**“God of Mercy: The Runaway Prophet”**

**Jonah 1:1-17**

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 5/2/21

This study has not so much to do with Jonah as it has to do with God. Jonah ran away…

He was rerouted. God rules over even fleeing prophets and wicked people and sinful nations. He is sovereign and merciful. God’s rule is supreme. God’s mercy is great. And God’s saving mission is global.

The book of Jonah shouts God’s rebuke to His church. What sins led to Jonah’s running away? Spiritual pride, nationalism, prejudice, personal desires, personal preferences. Any of those sound familiar (and personal)?! Jonah was to minister to Hebrews and Gentiles to show the reach of God’s mercy. God’s gospel is urgent. God’s mercy is impartial. God’s Kingdom takes priority over anything in this world. (Q1)

Read Jonah 1:1 again. God takes the initiative. His focus: Nineveh, the crown jewel of Assyria, a people who were notoriously cruel and ruthless to their enemies. Jonah was to learn that God often works in ways we don’t expect and often in ways we don’t even want! Do we really believe that all is not lost when the wicked or foolish rule? It’s true: God reigns over time, space, people, politics… everything! God even uses His enemies to build His kingdom. And God delights to dispense His mercy on whomever He chooses and however He chooses (see 2Peter 3:9). (Q2)

The book of Jonah is a picture that points people to Christ. We will meet Jesus in this book (see Matt. 12:39-40). Jesus, the last prophet, doesn’t just proclaim God’s word; He is God’s Word (see John 1:1). In Jonah, God commissioned a prophet who would disobey Him! His nationalism and prejudice and desire for comfort formed a toxic mindset that got in the way of His obedience to God. Could that be true of us? We understand when God uses faithful men and women. But some of us are unfaithful sinners, just like Jonah. Jonah finally realizes he (like us) is the recipient of great mercy, making it easier to convey His message of mercy. You may have heard it said that the gospel is just one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread. Aren’t you glad He sends fellow sinners to preach to you? (Q3)

God exerts supreme control over every aspect of redeeming His people. Read Luke 11:32. The phrase “One greater than Jonah is here” is talking about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Without Jesus you will be tossed into the sea of God’s wrath forever. Only a perfect life of a perfect God could prevent that. Jesus gave His life as a perfect substitute for the wrath of God that you and I deserve because of our sins. God WILL redeem all who return to Him in repentance and faith in Jesus.

The phrase “the word of the Lord came to…” (Jonah 1:1) is used over 100 times in the Old Testament. How many times has the word of the Lord come to you without breaking through? The solution? Repent, believe, and follow. Salvation is from the Lord.

God, give us grace to be your messengers. Give us eyes to see our apathy or our personal desires or anything that we put above Your will to reach others for Jesus. Help us to not confuse this earthly realm with Your eternal Kingdom. (Q4) Help us to see Christ in this book of Jonah. Amen.

**QUESTIONS**:

1. Why is the gospel not urgent to many Christians?
2. If God wants “all to come to repentance”, why doesn’t every person come to repentance? (see also John 1:12)
3. What causes a person to repent? What similarities do you see to a recovering alcoholic? What differences?
4. How can I avoid being caught up in and overwhelmed by this earthly realm? What role does the Body of Christ play in this?

“Wonderful Grace of Jesus” (Lillenas)

Wonderful grace of Jesus,  
Greater than all my sin;  
How shall my tongue describe it,  
Where shall its praise begin?  
Taking away my burden,  
Setting my spirit free;  
For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.

Refrain:  
Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,  
Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;  
Higher than the mountain, sparkling like a fountain,  
All-sufficient grace for even me!  
Broader than the scope of my transgressions,  
Greater far than all my sin and shame;  
Oh, magnify the precious Name of Jesus,  
Praise His Name!

Wonderful grace of Jesus,  
Reaching to all the lost,  
By it I have been pardoned,  
Saved to the uttermost;  
Chains have been torn asunder,  
Giving me liberty;  
For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.

Wonderful grace of Jesus,  
Reaching the most defiled,  
By its transforming power,  
Making him God’s dear child,  
Purchasing peace and heaven  
For all eternity—  
And the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.