



Jonah – Mercy
Sermon Discussion Questions – February 12, 2023

Scripture Passages:

2 Corinthians 13:11 (NLT) ¹¹ . . . Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

Philippians 2:2 (NIV84) ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Luke 6:27–28 (NLT) ²⁷ “But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.

Jonah 2:1–10 (NIV84) ² He said: “In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry. ³You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. ⁴I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.’ ⁵The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. ⁶To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God. ⁷“When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. ⁸“Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. ⁹But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord.”¹⁰ And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Hebrews 10:4-10 (NIV) ⁴ It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷

Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.’” 8 First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. 9 Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And

Warm Up:

This week Pastor Tom talked a lot about grace. Has there ever been a time in your life that you found yourself in a tight spot and someone helped you out? What did that look like? What did you learn?

Discussion:

1. Pastor Tom mentioned that sometimes we like to pick and choose who God is merciful to. If there is someone we don't like, maybe it would be okay for God to show them less mercy. Do you find yourself doing this? How can you show mercy to those people this week?
2. This week, we find Jonah in Chapter 2 in the belly of the fish (whale) where he is seemingly at the lowest he could go. Up to this point in the story, do you identify any with Jonah? Where might you see some similar inclinations in your own life?
3. If you were in Jonah's shoes, what would you be thinking at this moment? Do you ever find yourself in places where you are kicking yourself when you are down?
4. When talking about our disobedience to God, Tom shared this statement in regards to Jonah by Peter Craigie: *“radical treatment, if it [is] to be remedied . . . But not until he was all the way down, finally stripped of his own buoyant self-sufficiency, was deliverance possible.”* How does this statement sit with you? Have you found yourself stripped down and at the “very bottom” or are you in that place now? How did God deliver you from that place? If you are still there, how might your perspective change if you knew God could deliver you from that place?
5. Read through Jonah 2:8-9. Jonah declared of God's grace before he was saved by God. When you find yourself in a place where you need saving, what is normally your first response? Is it to get out of it yourself, to lean into grace, or something else?
6. In his message, Pastor Tom references a book by J.J. Packer called *Knowing God*. He describes the book in this way, “he (Packer) discusses our perceptions of grace, specifically he highlights how for many people, grace is an abstraction, a feel-good vibe as opposed to a life-changing power.”

What do you think it might look like for someone to understand grace as a “feel-good vibe?” How have you seen grace as a “life-changing power?” How might understanding grace as a life-changing power impact the way you live?

7. Pastor Tom closes with these words that sum up the reality in which we find ourselves: We are sinners, unable to save ourselves and able to be saved only through extreme and costly measures. He continues, “No human heart will learn its sinfulness and impotence by being told it is sinful. It will have to be shown—often in brutal experience. No human heart will dare to believe in such free, costly grace unless it is the only hope.”

Where do you need to search yourself this week for places where you can be shown you need grace? How might you approach grace differently?

8. The storm didn’t go away until Jonah was thrown into the sea, and he was then swallowed by the fish. Verse 17 says that God arranged a great fish to swallow him. Pastor Tom points out that the word “arranged” means prepared ahead of time – which we know is provision. This shows us that even though God was trying to teach Jonah a lesson, he also had a plan of provision and redemption for him.

How has God put you into situations where he allowed you a shot at redemption? Where have you seen God’s provision in your life?

Next Steps:

Excerpt from Pastor Tom’s sermon: *I must share one last word with you. Jonah is not perfect at this point. In chapter 4, he is going to get angry with God for being merciful to the Ninevites. And I am grateful he does. We who have received God’s grace often are graceless to ourselves when we make mistakes or sin. And we who have received God’s grace, often are graceless toward others, toward enemies. For Jonah, there is still a sense of superiority and self-righteousness that will cause him to explode in anger. But our gracious, God releases Jonah from the fish even though, as will become obvious soon, his repentance is only partial.*

Yet the merciful God patiently works with us, flawed and clueless though we are. In other words, we discover God’s grace for ourselves, and then spend our lives applying that same grace.

Take some time to reflect on how you have seen God rescue you in the past. Praise God for his mercy in his life.

Now take a few minutes to search your heart for areas where your repentance may have been partial. Are there any places in your own life where you are struggling to extend mercy to others? If so, ask for God to help you both remember his mercy to you and offer that mercy to others. This will be a process so consider making this a short daily prayer this week:

“God thank you for your mercy, love, and grace. Help me to extend that same mercy and grace to (fill in the blank.). In your name Amen”