

Jonah's Rebellion

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[0 : 00] Amen. Thank you for that song. We do not yet live in that final day of great rejoicing, but we can certainly look to it with great expectation.

! It seems so often that sickness and sadness reigns in this day, but our God does indeed. I think today we're going to have to accept as part of the normal noise of the room, our typical children, being in the service with us, which we're so happy for because we love children.

I think we're also going to have to include in that coughing and sniffing, which we don't love so much. It's part of that in-between, part of the curse that we deal with such things.

I'm really glad to be back with you in this manner this morning, able to preach as I've been in and out and sick. We had the Advent season the past four weeks, so we took some turns preaching, and the turn I was meant to have, I had to give up.

Clay very graciously preached on my behalf as I was diagnosed with pneumonia just two weeks ago, and I'm gaining in strength. I think I've felt a bit obligated to say that each time I've seen you that I've been getting a little bit better.

[1 : 17] I know last Sunday I told Stan that I was at 80%, and then at 90, I saw him at the grocery store last night, I said 95%. I'm probably being a little generous in all of that.

Sometimes I'm feeling like I'm drowning from the inside, so forgive me if I take a moment and a break in the midst of preaching to clear myself in that way.

Prior to Advent season, we were working through the book of Ecclesiastes. And I think, if I'm not mistaken, we were seven sermons in.

I think we got to chapter 2, verse 8, somewhere in that realm as we were marching through the book. We're going to take a break from it. We're going to stop preaching in Ecclesiastes.

And here's why. The book of Ecclesiastes is an interesting book. It's written. It's unique in all of biblical literature. Certainly unique as a wisdom book.

[2 : 18] And it's a difficult book to lay some bearing on because it has no real discernible outline. It at times really seems like the ranting of a madman. And you have to, in each and every time you pick up the book of Ecclesiastes, you really need to either read it in a sitting or in the preaching of it.

You've got to get to the conclusion. You've got to bring some sanity to what the preacher is saying in the book. And his summary of it, we find in a single verse in Ecclesiastes 12, 13, he says, The end of the matter, all has been heard, fear God, and keep His commandments.

For this is the whole duty of man. And he gives us some reason for that in verse 14. Verse 14, For God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

And so he's saying to us that we need to rightly recognize, we need to understand that we are created beings, and we have a creator who has a standard. This is the fear God, and we are meant to keep that standard.

The book of Ecclesiastes just drips with the gospel because it presents us with the great problem. And all of the things in the world, all of the vanities, all of the pointlessness of the world, he brings us this summary of this, and we're left with this issue of fearing God and keeping commandments.

[3 : 45] This is our duty as people, certainly as Christian people. So we're going to take a step away from the book. And we're going to go to the book of Jonah.

So let me invite you to turn there. The Old Testament prophet Jonah. As an example of a man that didn't do this well.

The book is characterized by Jonah's rebellion against God's command. And it so well for us serves Jonah's life as a wonderful backdrop to consider the character of God as we consider what it means to fear Him and to keep His commandments.

And so, kind of hear this as a continuation of our time in Ecclesiastes, as a biblical example of how this is meant to work out in our lives.

Now, my apologies to you if this is incredibly disappointing, if you were really hoping to work all the way through the book of Ecclesiastes. So to that, I would just say, if that's a desire of yours, stick around.

[4 : 59] Maybe build a house in the area. If you're young, get married and have children. And maybe at some point we'll revisit together the book of Ecclesiastes.

I'll make no promises, but likely we will at some point get into it. But for the next three weeks, I want to preach from the book of Jonah.

I want to structure it in this way. The first week being this morning, we're going to look at the rebellion found in the book, the theme of rebellion in the book of Jonah.

This morning we're going to look at chapter 1, verses 1-16. Secondly, so next Sunday, we're going to look at the repentance that's found in the book of Jonah by looking at chapter 1, verse 17, through chapter 3, verse 10.

And then finally, on the third week, the regret found in chapter 4. So let's look at together, as I read to you, Jonah chapter 1, verses 1-16.

[6 : 06] Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.

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 on board to go with them to Tarshish and away from the presence of the Lord. 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.

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.

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 : 14] And they said to one another, So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 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? And he said to them, and I love this, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

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.

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. 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. Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

[8 : 23] 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.

So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

I think that most of us are fairly familiar with the story of Jonah. We at least know the plot line of the story of Jonah.

We're aware of his rebellion, and therefore what happens to him as he's swallowed up by a great fish. But the rebellion in the story of Jonah goes beyond Jonah himself.

It's not just Jonah's rebellion that we ought to see together. And so I want to look at that, and then I want to step away from that a bit to look at God's character, as we see in these first 16 verses.

[9 : 26] So notice first, Nineveh's rebellion. Chapter 2, the word of the Lord to Jonah is, to arise and go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.

The people who lived in Nineveh were Assyrians, and they were wretchedly wicked, as I will show you in just a moment. So they were rebellious against the Lord God.

Jonah's message, you'll see in chapter 3, verse 4, is yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So God is bringing judgment, and a call of judgment down on Nineveh, unless they repent and turn from their ways.

Notice also the Mariner's Rebellion, those who are sailing the ship. As they're in this storm, they call out to all of their gods.

It seems that they all have a god of their own making, apparently. These gods are silent, they do not answer, but yet they don't worship the one true God, and are also in need of repentance.

[10:35] And we see them in this text, they do in fact repent, and we'll talk a bit more about that next week. And then certainly highlighted in the midst of all this is Jonah's rebellion.

Jonah's given a very clear command. I love how the author, we don't know who the author of Jonah is, but gets right to the point. In this first couple of verses, there's a call to Jonah to go to Nineveh, and then very quickly in verse 3, but Jonah.

Despite what God had commanded him to do, but Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. What caused Jonah to run in the other direction?

Was it the size of the task? It's a major task that God put before Jonah. Nineveh, called that great city in chapter 1, verse 2, took three days to cross.

Chapter 3, verse 3, probably because they're counting the suburbs around Nineveh as well. Nineveh itself was 18,000 acres within the city walls.

[11:47] It contained parks and a zoo. It was the Assyrian capital in that day. The wall was 100 feet tall and 30 feet thick.

In chapter 4, verse 11, God says that there are 120,000 small children, we presume. Persons who don't know their right hand from their left hand.

Hopefully, we know about what age that is. Small children, 120,000 of them. What a task for a single preacher.

Would you be overwhelmed by such a task? Was that the issue before Jonah? Was it the danger of the mission? The Assyrian people were extremely wicked.

In Nahum's prophecy, chapter 3, verses 1-4, he's speaking out against these very people that Jonah's been asked to go to. And he writes, Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder, no end to the prey, the crack of the whip and rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot, horsemen charging, flashing sword, and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end.

[13:15] They stumble over the bodies, and all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings and people with her charms.

Incredibly evil, incredibly dangerous people that Jonah is asked to go to as a solitary preacher and preach to them destruction.

Were these the reasons that he didn't go? The size of the task or the danger of the mission? No.

These weren't the reasons. So why then? Why then did Jonah go in the opposite direction from the place that God had asked him to go?

Nineveh is about 600 miles northeast of Jerusalem. It's modern-day Mosul, Iraq. Joppa is 30 miles northwest, which is modern-day Jaffa, Israel.

And Tarshish, we're not sure about, but it's likely located in Spain. So get that picture. He's meant to go one direction. He walks out of the front of his house, and rather than turning right to head down the road, he turns left.

[14:27] He goes in directly the opposite direction to get on a ship and to sail far away across the Mediterranean. Why did he flee in this way?

Why did his flight take this course? The book of Jonah answers that for us. In chapter 4, verse 2, after we see the repentance of the Ninevites, he said, O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country?

That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish, for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

Jonah hated the Ninevites. They were enemies of Israel, and he knew of God's character that he was merciful, and that if he were to go and preach destruction to these people and they were to turn from their ways, that God would show them mercy.

And he did not want that to be the case. I fear that in so many ways, we do this as a people. James Montgomery Boyce, in his commentary on Jonah, says, we can understand the geography and

Jonah's motives if we can imagine the word of the Lord coming to a Jew who lived in New York during World War II, telling him to go to Berlin to preach to Nazi Germany, and instead of this, he goes to San Francisco and takes a boat for Hong Kong.

[16:04] And this is the issue before us. This is the life of a man that we ought to filter our own lives through. Who are your Ninevites?

This could be on a grand and political scale. This could also be interpersonal, an individual that you just don't care for, or a group of people that you just don't care for.

I remember back to my high school days. I was not a big fan of the jocks at our school, with some good reason. But it's God's mercy not good for them should they not also repent and believe. And we categorize people and we break them up in this way and we should not. So I want to show you, with that as the backdrop, three things about our God.

I want to show you God's purpose in this text, God's power, and God's presence. And God's purpose in this world, I want to sum up in this way, is to make Himself known.

[17:12] To seek His own glory, His own acclaim, to make Himself known primarily through the merciful redemption of His people. Let me give you some text to this end.

Isaiah 43, 6 and 7. God says, I will say to the north, give up, and to the south, do not withhold. Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the end of the earth.

Everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and I made. God has always had worldwide intentions for His glory.

He has always intended to save peoples from every tribe and every nation and every tongue. This theme maintains itself all throughout the Old Testament.

God didn't just intend to have Israel as His people. The book of Jonah is a wonderful expression of that. Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach destruction that they may turn to Me.

[18:21] There's always been an inclusion in God's people. Habakkuk 2, 14. God says, For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

For time, there's two Old Testament examples for you. This has always been God's intention. How is it that He accomplishes this great work of the glory of His name by the redemption of His people? He accomplishes it through preaching. And I don't mean only this kind of preaching. I mean the kind of preaching that's so often translated in that way.

The Greek word means gossiping. Like in Acts 8, 4. When the early church is split up because of persecution, it says that they went about preaching the Word of God.

It means that they told anybody and everybody as they're dispersed back across the known world about the good news of Jesus Christ. How is it that we find Christianity on three continents in one generation?

[19:34] Because God's people preach the good news of Jesus Christ. They saw that they were meant to go and to make disciples. Romans chapter 10, 13 through 17.

Beloved, hear me. I often read these common texts and I think, oh, I need to come up with more creative texts. Right? That people haven't heard so much. But I wonder if I say Romans 10, 13 through 17 if you go, I don't read that.

You should. Okay, so hear me. You should. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Do we care about people to that degree?

Right? Even our Ninevites that we would want people to have what we have. Right? The mercy of God to us in Jesus Christ. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

[20:37] This is that Greek word. Don't think that this excludes you. Right? This isn't just a text for the pastor. This is a text for the believer. And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed what He has heard from us?

So there's not a promise that everyone's going to turn to Christ. Right? We can see that here.

Right? But there's a command to go. Verse 17, So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.

Jonah seemed to understand this better than we do so often. He didn't want to go because he knew they probably would believe that God would save their souls.

Psalm 96.3, the exhortation, declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples.

[21 : 40] Matthew chapter 28, another text you should be very familiar with. Right? Just the first part of verse 19, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

Acts 1.8, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

If we are disciples of Jesus Christ, we will care about what Jesus Christ cares about. Luke 19.10, For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

This is the means by which He carries the Gospel to all peoples. And don't hear me just making a mission call. Certainly include that in this.

Some of you may need to go and go to the ends of the earth, to the weirdest and most remote places where people live. All of us need to go to wherever we're going this week.

[22 : 46] To see that we are first and foremost disciples of Jesus Christ. Everything else falls underneath that. Everything else is subservient to the fact that we're God's people and we're meant to take the good news of Christ to everyone everywhere.

To be messengers of the mercy of God. And this book just drips with that. God displays abundant mercy toward mankind in the story of Jonah.

I am always so thankful for the conjunction but. You see that this command is given to Jonah. Verse 3, but Jonah. He's given a command.

Instead, he goes and does this thing. And instead of God doing the warranted thing for Jonah's rebellion, right? I read these first three verses and in my mind I want God to smush Jonah.

Be done with him. Right? Ah, rebellious. Go on to the next guy. Right? Somebody else in Jerusalem certainly would have gone. But verse 4 says, but the Lord.

[24 : 02] And there's this great intervention on his behalf. He sends a great wind and a great fish because he loves Jonah. Because he's merciful toward Jonah.

He's got this mission for him that he intends to carry out and he does not need him to accomplish this thing. Could God not in some other way preach the good news to the people of Nineveh? Certainly he could. But he chooses to use Jonah and to express his mercy through the work of Jonah. He shows this abundant mercy to him.

And he does it on more than one occasion. He does it again in chapter 4. Again, I want Jonah to be smushed by the thumb of God. But God stays his anger toward him.

He shows mercy to the mariners. We see their repentance and he stays the storm for them once they throw Jonah overboard. And he certainly shows mercy to the people of Nineveh as we see the greatest revival that has ever happened in all of history in the book of Jonah.

[25 : 05] We see God's purpose in Jonah. The redemption of people from every tribe, every nation, and every tongue. This includes all of the ways that we section ourselves out.

This includes the hipsters. God's power. The second thing I want you to see. God's power.

There's a number of things that we see in the text that we can speak about God's power. He calms a storm. Think about Jesus speaking to the storm on the Sea of Galilee and calming it. He commands a great fish.

He's got power over the creation. We see that he changes hearts. We see that the Ninevites and the mariners turn to God. We see all this expression of God's power, but I'm referring specifically when I talk about God's power from this text to God's sovereignty.

His ultimate and complete reign over all things. Nothing escapes God's control and power.

[26 : 10] And we seem as a people to have no trouble with God's sovereignty in the natural order of things. An example of this would be gravity. Have you ever heard a person complain? That God is in control of the way in which we stay on the ground?

I never have. I'm thankful for it. I can rest in that fact that I know that I'm on the ground and gravity is going to function and continue to work. This is under God's purview.

He is in control of this right now that we're where we are. We're held together. You're not going to float up out of your seats all of a sudden. Unless the sermon gets real good.

You're going to stay put in your seats. We have no trouble with this kind of thing. We say, oh sure, God is sovereign and in control of that. The orbit of the planet. Yes, God is in control of that.

But we seem to really struggle with it when it comes to the experience of life. Suddenly we become, because we experience something different, we become gods in ourselves.

[27 : 08] And we say, oh, we couldn't possibly be sovereign over all things. we struggle with it, with things like a wayward saint. I think all of us have been around long enough that we've seen a person who professes faith in Christ, who shows so much evidence of that, and then just seems in so many ways to rebel against God.

To run off. People are coming to my mind that have been here and have left. And this is not the magical place. You've got to be here if you're a Christian. But they go off and with their life, they just kick against God.

Does God not have the ability to actually crush our wills? Certainly He could, and sometimes I just wish that He would. That He would just actually make me a robot. I would be fine with that. Help me to walk in righteousness.

So we struggle in this way. Jonah speaks to this. Jonah speaks to this. God is in control. His providence raised.

Look at the way that He deals with Jonah. to accomplish His purpose with Jonah indirectly. Could God have, and certainly He has, there's some accounts of it in the Scripture, of changing somebody in a way that causes them to do a thing?

[28 : 25] Couldn't He have done that here, right? Couldn't verse 4 read, but God, but the Lord, as He was turning, as He was going toward Joppa, changed His heart and caused Him to walk the other direction to Nineveh.

Certainly, He could have. But here, God works indirectly. He works through circumstance, a great storm and a great fish. Jonah recognizes God's intervention in His repentance, which we'll talk about next week, and does the thing that God had said Him about doing.

His providence reigns at all times. It never does it, even if our experience doesn't seem to affirm that. Beloved, the Scripture is our great high authority, not our experience.

Psalms 115.3, Our God is in the heavens. He does all that He pleases. Proverbs 16.9, The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes His steps.

Proverbs 21.1, says of a king, and it says it of a king because the king was in absolute control in the mind of the people over everything that was under his reign, right?

[29 : 40] But the king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it wherever he will. Effortlessly he turns it. And certainly this gives application to us. God is sovereignly in control of all things.

Now I don't want to even try to work out all the implications of that with you. I don't think we will on this side of glory. I think it's a thing that's far too high for us to completely understand. How it is that God is sovereign over all things and yet we are responsible for our actions, I don't want to try.

I don't want to try. Listen to this quote from Charles Spurgeon. This is on the front of your bulletin that you don't have because it's sitting in the hall. So I'll try to read it carefully and you can go back and reread it if you manage to pick one of those up.

He once said, opposition to divine sovereignty is essentially atheism. Men have no objection to a God who really is no God.

I mean by this a God who shall be the subject of their caprice or temper tantrums, who shall be a lackey to their will, who shall be under their control.

[30 : 54] They have no objection to such a being as that. But a God who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, a God who has no respect for their persons but does as he wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world, such a God as this they cannot endure.

Oh, I hope we're not those people. I hope we're a people who rest in the sovereignty of God over all things, who believe the promises of Scripture.

The same way that we rest in the sure promise of gravity, we can rest in the sure promise that God is sovereignly in control of everything. Young people, this should help you as you consider what comes next in the future.

I know this is one of the great questions on your mind. What am I to do next? What is God's will for my life? God accomplished it with Jonah, even when Jonah was running in the opposite direction. He'll do the same for you. I'm not saying don't be wise, I'm not saying don't seek counsel, walk in the way of the Lord, pray about what you should do, but rest in the fact that God is in control.

[32 : 19] Thirdly, God's presence. God's presence. There's an interesting little phrase in this first chapter expressing what it is exactly that Jonah is fleeing from.

It doesn't say the command of God. It says that he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. It's twice in verse three, it's once in verse ten. He's fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

What does that mean? It's such an interesting thing. I think we all understand that God is omnipresent. The scripture affirms that. Psalm 139, 7-10, which Jonah should have been aware of. He's a bit of a later Old Testament character. The Psalms were completed at this time. They would have been canonized. They would have existed and distributed at this time.

I believe he would have been familiar with this text, which says, where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there.

[33 : 27] If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

But yet, it's recorded that he was fleeing from the presence of God. It seems that Psalm 139, 7-10 was written for Jonah. Once again, we get this dwelling in the uttermost parts of the sea.

Who has ever done that except for Jonah for three days? James Montgomery Boyce suggested he liked to imagine the name of the ship that he got on, which we don't know was Wings of the Morning.

He took the wings of the morning, and he later dwelled in the uttermost part of the sea. Maybe this is the text. Maybe this is the way that God spoke to him as he's in the belly of that great fish.

That even in these places, God's hand was leading him, and his right hand was holding him. So what does it mean that he was fleeing the presence of God?

[34 : 35] Jeremiah 7-23, God speaks and says, obey my voice, obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people, and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.

And I think what's happening in the book of Jonah, and the reason for this record, is not that Jonah could actually flee from God himself. God is going to be present in those places.

But what they're trying to express is that out of Jonah's disobedience, he was fleeing from communion with God, with God's pleasure with him, that he was severing that which was good in the garden, which was so beautiful and precious about the garden.

It was paradise, there was no evil, there was no death, all of those things. But the beautiful thing about the garden is that Adam and Eve had communion with God. He walked with them in the garden.

And this is something that ceased at the fall as their cast out of the garden, they're cast out of the presence of God. Christ brings us back to that.

[35 : 43] That's what the great restoration is for us, that we get to be back in relationship with God. But even as those who are now positionally back in that place, we can still sever communion with the Lord by our disobedience.

We walk in evil ways. We don't walk by the Spirit. He is always there, but yet we shut him off. And I think that's what's trying to be communicated here. The author of Jonah is trying to say that Jonah by fleeing from the will of God was fleeing from the relationship with God.

It's good to be with the Lord, even if He's saving our enemies, that we would walk with Him because He's our greatest good. Psalm 119. 35 says, Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

It is good for the people of God, to be with God. John writes in 1 John 2, 3-6, and by this we know that we have come to know Him.

We've positionally changed. We know that we have come to know if we keep His commandments. We don't keep His commandments so that we can know, but we know that we know because we keep His commandments.

[37 : 03] Whoever says, I know Him, but does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word in Him, truly the love of God is perfected.

By this we may know that we are in Him. Whoever says he abides in Him, ought to walk in the same way in which He walked. This brings us back to God's purpose.

God's purpose, God's power, and God's presence. So let me ask you a couple of questions in conclusion this morning. Are you a rebel this morning?

Are you a rebel positionally? Have you never believed in Christ, His person, His work, His perfect sacrifice, on your behalf?

Do you stand as the Ninevites or the mariners stand, never knowing God, being cut off from Him? The call to you is to repent and to believe.

[38 : 10] Destruction is your end unless you repent and believe. Or are you a rebel functionally this morning? Have you repented and believed?

Are you positionally found in Christ and yet you don't walk in His way? And don't think that you're waiting for the word of the Lord to come to you. That you need a vision for Him to speak to you for what you should do.

You have His word already. He's given you command to walk in. Do you love the purpose of God? Do you believe in the power of God? Do you walk in the presence of God? Of course, to all of these things, all of us should say imperfectly no.

Imperfectly, I hope yes. And in this, as you ask the Lord to search your heart, the call to you is repent and believe.

[39 : 09] Turn from your sin and turn to Christ. Don't be Jonah. And we'll look more in the coming weeks. What the rest of the book has to say to us about our God.

Let's pray together.