

“The Boat and the World” – Jonah 1:1-16

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.sobc.net.]

Jonah 1. This is God’s Word...

*Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” ³ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. ⁴ But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. ⁶ So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.” 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. ¹¹ Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. ¹² He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” ¹³ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Therefore they called out to the LORD, “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 pleased you.” ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.
(Jonah 1:1-16)*

The sermon this morning does not exist in a vacuum. There are a lot of things we have explored in Jonah 1 over the past several weeks, most of which I have to assume for the sake of time. We’ve studied the details of these verses. We have taken our time to understand the characters and the background, the context within the Old Testament and the progression of the story. What remains is some broader reflection on the patterns we observe in this text and some theological trajectories that can be traced, which ultimately drive us to Christ.

I made the point last week that the Lord is a missionary God regardless of how committed His servants are to that mission. I also suggested that this chapter is best understood as a missions text, i.e. one that deals with the mission of God in the world, which He invites His people to participate in, where He is seeking and saving people from among all the nations. Jonah certainly is not portrayed as having a missionary’s heart. But God certainly does. I think the structure supports these claims.

A few weeks ago, I noted that the book of Jonah could be split in half and divided into three scenes per half. What we notice is that in both halves the Word of God being brought to the nations is the central feature of the narrative. You might remember this chart:

<i>First Half: Jonah 1-2</i>			<i>Second Half: Jonah 3-4</i>			
Scene 1 (1:1-3)	Scene 2 (1:4-16)	Scene 3 (2:1-11)		Scene 4 (3:1-3)	Scene 5 (3:4-10)	Scene 6 (4:1-11)
The Lord with Jonah	Jonah with Gentiles	The Lord with Jonah		The Lord with Jonah	Jonah with Gentiles	The Lord with Jonah

The middle scene involves Jonah communicating about the Lord to nations who have never heard of Him and their reaction to that message. Usually the nations are simply referred to as “Gentiles,” which simply means “nations” and is a word used in the Bible to refer to non-Israelites. In both middle scenes, Jonah comes off as reluctant and insincere and yet the Gentile people respond to God’s Word in dramatic ways, which lead to the Lord’s deliverance. So the central scenes of the story involve God’s Word being brought to a foreign people who respond appropriately and experience God’s deliverance.

Last week, I showed you that chapter 1 is structured in a way that highlights this same idea. Chapter 1 employs a literary device, called a “chiasm,” which is a kind of parallelism in which the first expressed thought parallels the last, and the second thought parallels the next to last thought, and so on until you reach the middle of the structure that very often conveys the main idea the author is drawing attention to. So, in the case of Jonah 1, it looks something like this:

- A – Jonah’s response to the word of Yahweh (1:1-3)
- B – Wind hurled, beginning of storm, sailors fear (1:4-5a)
- C – Sailors pray to their gods (1:5b)
- D – Sailors use mechanical means to save ship, Jonah’s response (1:5c)
- E – Captain questions Jonah, commands solution (1:6)
- F – Speech of sailors – resolve to know (1:7a)
- G – Knowledge gained by lot (1:7b)
- H – Speech of sailors – questions put to Jonah (1:8)
- I – Response of Jonah and response of sailors (1:9-10a)
- H’ – Speech of sailors – questions put to Jonah (1:10b)
- G’ – Knowledge gained directly from Jonah (1:10c)
- F’ – Speech of the sailors – question put to Jonah (1:11)
- E’ – Jonah proposes a solution, offers partial confession (1:12)
- D’ – Sailors use mechanical means to save ship (1:13)
- C’ – Sailors pray to Yahweh (1:14)
- B’ – Jonah hurled, end of storm, sailors fear Yahweh greatly (1:15-16a)
- A’ – Sailors’ response to the work of Yahweh (1:16b)ⁱⁱ

With a structure as elaborate as this (which we can’t even fit on one readable slide), it is very likely then that the author is drawing our attention the verse 9 and the first part of verse 10, where we find Jonah revealing to these ignorant sailors the truth about who the true God is and what He has done and what He is doing. This is why I have argued that this is a missions text. God’s mission is at the heart of what is happening in the story. It’s not all that is happening. But it is certainly being highlighted. There is one true God and He is worthy of worship in all the nations. The fact that He is not worshipped in all the nations is the reason for missions.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, “*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*” (John 4:23). Do you see then? God the Father is seeking worshipers! That’s His agenda.

John Piper famously said, “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.”ⁱⁱⁱ That’s exactly right. And in order for this God-honoring worship to happen, the kind of worship Jesus says His Father is seeking, then people have to hear about who God is and what He has done ultimately through Christ. That’s what mission involves—telling the world about that. Telling the world the “good news” about who God is and what He has done.

The question is, will we—individually and as a church—choose to be among those blessed with the privilege of telling them? Or will we do what has become all too typical and think only about ourselves and our conveniences and our preferences and in so doing waste our lives away on things that don’t matter and watch this church fade away comfortably into extinction? Because that is what will happen, apart from God’s intervention, if we become so self-absorbed that God’s mission in this world fails to shape our mission in this world. Do we exist for our agendas or do we exist for His?

If we exist for His, then we are going to see people—people you know—sent from this church to the nations. You’re going to see an increase in giving each Sunday, not to increase our comforts and trinkets, but to ensure that the spread of the Gospel in Tyler and in the nations is not hindered by our tight-fisted grip around the God’s resources that he has given us to be stewards of. We’re going to see lives forever changed by the power of the Gospel. We’re going to see the members of this church seeking first the kingdom and in some cases radially reorienting their priorities and pursuits for the sake of God’s glory in this world. It’s going to be difficult. It’s going to be costly. It’s not going to be convenient. But it is going to be worth it. And if this church wants to have a vibrant and healthy and God-honoring existence for another 60 years, it’s not going to happen unless we maintain our commitment to these Gospel priorities and be about what God is about. If God is a missionary God, then if we are following His lead we are going to be about missions, we are going to be about what He is about.

Jonah was too selfish to pursue God’s agenda. That’s why he was on the run. And yet God, in his mercy, sent a wake-up call. God intervened by sending a storm. God refused to leave Jonah to His own devices and pursued him, a sign of God’s amazing affection for His people and for those not yet His people. So one of the things I pointed out last week were some lessons the storm conveys to us.

Lessons from the Storm

The storm shows us that God is absolutely committed to His agenda even when His people are not. The storm shows us the incredible mercy of God in that He would go after a rebellious prophet like Jonah and intervene in Jonah’s life in a way that would ultimately lead to a second chance. And the storm shows us this pattern of God pursuing His people when the run. And what I stressed at the end of the last sermon was that this pattern ultimately finds fulfillment in Christ, the God’s Son who was sent to this world to see and save the lost. We know that God spares no expense in going after sinners on the run because God did not even spare His own Son. The coming of Christ says that God pursues the salvation of sinners and if you ever doubt how seriously God takes that pursuit, you need only think of the bloody cross where Jesus laid down his perfect life in the place of imperfect people so that they could be forgiven and have everlasting life with God. Apart from that work, we would have no hope when it’s our turn to stand before God. Like the quote I shared last week:

“Jesus is really God’s [ultimate] ‘great wind,’ his ‘mighty tempest’ in response to human rebellion. *Jesus is the storm.* Jesus is God’s gracious intervention for those enslaved to themselves. He comes...with an aggressive affection to pursue fugitives like you and me.”^{iv}

This is good news for Christians. The story of Jonah reminds us of it.

But, if we boil down the boat scene, what we have essentially is someone who knows the Lord (i.e., Jonah) among group of people who don't (i.e., the Gentile sailors). So, in a sense, the boat is a microcosm of the world, where we have people who know the truth about God among people who don't. Therefore, there are lessons and patterns to be learned from both Jonah and the sailors. Let's start with Jonah.

Lessons from the Prophet

The only one of the boat who knows the truth about God and understands why the storm has come is Jonah, yet he's the only one onboard who doesn't seem to care about the situation. He's the only one there who can provide perspective and truth and guidance, yet verse 5 says "*But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.*"

In a book by Richard D. Phillips, there is a chapter called "The Church in the World" that is based on this scene in Jonah. Phillips argues that, "Jonah...provides a picture of the relationship between the church and the world." I think he is right. He asks, "Why were the mariners in such trouble? It was not because of their sins, but because of the prophet's sin! In like manner, the condition of the world in any age may be traced to the condition of the church." By this he doesn't mean that the sailors are sinless or completely innocent. They are not, of course. They are guilty before God for their own sins. But their current situation is owing to Jonah's actions and inactions. What Phillips reflects on is the fact that, historically, when you look at places where the influence of Christianity has increased—we're talking biblical Christianity, not those movements that call themselves Christian and look nothing like the values we see in the New Testament—it has, in time, benefitted the society as a whole. But the converse is also true in history. When the church has been "asleep" on the boat, so to speak, and their influence has declined it has been to the detriment of the society around them. We don't have time for detailed history lesson, but here are a few paragraphs where he illustrates the point:

"When the church is actively awake, exercising its duty of godliness, prayer, and gospel witness, things go well in the world. In this way, you may trace the world's advancement in the quality of life—whether through science, medicine, literature, or political science—to the influence of God's people. Just one example is the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century in both England and America in which large portions of society were converted to Christ. Many historians credit this revival with England's stability in an age of revolution, as well as with the civic virtue that made the American democracy possible. By God's common grace, some societies have flourished for a time apart from true religion (consider Egypt, China, or the Mayans). But wherever the footprints of Christian disciples have marked the earth, they lead to an increase of peace, prosperity, and well-being.

Conversely, the neglect of God and his Word, and especially the abandonment of fidelity to Christ, invariably foreshadows looming clouds of darkness and storm. One example is that of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany. In the nineteenth century, German scholarship assaulted the biblical foundations of the Christian faith. This led to a highly nationalistic church largely devoid of the gospel. In this spiritual vacuum, Adolf Hitler was able to raise the Nazi standard and engulf the world in war. Tragically, recent decades tell a similar state of decline in Europe and in America, the results of which are greatly to be dreaded.

In all of these cases, the situation can be largely traced to the failures of the Christian church. Like Jonah's flight, it begins with the rejection of God's Word. And like Jonah in the Tarshish-bound ship, doctrinely wayward Christians too often have sought refuge in the findings of science, the fashions of secular academia, and the waves of trendy culture, instead of standing fast on the solid rock of the Bible. The result is trouble not merely for the church but for the entire

society.”^{vi}

He goes on to say,

“This illuminates a tragedy in our own time, for like Jonah in the ship the church today is largely asleep in the world. We see this in the neglect of prayer, the lack of interest in theology in favor of lifestyle teaching, the casualness with which so many believers approach worship, and a lack of concern to witness the gospel to the surrounding world.”^{vii}

Do you see? When we neglect what God has called us to be in this world, it’s not only to our detriment. It’s dangerous for the world too. What could be more dangerous to the world, then for us to know truth that could save their life and bring them peace with God and salvation from sin and to either run away from that calling or peacefully sleep away the opportunity to share that good news with them when they are all around us? Could it be that the church, by in large in our country, is sleeping comfortably while those around us waste away?

This leads to another lesson we must see here—the storm was not just for Jonah’s sake, to restore him, but also for the sailors’ sake, to expose them to the one true God who they needed and didn’t even realize. Here’s the lesson then: the circumstances in your life are not merely for your sake, but the sake of the world around you. Have you considered that what you are going through right now may have as much to do with what God is doing in those watching lives around you as it does with what God is doing in your life? How might that change how you handle your circumstances? What would that reality do for your perspective? Your witness? Your reactions?

In the 19th century, Hugh Martin once asked, “Do not we often allow many a precious opportunity to pass without taking advantage of it? Are you careful, believing brethren...in time of trial, adversity, poverty, anxiety, or bereavement, to show the world how the grace of God, how the faith of Jesus, how the fellowship of the Spirit, can suffice to keep your soul in perfect peace and perfect patience?”^{viii} Even in those moments where you stumble, there is an opportunity to point to the power of the Gospel and the greatness of God. Will you try to cover it up and justify your actions before the world? Or will you confess and point the world to your need for God’s grace, which is also available to them? The circumstances that God allows into your life are not just about you. God may be communicating to those around you too.

I think every one of us Christians can relate to Jonah in some seasons of our lives. But let me tell you, I can also relate to the sailors because I remember those days in my life when I didn’t know the truth about God and how I responded to the storms of life as a result. Just like Jonah in some ways may be typical of many of God’s people, the sailors convey something of the tendencies we see in the lives of many non-believers.

Lessons from the Sailors

The storms of life—those difficult and trying situations that eventually come into everyone’s life—are revealing. There is often a lot of mystery as to why those storms come. But there is very little mystery about who we are when they come, because the storms tend to bring to the surface the real us. Sometimes it’s painful to see, but adversity has a way of exposing who we are inside and exposing the idolatry of our hearts.

What actions do the sailors take when the storm hits? Well, first off, they get religious. This is a common tendency in the world. Tragedy strikes and churches get full. I know of skeptics who look at that and think, “so what? Just because people get religious when bad things happen doesn’t prove that God exists.”

They may be right. Maybe it's just an involuntary reflex to pray and cry out to God when things get tough and therefore it's not evidence for the existence of God. But have you ever considered that it may be evidence from God against the existence of skeptics? In Romans 1, Paul explains that there is really no such thing as real skeptics to the core. We may tell ourselves that we are or tell our classmates in Religion 101 that you have your doubts and you don't really believe all of this stuff, but deep down your heart knows that there is a God and your heart actually longs to cry out to Him. It's the storms of life that best bring that to the surface, because the storms have the potential to show us the truth that we are dependent, fragile, finite, and contingent beings.^{ix} The storm forces these sailors to acknowledge that and so they cry out for help, but they don't know immediately where to look, which god to turn to. That was true in my past and maybe you can relate too. They call out to idols hoping one of them can help. But the problem with that is that the idols are powerless and they just sink with you.

But notice also that they turn to their own resourcefulness. When the storm comes they start rowing back to shore and casting their cargo into the water. They exhaust all the options they can come up with to dig themselves out of the situation. But eventually they realize, the nature of the problem is too big for them to deal with. Sooner or later there will be a storm in your life that will exhaust the limits of your resourcefulness. And if that is what you bank on, just like the idols, your resourcefulness is going to sink with you.

Then, in verse 9, Jonah finally shares with them about the one true God—*"I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."* This is the first time they have ever heard of the Lord. This is their first encounter with the truth, even if it comes from the lips of an insincere prophet. And what do they do? Well, initially they double down on their original strategies. They don't call on the Lord. They turn again to their resourcefulness and, according to verse 13, they row harder to reach the shore. And again it doesn't work.

But even before that they handle the truth incorrectly. They now have heard who the true God is and their first question to Jonah is "what do we do?" (1:11). In other words, they just opt for a new form of getting religious. Same strategy as before, same religious system, same fear-based religious paradigm, only difference is they substituted the God. The idols are out and the Lord is just incorporated into their religious system. But at the end of the day, that's still idolatry.

Here's what I mean. When we say, "God I will do anything you want, if you'll just get me out of this situation" or "do this for me" or "give me this" or "take this away," we are just revealing that we don't get it yet. Timothy Keller nails this point:

"What is so ironic and paradoxical about saying, 'I'll do anything if,' is the very statement proves you won't do the one thing that God wants... The one thing God wants is for you to love him without 'ifs.' When you say, 'I'll do anything, if...' the one thing you won't do is love him without 'ifs.'...[and] do you know what is on the other side of the 'if'? Your real god. The real thing you are looking to for your significance and security..."^x

It's still idolatry. Let me give you an example we can probably all relate to—dating. Dating is kind of a weird animal in western culture, isn't it? I saw one writer compare dating to used-car sales.

"To put it bluntly and accurately, the idea in Western culture dating is to sell yourself. The last thing you want is for the other person to really get to know you. Consequently, a man who doesn't like to shop will suddenly be saying things like, 'Sure, honey, I would love to go to another twelve stores to look for those special shoes you have in mind.' A woman who doesn't appreciate sports will find herself volunteering to watch sports with her date and his buddies for hour upon endless, grueling hour."^{xi}

After a few rounds of this they are convinced that they have found the mythical “one,” their perfect match. If they get married, give it a few weeks and someone is bound to say, “that’s not the person I married!” But actually it was. It was the person you dated who was the fake. But the reality is, for most young people today, the person they are dating is not the person they will marry. That person they’re dating is the person who will become their “X” in short order.

But what happens when they break up? For some, they will take some time to grieve the end of the relationship, they’ll seek refuge in their friendships, turn to the Lord, debrief themselves and discover that there were some things they didn’t do right in the relationship, learn more about what is inside of them, repent as necessary, and come through the end of it wiser. They get through it. They process the adversity. They’re wiser for it. It’s normal to grieve for a while, but they get through it with God’s help.

On the other hand, some just never seem to get over it, at least not any time soon. They get negative about life. Jaded towards the opposite sex. Down on themselves. “No one will ever love me.” They grow bitter towards life and cynical about love. And they never can seem to trust another person. What’s the difference? If you breakup with a person and you feel like you just don’t want to go on living or you no longer have meaning in life, then, friends, the adversity of the breakup has pulled the curtain on the idolatry of the relationship. That person had become more important to you than Jesus. If that person was the greatest source of significance and security for you, then somewhere along the way they have become an idol. And it is the suffering of losing that person that will show you the inordinate attachment you give to love, romance, or that person. Jesus was not the emotional center of your heart. And it wouldn’t surprise me if there were a few “God, I’ll do anything if” statements uttered along the way.

Now it is incredible painful to realize something like that. But it is a grace that you discover it and have the opportunity to repent of it. But never would have seen it had that adversity—the storm—not shined the light into your heart. It was the situation that took you off guard that revealed what you needed to see in your heart so that you could grow in your walk with God. C. S. Lewis has a brilliant illustration of this in his book called *Mere Christianity*.

“...surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is? Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth? If there are rats in a cellar you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats: it only prevents them from hiding. In the same way the suddenness of the provocation does not make me an ill-tempered man: it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am. The rats are always there in the cellar, but if you go in shouting and noisily they will have taken cover before you switch on the light.”^{xii}

Well, friends, sometimes help us to jump to the bottom of our hearts and see the stuff, the rats, that you never thought were down there. And that is grace. That is mercy. Because with that revelation comes an opportunity to grow, through repentance and submission to God, through faith and through preaching the gospel to yourself. In the Lord’s hands, the storm just might lead to you receiving the truth.

That’s what is happening on the boat in Jonah 1. The sailors are, in various ways, having their sense of self-sufficiency stripped away and their idolatries brought in to the light and that’s what ultimately leads them to call upon the name of the Lord for the first time, and to recognize that there is no deliverance apart from his mercy, and to throw themselves on the grace of God. And you can see these realities echoed in their words. Look again at what they say 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 pleased you.” That Hebrew phrase that’s translated “for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you,” occurs three other times in the Hebrew Bible (Isaiah 46:10; Psalm 115:3; and Psalm 135:6). If we had time to compare those passages, what we

would notice is that each of them a major point of emphasis is that God rules over all of creation and that worshipping any idol instead of the Lord is futile. And, of course, both of those lessons are here in Jonah 1 too.

Now let me add one more thought. Look at verse 16. “...*the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.*” What is that? That’s worship. The scene ends with the foreign sailors worshipping the one true God. But did you notice what ultimately led these sailors to worship? Verse 15. “*So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.*”

Remember now, that course of action was Jonah’s recommendation in verse 12.^{xiii} Whether or not Jonah has their best interests in mind when he suggests that they throw him in is greatly debated. Nothing in the text leads me to conclude that he did. From Jonah’s perspective, it may still be an extension of his spiritual tantrum that has now led him to pursue death instead of repentance. Jonah doesn’t call on the name of the Lord in this scene, does he? Not hardly. I don’t think he really repents until chapter 2, but we will get there next week.

Nevertheless, regardless of what Jonah’s motivations were, consider what the act would have looked like to the sailors. Jonah suggests that his death, would lead to their deliverance. On some level, even though they know Jonah is running from the Lord, their thinking of him as innocent or, at least, as one not deserving to die. That’s why the sailors ask the Lord to not hold them guilty of taking an innocent life in verse 14. Then they cast Jonah in and the storm subsides. And these pagan sailors are now worshipers of the true God. So what preceded their worship, from their perspective, was the voluntary sacrifice of one man for them to take away the wrath of God. Jonah’s life, for theirs. It would have looked like an act of substitution, wouldn’t it?

So as Christians, do you know what we are meant to see in this? A shadow of what Christ would do for sinners on the cross. Even Jesus compared his own death to this moment in Jonah’s life. In Matthew 12:40, Jesus said, “*For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*”

Of course, there are major differences between Jonah and Jesus. Jonah was guilty of his own sin. Jesus had no sin or guilt, but took upon himself our sin and guilt when He died in our place on the cross. Nevertheless there is a typology here. Jonah is a type of Christ, one who God used to point to something about Jesus or some aspect of the work of Jesus. And when you boil it all down, what you have is Jonah being given over to death so that those around him could be spared. And that essentially is what Jesus has done.^{xiv}

And here we are again at the deep and overflowing well of the Gospel. In the New Testament, Paul said to Timothy,

“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.... For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” (1 Timothy 1:15; 2:5-6)

The good news we find in the Bible, which is what we refer to as the “Gospel,” is that while we have sinned and done evil before a perfect and just God, God has sent a Savior to take away the consequences of our failures. When Christ died on the cross, the Bible says, “*For our sake [God] made him [i.e., Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Corinthians 5:21). You have heard about Jesus. You have heard that died on the cross and rose from the dead. Now you

know why. He did it so our sin and our guilt and everything that we deserve for our disobeying God would be laid on him and the wrath of God deserved by each of us would be absorbed by Him on the cross. He is our substitute. His life destroyed, so that the storm of God's wrath and condemnation that hovered over us would be removed completely and we could have eternal life with God and forgiveness of all of our sins. The good news is that everything that is necessary for us to experience salvation, Jesus has accomplished. And He will give to us that salvation, if we, like the sailors, will cease to rely on our efforts and resourcefulness and turn from our idols and trust instead in Christ alone to save us.

So how will you respond today? If you are a Christian, are you just going to remain silent about this life-changing gospel while those around you are at risk of perishing. Are you just sleep? Or are you going to wake up and, as Paul said to the Corinthians, be an ambassador of Christ, having been entrusted with the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). That's what God is calling you to do. Any response other than that puts you in the company of the sleeping Jonah, which is not who want to identify with.

For the rest of you, are ready to experience salvation? Are you tired of your idols and your efforts that have not removed your guilt or sin? Are you ready to put your faith in Christ this morning, believing that He alone can do that for you?

If so, let me give you a couple ways you can indicate that and take a step toward Jesus today. In a moment we are going to sing a song together and if you are ready to trust Christ to save you, I'm going to invite to come forward so we can pray together. You can ask those question. You can express your faith in Christ. I'm not going to embarrass you. I just want to pray with you and we want to celebrate what God is doing in your life. There is nothing to be ashamed about. God celebrates those who acknowledge their faith in Jesus before people. It glorifies God. You can do that today by coming forward in a moment.

Here is another way you can respond...in front of you, in the pew, there is a "Response Card." Take it, fill it out, indicate what decision God is leading you to make, or the questions that you have, and drop it in the offering plate that will be passed later. Let that be your offering to us today and someone from our pastoral staff will follow up with you this week. Don't sink with the ship when God is extending to you a life-vest. It's an underserved gift that can be received by you today through faith. So take a life-changing step of faith today. Don't waste the opportunity God has given you today.

Let's pray...

ⁱ Chart adapted from Kevin J. Youngblood, *Jonah: God's Scandalous Mercy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 39.

ⁱⁱ I picked this up from the work Dr. Dennis Magary, who is a Hebrew scholar who teaches at Trinity International University, where I'm doing my doctoral work. He also happens to be one of the scholars consulted for the Old Testament translations in the English Standard Version. This is how he summarizes the structure. I have adapted it a bit, mainly by condensing "I" and "I" into one point and clarifying the verse references. I have not seen this in print, but know of it through the lecture notes of former students. One example can be found in a sermon called, "Chicken of the Sea," preached by Josh Black on September 13, 2009, as part of a series of sermons through the book of Jonah. That sermon has an appendix, where the same chiasm is related in an appendix. The abbreviated form of the chiasm was also used in the course of his sermon.

ⁱⁱⁱ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 11.

^{iv} Tullian Tchavidjian, *Surprised by Grace: God's Relentless Pursuit of Rebels* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 51-52.

^v Richard Phillips, *Jonah and Micah* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 37.

^{vi} Ibid., 37-38.

^{vii} Ibid., 38.

^{viii} Hugh Martin, *A Commentary on Jonah* (1870; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1958), 97-98.

^{ix} Timothy Keller makes this point in a sermon titled, "The Greatly Feared," which he preached on September 23, 2001, to Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Paul David Tripp, *Broken-Down House: Living Productively in a World Gone Bad* (Wapwallopen, PN; Shepherd Press, 2009), 25.

^{xii} C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2009).

^{xiii} Bryan D. Estelle points out: "at the *semantic level*, it is at least interesting to note that the verb used by Jonah is often used of the removal of sin, but only rarely is it used in the manner that Jonah uses it. This too may be suggestive." Bryan D. Estelle, *Salvation Through Judgment and Mercy: The Gospel According to Jonah* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 58-59.

^{xiv} Philippians 60-61; Jacques Ellul, *The Judgment of Jonah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 37.