

This morning our text comes from the book of Jonah chapter one. Jonah was a minor prophet. It doesn't mean they were less than the other prophets, their books were just shorter. There are twelve in total, and Jonah is named as one of them. The author of this book in the Old Testament is unknown, but more likely to be Jonah himself.

Jonah was a prophet that, most likely, was a contemporary of Amos the prophet. They might have even known one another but, Jonah was a man who was raised up in the North Country up near Nazareth where Jesus ultimately was raised.

And it's fascinating to me that Jonah is probably one of the Old Testament books that is best known.

Because this book tells us that a big fish swallowed Jonah and he remained inside that fish for three days, there's just a lot of people who assume the book is fictional.

There's a mention of the prophet Jonah that appears in another place in the Old Testament.

**2 Kings 14:23-25 (KJV)** says, **23** *In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. 24 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 25 He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher.*

And so, there's a reference right there to the same Jonah that we are talking about here in the book of Jonah.

Now this would mean that Jonah lived and ministered prophetically sometime between 793 and 753 BC or before the time of Christ. But concerning the events of the book of Jonah, we have some rather powerful statements made by our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

That if Jonah is not a real person, and the events of Jonah were not real events, we got a big problem because Jesus talked as if they were.

**Matthew 12:39-40 (KJV)** **39** *But he answered and said unto them, an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

And so, you'll see in that very passage that Jesus not only references Jonah but references the events of the book of Jonah and connects them to his own resurrection from the dead.

Which, of course, is **another** historical event!

And you don't mark a historical event by a fictional event. In the very next verse of **Matthew 12** Jesus says, "<sup>41</sup>*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*"

So once again Jesus refers to the events of the book of Jonah as real historical events.

Now that we know that this story is more than a fairytale, or a nursery rhyme, please go with me or follow me with your notes to **Jonah 1:1-17**

I want to share with you a message entitled **The Jonah Complex**.

*The **Jonah complex** is the fear of success or the fear of being one's best. This fear prevents self-actualization, or the realization of one's own potential. It is the evasion of one's destiny, or the avoidance of exercising one's talents.*

Jonah was avoiding God. Avoiding his assignment and wanted to quit his calling to ministry. Because he disagreed with God.

Jonah was one of the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament. God called Jonah to deliver a message to the city of Nineveh, which was experiencing great sin and wickedness at the time. Anything you can imagine was wicked, that's what they were doing. Jonah believed that Nineveh and the Assyrians were so wicked, they should not be spared for any reason.

The city of Nineveh was a major center for the Assyrian Empire, which was notorious for its brutality and violence. The people of Nineveh were known to be involved in many great sins, such as idolatry, greed, and injustice towards their fellow human beings. They worshiped false gods and engaged in immoral practices such as sexual immorality, drunkenness, and gluttony. Their greed led them to exploit others for their own gain, while they showed no mercy or compassion towards those who were weaker than themselves. So, Jonah had a problem with them. To him, they were an enemy of Israel.

**Jonah 1:1-17 (KJV)** *Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup>Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.<sup>3</sup>But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*

*<sup>4</sup>But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.<sup>5</sup>Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah went down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. <sup>6</sup>So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.*

*<sup>7</sup>And they said everyone to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So, they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.<sup>8</sup>Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou what is thy country and of what people art thou? <sup>9</sup>And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.<sup>10</sup>Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.*

*<sup>11</sup>Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. <sup>12</sup>And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. <sup>13</sup>Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them.<sup>14</sup>Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. <sup>15</sup> So they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.<sup>16</sup>Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. <sup>17</sup>Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

**In Matthew 12:39-40 (KJV)** ***<sup>39</sup> But he answered and said unto them, an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: <sup>40</sup> For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.***

Christian theologians have traditionally interpreted Jonah as a type for Jesus Christ. Jonah being in swallowed by the giant fish was regarded as a foreshadowing of Jesus's crucifixion and Jonah emerging from the fish after three days was seen as a parallel for Jesus emerging from the tomb after three days.

In Chapter 2 it's recorded that Jonah prayed while he was in trouble. He repented while he was in trouble.

**Jonah 2:1-10 (NIV)** **1** From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. **2** He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. **3** You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.' **5** The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. **6** To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit. **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 turn away from God's love for them. **9** But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'" **10** And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

### **Conclusion**

One of the overarching messages from this chapter is how the Lord is compassionate. Jonah was a prophet, and even though he had let God down in numerous ways, he was still forgiven because God showed him unlimited love and compassion. And He patiently waited for Jonah to repent and change his mind about going to a people who didn't know God, or his love for them, and hated His people.

Jonah represents the body of Christ. The church.

We have all been called to share the love of God with people. We can either walk in obedience or we can resist. But many people who don't know God's love for them are dying without Jesus. And we must make sure we don't walk, serve, or represent Christ with a Jonah complex.

**2 Peter 3:9 KJV** *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*

I pray this message will encourage you to share your story with someone about a living Savior who loves them.