Second Chances Jonah – We have a choice to make 021625  
  
Announcements – Youth Camp, bible study Wed night  
  
Well, today we're in chapter two of the Book of Jonah, and I want to show you my favorite verse in the entire book of Jonah. Hang on a second. Did I say chapt 2 What's chapter did I say? Chapter, what chapter are we in?  
It's been a long week. So, can I start over? Let’s just startover. Will you give me a second chance, anybody? Give me a second chance? Okay, here we go.  
Today we're in chapter three of the book of Jonah, and I want to show you my favorite verse from the entire book of Jonah. Jonah 3:1 says, “The word of the Lord came to Jonah, a second time”. The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. Type it in the comment sections in you are watching online. Many of you participated last week from online and it was so encouraging! The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. Anyone thankful for a God of second chances? Which raises the question, did I actually mess up on the chapter by accident or was that on purpose to illustrate we have a God of second chance? That might have been an illustration. If I mess up from here on out, it is for real. Just so you'll know.  
Now, before we dive into chapter three, I want to review where we've been, in case there are those of you that missed the first two weeks. We've been in the book of Jonah, and we read that the word of the Lord came to Jonah and said, "Go to Nineveh and preach to the people there. The people that God wanted him to preach to were very, very... I mean, they were horribly wicked. I mean, they would torture people. They were horrible. And so God told Jonah to go. And he said ok God I’ll go.  
No, He said no. I'll show you on the map again what it looks like. One more time. Jonah was in Joppa. God said, "Go to Nineveh," 550 miles. He went the opposite direction, got in a boat sailing for Tarshish. When he was in the boat, God sent a big storm. The sailors in the boat thought that they were all going to die, they ended up throwing Jonah overboard to try to save themselves. And we get to the last verse in chapter one that said, Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah. The Lord provided a big fish to basically eat Jonah. Doesn't sound like provision. It sounds like a problem. And last week we learned that sometimes what we call a problem, God calls provision. The Lord provided a fish and it swallowed Jonah up, and he's in the fish and he prays. And we read last week that he prayed, and the Lord heard his prayer. But you remember, did anything happen immediately? Nothing happened immediately. He's waiting three days and three nights. He's waiting and he's waiting. And we learned the principle last week, that while you're waiting, oh, God is still working, which is such great news for those of us that have been praying for a long time. When you pray, God hears your prayer. Even if you don't see anything, it doesn't mean God's not doing anything. While you're waiting, God is still working. And then last week, we ended with the very last verse of chapter two. Verse 10 says this, and the Lord commanded the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. It's kind of gross. The fish throws Jonah up, he's on the shore, he's alive, but he's a mess. His salvation is like some of yours. It wasn't clean. You went through some stuﬀ. And he went through some stuﬀ. He's there and we established He is in fish guts. You know, fish bile. Yuck.  
And here we are in Jonah 3 and chapter three starts with my very favorite verse in all of Jonah. And chapter three says, the word of the Lord came to Jonah, somebody??, a second time. How many of you're thankful that we serve a God of second chances? We serve a God that doesn't just call, but our God calls back. And some of you may take a moment and you may just in your own heart, just tell God thank you.  
Bebecause you're like Jonah, you couldn't save yourself and we couldn't save ourselves.  
  
Titus 3:5 tells us this, that God saved us not bebecause of righteous things that we  
  
have done, but Bebecause of his mercy. Bebecause we serve a compassionate God. Bebecause we have a God of grace, bebecause we have a God that calls back. We serve a God of second chances. And there is not a single person that's ever saved by your own righteousness. Scripture tells us that we're not saved by works, but we're saved by grace through faith. So no one can brag about it. We are saved by the grace of Jesus, the risen Christ, and we can thank God that everyone, it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter how dark your life is, it doesn't matter how much you've messed up, but everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.  
He is a God of second chances. Our God doesn't just call, but he calls back, the God of second chances. This is in many ways the story of the Bible. From Genesis all the way to Revelation, we serve a God of second chances. I'll show you some highlights and let it just sink in. There's a lot to look at bebecause God is a gracious God. Adam and Eve, they sinned against God, but God displayed grace and made a covering for them. Moses murdered a man, but God displayed grace and still used him to free Israel. David committed adultery and then committed murder to cover it up. But God displayed grace. And when he repented, God forgave him and still called him a man after God's own heart. Rahab, she lived as a prostitute, but God displayed grace and used her to help protect the spies and redeemed her in the lineage of our savior, Jesus. Zacchaeus, he was a corrupt tax collector, he stole from people and was greedy. But God displayed grace and Jesus came to his home for dinner and forgave his sins and made him new.  
Peter denied Jesus three times before his death. But God displayed grace and forgave Peter and reinstated him and used him to help build the early church. And Thomas doubted Jesus after the resurrection.  
But our God is a good God of second chances. Our God displayed grace and met Thomas in his doubt and in his need and gave him what he needed to believe.  
  
I thank God. I thank God. I thank God for my salvation. I thank God for his grace after my salvation. I thank God that he is a God of compassion, that he is a God of mercy, that he is a God a second chances.  
  
And the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. Now, why did he run the first time? The word of the Lord came to him the first time. Why did he run? We're going to find out next week in chapter four. And I have to tell you, chapter four is odd. It is weird. You have to take my word for it, you have to come back, is interesting and is odd, but we're going to find out next week. Allen Gaskin is bringing the word next week – the last chapter of Jonah and we are going to see very clearly why he disobeyed God the first time. We talked about this the first week but chapter four tells us Jonah didn't want to go bebecause he knew God's character, he knew God's nature and he knew God was so compassionate to the people that he hated.  
  
He didn't want to do it bebecause he didn't want them forgiven. Which is really interesting and relatable when you think about it, bebecause Jonah enjoyed when God showed him grace, he just didn't want God to show them grace, like some people you may know right now, or maybe even you.  
  
We want God's favor, we want his grace, we want his mercy, but all those people over there, I mean, there, you know, on the other political side, I shouldn't even say that out loud in church, you guys aren't going to, you know, I just said the other one, I didn't tell you which one. So just keep your cool right now. So don't freak out on me. We're going to be okay.  
  
The word of the Lord came to Jonah second time. And verse two tells us this. God said, "Get up." Everybody say, get up. And go, say go. Now, let's say it all together. What did he say? He said, "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Now, do you remember in chapter one, which direction did Jonah go? Did he go up or down? When he ran from God, he went down, down, down. Now the Lord says, "You're not going down anymore. Now it's time for you to get up and go to the great city of Nineveh and deliver the message that I have given you. Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh." The word get up and go in the Hebrew  
, this means go now. It means go immediately. It means go today. Go now. Go immediately. Go today. Here is what we need to hear. Whenever God speaks to you through his word, do it now. Do it immediately. Do it today. Whenever the Holy Spirit prompts you. like maybe to be generous to somebody and you're like, "Is that God telling me to be generous? Or we think is that the devil telling me to bless him?" You know, it’s God. Of course it's God? You think the devil's going to attempt you to be generous? Whenever God prompts you to do something, do it now. Do it immediately. Do it today. I always honestly try to do something immediately. If God prompts me to text someone, I try to do it immediately.  
  
God prompts me to give, I try and do it quickly, bebecause if I don't, I'll talk myself out of it. "Well, maybe that wasn't God. Maybe I'll do it later." No, do it now. Do it immediately. Do it today. The first time the word of the Lord came to Jonah, he ran from God. This time, what does he do? Verse three tells us that he obeyed. This time scripture says that Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and he went to Nineveh.  
  
Now, Nineveh was a very large city. Historians tell us that there would've been about 120,000 or so Ninevites living there at the time. So God said to go preach to 120,000 people that he despises with all of his heart. Go to Nineveh, this very large city. And so he went there, it took him three days to go through the city, and he began by going on a day's journey in the city, proclaiming dot, dot, dot. Now, what comes after the dot, dot, dot is the sermon that he gave them. But before I show you the sermon he gave him, I just want you to pause and recognize where we are.  
  
Jonah is one man in enemy territory. His life is in danger. He hated them, they hated him. And he didn't want to be there. He didn't like them. He probably thought, there's no way they're going to hear this message. And so he preached this message. Now, this is just a little advice. If you're ever going to do like a Bible study or something, one of the things I suggest is oftentimes do a little opener, something creative to get people's attention. Like share how you mess up, and then show people that God gives second chances. That's intentional to try to help bring you in. Or you might want to say something that speaks to someone's need. And like, you know, like God loves you. You know God has a wonderful plan for your life.  
Jonah did not do any of that. Let me show you what he did. Scripture says he went on a day's journey proclaiming, here's the sermon, "40 more days, and Nineveh will be overthrown." 40 more days, Nineveh is going to be destroyed. That's his sermon. 40 more days and God's going to wipe you oﬀ the face of the earth. That's his sermon. That's what he said. He probably said more, we don't have any record of it, but we know he said, "40 more days from now, God's going to destroy all of you." Why is he doing this? Well, that's what God told him to say. God said, "Go tell him the message I'm proclaiming. If you don't repent, then you don't get to stay here." And he's probably thinking, this is just plain stupid.  
  
These people hate God. They hate me. They're not going to listen. There's no way this is going to work. Some of you right now, you have someone, you're a follower of Jesus, and you have someone in your life that you think there is no way they will ever meet the grace and the love of Jesus. Someone in your life, like they're so far from God, there's no way that they would ever turn from their sins and surrender their lives to Jesus. And I want to say specifically to you, never underestimate what God might be doing in someone's life. I've found in 20 years of ministry, that oftentimes when someone looks very, very low, there's only one way they have eventually to look, and that's up. Don't underestimate what the Holy Spirit might be doing in someone's life. You might have someone right now that you love, it's maybe your dad, and you think, "No way," maybe it's a friend, maybe it's one of your children, "There's no way that she's ever going to or he's ever going to come back." Don't give up hope, bebecause Jonah preached this very short and this very blunt sermon. And what happened? Verse five says, the Ninevites  
  
believed God. What?! These evil, horrible, wicked people? The Ninevites believed God. There's a whole word right there. The Ninevites, they believed God. How many of you know there is a big diﬀerence between believing in God and actually believing God? Some of us right now, we just believe in God. Like, "Well, of course I believe in God. And like I'm at church, right? I mean, I'm here, right? I'm watching this YouTube video. Of course, I believe in God." Just bebecause you believe in God doesn't mean you believe God.  
The Ninevites believed God. James said this. He he said, "You believe there is one God? Good. Even the demons believe that. And they shudder." Believing in God is diﬀerent than believing God. Some of you here, the problem is you believe in a loving God, but you don't believe that God truly loves you. Or you believe in a God that answer prayers, but you don't have the faith to believe that he'll hear the cries of your heart and answer your prayers. Or you believe in a God that will save the lost. But you don't think that God will save that person that you're praying for.  
I want to say to somebody here, don't just believe in him. Believe him. Don't just believe that God can, but believe that our God will, he can and will do abundantly more than all you can ask, think, or imagine. Don't just believe in HIm, believe Him.  
  
The Ninevites believe God. Verse five says this, They believed God and a fast was proclaimed, that means they're not going to eat for some period of time. From the greatest of the least, they put on sackcloth. That's a form of mourning for their sinfulness. When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, the evil king. He rose from his throne, he took oﬀ his royal robes, and he covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.  
  
Hmm - Very, very interesting. The Ninevites believed God. And this evil pagan king stepped away from the throne, took oﬀ his royal robe, and covered himself in sackcloth, saying, "God, I'm sorry, I've sinned against you." In humility, he removed himself from the throne.  
  
In a similar way, there may be someone here, it's time for you to take yourself oﬀ the throne of your life and say, "I'm no longer the Lord of my life, and I'm going to turn away from my sins and turn toward God." The word in the Bible is the word repent. It's like a Bible word, but it means we're turning away from our sins. We're grieving from our sins. And in verse eight, scripture says this, "Let everyone call urgently on God." The king says this, the king's like, "Hey, everybody, call on God now. Call on God now. You need him now. Call on him now. Call on God. Don't sit around. Don't wait for later. Call on him now." Some of you right now, if I could just say it, you're like putting oﬀ fully, completely calling on God. "I'm going to wait until I get older, and I'm finished adulting and life gets serious. And then I get married one day or maybe when we have kids, or maybe I'll call on God, you know, when I really need him." You need him now. Like, you need his grace now. You need his power now.  
You need his mercy now. You need his Holy Spirit now. You need his love now. You need his strengthen. You need him now.  
  
The king said, "Call on him now. Now, today, with the urgency call on him." And the king said, "Repent." It's a beautiful word. Re it just means to turn, it's to turn away from going the wrong way. Turn toward God, pent is that which is highest, like the penthouse, that we're turning away from, we're not going down, down, down. We're getting up and we're turning toward God. We're turning away from the lower things of this world, and we're looking up to God. It's a turn of a heart.  
  
It's a beautiful thing to repent. To truly repent, it's to change your mind so deeply, it changes you completely. I'm changing my mind. I am not the Lord of my life. I'm no longer on the throne. It's no longer about my desires and my wishes and what I want. And you know, it is everything. God, everything. I surrender to you. Jonah preached, and the nation by the power of God turns to him. The Ninevites repented. Now listen to this. How did God respond when the Ninevites repented? I'll tell you right now, can we just be real?  
If I were God, and I am not, if I'm God and they're repenting, I'm going to say, "Prove it. Let's see if this lasts. I mean, I want to see if you really mean it. I'm going to give you a year to see if you are on good behavior, bebecause I'm not going to just let you turn one little day and tell me you mean business. I want to see it." If I were God, that's what I would do.  
Thank God I'm not God. Verse 10 says this, when God saw what they did and how they turned, how they repented, how they turned from their evil ways, he relented. He said, "I'll destroy you if you don't turn." They turned. And so he relented and didn't bring on them the destruction that he had threatened. I love this. Whenever they repented, God relented. Whenever they turned to him, God took back his threat to destroy them and he showed them compassion, in the very same way that when you mess up again. How many of you have a mess-up-again story? Anybody? I sure do.  
  
Raise your hand. Anybody else, you can just polish your whole halo and sit there and all. I mean, I'm talking about to real people today who have that thing that you really don't want to do, and you do it again. "God, I'm never going to swear again. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." Right? "You know, I'm not going to yell at my kids again." And you lose your temper at your kids again. "God, I'm not going to listen to those negative voices." And then all of a sudden you get sucked into those negative... "God, I'm not going to be hateful. I'm not going to be critical. God, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to look at the thing I'm not supposed to look at again. I'm not going to be mean to my spouse again." Here's great news. When you mess up, the word of the Lord comes to you again. And you mess up again. And the word of the Lord comes to you again. And God shows compassion to you. In fact, scripture says in Isaiah 30, Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you.  
Therefore, he will rise up and show you compassion. Look at what that says. The Lord longs to, he desires to, he wants to, he purposes to, he longs to show you compassion. He's not looking like going, "Hey, I'm going to catch him doing something wrong." No, he's longing to show grace to you. He wants to show you his compassion. He wants for you to feel it when you turn from him. When you repent, he relents. He shows you compassion. The word of the Lord is coming to someone again today. And the question I want you to ask yourself, we're going to ask this in our LifeGroups. And if you're not in a LifeGroup, you need the Body of Christ. I need the Body of Christ. I need people praying for me, praying with me, serving with me by my side, strengthening me, sharpening iron, we need the Body of Christ in the Body of Christ. I want you to ask this question in your LifeGroup, and it's very, very simple, bebecause the word of the Lord is coming to you again. And the question is this, what is God trying to show you? What's he saying to you? What message is he sending your way? Just ask yourself, ask the Holy Spirit talk about it with people around you. What is God trying to show you? Here's what I've discovered in my own life, in years of walking with God in his goodness, I found that it's usually one of two things God's trying to show me. Either it's a sin he is trying to save me from or an opportunity he's trying to call me to. Most of the time when God's trying to show me something that's either a sin, something in my life that is displeasing to him, something that's dangerous to me, something outside of his will that hurts his heart, hurts others and hurts me. It's a sin, it's pride or it's anger, or jealousy and comparison, or financial insecurity or greed or something. He's trying to show me something in my life that he's trying to remove, protect me from, or he's trying to call me to do something, an opportunity. And it's usually to be generous, to serve, to be a voice of encouragement, to pray with someone. It's usually a sin he is trying to save me from or an opportunity he's trying to call me to. What is the Lord trying to show you? God, what are you trying to show me? And the good news for you is this, that the word of the Lord is coming to you again, and he's given you a second chance. He's given you a second chance. He's given you a second chance. He's given you another chance. And the word  
  
of the Lord is coming to you again, and he is given you another chance. Remember this, he's giving you another chance. Don't forget this. Remember this, he's given you another chance. Don't ever forget this. He's given you another chance. Remember, every chance from God demands a choice from you. Don't ever forget it. The word of the Lord is coming to you again and he's giving you another chance. And every chance from God demands a choice from you. He's coming to you. Some of you, you've brushed him oﬀ, you've taken him for granted, and he's coming to you again. Some of you, you are close to God and you drifted from him, and he's coming to you again. Some of you, you've never really known him, and you've, considered it, you've thought about it, you kind of enclosed, you kind of flirt with it, and he's coming to you again. And the good news is, we serve a God of second chances. Our God doesn't just call, but he calls back. And maybe God is calling you again today. Please think about the compassion of our good God. He didn't give up on Jonah, when Jonah turned his back on God. He didn't give up on the sailors who are far, far from him. He didn't give up on the king who was evil and wicked. God didn't give up on the Ninevites. And God hasn't given up on you. Our God is the God of second chances. Come on, church, come on, church, come on, church, come on. If you screwed up in your life, the word of the Lord is coming to you again. If you feel ashamed or stuck in the same old sin, the word of the Lord is coming to you again. If you're away from God and you feel like you've lost all hope, you've been too bad, the word of the Lord is coming to you again. And if you think for a moment after what I've done and who I've hurt and how dark my life is, and how bad my sin is, and how much I've hurt people, remember God's grace is greater than your greatest sin. The Lord longs to show compassion. The word of the Lord is coming to you again. The word of the Lord, he is so good, is coming to you again. He's giving you another chance. And just remember, every chance from God demands a choice from you. The word of the Lord is coming to you again.  
  
So Father, we pause and we tell you, God, thank you. We worship you, we love you, we need you, God. You are the only one worthy of our praise. Today, nobody looking around trying not to move, if you guys could help it, nobody looking around, would you take a moment and just ask God, what is he trying to show you? What is he showing you? If you're willing to pray that prayer wherever you are, God, what are you trying to show me? Would you just lift up your hand and acknowledge you're going to pray it? Lift it up. Just almost like in an act of worship to God, and online, you can type it in the comment section, "God, what are you trying to show me?" Just pray that right now you can leave your hand up or put it down whatever's most comfortable to you. But just ask God, just quietly. You don't have to say it out loud in your mind or just kind of whisper, "God, what are you trying to show me?" Just listen. Some of you know immediately. If there's something that you think he's trying to show you and you're resisting it, are pretty good is God trying to show you, and just think about it. What is he trying to show you? Probably, most likely, it might be a sin that he's trying to save you from or it might be an opportunity that he's trying to call you to. Holy Spirit, what are you trying to show us? God, speak to us. We want to obey. God, even if we've rebelled in the past, God, we want to obey. God, speak to us  
Here's what I believe, God, you're showing me. And then, God, help us to obey. As you keep praying today, nobody looking around. I want to try to say this as lovingly as I can. As your pastor, I am sincerely afraid that there are some of you that you, you're what I'd call a cultural Christian. You kind of like believe in God because like you kind of believe in God, 'because we're kind of like in places where most people kind of like are good people and believe in God, and such. But if we look at the text, like you're still kind of on the throne of your own life. You're still calling the  
  
shots. You're still doing what you want to do. And that's not being submitted to Jesus. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the sinless perfect Son of God who came to earth not to condemn but to save us. He didn't come for the perfect people, he came for the broken people. He came for sinners. See, that's really, really good news, because all of us have sinned, the Bible says. You know it, you've done things that are wrong and you may feel distant from God or feel some guilt. The good news is he came for those who are broken. He came for those who are hurting. He came for the lost. He came to seek and save those who are lost. Jesus on the cross, he was the sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. The Son of God died in our place. And God in his mercy raised Jesus from the dead, so that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord would be saved. Today, there are those of you that you know you're not following him. Maybe you don't know where you stand with him. And I just want to say today, now, do it today, now. Now, today. Yes, fully in. No, don't think about it. Don't hold back. Call on his name. Call on his name.  
  
Today, today, today. I'm stepping away from my sin. I'm repenting. I'm turning my life over to him. I'm not playing. This is now. When you call on him, when you repent, he relents. When you call on his name, he hears your prayer. He forgives you immediately. You become brand new. That's how good his grace is today. Those who say "that's me, I need his grace today. By faith, all in, not holding back, I give him my whole life. Jesus, I turn from my sins. I give you my whole life." That's your prayer. Lift your hands high right now "Yes, that's my prayer." "I surrender to you."  
  
would you pray with those around you? Pray, Heavenly Father.  
  
Heavenly Father.  
- Today.  
- Right now.  
- I give you my life.  
I put you first. Jesus, save me. My savior, the Lord of my life, forgive all of my sins. I turn from my sins. I turn toward you. Be first in my life. Fill me with your Holy Spirit, so I could know you, so I could serve you. Thank you for new life. I give you all of mine. In Jesus' name, I pray. Welcome those born into family.