabar” – broken, shattered, crushed, & destroyed. When you run away from God, oftentimes, you end up broken.

The differences between Tarshish & Nineveh:

TARSHISH	NINEVEH
Tarshish was about as far away from Nineveh as you could get (show map)	It takes 3 days to walk from one end of the city to the other/ circum: 55 miles
Tarshish were rich, heavy traders & world explorers; 1 Kings 10:22 & 2 Chronicles 9:21 make identical references to Tarshish saying, “once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory & apes & peacocks.” It was likely a merchant trading vessel that Jonah fled upon, because it talks about the sailor trying to row back to shore. Most merchant vessels had oars.	Nineveh was a HUGE trading center between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.
Tarshish was Jonah’s exotic, cruise vacation to get away from the stress of ministry	The name means “place of fish” (ironic).
	The people there largely worship a god called Ishtar.
	It’s located on a fault line/ lots of earthquakes.
	They invented the lock/ key, paved roads, postal system, use of iron, libraries, flushing toilets.
	<p>There were also the most brutal warriors ever! Capitol of the feared Assyrian empire</p> <p>Flayed the nobles of conquering cities alive and placed their skins on the walls of the city</p> <p>Burned captives alive</p> <p>Cut off hands, noses, ears, & fingers of victims</p> <p>Made pyramids of citizen’s heads at the gates of the cities they conquered/ psychological warfare</p> <p>ANYTHING BUT A VACATION FOR JONAH!</p>

NINEVEH SOUNDS LIKE ISIS! Imagine for a moment if God called you to go as a prophet or missionary to ISIS. Put aside the fear for a moment, because there probably would be some, but would you WANT to see ISIS saved? Jonah doesn't. Ironically, Jonah was safer in the presence of God in Nineveh than he was away from the presence of God in Tarshish.

- 2. When you are self-righteous, you cannot see the peril all around you.** Jonah was sleeping – Jonah 1:5 “Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship and fallen asleep.” He figured he was “fine”. He was concerned about his comfort. Yet, all around him sailors were frantically trying to keep afloat.
- 3. When you disobey God, you leave collateral damage in your wake.** Jonah 1:12b “On account of me this great storm has come upon you.” In our community last week, there was a great tragedy. A young man, who had just graduated from Spring Mills High School, tragically passed away after a drug overdose. In the wake of ONE poor decision, his family, friends, and an entire school community is collateral damage. Our actions can cause a storm in someone else's life or keep them from finding safety in the arms of God (if we do nothing).
- 4. God will accomplish his mission; but your cooperation determines your blessing.** Jonah 1:15 says, “Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.” Jonah messed up, but God still used his life to bring the sailors to repentance. God wanted Jonah to bring people to repentance. Even in his running away, he did just that, but Jonah missed out on the blessing and landed in a large fish instead.
- 5. When you are self-absorbed, you lose your ability to love.** In Chapter 2, Jonah is praying to God inside the belly of the fish. He proclaims that God has saved him by sending this fish. But it's a chapter all about Jonah. In 8 verses, Jonah refers to himself 16 times and refers to those who are lost only 1 time in verse 8: “Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.”
- 6. Obedience can change God's mind & bring success.** Jonah goes and ALL OF NINEVEH repents and are spared! The king had everyone, including animals, were sackcloth in repentance! Jonah 3:10 says, “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 he had threatened.” Jonah was the most successful preacher; maybe EVER! Around 600,000 people came to the Lord in three days; in ONE missionary trip to Nineveh! Yet Jonah was not pleased. Why?
- 7. When we get too comfortable, we lose our ability to care about & grieve for a dying world** Jonah says in 4:2, “Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.” Jonah clearly did not believe that the people of Nineveh deserved to be saved and he was angry. Jonah sets up a camp outside the city and watched to see if God will destroy them. In Jonah 4:6 it is recorded, “So the Lord God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. Later in verse 10-11, “Then the Lord said, ‘You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow...should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right & left hand, as well as many animals?’” The Matthew Henry commentary talks about the 120,000 as being infants & children (that is why they don't know their right from their left); but there were probably more like 600,000 total people! Contrast Jonah's love of people with the sailors' love of Jonah. Even after they found out that Jonah was the reason for the storm, they still rowed hard to get him back to land, not wanting to throw him overboard. Jonah was more in love with the plant that gave him shade, then the people who were lost in Nineveh. Jonah's love of comfort sent him fleeing God instead of running toward him. His love

of comfort had him sleeping in the belly of the boat instead of helping to save the lives of the sailors around him. His love of comfort had him concerned about his own life in the belly of the fish instead of the lives of the lost. His love of comfort made him “extremely happy” about the plant which gave him shade. And his love of comfort made him extremely angry with God & wanting death when that shade plant died. His love of comfort kept him from knowing the true heart of God, which was a heart of compassion for the people of Nineveh. His love of comfort kept him from feeling the pleasure of God using him to do great and mighty things.

So again I’m going to ask you...would you rather be on a cruise ship or an aircraft carrier?

The cruise ship is a picture of a comfort-centered church. It draws people by programs & promises of personal attention. People on a cruise ship show up to be served, catered to, & entertained. **It’s** a place of refreshment, rest, & recuperation, **which is** built to impress and to compete with other cruise ships for “customers.”

An aircraft carrier is a picture of a mission-centered church. Aircraft carriers hold people who are compelled by the magnitude of the mission. **These** people show up to serve, not to be served and are committed, regardless of their comfort. The ship itself is built for function & mission, not personal taste.

Graduates, when you think of your whole lives ahead of you, do you want to be happy & comfortable or do you want to have a mission which leaves a legacy? It’s really this question that we will answer for our entire lives. It’s the answer to this question which directs our spiritual course. It’s a choice that we will continue to make forever which is why it’s valid to all of us who aren’t graduates today. It’s also a choice that the Body of Christ must make collectively.

Read Luke 11:29-32

Jesus is saying that just like Jonah was sent to the Ninevites for them to repent, HE has been sent to this generation so they may repent. Just like the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon for wisdom, there is GREATER wisdom in the person of Jesus. But people are not seeing it!

Read Luke 11:33-36

The Lord spoke to me the other day and said to me, “You know when you are outside on a warm day and the sun beats down? You feel it on your skin; you feel relaxed and just amazing? That is me. My light nourishes you. My light makes things grow. My light is for the whole world, but in that moment, it feels as if it’s just for you. That sun/son; it’s all yours yet for everyone. My creation shows who I am.” Jonah’s mind, his spiritual eye was not clear; it was not displaying brightness of character. But Jesus has come so that his rays will cause us to be fully transparent, fully able to carry his brilliant light all over this world. THAT IS YOUR MISSION, graduates, church.

Read Luke 11:37-44

Jesus goes on here to contrast the light he just spoke of with the Pharisees who outwardly look clean and brilliant, but inside are full of darkness in their souls. They take great pains to follow lots of religious rules, but have little compassion or love for those who are needy. It’s as if THEY are the ones making the people unclean.

CONCLUSION: Let me close with the story of David Sharp. He was an English mountaineer who died in 2006 near the summit of Mount Everest. His death caused controversy and debate, because he was passed by a number of other climbers heading to and returning from the summit as he was dying. Some reports say climbers literally unclipped from the fix line near (27,900 ft) stepped over David’s whimpering body and clipped back in as they pushed for the summit.

The body of David Sharp was later removed from (27,900 ft) in 2007. Something that almost never happens on Everest because of the added danger and lack of practical benefit of removing frozen bodies. However the climbing community and those that stepped over him while he reached to them for help were so ashamed they felt they must recover his body.

Do we do this to people? We step over those in the world that have yet to hear about Jesus so we can press on to our personal goals and summits? What about the people all around us that spiritually lay long the road waiting for something or someone to help them?

In the office we get people all of the time who knock on our door asking for help with various things. I had a father, mother, & 1-year old boy come in the other week. Immediately, upon opening the door I knew they were there for food or some sort of assistance because I had seen them before. I was able to help them with a food card & prayed with them that God would give them provision of a car, which they desperately needed, and then they left. I said "Lord, why do the same people keep coming here asking for the same food and gas cards, but their lives never change?" Immediately, I felt the Lord say in my Spirit, "Rachel, they are asking for the only thing they know to ask for. They don't know to ask for me. They don't even know to ask for me. So when they are asking for food or gas or help with an electric bill, you need to tell them about me. I'm what they really seek."

Do you want to live on the cruise ship or the aircraft carrier?

Do you want to go to Tarshish or Nineveh?

Do you want to live for the comfort or for the mission?

Do you want to just make it Heaven or do you want to steal from hell?

The answers to these decisions will chart the course of your spiritual life.