Second Chances – Jonah 02/02/25  
I want to talk to those of you that are followers of Jesus and I'm curious, if you are a Christian, how many of you want to hear from God? You want God's will for your life. Great news that you do, but I need to warn you, whenever God speaks to you, he'll often ask you to do something that you don't want to do. We're going to see that in our new series. And for the next four weeks, we're going to go verse by verse through the book of Jonah an amazing book. How many of you read Jonah this week? Or, basically know the story of Jonah?  
  
Raise your hand. You can type in the chat online – all of those watching on line today, we love you and we are glad you are here with us.  
  
I know the story of Jonah. Many people know the basics. Some of you learned it as a child. In a nut shell, God calls Jonah to preach the message to some people he doesn't want to. So he runs from God. He gets thrown into the water. A fish swallows him up. The fish vomits him up. He preaches, they repent, they live happily ever after. And that's what most people know. There is so much more to this story. There are layers and layers and layers that will speak to your everyday life and inspire you to be closer to God and to posture and position us to be used by God. And I want to build a foundation and then we're going to go verse by verse through the book of Jonah. Let's start with the basics.  
  
Who is the main character of the book of Jonah? And the answer is, not Jonah. Good guess. It's what most people would guess is actually not Jonah. Jonah the son of Amittai is the only name mentioned anywhere in Jonah. There's no king, there's no captain. His is the only name, but he's not the main character.  
  
Someone would say, well, then it's the big fish. And oddly enough, in four chapters, there's only three verses that talk about the big fish. So if it's not Jonah and it's not the big fish, who is the main character of the book of Jonah? Yes – right And the answer is the Lord God is the main character of the book of Jonah. In fact, Jonah starts this way.  
  
Jonah 1:1 says, "The word of the Lord came to Jonah." The word of the Lord. How many of you know that God is a God who speaks? In our bible study, The Gospel of John it starts this way - In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. In the beginning was the Word. Our God is a God who speaks and God is still speaking today. The word of the Lord came to Jonah. And I believe the word of the Lord is going to come to you.  
  
If you have ears to hear, I promise, God is going to speak to you and God is going to direct your steps. And sometimes what God says to you, what he directs you to do may not be something that you want to do. Last week remember I talked about “Go clean your room”. Stop stalling, stop talking about , do what Jesus says to do. Jonah 1:1 starts this way. "The word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai. "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it "because its wickedness has come up before me." God says, "Hey, Jonah, you're the prophet. "Go do what prophets do. "Go preach repentance to those evil people. "Call them to turn to me "because they've done horrible things." And so what did Jonah do? Did he clean his room? If he had done what God told him to do, he could have gone and preached and they would have turned to God, but he didn't do that. Instead, he did what a lot of us do. Verse 3 tells us this. God told him what to do, but Jonah ran away from the Lord. Jonah didn't do what God asked him to do. Jonah did his own thing. He ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish and he went which direction? 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 in order to flee from the Lord. Scripture says he ran from God. Jonah actually went great lengths, He went to extensive lengths to get away from God and run as far as he possibly could. And I'll show you on a map what he did. If you see Joppa down in the corner, God told him to go to Nineveh, which was 550 miles to the east, but he didn't do that. Instead of going east, he actually went west 2,500 miles all the way to Tarshish.  
  
That was at the time that he lived as far as possible from his God-given assignment. And scripture tells us God told him to go to Nineveh, but Jonah found a ship that was bound for Tarshish, which leads us to the principle that if you want to run from God, the devil will always oﬀer you a ride. If you want to get away from God, I promise you, you can always find a boat sailing in the wrong direction. What did Jonah do? He ran from God, he  
  
disobeyed God. God gave him an assignment and he said, "No, I'm not going to do that." Why? Why did he run from God? The reason is because God wanted him to go preach to the Ninevites and he hated, despised the Ninevites. Jonah was a Jewish Hebrew from Israel and Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. The Assyrians hated the Israelites. The Israelites hated the Assyrians. It was kind of like Luke Skywalker or Darth Vader type of thing, okay? He despised these people and for a very, very good reason. I'm going to explain to you some stuﬀ and I don't want to be too graphic, but you kind of need to understand why he hated them so much. The Assyrians, they were horrible. When they would go and conquer a city, they would sexually abuse the women. They would kill the children. They would take survivors and they would skin them alive. This is gross. They would bury them in the sands. After skinning them, they would pull their tongue out at times and drive a stake through it and just let them die a brutal death, torturing them and Jonah said, "I can't stand these people." The real reason he didn't go ask them to turn to God wasn't because he was afraid of them, it's because he knew God's character and he didn't want God to show favor and grace and actually forgive his enemies. Anybody?  
  
So Jonah ran away from God and he rationalized his disobedience. What does it mean to rationalize sin? He probably thought something like, "Hey, these people are so evil, they don't deserve it, "so I'm not doing it." He rationalized his sin.  
When I say to rationalize sin, what do I mean? We defined it a couple of weeks ago, we'll say it again. It's when our mind makes an excuse for what our spirit knows is wrong. It's when our mind makes an excuse for something that God's Word forbids or we know in our spirit that it's wrong. The reality is some of us right now, you're rationalizing some sin. Maybe God asked you to do something, like you were prompted to serve somewhere or to give something to someone or to be a witness or to forgive someone. And you thought, "I'm not ready for it. "This isn't the best time. "I don't feel like it, I'll do it later." You're putting oﬀ what God told you to do. I want to remind you that delayed obedience is disobedience. Those of you that are parents, you know that. Some of you, you train your kids by counting. One, stop it, two. One, two, splat, if they run into the street. They should obey on 1 not on 3 or 10 or 1000. It's on one. We need to stop on one. Delayed obedience is disobedience.  
  
A lot of times when people think about spiritual maturity, what does it mean to really be mature in your relationship with God? A lot of Christians think it's all about Bible knowledge. and Bible knowledge is very, very, very important. But it's not just knowledge, it's actually what you do with the knowledge. In fact, if you asked me to define spiritual maturity, I would say it includes having a short time between God's commands and our obedience. That's maturity, that when God says something, you don't argue, you don't question, you obey what he prompts you to do.  
  
And so we see the word of the Lord comes to Jonah. And Jonah ran from God. When he ran from God, do you think his life got better or do you think it got worse? Once he started to run from God, his life went downhill. I think it's really interesting when you read through the book of Jonah, you're going to see two directions mentioned often.  
You're going to see up, arise and go, and then you're going to see Jonah going down. I'll show you three diﬀerent verses that show this.  
  
Jonah 1:3, Jonah went down to Joppa. Jonah 1:5, Jonah went down to the bottom of the ship. Jonah 2:3, Jonah was thrown down to the bottom of the sea. As you read through this whole book, you're going to see direction, God calls him up, but when he rebels, he goes down.  
  
And that's what happens when you run from God. You go down, down, down. Verse four shows us what happens. Then up, here's the main character. The main character is who? Is the Lord. Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea. And such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. Now, who sent the storm here? God sent the storm. And all the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own God. So these sailors don't worship the true God, they worship their own gods. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship, but Jonah had gone below, he went down again, he went below the deck where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep.  
Now, there's a lot here. First of all, what's interesting to me is that the pagan sailors, whenever they got afraid, they started praying. It's funny. I always think it's funny when people that don't believe in God get afraid and start praying or better yet call you to pray for them. You try to talk to them about Jesus and they aren’t interested BUT as soon as the storms come…..Kathy, would you pray for me? Mom, say a pray for me please….  
  
That's what these sailors did. They're in this storm, they're like, "God, wherever you are, we need your help." Notice, these sailors, they hadn't done anything wrong, but yet, they're in the middle of a storm because God sent a storm because of Jonah's rebellion. Think about this. The sailors were suﬀering because a rebellious guy was on the boat.  
Some of you might be struggling right now because you have the wrong friend in your boat. Some of you, you've been dating Jonah. And anytime you're dating someone who's running from God, you might find yourself in a little bit of a storm. You might need to throw that old boy oﬀ your boat. And some of you, you're not dating Jonah, but you just got Jonah all up into your feet. You're following people that take you away from God. And anytime you have a consistent voice in your life distracting you from the true Vine, you might need to get that voice oﬀ of your boat. Here we have these sailors, and they're in the middle of a storm that they didn't cause. And their boat's about to break apart. And what's Jonah doing? Jonah's asleep. I want you to notice this. His life is going what? Help me out. His life is going down, down, down. And he's asleep, not even noticing what's happening.  
  
And this is a very scary place when you become comfortable disobeying God. And I'm afraid that there are a lot of people, many of us, like Jonah, at this point in your life, you're becoming more comfortable in your compromise. You're running from God, you're ignoring God, and you don't even care. You have no idea that all around you, your life is starting to go down, down, down. And if you are someone that does not know God, and you're disobeying Him, and you're running from Him, or maybe you just become spiritually complacent, I've got really good news for you, and it's not going to feel like good news. Here it is. God won't let you get comfortable in your sin. He will not let you get comfortable in your compromise. God will either send or He'll allow, some type of consequence to get your attention when you're running from God. In this case, it was actually God who sent the storm. It was God who sent the storm.  
  
Is that like mean? Is God some kind of cruel God? Why is He doing this? It's actually not mean, it was kindness. Because Jonah was running away, God sent a storm to try to bring him back. Sometimes God sends a storm. Sometimes  
  
God allows a storm. Sometimes the devil may send a storm. Sometimes though, you actually bring the storm on yourself. Because sin always has consequences.  
I know some Christians who do the wrong thing and they end up in a bad place, they blame it on the devil every time. And I just need to tell you, the devil doesn't bring every storm. Some storms you bring on yourself, right? The devil took my job. No, you lost your job 'cause you were always late, right? Devil got me in debt. No, that was you, your credit card and Amazon. You did that by yourself. The devil doesn't bring every single storm. Some of them you bring on yourself. In this case, God actually lovingly in His grace sent a storm. Jonah's life was going down, down, down, and he didn't even notice because he was comfortable in his compromise.  
So in verse eight, we see this. They ask him, the sailor's like, "Hey, tell us, who's responsible "for making all this trouble for us? "We didn't do anything wrong. "We got the wrong guy on the boat." Jonah answered, "I'm a Hebrew, "and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, "who made the sea and the dry land." Oh, there you go, that's almost funny. Everything's going wrong, and Jonah says, "Oh, I'm a Hebrew, I worship the Lord. "He says he worships God, but he's not obeying God. "He says he worships God, and he's not obeying God." That may be one of the biggest problems represented in the American church today. Like our church, my church, me, you. We claim, "Yeah, yeah, Jesus, yeah, go USA," , "Go, yeah, go, Jesus," and yet we're often far from God.  
The word of the Lord came to Jonah, and Jonah disobeyed the word of God. What we do in our church - is we're in community. We have LifeGroups, even in our larger bible study that we are doing no on the Gospel of John, we break into smaller groups so we can get to know one another. We are better together. We do not try to fight alone. Two are better than one. If one falls down, who can help him up? If he's got a buddy, he can help him up. Iron sharpens iron. Wherever two or three gather together, we are people of community.  
  
This is the question we're going to discuss. I want you to ask yourself this. Where in your life are you rationalizing sin and running from God? Where in your life are you doing something, if you slow down long enough to be honest, financially you're not honoring God, in your marriage you're not treating your wife with respect or you're dishonoring your husband. Kids, you're not obeying your mom and dad. Adult kids, you aren’t respecting your parents. You're like, yeah, I'm a youth group and I disobey mom and dad. You're looking at something you shouldn't look at. Your gospel, whatever it is. You're listening to music that you know is dishonoring.  
What is it for you? What area of your life are you rationalizing sin and running from God? Talk about it with someone. Share it and pray about it. And turn away from it. We're not going to claim to worship God and do whatever we want. Verse 11 tells us this. The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked Jonah, what should we do to you to make this sea calm down? In other words, if it's your fault, what do we need to do about it? And watch this, how sad this is. Jonah says this.  
He says, hey guys, pick me up and throw me into the sea. In other words, I know it's my fault and that God's bringing this judgment because of me. Pick me up and throw me into the sea and it will become calm. I know that it's my fault that this great storm has come upon you. Jonah says, my bad. I brought it on. I want you to see how heartbreaking this is, how sad this is. And I want you to feel the sadness because I want to say this lovingly, not harshly. This is where some of you are right now. Jonah was God's chosen prophet. And he's so far from God. So depressed that he doesn't care if he lives or if he dies. My fault, throw me overboard. Heartbreaking because God chose Jonah and God called Jonah. And Jonah ran from God and his life went down, down, down.  
And I know there is someone here, there is someone watching online that God called you. And you said, yes. You trusted your life to him. You made him Lord and you said, I want to please you in all that I do. But then you've been running from him, doing your own thing. He said, go this way. And you said, I'm going that way. And you have been doing it for so long that you've grown comfortable in it. And maybe life's not going so well right now and you  
  
get mad at God. And I might tell you, maybe devil didn't send that storm. Maybe you brought it on yourself. God called you, you're running from God and now you're stuck in a storm. We get there when we ignore God and we end up in a place that we never, ever wanted to be. Depressed, hopeless, we see no way out. We wonder, is life even worth it? Then we start looking for somebody to blame. It must be the sailor's fault or it must be it's the Ninevites fault or it's God's fault. It couldn't be my fault.  
When the Word of the Lord came to us and we went our own way. And Jonah, comfortable in his compromise, loses all hope and says, throw me in. And the guys on the boat, what's crazy is like, in modern terms, we'd say they weren't Christians, but they were actually trying to do the right thing. Jonah, in modern terms, would have been the Christian and he was the one disobeying God. And we got these pagan sailors and they don't want to do it. But when they had no other choice and the storm got worse, they finally, verse 15 tells us this, they took Jonah and they threw him overboard. And the moment they did that, I want you to imagine this.  
They're in a storm and they know this guy's rebelling and they know that God brought the storm, they throw him overboard and everything, the sea goes calm. The sea went calm, completely calm. At this, the men, what?  
  
They greatly feared the main character of this story. They greatly feared, not like we're afraid of, like it's a reverent, like, oh, wow, he's that powerful. They greatly feared the Lord and they oﬀered a sacrifice. It's like at that moment, we're choosing to serve and worship him. And they made vows to God. They looked on and thought, any God who can do this is a God that we need to know and worship. Any God that is this powerful is a God that we want to surrender our lives to.  
  
If God has ever reached out to you, the Word of the Lord has ever come to you and you've just stepped away, I want to tell you about the goodness of this God. Our God is our refuge and our strength. He is our ever- present help in a time of trouble. His name is a strong fortress and the righteous run to it and they're kept safe. Our God gives strength to the weary and he increases the power of the weak. Our God is a compassionate God who heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Our God is a generous God who meets all of your needs according to his glorious riches found in Christ Jesus. Our God is a good God and he does have an enemy, Satan the liar, the thief who comes to steal, kill and destroy. But our God sent his son, whose name is Jesus, who came that you may have life and life to the full. When you seek God, when you call on him, you will find him. He is a good God who will be with you. He will never leave you. He will never forsake you. A God like this is a God we want to know. He's a God we want to worship. He's a God worthy of our reverence. We fear a God like that. Our God is holy. He's not some Santa Claus in the sky. He's God. He's the Lord of all. The word of the Lord comes and we say, "Yes, Lord." The word of the Lord comes and we say, "Yes, Lord. "Here I am. "May it be done unto me according to your word." A God like that is a God we want to give our lives to. Honor, worship, fear, trust, obey, surrender.  
  
So Jonah's overboard. He's in the water. He doesn’t have a life jacket. There's no little dingy boat coming his way. It looks like game over. Do not pass go. Do not collect  
$200. It's game over. Why? Because the word of the Lord came to him and he ran from God.  
  
The word of the Lord is coming to you. God is a loving God. God is a God who speaks. God is going to speak to you. The word of the Lord is coming to you. And so I'd ask you again, in what area of your life, where in your life are you rationalizing sin and running from God? We're going to acknowledge it, confess it, and we're going to turn from it. And if you are someone that has never known God, turn to him, call out to him. Just try it. Just ask him, if you're there, reveal yourself to me. and then buckle your seatbelt. If you've strayed from God, please stop running from him. Turn back to him. He loves you. He's ready to receive you. Maybe you know  
  
God and you love God, but you've drifted away. And you've become comfortable in your compromise. Turn to him. Turn to him. Turn to him. He loves you. It's time to stop running and turn to God, a God who is this good, this powerful, this gracious, this God worthy of our love. Our worship, our fear, and our obedience. A God that good is a God you want to know and a God that you want to worship.  
  
Pray - So Father, we ask that you would do what only you can do. Do a very real cleansing work in our hearts. And God, I go first. Show me God where I'm rationalizing sin where I've become complacent. Show me, God, any area of my life that I'm running from you. Today, as you're praying, nobody looking around, if you are willing to pray that prayer, God, show me where I'm rationalizing sin or running from you. The prayer is this, show me God. Anywhere I'm rationalizing sin and running from you. If you're willing to pray that, would you lift up your hands right now? Just say, God, show me. You can just, you can say it in your head, you can whisper it out loud, show me. Any area, any sin I'm rationalizing, justifying. Any area of disobedience to you Lord, any place I'm running from you. And then just listen, be sensitive. If there's some area you want to push back and say, no, not that area. That's the area you probably need to pay most attention to.  
What are you going to do about what God shows you? The word of the Lord is coming to you. God is going to speak to you. What are you going to do about what God shows you? Speak to us, God. Give us the courage to obey. As you keep praying today I am certain that there are many of you that are here maybe kind of like the sailors. The sailors would kind of pray in times of need, but they didn't know God intimately. They found themselves in a place where they needed help. And when they saw the goodness and the reality and the power of the one true God, they were like, I'm in, I'm in. I want that God. Let me tell you about that God. That God is holy, He is righteous, He is just. And one day, every knee is going to bow down to Him and every tongue will confess the Lordship of His Son, Jesus.  
Who is Jesus? Jesus is the Son of a loving God. Let me tell you about how loving our God is. God so loved the world. Loved, loved, loved. He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, that whoever believes in Him, calls on Him, wouldn't perish, but would have eternal life.  
Not because we're good, because He is that good. It is His will, His desire, His heart that no one would suﬀer and perish. Our God is revealing Himself to you. There are those of you today, you're kind of like what I call like cultural Christians. You're like, yeah, I'm kind of like, I go to church sometimes. You're not fully in, and all of a sudden you realize, this is God, I want that God. I want to know Him. Today, if you recognize you don't know Him, you're not walking with Him, you don't have His peace, you don't know where you stand with God, we're going to turn away from our own will, and we're going to say yes to His goodness. When you call on the name of Jesus, God will hear your prayer. He will forgive all of your sins. He will make you brand new. That is why many of you are here today.  
You say, I'm ready, I need it. A God like that is a God I want to know, a God I want to worship. Today, I'm turning from my life, I'm surrendering to Him. Jesus, be my Savior, be the Lord of my life. That's your prayer, lift your hands high right now. Now, all over the  
  
place, lift your hands and say yes. That's my prayer, God bless you. Others today, say yes. Lift your hands, say yes, Jesus, I need you.  
Online, you can type in the comments section, I am turning my life over to Jesus. I'm turning my life over to Him. Would you pray today, wherever you are? Pray, Heavenly Father, I trust you. A God like you is a God I want to know, I want to worship, I commit to serve. Jesus, forgive my sins. Save me, be the Lord of my life. I trust you, fill me with your Spirit, so I can serve you always. Thank you for new life, I give you all of mine. In Jesus' name, I pray. Church, could you worship Him, give Him honor, give Him praise today. He's a good God, worthy of our praise and honor.