

The Obedient Prophet

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Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[0:00] Follow the sound of your voice And as you speak A hundred billion creatures catch your breath Evolving in pursuit of what you said And if it all reveals your nature so alive I can see your heart in everything you say Every pain is God, a canvas of your grace If creation still obeys you so alive So alive

So alive So alive So alive So alive So alive So alive It's all right.

And if the wind goes away, you send this all right. It's the rocks, Christ. Hello, hello.

Good morning, church. Good morning. How are you guys doing? Oh, the how are you guys doing is always so awkward because obviously I'm not asking you how you're doing because I'm up here and there's 50 people.

But anyways, my name is JD. I am one of the youth leaders. Go youth. Today is Youth Sunday. So you guys saw all of our youth students out there, part of the welcome team.

[2:29] They're going to be sitting over here. So it's just a really cool thing to get them involved in serving our church. So what I'm going to do right now is I'm just going to read a verse for us just to kind of get us settled and in the mindset to worship our God and then pray.

And then we'll get started. So the passage that I'm going to be reading from is Ephesians 3 verses 14 through 21. And it says, For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. And just a quick thing that I learned through this. Sorry, Jesse. But talking about the width and length and height and depth of the love of God.

In community groups, we're praying for those of our friends and family members that are lost, that they may pass from death to life, that they may know the goodness of salvation.

And one of the things that was taught in a commentary is that God's, the width of God's love, God is so wide that it can reach any person.

[4:13] His length is so long that it can reach into all of eternity. His depth is so deep that it could reach even the worst sinner. And his height reaches so high that it can take us up into heaven to experience eternity with him.

But just finishing this passage up, it says, Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Amen. Let's pray together. Father, you are such a beautiful, big, awesome God. We thank you that we could come together here as a church and just praise your name.

We thank you that you even hear our prayer now. That you, being the creator of the universe, bow your ear to us and hear our prayer. It's such an incredible thing, Father.

Father, we do ask that you would soften the hearts of all of our friends and family members, and even those here, God, that haven't experienced you, that don't know you, that you would touch them, Father, and that you would soften their hearts, that they would experience what it means to have a relationship with the creator of the universe, that they would experience grace, that they would experience freedom from sin.

[5:38] God, and we thank you so much that we get to experience that. We thank you that your mercies are new every morning. And we just pray that right now, as we worship and praise you, that we would just lay down all of our idols, that we would lay down all of the things that have our minds

right now, and that we would just focus on our great, awesome, powerful God that has saved us. And we pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Holy cow. We can go home now. Well, good morning, everybody.

If y'all please stand with me. We're going to try something a little bit different today. This song reminds me of Saul before he became Paul, and as he became Paul, and the things that he went through.

It's called I Thank God. So, uh... Wandering into the night Wanting a place to hide this weary soul
This bag of bones And I try with all my might But I just can't win the fight I'm slowly drifting A
vagabond And just when I ran out of the road I met a man I didn't know And he told me that I was
not alone You picked me up You turned me around And placed my feet on solid ground
I thank the Master I thank the Savior Because you healed my heart You changed my name Forever
free I'm not the same I thank the Master I thank the Savior I thank God I cannot deny what I've seen
I've got no choice but to believe My doubts are burning Like ashes in the wind So, so long to my old
friends Burden and bitterness You just can't keep it moving You ain't welcome here From now till I
walk the streets of gold I'll sing of how you saved my soul This wayward son has found his way
back home You picked me up

[8:27] You turned me around And placed my feet on solid ground I thank the Master I thank the
Savior Because you healed my heart You changed my name Forever free I'm not the same I thank
the Master I thank the Savior I thank God I thank God I thank God It's easier with the words, right?

Your blood speaks a better word Than all the empty claims I've heard upon this earth It speaks
righteousness for me It stands in my defense Jesus is your blood Your blood speaks a better word
Than all the empty claims I've heard upon this earth It speaks righteousness for me It stands in my
defense Jesus is your blood What can wash?

What can wash? What can wash away our sins? What can make us whole again?

Nothing but the blood? Nothing but the blood Nothing but the blood Of Jesus And what can wash us
pure as snow Welcomed as the friends of God Nothing but the blood?

Nothing but your blood Nothing but your blood King Jesus Your cross testifies in grace tells of the
Father's heart to make a way for us now boldly we approach my earthly confidence it's only by your
blood What can wash away our sins What can make us whole again Nothing but the blood Nothing
but the blood of Jesus What can wash us pure as snow

[11:43] Welcomed as the friends of God Nothing but the blood Nothing but your blood Nothing
but the blood of Jesus What can wash away our sins What can make us whole again Nothing but
the blood Nothing but the blood Nothing but the blood Nothing but the blood of Jesus Jesus Your
love is devoted

Like a ring of solid gold Like a vow that is tested Like a covenant of hope Your love is enduring
Through the winter And beyond the horizon And merciful today Faithful you have been Faithful you
will be You pledge yourself to me And it's why I sing Your praise will Ever be on my lips Ever be on
my lips Your praise will Ever be on my lips Ever be on my lips Your praise will Ever be on my lips
Ever be on my lips You father the orphan Your kindness makes us whole You shoulder our
weakness And the strength that comes our role You're making me like you Clothing me in white
And beautiful my sins For you will have your pride And rid of all her shame And known by her true
name And it's why I sing Your praise will

You will be praised.

Angels and saints, we sing worthy are you, Lord. And it's why I sing your praise will ever be on my
lips.

[15:40] Ever be on my lips, your praise will ever be on my lips. Ever be on my lips, your praise will
ever be on my lips.

Ever be on my lips, your praise will ever be on my lips. Ever be on my lips. Ever be on my lips.
Ever be on my lips. Lord, we just are so thankful to be here today. We're so thankful for all of your
blessings, all of your safekeeping of our families, our friends.

And we just thank you that we live in a place that we can come together and be in your presence.
Let your praise always be on our list.

For now and forevermore. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, say hello to somebody. And talk
about that great first song that you knew all the words to.

[16:54] That was awesome. And we'll get started in just a minute. Amen. All right.

All right, everyone. We're going to continue on with the service with just a few announcements before Jesse comes up for the sermon. Thank you all so much for being here. My name is Alan. I'm one of the pastors here at One Harbor Church.

It's just a great honor for you to be with us today. There are so many great churches in the area. And the fact you chose to be with us is just a great honor. We do not take that lightly. So like I mentioned, a few announcements.

The first one is we're having an all-sites partnership class coming up October the 16th at 10 o'clock at our Morehead City class. And so for those of you that may not know, partnership is what we use for membership.

We see everybody coming together shoulder to shoulder fulfilling the mission that God has given us, which is to make much of Jesus everywhere in eastern North Carolina. So that's just if you've been coming for a few months and you're like, man, this is my home.

[18:27] This is where I want to be plugged into a local body. This is where I want to serve. This is where I want to make much of Jesus. Go to the website or the app, and there's more information there. You can sign up. Lunch and child care will be provided on that day.

So go to the app and get more information. The next one is next Sunday, October the 3rd, which is crazy. I can't believe September is already going and October is here. But I am thankful.

The older I get, the more I love fall and cool weather. So awesome for that. So next Sunday, we will not be at this site. Cherry Point Baptist is having their annual homecoming, so they're going to be using this facility.

So we're going to take advantage of that and the beautiful weather, and we're going to meet at Creekside Park for a church picnic. We haven't had that in a long time, and we love doing that, and the fact we're going to be able to do that is coming up next Sunday, October 3rd, 11 a.m.

David Kick, the king of pork, is going to be cooking some Boston butts. Right? He went to the Boston. Yep, going to do some Boston butts, which is going to be incredible. And if your last name begins with A through M, would you bring a sweet side?

[19:32] N through Z, savory. So we can all come out and have a good time. I'm sure there's going to be some ultimate Frisbee going on. There's a fantastic playground right there for the kiddos. Just a great time to fellowship.

Have some good relational time. And don't take this as a Sunday off. This is a time where we can come together and hang out and find out more about each other than we normally can on a Sunday morning. And then finally, have a little video queued up.

Men, we've got a camp out coming November 5th through 6th. That's for your sons too. Five and up. And like I said, we've got a little video. Right? Second? Yep. Go on with it.

Hey, what's up guys? Donnie here from One Harbor Church. I want to invite the men watching this to come join me and some of my best friends from around the world here at Camp Albemarle.

It's in Newport, North Carolina on Vogue Sound. It's absolutely epic. And we're going to get together November 5th and 6th for 24 hours together to consider how do we become better men. If you're like myself, you probably go to bed at night when things are quiet or first thing in the morning you're thinking things like, I wish I was a better friend.

[20:33] I wish I was a better father or husband or brother or just a better man in general. But a lot of us don't really know how to do that. What are even the first steps to take? This is a great step to take.

To mark a date on your calendar and say, I'm going to join hundreds of other men. We're going to get together some food and some fellowship and we're going to focus on how to become better men. And here's what you need to do.

You need to invite some friends. You need to get a tent. You need to go over to oneharborchurch.com to our events page and register. And you need to join us here November 5th and 6th. Love you guys. Hope to see you there. All right.

Cool. Finally, Jesse, come on up, bud. Just a time for me to honor Jesse. He is a phenomenal pastor. And he made fun of me last Sunday.

And I have the microphone. And so this is going to be a little payback times here. So, yeah. He really is a phenomenal pastor. He leads with compassion, with conviction, excellent theologian, and just loves each of us to the max.

[21:33] We are really a blessed church in sight to have you. And what you may not know that I know is that tomorrow is his birthday. And so we normally don't do this, but I feel like it would be

appropriate for all of us to sing happy birthday to him.

So here we go. One, two. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, Pastor Jesse.

Happy birthday to you. All right. All right. You got me.

You got me. Oh, thank you so much, guys. Yeah. I am blessed to be able to pastor this church. You guys are just a huge gift to me. And I just love every single one of you.

And the more I get to know you, the more just in awe I am of God's goodness. And how thankful he is is how he just brings together the most likely kind of people. I mean, you look around this room, and there is no social club that would create this group of people coming together, which is awesome.

[22 : 44] I love that. I love that. We are so diverse. And there's just such beauty and diversity in the kingdom of God. And only God is able to do that. So I just love you guys so much and appreciate you so much.

As part of our Youth Sunday, before we get into the sermon, part of our Youth Sunday, we're going to actually have one of the wonderful ladies in the youth, Addison Bartz, come up and read the scripture passage today.

So Addison, yeah, let's give her a big round of applause. Cool. And so you can follow along with her. She's reading from, ooh, can we get a better view of the, there we go.

There we go. So she's going to read up there. You can follow along behind us as well. Thanks, guys. Is it not on? Sorry. My fault. My fault.

There we go. It works better when the green light's on. Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me out of the belly of the shalom.

[23 : 44] I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me.

All of your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, I am driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.

The waters closed in over me to take my life. The deep surrounded me. The weeds were wrapped around my head.

At the roots of the mountain, I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you brought up my life from the pit.

Oh, Lord, my God. When my life was fading away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you into your holy temple.

[24 : 43] Whose who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you what I have vowed, and I will pray salvation belongs to the Lord.

And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land. Good job. Good job. Excellent. All right.

So, this is the final sermon in our series, Look to the Rock, which the series has been looking at these various Old Testament stories and seeing actually how they point to Jesus.

And the story we just read is about a prophet of God named Jonah. It's an interesting story because Jonah isn't your typical prophet. And actually, the book of Jonah isn't really typical for a prophet either.

There's actually no prophecy in it. Right? It's the one prophetic book that has no message, no prophetic message in it at all. Because it's not really focusing on a message.

[25 : 57] It's actually focusing on what God is doing in Jonah's heart. Right? And Jonah is struggling. He is struggling with God's sovereign will of grace and mercy and judgment.

And Jonah's struggle with the depths of God's love and grace, what it did, it led him to disobey.

Jonah doesn't come through as the hero in his own autobiography. He is the prodigal prophet who has a hard heart towards what God wants to do and toward the people he doesn't like.

Jonah, as far as prophets go, was pretty pathetic. Right? See, in the Old Testament, God would use prophets to tell people about what he was about to get up to.

Amos 3, verse 7 says, For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants, the prophets. And so a prophet was this important role in God's purpose of redemption and throughout redemptive history and through his people Israel, specifically to his people Israel.

The prophet played this important role. He was a mediator between God and the people. God would never speak directly to people. He would give his message to a prophet. And then the prophet would go and he would make that known.

[27 : 09] He would disclose God's revelation of what he was going to be up to to the rest of the people. And so in Israel's history, prophetic revelation was normal. In fact, it was critical.

It was a massive part of God correcting and encouraging and giving hope. And just kind of in general, guiding his people into covenant faithfulness. But as well as all that, the ongoing ministry of prophetic revelation in the Old Testament put God's faithfulness and love toward his people beyond question.

See, it reminded them that God was present with them by his Holy Spirit. He would put his Holy Spirit on that prophet and that prophet would bring the message and the purpose of God to the people.

And he would remind them, hey, God's presence is with us. God was still among us. He was still their God and they were still his people. And so you can see how significant. And just think about those 400 years of silence after Malachi, right?

400 years of no prophecy between Malachi and just before Jesus shows up on the scene. In those 400 silent years, Israel's left wondering, was God done with them?

[28 : 20] His presence is no longer with us. There's no prophecy happening. It hasn't been happening for a long, long, long time. Had their continued disobedience put them beyond hope. And it seems in that time, that era, God's presence was gone.

And actually, that is what Jonah is experiencing in the passage that Addison read. Chapter 2, he is experiencing a morbid existence away from God's presence.

And that's what happens. Life apart from God is more terrible than we can imagine. Why would God do this to Jonah? Why? That seems pretty harsh to have him be in the belly of a fish for three days, right?

And actually, God is giving Jonah what he wanted. See, God had commissioned Jonah to go to Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, a neighboring nation.

And he was supposed to go and tell that city to repent because in 40 days, God was going to destroy the city. He was going to overthrow it. But Jonah didn't like this. In his opinion, Nineveh getting sacked was a good thing for Israel.

[29 : 27] And there's a good reason why. The Assyrian nation was a powerful war machine. They worshipped a war god named Ashur. And so worship to him meant fighting.

It meant battles. It meant being cruel. That's what they lived for. They lived to fight. They lived to conquer. They lived to torture. It says this. Like their own art from this period that Jonah's living in, Assyria's own art, Nineveh's own art, boasted in their cruelty, showing how they would rip out people's tongues.

Flay prisoners alive. If you're wondering what flay is, just imagine skinning something. Make prisoners grind their own father's bones before being executed themselves in the streets of Nineveh.

Really nice guys, right? See, the prophet Nahum actually says this about Nineveh in chapter 3, verse 1. Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder.

No end to the prey. And so you start to get this idea, this picture of Nineveh as like, man, it's pretty easy to hate on Nineveh if you were Jonah, right? And probably most people that weren't Ninevites.

[30 : 36] And beyond that, at the time of Jonah, like Assyria and Nineveh were a superpower. They were the dominant force at that time, and they were pretty close to Israel. They threatened Israel's very existence.

So you start to feel Jonah's struggle here, right? It's why he disobeys. Instead of bringing the presence of God in his prophetic message of repentance that could save Nineveh, what Jonah decides to do is to run from God's presence.

In Jonah 1, verse 3, it says this, See, Tarshish is this place that like, all the commentators and the clever guys, it's like, there's not really an idea, like an actual location of what that place is.

All they know is, it was like this idea as the farthest western place he could possibly go. It was the westernmost part of the known world. And Nineveh, funny enough, is east, right?

So we see, God says, Jonah, go east. Jonah says, no, I'm going west, as far west as I can go to. As far as the east is from the west is how far Jonah wanted to be separated from Nineveh and from

God's presence, right?

[31:58] And so that's exactly what God gave him. He hurls a great storm at the boat that Jonah's in so that it's in danger of breaking apart and they're all going to sink and drown.

And so finally Jonah confesses that, you know what, he's the reason that storm's happening. And it's because of his disobedience. So what he does is he offers to sacrifice himself to save the ship and the men.

Which, I mean, it sounds noble, but actually he's the problem, so it's really not a noble thing. If you're saying like, yeah, you know what, you guys are going to die because of me, so I guess, you know what, kill me. So that's what they did begrudgingly.

They said, man, isn't there any other way? And Jonah says, no, toss me into the sea. So they toss him into the sea and God sends a fish to swallow Jonah. And here's where we find Jonah in chapter 2.

In the belly of the fish, in the depths of the sea. Now, I don't want us to imagine Jonah being in this cozy little cave with just enough room to maybe kneel and pray or like stand up, walk around a little bit.

[32:58] Like don't think like belly of the whale like in Pinocchio, right, where a whole ship is in there and they're kind of fishing and like woe is me. No, this is more like being buried alive in a coffin.

That's what I want you to think about. That's his experience. It's claustrophobic. Like you don't have room to move or roll around. That's where Jonah's at. No light, like dark, lights out, dark, can't see anything.

Imagine unpleasant odors, all right, the most unpleasant odors you can imagine. He is slowly being digested in the belly of that fish. It's bad. It's bad.

But I would also say we can't really appreciate how bad it is without knowing how Jonah is interpreting this situation. See, the sea and the deep and Sheol, which Jonah talks about, right, that's the place he's in.

He talks about that in chapter 2. They were all references to a specific place in the Hebrew understanding of the cosmos, right? And so their understanding of the universe and how it was ordered and structured, they saw three different spheres.

[34:04] They believed three different spheres. You had the high heavens, right? The heavens that were above, that's where God was. That's where light was. That's where there was no sin and no corruption had touched that place.

It was a good place. It was full of joy. There was nothing bad there. And then below heavens, you had earth, right? And earth is, God's presence was still there, but it was a little bit further away from God's presence.

And so there was some of God's goodness and some of those good things like joy, but there was also sin and there was also some corruption at play as well. There was evil at play there.

But then you have this third sphere, which was below earth, below the land and below the surface of the sea. That was the underworld. That was the place of evil and chaos and darkness and torment and isolation.

That's how the Hebrews saw the world. And they were very comfortable with saying like, man, those things interacted and interplayed with each other all the time. And it's also that lower place, that underworld, it signified the furthest place from God's presence you could possibly get.

[35:16] It is death, but it's a living death. It's a horrid existence. Think about this. In that place, in that Sheol, there's a vulnerability without any possibility of comfort.

You are absolutely vulnerable, but there's no way to be comforted. There is suffering without any possibility of hope. I mean, imagine if you get stranded in a cave in the earth, right, as a miner.

But you know what? Everybody knows that you've been in there because you're working with a bunch of other people. And so you can cry out for help and you can be assured that like, hey, I'm trapped for now, but you know what?

I can get out. But in this underworld, your cries go unheard. You can scream your head off. You can cry your head off, but nobody is going to hear you. Nobody is coming to get you.

Nobody is coming to save you. So this is Sheol. This is the deep. This is the pit. And Jonah recognizes that's the situation he is.

[36:15] And he recognizes the irony of the situation. He thought he could escape God's presence while remaining above this place of chaos and darkness and torment and isolation. And what he's learned is that there is no such thing.

In the end, there is no such thing. You don't get to have your cake and eat it to you. You don't get to ignore God, run from him, flee from his presence, and everything's going to end up okay with you. Jonah finds himself in a living death. Life without God is actually more terrifying than he could have ever imagined. So what does he do? He cries out to God for help.

Verse 2, I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

The waters closed in over me to take my life. The deep surrounded me. The weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever.

[37:18] Yet you brought me up. You brought up my life from the pit. Oh, Lord, my God. Jonah needed this experience.

He was God's prophet. He should have known better. He was God's prophet that didn't truly understand and appreciate who God is. And so because of that, instead of obeying God, he took matters into his own hands.

So God took him to a place of utter despair and helplessness. And finally, there in that place, three days in the pit, three days in Sheol, he cries out, Oh, Lord, help me, help me.

And then he ends with verse 9 saying this, Salvation belongs to the Lord. Salvation belongs to the Lord. And what Jonah has come to realize is what is at the very heart of the good news of the gospel, the very heart of what God has always been about.

Nobody and no place is too far from God. See, based on everything Jonah knew about Sheol, he should have just given up. He should have been there and said, You know what?

[38:28] It's over for me. I've got myself into this situation. It's hopeless. He is as far from God's presence as you can get. I want to say some of you have been there.

Some of you know what that feels like to be, feel like you're far from God's presence, that it's nowhere. Some of you feel like you might be there right now. And I hope this story, I hope this shows you and gives you a glimmer of hope and insight into what gives that hope.

See, what Jonah is doing in this time, in his prayer to God, what he's doing is he's remembering Scripture. Much of his prayer is cobbled together from various Psalms.

He's borrowing what he's doing. He's borrowing from these prophetic songs that have been created and known and sung throughout Israel's history. And he's pulling them in and he's making them his own.

And he's reaching back and he's saying like, oh my goodness, these are the things, the truths of Scripture, how God has revealed himself that I can see who God actually is. He's not the God who abandons me in the pit.

[39:28] He's the God that can actually still hear me in the pit. He can hear me even when I am in Sheol, that hopeless place. And what he finds through the revelation of God as seen in Scripture and the Holy Scripture, he finds a comforting truth.

No place is too far for God. Now, you have maybe made some bad decisions. Maybe you've ran from God's presence. You may be harboring resentment against people like Jonah is, right?

People you see as the enemy. And your attitude towards them, your treatment towards them is as the enemy. You may be in a dark place, feeling isolated, alone, in serious trouble.

You may be feeling hopeless and helpless. But God hasn't abandoned you. God has not abandoned you. He is still there. Psalm 139 says this, Where shall I go from your spirit?

Where shall I go from your presence, Lord? Where shall I flee? If I ascend to heaven, you're there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you're there. God heard Jonah's repentance.

[40:38] God heard his cry for help. And what happened? He saved him. He ordered the fish to vomit Jonah out on dry ground. Jonah goes from Sheol, living death, back into the land of the living.

He's back on solid ground, solid footing. You could say he experienced a sort of resurrection here. And this time, Jonah doesn't run from God's presence.

He goes to Nineveh. He preaches the message, hopefully after taking a bath. And what happens? The whole city repents. He gives this simple message.

Repent. Or God's going to destroy you in 40 days. That's his message. And the whole city repents. And God has mercy on them. He doesn't destroy them.

And that's Jonah's story. But what does that have anything to do with Jesus? Well, Jesus actually says it does. He draws the connection.

[41 : 39] In Matthew 12, verse 38 to 41, there's this little incident. And he's having some give and take with some of the leaders of the Jewish religion in those days. And so they ask him, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.

But he answered them. Jesus answered them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, So will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, For they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

So you see these people trying to figure out, Jesus, who are you? Are you from God? Are you a guy that's been sent by God? Are we supposed to take you as some kind of prophet?

Are you God? And so what they're trying to do is they're asking him for a sign. They're saying, hey, we need some proof. Show us something. Prove it. Show us what you're all about. So Jesus says, okay, I'm like Jonah.

[42 : 48] That's the sign you're going to get. But you know what? I'm greater. So how is Jesus greater than Jonah? Well, man, in every single way.

See, unlike Jonah, Jesus didn't struggle with the depths of God's love and grace. He understood it perfectly. And Jesus is God's only Son. Man, he knew his Father's love for him.

He was secure in it. Even at his baptism, we see this right away. God the Father declares from heaven over Jesus, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Jesus lived confidently in that revelation.

He ministered. He walked this earth out of that revelation, understanding the depths of the love and grace of God. And in a prayer, actually, and what this did, it actually led Jesus to be perfectly obedient.

His obedience flowed out of his love and his confidence of the Father's love for him and his love for the Father. In a prayer just before he was crucified, Jesus confesses to God the Father this.

[43 : 50] In verse 4, I glorified you on earth. Father, I glorified you on earth. While I was here, I glorified you. Everything I did was to point to you. Having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

He was obedient in every single way. But what was that work? What was the work that the Father sent Jesus to do? Well, John 3.16, sorry. We all know that pretty well. If you've been around church, it's really famous.

You can see it at football stadiums. John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Jesus came and he did the work that the Father gave him to do.

He knew God. He loved God. And that showed in his life. And Jesus says on a few occasions to his disciples, Actually, man, if you love me, you're going to keep my commandments. Jesus never separated obedience from love.

He saw them as two sides of the same coin. And actually, obedience flows out of love. And so what does he do? He comes and he shows God's love for the world.

[44 : 53] God sent him to give us a message greater than Jonah's. And unlike Jonah, who ran the opposite direction from his enemies, Jesus obediently brought a message better than Jonah's to his enemies.

You know, I love that about Jesus. He never keeps his distance from anyone. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter how bad you are. It doesn't matter what society thinks about you. Jesus always moved toward people.

That was his gig. That's what he did. He came down from heaven, took away the separation, moved into the neighborhood. He walked among us. He lived among us. He loved us. He walked around and he preached and he taught and he healed.

That's what he did. Now, Jonah, he sees Nineveh. And he sees a people that he doesn't like. He sees enemies. He sees people that are beyond hope, beyond grace.

And sometimes, to be honest, we can be Jonah in this story. Disobedient to God and gracious and unmerciful to people. But at the same time, too, we're not just Jonah. We are the Ninevites as well, apart from Jesus, apart from God stepping in and saving us.

[45 : 58] We are just as bad as the Ninevites. And Jesus sees you and me lost, enemies of God, destined to perish. And he came to save us.

And here's the thing. He said of himself when he came that the kingdom of heaven has come to man. Right? Jesus' message was greater than Jonah's. And I think what's interesting here that we should take note of, it isn't that Jesus said someone greater than Jonah is here.

He actually says something greater than Jonah is here. Now, at a minimum, he's definitely including himself. He's definitely talking about himself, a person. But he isn't limiting the greatness.

New word, just invented. He isn't limiting that to himself. He's talking about himself, but so much more. So much more of what he is accomplishing. So remember that Hebrew cosmology we kind of discussed.

You have the three spheres. You have heaven, earth, Sheol. The highest heaven, where God is at. Fullness of joy, no sin, suffering, chaos. You can't get closer to God than in the highest heaven.

That's where he's at.

[47 : 01] Then you had earth in between, heaven and Sheol, a little distant from God's presence. Some order, some chaos. There's both joy and suffering happening, right? And what Jesus brought that was greater than Jonah was that he bridged heaven and earth.

God's presence was among us again. Heaven invaded earth. He said the kingdom of heaven has come to man. The kingdom of heaven that's way up here, now it's down here in the person of Jesus.

Heaven invaded earth. Jesus' ability to heal, his authority to forgive sins, and his power to cast out demons, right? Demons are the agents of chaos.

All proved that his message was true. But his work to bridge heaven and earth had to be more than living among us. He had to die for us too.

And in this way, Jesus proves superior to Jonah again. While Jonah was willing to die so that his enemies would perish, Jesus willingly died so his enemies wouldn't face life without God forever.

[48 : 09] So in the storm, remember Jonah offers himself to be thrown overboard and drowned to save the boat and the crew. And again, it's like a noble offering, right?

But his disobedience got him into that. He's dying to pay for his own sins in a sense. But I think something else is motivating him in that moment. Like he could have just said like, God, I got you. I can't run away from your presence. I repent. I'm going to go to Nineveh. I'll get these guys to turn me around, drop me off, and I'll start walking that way. But he doesn't do that. He says like, you know what?

Throw me into the ocean. Let me die. See, if he died, he knew God's message of salvation would drown in the water with him. And this would mean Nineveh gets destroyed and Israel is saved from his enemies.

Better that one man should die for the sake of many, right? That's probably what Jonah was thinking. But in Jonah's case, no. In Jesus' case, yes. It is good that one man should die for the many.

[49 : 12] Jonah rebelled against God to try and save the people he loved. But it was at the expense of his enemies. Jesus obeyed God and laid down his life for everyone, even his enemies.

We'd all take a bullet for the people we love, right? But would we take a bullet for the unlovely, the cruel, those who would torment us? Let me say this.

Whatever your greatest God is, is going to create who your enemy is. So if your greatest God is politics, then you couldn't imagine taking a bullet for anyone on the opposing team.

If your greatest God is consumerism, then you couldn't imagine taking a bullet to be generous to somebody else.

Because that means you don't get to spend that money on yourself. If your greatest God is you and self-righteousness, then you can't imagine taking a bullet for anybody.

[50 : 24] Nobody's worth it. And what this does, the idolatry in our hearts, what it does, it ends up making positions of us versus them. We begin to treat people like Jonah treated the Ninevites.

We wouldn't take a bullet for those kind of people. We wouldn't want those people saved. We wouldn't want those people to flourish. But that's what Jesus did.

We're those people. In God's economy, in his kingdom, before Christ saves us, we're all enemies. Jesus died and went to the grave.

He went into Sheol, into the depths of the earth for that. Jesus didn't, Jonah didn't choose that.

Jesus did. He chose that. Jesus willingly let death swallow him up.

For three days, Jesus was in the grave. Much worse than what Jonah experienced. Jesus experienced true darkness. He experienced real isolation.

[51:32] He experienced ultimate torment. He experienced the ultimate kind of chaos. Actual chaos of the real living death. And we don't know for sure if he was totally cut off from God's presence in the grave.

We do know that on the cross before he died, he says, Father, Father, why? He cries out, why have you forsaken me? In that moment, the Father has forsaken him. And we do know that the grave lacks all the things that represent the presence of God.

Light, goodness, order, and joy. And Jesus is in that place for three days. But the good news is the grave couldn't hold him. Acts 2:42, Peter says this about Jesus.

God raised Jesus up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. The grave, like Jonah's fish, vomited Jesus out at God's command.

After three days, Jesus rose again. And this wasn't him just being back alive. This was also a declaration of victory over sin and death.

[52:43] The Apostle Paul, writing about Jesus' resurrection, concludes this. In the second part of 1 Corinthians 15, verse 54, the second part of it says, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Talking about Jesus' resurrection. Oh, death, where is your victory? Oh, death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Man, I love the imagery here. Death swallowed up Jesus, but by his resurrection, Jesus swallowed up death's power so it can never swallow us.

I mean, think about that. Think about that. Not only did Jesus bridge heaven to earth, but he swallowed up death's power to hold, that had the power to hold us in that place of chaos and isolation and torment and utter darkness.

And until Jesus had had the power to hold us forever and ever and ever. And so now we don't have to worry about getting stuck there by faith in Jesus. We don't have to worry about that.

[53:53] And that's the guarantee God gives for those who by faith in Jesus are saved. Now, do you see the depths of God's love and grace?

Do you see how beautiful it is and how better Jesus is than Jonah? It finds us no matter how far we run and hide.

It saves us from our greatest enemies, sin and death. As the band comes up, I want to ask us to respond. If you're not a Christian, I want to say this to you.

Please, please stop running from God. You don't want to end up in eternity away from God's presence. And that's why Jesus came to die for your sins.

That's what his resurrection was all about. And you can't earn your way in it. You can't say like, oh man, I've just messed up my whole life. Now I better start doing all these good things to earn my way in so he'll accept me.

[54:54] No, no, no. All you do is you stop. You stop. You say, man, Jesus, I agree with who you say you are. I agree and I believe that you are the Savior who came and died for me.

He went into the grave and conquered it so I don't have to. And you believe in those things and you repent and you turn from your sin and you begin to trust him and live for him.

And I want to invite you to do that today. Now for those of us who are Christians, I would say this.

We can be a lot like Jonah. Hard-hearted, struggling with the depths of God's grace and love.

Maybe you're struggling to believe it for yourself. Maybe you're struggling to believe it for someone else. And I want to ask us this. How is God calling you and I to respond?

And I want to give us opportunity to examine our hearts before we take communion. We're going to take a moment to pray. We're going to listen to the Holy Spirit and respond to where God's grace and love is leading us.

[56:04] And just remember, man, this isn't a moment where God's coming to judge you and embarrass you and shame you and make you feel bad. No, man, he's inviting you to repent and say, man, God, I messed up.

I need your help. And he's there with his grace and love to forgive you, to cleanse you, to heal you, and to renew your heart. And so let's take a few seconds to do that right now.

Let's bow our heads. Let's bow our heads. Let's bow our heads.

The grace, the Holy Spirit, who you send to convict us and encourage us and call us to repentance. I pray that the work you've begun, Holy Spirit, in our hearts, you would continue to do.

By your strength and by your power, not our own. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. It's kind of coming full circle. J.D. kicked us off this way.

[57 : 32] He had no idea what I was going to preach on, but so it is with how God works. The height, the depth, the breadth, the length of God's love is impossible for us to imagine.

And as we take communion, it's really bringing us to that reality. It's grounding us back in that reality that he was willing to do whatever it took.

His grace is sufficient. His grace is perfect. His love is unending. His love has no measure. This is how we know.

His body was broken for you and for me. To heal our brokenness. So let's take and eat together. His blood cleanses us from sin.

The reason we should be down in Sheol, his blood saves us from that, cleanses us from that. The depths of his grace, the depths of his love.

[58 : 44] Let's drink it together. Now would you stand with me? We have a lot to praise our God for, right? And let's sing loud and proud and thankful to this amazing God.

This is my desire To honor you.

To honor you. To honor you. To honor you. All from my heart.

All I have within me I give you praise I live for you I live for you Lord Is in you Lord, I give you my heart I give you my soul I live for you Every breath that I take Every breath that I take Every moment I'm awake Every moment I'm awake Lord, I have your way Lord, I have your way in me Lord, I have your way in me This is my desire This is my desire To honor you Lord, I have my heart I worship you Lord, with all my heart I worship you All I have within me I give you praise All that I adore Is in you Lord, I give you my heart

[61 : 48] I give you my soul I live for you, Lord Every breath that I take Every moment I'm awake Lord, have your way in me Lord, I give you my heart I give you my soul I live for you, Lord Every breath that I take Every moment I'm awake Lord, have your way in me Awesome. Hey, huge thanks to the youth who served us so well today. Addison, you did an awesome job reading that passage.

It's been a great morning, guys. Hey, before you go, first, if it's your first time with us, I'm going to be right in front of here.

I would love to meet you. Come up and say hi. My name is Jesse, just one of the pastors. If you need prayer for anything, we're going to have some people over here to pray with you.

So, man, don't leave. If God's been putting something on your heart that you need to talk about or have somebody to come alongside you for comfort or encouragement to pray into that, take advantage of that.

We're going to have some people over here as well. If it's your second time on your way out the door, Lisa Bryce is in the back raising her hand really high. And she's got a little gift for you. If it's your second time with us, we just want to say thank you for coming back.

[63 : 35] We're kind of blown away that you do, you know, so we appreciate that. But, man, for the rest of us, everyone, we have seven days. We have a whole week where we get to go out.

We get to make disciples and we get to push back darkness all for the sake of the gospel. Be blessed and do that in the power of Jesus. Amen. We have a whole week where we get to go. We have a whole week where we get to go.