

Grace & Second Chances

Jonah is Given a Second Opportunity

Consumed Series – Part 2

Jonah 3

December 7-8, 2024

Introduction

- Mark's ending of Peter - We wrapped our Mark Series a couple of weeks ago and the way that Mark closed it left a loose end untied. The last we heard was that the apostle Peter had denied Christ 3 times. He had failed. He said he would do something and didn't. He was arrogant and stumbled. He was the leader of the group and had become their greatest failure. So, **what happened to that guy?**
- Jesus gave him another chance – **Why?** Why would Jesus give a guy like this another chance **not just to follow Him but to lead for Him?**
- Jesus changed him – **Jesus changed Peter from the inside out.** When Jesus called Peter a rock and hinted at him leading the group, Jesus didn't make a mistake. God doesn't look at the outside but the inside, and God doesn't look at the possibility of man but the possibility of God. Jesus knew that after Peter's training was done he would be ready. Unfortunately for Peter that mean a pathway through disaster and failure. But without that collapse and embarrassment, Peter wouldn't have been the leader God needed.

We Serve a GOD of SECOND Chances

- A call on our life – some of us have a call on our life that is yet unfulfilled. The reason for that is that it is on the other side of a meltdown.
- Last Week – Pastor Judah kicked off our brand new series called, Consumed. It's about the story of Jonah.
 - Fake Summary (Pinocchio) – there was this young boy who was on a raft and swallowed by a whale named Monstro. He found his dad inside and they were reunited.
 - Summary – God told Jonah to go minister to an enemy people group and Jonah refused and tried to go the other way. God caused a storm to swamp his ship and he was thrown overboard and swallowed by a huge fish where he stayed for 3 days. God changed his plans in that dark, dank, gross and scary place. Once his heart was adjusted ENOUGH, God had the fish spit him up on the seashore near Nineveh, the Assyrian city.
 - Pastor Judah had a few incredible points that should have rocked our world. He said:

- Jonah was a rebellious believer that hated God for loving his enemies.
- Character is more important than gifting.
- The big fish that swallowed Jonah was his TRIAL, but it turned out for his salvation. Many times what we think is going to end us, is truly freeing us for God's best.

Lesson

- Double Shot
 - God Gives Jonah a Second Chance
 - *Jonah 3:1–2 - "Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you."*
 - Then the word of the LORD – this is a figure of speech that means God got a communication across to His people. It doesn't speak to the vehicle or manner that it comes. In other words, it doesn't say that God spoke audibly to Jonah. It could have been any method: Dream, vision, thought, impression, audio, etc.
 - came to Jonah the second time, - **why did God have to come to Jonah a second time? Because he rejected the first.** Jonah was rebellious and refused his calling and assignment by God to minister to this city and he did so because he hated these people. To be honest they weren't great people, but he didn't have a right to hate them this much. He knew that God was merciful, and he didn't want any of that mercy to fall on this city. So **he ran away** (that's last week's message). I would be remiss if I didn't mention that it was far and dangerous as well, but I don't think that was Jonah's main concerns (he would AT LEAST be humiliated in that foreign city).
 - saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city¹, and call out against it the message that I tell you." – the common word for 'great' used here means 'large, big, or important.' Usually when it's used of things it's 'magnitude'. When it's used of groups of people it means 'large number'. When it's use of emotion, it means 'intensity'. You get the point. Here it likely means size and its size created its influence and importance in the world scene.

¹ "In the first century B.C. Diodorus Siculus (ii.3) relates with awe the information received from the fourth-century Ctesias that Nineveh's longer pair of walls were 150 stades and the shorter two were 90, a total circumference of 480 stades, about 55 miles. He fittingly commented: "No one afterward built a city of such compass or with walls so magnificent." The narrator's conception of Nineveh was on a similarly grand scale. "Three days' journey," which in light of v. 4 represents the city's diameter, would amount to some such length as 450 stades or over 50 miles, if Herodotus' reasonable definition of a day's march as 17 miles (v. 53) is followed.

This image of Nineveh must have originated in its magnificence during the last eighty years of its existence. Sennacherib early in the seventh century B.C. made it the capital of Assyria and embarked on an extensive building program, enlarging and beautifying it like an ancient Versailles. An inscription of his mentions that formerly the circumference of the city was 9300 cubits, less than 3 miles, but he added 12,515 cubits. This information accords with a survey of the site, which revealed that the city's circumference was 7 ½ miles, an extraordinary size for an ancient city.⁹ The oblong area had on its widest axis a diameter of 3 miles, not 50. It is possible that the conception of its much greater size was due to a reminiscence of a vast administrative complex, a triangle stretching from Khorsabad in the north to Nimrud in the south and Nineveh in the west. But there remains a lack of harmony with the datum of 4:11. The city which took three days to cross had for the narrator a population of over 120,000, yet that is a reasonable figure for the historical city 3 miles wide.¹² The narrator's intention in recording the colossal dimensions of the city was to convey the magnitude of the prophet's task—and to enhance the sequel." NICNT

- Nineveh location – Nineveh was 550 miles from where Jonah lived originally (Gath-Hepher 2 miles from Nazareth, 65 miles from Joppa), but a lot has happened and **Jonah was barfed up by a fish on the seashore of the Mediterranean Sea, 370 miles away.** There's no clarity whether or not the great fish was able to go up the Euphrates River (and then perhaps the Tigris as well) to get Jonah closer to the city so we don't know where Jonah was dropped off.
- Recap what Nineveh is – The **capital of the Assyrian Empire, the same Empire that is going to take over the North of Israel in 722BC.** It was a massive and warfare-based empire. The capital, Nineveh, has been a city and then not, over and over (sometimes super tiny²) since it's on the major trade route (and on the Upper Tigris River). Today it is a shell of what it ever was. It was a city of great corruption. **When you mix money, power, moral corruption, and paganism together it's a nasty mix.**
 - Modern Day Nineveh – today it's on the outskirts of the major Iraqi city of Mosul.
 - Nahum's focus – the focus of the prophetic book of Nahum is about Nineveh and the destruction that was about to take place in it. It was prophesying it's takeover (612BC – Babylonian-Mede) by the rising Babylonian Empire.
 - Summary of the Assyrian People and Empire³ – it's helpful to know a little bit about the Assyrian people and the Empire that had their name.
 - People Group - The people group emerged from Mesopotamia about 1,000 years prior (3500-3000BC). This means that in some form they have been a people for the last 6700 years (the Assyrians are not to be confused with the Syrians – Assyrians may live in Syria, but they are different. Assyrians are not Arabs. To make matters more confusing the language that Assyrians speak is Syriac).
 - The Empire - The Assyrian Empire, which flourished from 2500BC to 609BC (almost 2,000 years!) was one of the earliest world empires (covering the whole fertile crescent – the entire Near East). The Empire rose to prominence during the early bronze era under the Akkadian Empire. Assyria was eventually wiped out under the Arab Islamic Conquest of the mid 7th century AD (612BC).
 - Christianity – Assyrians are proud of their Christian heritage. They were the first people group as a whole to accept Christianity (1st century AD). The Assyrian church grew and grew

² Nineveh had been so completely destroyed in 612 B.C. that in 401 Xenophon walked past the site without noticing it (Anabasis ii.4.28).” NICNT

³ <https://www.christianity.com/church/denominations/discover-the-assyrians-10-things-to-know-about-their-history-faith.html>;
<http://www.aina.org/articles/assyrians.htm>;

and at one time had 80,000,000. They were active missionaries and reached as far as China and Japan.

- Christian Persecution - As an ardent and passionate Christian group they were persecuted under the Islamic regime that grew in their area. During the Ottoman/Turkish Empire there was an Assyrian genocide (mass killing) during the First World War (1914-1920), when they were invited by Great Britain to be an ally in WWI. It happened alongside the Armenians and Greek genocides. Many fled to modern day Turkey but were then chased into Syria or Iraq (after the Turkish War of Independence). Today most Assyrians (4.5million worldwide) are in Iraq and in 1932 they declined to be part of the state of Iraq and demanded to be a separate nation within a nation. Christian Persecution continued and had highs and lows. Islamic extremists have intensified their attacks since 2003 Iraq War. Most now are in northern Iraq (The Gulf War of 1991 led to the UN establishing a safe haven in Northern Iraq for minority groups: Assyrian, Kurdish, Turkoman), or left to live abroad.
 - Assyrian Christianity Today – Today there are 3 major Christian sects that Assyrians developed: 1.) The Church of the East; 2.) The Chaldean Church; 3.) Syrian Orthodox Church.
- Street Preacher on Fire
 - Jonah Preaches in the Streets of Nineveh
 - *Jonah 3:3–4 - "So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days,⁴ and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"*
 - So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. – We finally have a prophet willing to go and do the Lord's assignment in Nineveh. It's what God wanted and God made it happened DESPITE Jonah.
 - Why Nineveh at all? - **Why would God want to reach a city like this?** It's corrupt, pagan people, right? But here's the thing: **God only works with broken people because those are the only people on the planet.** Jesus died for us while we were YET SINNERS. God loves all of His creation and desires all of them to be saved. God is not just the God of the Jews or Christians, but the God of the universe. This means that His heart is strong for the Assyrian people regardless of what other people think of them. God didn't build them as a people group to be

⁴ "Nineveh is allowed forty days' grace. Why forty? Conceivably as a typical waiting and testing period: compare Israel's forty years in the wilderness and Jesus' forty days. Is there a hint of Moses' forty days of supplication before God in Deut. 9:18, 25? Mention of the delay builds a bridge between the decree of destruction and the surprising narrative that follows. The "tension-laden interval" between the delivery of the message and its fulfillment was to be understood by the Ninevite listener as "a time when it would be possible for him to bend himself to the will of the one who sends the message." NICNT

a stench to the planet, He built them for great things. For 300 years they were living far less than their intention and potential. It was time to change that.

- Who are we Xing out of the Kingdom? – It's impossible to read this book and not **consistently ask the question: who are my Ninevites?** Who are we so bothered by that we don't even want them to get saved? We would rather have them died and go away. Which people group, which political group, which location, which nation, which neighbor, have we opted out of our desire to see them rescued? Where has our love stopped for a person or people?
- God hasn't stopped – **Praise the Lord that while we are lost in our selfish assumptions about people around us, that He has never diminished in His love or passion to save the world, even those His children have written off.**
- Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. – This means it was a huge and influential city.
 - God's bizarre plans for Nineveh – What is the strangest thing to me as I read this is I know **what happens 50 years after this story:** Jonah roughly lived in 775BC or later (750BC? – the only thing we know is that Jonah lived during Jeroboam II's reign, and he reigned for 40 years. But the end of his reign his son Menahem had already made an agreement with Assyria to pay tribute so they wouldn't invade and that was in 745BC⁵). In 722 BC Assyria will come in and devastate the Northern kingdom of Israel and wipe them off the map! How weird that God is working with a pagan city who will ultimately destroy a majority of His people in the near future. But He is. Actually this is all part of the plan.
 - Assyria's connection to Jews⁶ – Already Israel's kingdoms knew this Empire well. They had been paying tribute to this up and coming power player on the world stage. Assyria was brutal and scary when it came to warfare and had used that to their advantage. If a nation or city didn't surrender and agree to pay tribute, they would be wiped out in gory ways. Israel had already submitted to them.
 - Occupier – Just like we see hatred by the Jewish people toward Rome in the New Testament because they were the occupying group who owned the Jewish land, so too, in this day and age, do we see **hatred for their oppressors.**
- Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown! – The city was so

⁵ <https://www.criveoice.org/othassyrian.html>

⁶ "Biblical Assyria was at its peak during the time of Jonah, just before the fall of Israel in 722BC (see Jonah 1:1). In 733 BC, Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria invaded Israel and captured Galilee (see 2 Kings 15:29). Two years later, he captured Damascus and killed King Rezin of Syria. In 724BC, King Shalmaneser V of Assyria laid siege to Samaria, and Israel fell to the Assyrians two years later (see 2 Kings 17:5-6). The assimilation of many Aramaic speaking peoples from Syria and Galilee into far-flung corners of the Assyrian Empire led to the adoption of Aramaic as the second official language of Assyria in 752BC, and its gradual takeover from Akkadian during the subsequent century."
<https://ibiblemaps.com/assyrian-campaigns-734-732/#open-overlay>

big that it took 3 days to walk through it appropriately. Jonah was a small guy in a HUGE city, and it must have seemed daunting. **Who would listen to this foreigner, and a Jew at that.** The Assyrians knew about the Jews and likely had a conquering mentality (albeit pacified by taxes and tribute payments) toward them. So it wasn't like everyone was cool with each other. Jonah, now heavily reprimanded by God, is ready to do his job. **He preached a VERY SIMPLE MESSAGE, and he probably wasn't trying very hard** (he didn't want this to work out for Nineveh).

- When the anointing exceeds the message – **we need to remember how people get saved.** Jesus said that no one gets saved, no matter how great the message is, until the Father has the **Holy Spirit draw them.** This means that it's ALWAYS a supernatural awakening that gets someone saved. It's not on the preacher or speaker, or friend. **It's on God. Our job is not to make it more difficult for the person who is hearing the message** (by our bad choices or behaviors or info). We see this played out with **Jonah who is doing his minimal with a simple and uninspiring message:** in 40 days God's going to destroy you! Not very winsome, but it could be scary IF they cared about what he was going to say. I'm sure there were always doomsday people saying stuff. **But this time it worked. Why? God had a plan and was working DESPITE Jonah.**
- Shocking Reversal
 - Nineveh Repents from Their Sins
 - *Jonah 3:5–9 - "And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. ⁶ The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸ but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."*
 - And the people of Nineveh believed God. – Wait, what? **How in the world did that happen?** If there was a city that was in the 'no possible way' category it was them. How did this happen?
 - Big City, Little People – it's so tempting to see the size or intensity of a city to be insurmountable, but we must remember that **filling those cities are not masses but individual hearts in people.** This means that no matter how big and impenetrable a city seems, a nation seems, a situation seems, a culture seems, it really comes down to individual hearts and individual wills. Nineveh was no different. It was made up

of regular people. Those regular people snapped under the movement and weight of God's hand.

- Who's your impossible person? – Let's make this personal. You have people in your life that seem impenetrable to the gospel. You cannot imagine them getting saved or having any heart softening toward God. They are not just atheistic; they are full of animosity. They hate what we love and there hasn't been a change in decades. But here's the thing, it only takes one move of God to change everything around. No one is impossible for God to reach.
- The Tipping Point – in many people God has been working a long time and leaning on them over and over. They have had the resistance and strength to ignore, but it only takes that one 'straw to break the camel's back' to snap the situation. We never know where the people are at internally, that we are ministering to. They may be one straw away and it's our job to say it again.
- They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. – this is evidence of the supernatural. This would never happen naturally. For a massive city that doesn't really all know each other (120,000 people assumed in population), to suddenly have a mass conversion is normally impossible. But that's the God-factor. God can do it. God can anoint movements in nations. God can anoint messages and leaders to bring change. If it was left to people to do a strategic effort in their own power, it's highly unlikely. But here God got the glory because there was no way that one tiny Jew (Jonah) would be able to reach a city of this magnitude with his message or even to change their hearts if he did.
- The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. – the message went all the way to the top and the king (it wasn't the king of Assyria most likely, but the leader of the city), the main influencer and leader. He took it VERY seriously this time. He did all the physical signs of mourning and repenting including taking off his royal robes (which king's/leaders don't do due to power issues), and humbling himself into sackcloth (itchy coarse fabric – like burlap), and sat in ashes on the ground (ashes of misery).
- And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. – A national revival proclamation? Wow! Can you imagine? This is back when leadership demands and decrees meant something. The whole nation was already prepped to do it but when the King said to do it, they did it.
- National Fast – it was a fast of food AND water! He wasn't playing. They had 40 days before doomsday, and he wasn't going to risk it.

How long can people go without water? About 3 days so clearly this was intended to be **ONE BIG day or two days of intensity**.

- National Prayer – **they were all supposed to call out to Yahweh, a god that they didn't know well**. Their superstition and religion made them sensitive to gods and goddesses, so they know HOW to do it, but Yahweh was a relatively new one for them. Nevertheless they did it.
 - Animal Fast? – **what they heck?** Why do the animals have to fast? What did they do wrong? Why are they involved? It was actually a move of visual solidarity. Some cultures have their animals do the same thing so it looks like EVERYONE, ALL OF THEM, are doing it.⁷
 - Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. – **This is when you know that someone is taking change seriously. It's not just a show of repentance, it's actual adjustment of lifestyle**. The king knew what they were doing wrong and called his nation on it and told them to knock it off. Most of the judgment language in the Bible about Nineveh surrounded national oppression (justice corruption) and violence.
 - Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish – **they had no guarantee that Yahweh would hear them**. They didn't know Him well and they were doing it based on their conviction that they felt. Would it work? I don't know but it's better than not trying at all. They understand what an angered god meant, and this time it felt dangerous.
 - The Amazing story of Christianity in Assyria – Although this whole story takes place over 700 years BEFORE Christ, it is worth noting that God wasn't done with the Assyria people, and He had something GREAT in store for their future. This may have been the first revival in that people group but it certainly wasn't the most stunning (as incredible as it was). They were the first people group as a whole to convert to Christianity and they did this in the FIRST CENTURY AD. This means that within (Jesus died roughly AD30) 70 years (likely shorter), there was a whole people group that called themselves official followers of Christ and started to impact the world (see above for more details).
- Have Mercy!
 - God Stops His Coming Judgment on Nineveh
 - *Jonah 3:10 - "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it."*
 - When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, - Did God really change His mind from a decree due to the actions of

⁷ "A touch of exotic color is added in the inclusion of domestic animals in fasting and donning of penitent garb; it was a Persian custom for animals to participate in mourning ceremonies," NICNT

mankind?⁸ Yep...kind of. The book of Jonah doubles down on this concept: That **prayer changes things with God.**⁹ **Although that's true, it's important to remember that God is in control.** He is not shifting or capricious. It's vital that we understand that **God sovereignly sets up a system where prayer matters. He creates an 'if/then' reality.** It's not like He is full-bore one direction and then mankind does something and He shifts His intentions. That's not true. Usually it's God setting people up to do the very thing He intended them to do. He got them involved and connected to the process and then was able to release what He wanted to do all along.

- God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. – God shut down the judgment train on them. It was coming in hot but God stopped it. They were saved.

Conclusion

- Who's your Nineveh – **let's double back to my point earlier.** Who is your Assyrian? Who's your Nineveh? **Who's the impossible to be saved? God can do it. Pray about it. God has done far more spectacular than anything you could imagine to pray for. Let's walk out of here more confident than ever that God can change the hardest of hearts. It's our job to be faithful to the message.**
- Are you the Nineveh? – **what if today you are feeling a crack in your heart toward God? You've been so fired up to resist for so long, but times have changed, circumstances have altered and you are starting to need God for the first time in your life. You may not have a 40-day window until destruction like Nineveh...it may be shorter...what will you do?**

⁸ "There was a venerable precedent for such reversal of divine policy. Moses had prayed that Israel might not be destroyed despite the sin of making and worshipping the golden calf: "Turn from your fierce anger, relent and do not punish your people" (Ex. 32:12). And it is duly recorded that "Yahweh did relent over the punishment with which he had threatened his people." That was Israel, it is true, but had not Nineveh reacted in a typically Israelite way? Moreover, there was warrant for clemency to be shown to foreigners, provided they repented. Jeremiah had been the bearer of a divine oracle whose thesis was very relevant to the narrator's theme: "At times I threaten some nation or kingdom that I shall tear it up, break it down, and make it perish; then the threatened nation turns from its wickedness and I relent over the punishment I intended to carry out." NICNT

⁹ "The story of the sparing of Nineveh is ch. 1 all over again: just as the praying sailors were delivered from the fatal effect of the storm, so now is Nineveh from the realization of Yahweh's prophecy of doom. It is even more a repetition of Jonah's experience. Jonah had been the object of divine anger, symbolized in the fury of the storm (1:15). He too had been under sentence of death and conscious of his guilt (1:12). He had been saved from drowning at the last moment by a signal act of grace shown by his sovereign God." NICNT