



## Help for the Journey: Sermon Resources and References

February 9, 2014

**The God of Second Chances: Jonah 3**

**Steve Hawkins, speaker**

*God teaches Jonah that God's faithfulness and mercy don't depend on Jonah's faithfulness (or lack thereof).*

### Central Text:

*Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. 6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, 8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." 10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.*

Jonah 3:1-10 (ESV)

### Further Reading & Resources:

[Reading of Merchant of Venice Act 4 scene 1 \(Wonderful soliloquy on mercy\)](#)

(Spoken by Portia)

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice.

Songs:

Kyrie Eleison (David Lynch and Jocelyn Montgomery)

Kyrie Eleison (Richard Souther)

Thy Mercy (Sandra McCracken)

The Quality of Mercy (Michelle Shocked)

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. We often pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Sometimes our biggest fear is that God will answer our prayer! How has God's will been revealed in your life? Do you have a 'Rise! Go!' moment that you have been ignoring or avoiding?
2. Have you ever needed a second chance? Do you know of others who need a second chance? How are both Jonah and Nineveh given second chances here?
3. In the book of Jonah we see a 'hard edge' to the mercy of God: Thrown overboard. Swallowed by a whale. 40 days to repent. This is the unexpected nature of God's mercy – uncomfortable, inconvenient, 'hard'. Is there a place of hard mercy in your life where God is saying something about himself or your life you don't want to hear? What is He saying and why don't you want to listen?
4. Do you have a 'deja vu' faith story? What do you see happening in your life that you have seen before? Is there a hard, painful pattern that you are aware of? What is God saying to you about that? And how are you seeing your heart respond?
5. From history and from the Hebrew it is apparent that Nineveh had a short-lived, rather shallow repentance. Often that defines our repentance (individually and corporately) as well. What attitudes and theologies have we developed that "let us off the hook" so quickly and easily?

## Gospel Practice:

If you have kept a journal of prayer or about your spiritual life, go back through it and notice what the themes of your prayers have been, what patterns of thought or habit you notice, and your sense of God's involvement or response. If you have not kept a prayer journal, consider keeping one for a season (or long term) to learn more about how you pray and think about God.

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