

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Sermon Title: The Story of Jonah: What Not To Do When God Gives You a Second Chance, Jonah 1-4

Date preached: September 10, 2017

For public use: See non-copyright comments at the end of message

INTRODUCTION: We have quite a few lost and found stories in the Bible. We have stories about lost things, lost people, and lost animals. Last week I told you about the woodcutter who lost the head of an ax, which I called the cutting edge. I appreciate your response from the message. We all lose our cutting edge from time to time and need help regaining it.

Today, I want to tell you about an interesting man in the Bible—about a person to whom we can all relate. The story of Jonah is usually referenced as a children's story, but it is a story which all people can relate to. Jonah was lost and found; however, no one but God and Jonah knew he was lost and found. We don't have any record of anyone missing him, nor do we have any record he told anyone he'd been lost.

The four points to my message today are the following:

1. Jonah's lost condition was caused by his choices.
2. Jonah lost everything when he was inside the fish.
3. Jonah had a second opportunity at life and ministry.
4. Jonah obeyed but missed the point.

All the elements of a good story are found in the book of Jonah: the drama, the seemingly impossible situation, and the surprise outcome. No doubt a good movie could be made from it.

As we look at this man who was lost and found, how about we clear our minds and ask God to show us something we've never seen before? How about we ask God to help us realize how this story applies to us right now in our personal and individual situations?

First, JONAH'S LOST CONDITION WAS CAUSED BY HIS CHOICES.

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 1:1-3 ¹*The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:*
² *“Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”*

³ *But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.*

EXPLANATION: The boat found itself in a terrible storm. They tried to lighten the load, and they cast lots to determine whose fault it was they were in such a terrible storm. Verse Ten tells us Jonah had already told them he was running from the Lord.

In last week's message, I spoke about the woodcutter who lost his main tool, his ax head, while he was working. He wasn't in rebellion. He didn't cause the loss of his ax head. He just lost it at no fault of his own or anyone else's. With Jonah, however, we have a completely different situation. Jonah was the cause of his own problems. He was lost because he refused to follow the road map God had given him. In his rebellion, he caused his own mess.

APPLICATION: I've done my best to teach my kids a life lesson. Here it is: life is all about choices. Sure, there will be times, when, like the woodcutter, something happens at no fault of our own. In fact, those times happen frequently enough, don't they?

ILLUSTRATION: Too many people believe fate directs their lives or that all problems are caused by others. I spoke with a person this week about all the people who has let him down. As I listened, I realized a pattern. His choice of friends is the main reason he has had friends who let him down. If he chose to associate with better friends, then he wouldn't be let down so often. People who fail to realize their choices are bringing them down are behaving like Jonah.

And, too many people won't accept responsibility for their own decisions. They wander around lost— like Jonah, in the belly of a fish—completely lost, and they blame others for their life's sad direction.

ILLUSTRATION: I know another person I know who is always broke, even though she has a job and just a few bills. She never has any money for anything. I'll guarantee you a year from now she'll be broke, and five years from now she'll be broke. It's always someone else's fault. People who fail to take responsibility for their own actions are like Jonah.

Second, JONAH LOST EVERYTHING WHEN HE WAS INSIDE THE FISH.

Busy schedules and too many responsibilities can clutter our minds to the point we lose sight of who we are and what's important. It's not until something terrible happens or when we face losing everything, that we consider what's really important. I've never met a person in hospice who wanted another day at the office or another day to sort through junk they've collected.

When Jonah was thrown overboard and subsequently swallowed up by the fish, he had lost everything. He didn't know if he'd live another minute. His stuff no longer mattered. His vacation plans no longer mattered. Nothing mattered. It was a time for him to focus on what was really important. Did he do that? Apparently, he did.

SCRIPTURE: [Read all of Jonah 2]

APPLICATION: When we find ourselves at a point where all we've worked for no longer matters, we learn it's not the worst place to be. In fact, it might be the best place to be. Being in the belly of the fish was a good place for Jonah because he was in the center of God's will and he was surrendered to God. When Jonah was out of options, he trusted God. Notice in verse 9, Jonah told God he would sacrifice to him and he would declare salvation is from the Lord. In other words, Jonah was asking for a second chance.

Third, JONAH HAD A SECOND OPPORTUNITY AT LIFE AND MINISTRY.

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 3:1-6 ³*Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time:* ² *“Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”*

³ *Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it.* ⁴ *Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”* ⁵ *The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.*

⁶ *When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.*

The people repented and God did not destroy them.

APPLICATION: Please listen to this. Any second or subsequent opportunity we have to start over is solely a gift of God. You've heard me speak a lot about the God of second chances because that's indeed what he is. The Apostle Paul said, “I die daily,” and what he meant was he died to his own will and started over everyday to follow God's will. So, not only do we have the God of second chances, but third, fourth, fifth, and so on. While others may not believe you when you say you are sincerely starting over, in a manner of speaking, God accepts at face value your repentance and your desire to start over.

Here is a bit of an aside, but I want you to notice some comparisons between Jonah the people of Nineveh:

- Jonah and the Ninevites were heading the wrong direction (Jonah, geographically and the Ninevites spiritually), and God gave them a second chance.
- Jonah and the Ninevites both were in a state of rebellion against God.
- Jonah and the Ninevites were spared only because of God's grace and mercy.
- Jonah and the Ninevites both needed a fresh start. Jonah needed a second opportunity to become an obedient prophet, and the Ninevites needed national repentance as a people group. The problem was that the rebellious prophet did not want to deliver the message of repentance to the rebellious Ninevites. If they were to ever repent, Jonah would have to have a change of heart or God would have had to get his message delivered another way. As we see, Jonah finally obeyed God, and so did the Ninevites.

Fourth, JONAH OBEYED BUT MISSED THE POINT.

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 4:1-3 ¹*But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. ²He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. ³Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."*

APPLICATION: It's important for us to look at the spirit of obedience. It is possible to obey out of obligation, fear of reprisal, or hope for reward. We pay our taxes and grit our teeth when we do it. No one is excited about paying taxes, but we do it because we'll get in trouble if we don't. However, just because we obey doesn't mean we have an obedient attitude. Also, it's possible to obey because of hope for reward. People who play sports love to play the game more than they like to practice, but they obey their coaches because they want the reward of winning.

Truly there is nothing wrong with obeying out of obligation, fear of reprisal, or hope for reward, but when it comes to obeying God, we should obey out of joy and desire to do follow his will. Let's avoid the Jonah syndrome. In the beginning of the story, he was a reluctant prophet, and in the end, he was the bitter prophet because God did not respond the way he thought he should. You'd think a prophet would be thrilled people listened to him and repented, but no. He had gloom and doom on his mind. He thought people would rebel, resist, and disobey his prophetic message. He thought he'd stand just outside the city limits sign and watch fire and brimstone fall from Heaven and consume everything.

We don't know what happened to Jonah, but as I said, past behavior is a good indicator of future behavior. Unless Jonah had a life-changing experience with God, he probably would have continued down the same path.

CONCLUSION: In looking at the story of Jonah, we see what not to do when God gives you a second chance.

How was Jonah lost and found? Jonah was lost at sea, found by God, and restored by God. However, he missed the blessing of God.

We are all given a second chance by God. We are given the opportunity to experience new life in Christ. Do not miss out on a second chance when God has so graciously given you one.

To preachers, teachers, students, and anyone else reading or using this message: I have posted this for all to use as you see fit. There is no need to cite me as the source. You are free to delete sections, add your own, or do whatever you want. There is no copyright. My request is that you do not copyright or sell my work. I am sharing my preaching notes in good faith with you because I know the challenges of putting together a lesson, especially when your week gets consumed with other things. Use it and enjoy!

I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
Thanks to Judy Andrews and Nancy Claire Smith for their editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA