**“God of Mercy: Preserved to Proclaim”**

**Jonah 3:1-5**

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 6/13/21)

[We were blessed to be part of the sacrament of baptism this morning. Baptism is a picture of what God has done for us through the work of Christ, imparting forgiveness and life. It is a proclamation by the participant that Jesus is his Savior forever. One of the men being baptized said that he’d “gone back and forth with God quite a bit,” but now wanted to follow Jesus whole-heartedly. Pastor Steve said, “When we go back and forth with God, He doesn’t go back and forth with us; He keeps us!”] (Q1)

 Jonah 2:9 proclaims that “Salvation is of the Lord.” What is God doing? He’s graciously granting rescue from His wrath for sin. This salvation involves a messenger, a message, and a miracle.

 Jonah 3:2 represents a new beginning for Jonah. (Q2) After being spit up on a beach, Jonah was eager to obey God. (He was also eager to travel only by land!!!) This command to go and proclaim applies to then and now. Jesus repeated it for us in Matt. 28:18-20. (Q3) We are to proclaim the urgent news of God’s judgment of sin AND we are to proclaim the good news of God’s provision through Jesus. (Q4) God preserves and prepares His people to serve as His messengers, even if they are not perfect. Look at Jonah. He was a mixed bag of successes and failures. All of God’s ambassadors are mixed bags! To God, who you are now is what is important, not your past or even your future. The messenger’s confidence is not in themselves, but in God.

 Why did Jonah disobey the first time? Probably because of his prejudice and indifference toward “those people”. Probably because he was shaped by the times he lived in. Probably because he was preoccupied with his own comfort and security. Maybe even because he was caught up in his national identity. But God awakened Jonah to the fact that he had been shaped by God FOR this special time. God’s messengers are always shaped for their times; they are not shaped by their times. The primary qualification of God’s messenger is not a track record from the past, nor a pledge for the future, but OBEDIENCE in the present.

 Jonah’s great sin was disobedience to what God had made clear for him to do. This undoubtedly grieved the Holy Spirit. How about us? To many of us, the Great Commission is the Great Omission. Some of us are scared of “those people”. Some of us are just scared to speak up. But the power of the gospel does not lie in the messenger, but in the God of the message (see Rom. 1:16). The gospel is a message of warning from God. The most loving thing you can do is let someone know of their peril. The gospel is also a message of mercy from God. Jesus obeyed the Father when He stepped into humanity, lived a perfect life, took the wrath that we deserve, and then rose from the dead. Isn’t that amazing beyond comprehension?!

 The miracle of this story is not so much the whale as it is the salvation of undeserving people. Jonah was the imperfect messenger, but the people believed God. Read John 1:12-13. Salvation is not a work of man, but a miraculous work of God. Let’s rejoice that all whom God purposes to save will be saved… not one will be lost. Amen. (Q5) (Q6)

**QUESTIONS:**

1. How does Pastor Steve’s statement apply to our study of Jonah?
2. As a group, list some of the other “new beginnings” we see in the Bible.
3. What commands in these verses are we to follow? How does the promise of Matt. 28:20 affect your life?
4. Study John 3:16-19. God’s #1 question to you will be, “What have you done with my Son?” Why would some choose darkness and judgment over life with God forever?!?
5. All humans have been made in God’s image, but only some are His children. What is the difference?
6. The two most loving, caring people I know do not believe that Jesus is their Savior. How should I talk to them about this vital hole in their lives? Who do you need to pray for and talk to?

“We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations” (Ernest Nichol)

 We’ve a story to tell to the nations,

 That shall turn their hearts to the right,

 A story of truth and mercy,

 A story of peace and light,

 A story of peace and light.

 Refrain:

 For the darkness shall turn to dawning,

 And the dawning to noonday bright;

 And Christ’s great kingdom shall come on earth,

 The kingdom of love and light.

 We’ve a message to give to the nations,

 That the Lord who reigns up above

 Has sent us His Son to save us

 And show us that God is love,

 And show us that God is love.

 We’ve a Savior to show to the nations,

 Who the path of sorrow has trod,

 That all of the world’s great peoples

 Might come to the truth of God,

 Might come to the truth of God.