

# Jonah

## The Blessing of Interruptions

### Jonah 2:1-10

This Week's Message  
February 11, 2024

*Jonah: The Blessing of  
Interruptions*

*He said: "In my distress I called to  
the Lord, and he answered me.*

Jonah 2:2  
(New International Version)

### ***Sunday's Scripture Reading*** ***Jonah 2:1-10***

<sup>1</sup>*From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.*

<sup>2</sup>*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.*

<sup>3</sup>*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.*

<sup>4</sup>*I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'*

<sup>5</sup>*The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.*

<sup>6</sup>*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.*

<sup>7</sup>*"When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.*

<sup>8</sup>*"Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.*

<sup>9</sup>*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.'"*

<sup>10</sup>*And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.*

On Sunday, I will continue the series of messages from the book of Jonah, as we take a look at chapter 2.

Chapter 2 of Jonah contains the most well-known portion of the story, as Jonah finds himself in the belly of the fish. This part of the story, being as famous as it is, has often distracted people from the most important part of the Jonah's adventure, which is God attempting to teach Jonah about grace and love. When people study Jonah, attention often turns to the possibility of a fish being able to swallow a human being whole, and of the person being able to survive inside of that fish for three days and three nights. In the context of the story, that Jonah finds himself in the fish is really only secondary, at best. What is important is that Jonah, in that moment, begins to open his heart and mind to what God wants him to learn. While the experience does move Jonah in the right direction, by the time he is out of the fish and back on his journey to Nineveh, he seems to quickly forget what he learned while in the fish.

Which begs the question, *what does it take for God to get our attention?* I am not one to say that if you have had difficulties in your

*Questions to Consider –*

\* Jonah expressed his feelings of hope and despair at the same time. How is it possible to feel despair and hope at the same time?

\* Have you ever sensed that God gave you a Nineveh task – a Nineveh task being one that is difficult for us to accept – like that of Jonah? What did you do in response? Did you want to run, like Jonah?

\* Do you believe that God has ever intervened in your life to move you in a particular direction, or toward a particular task? If so, how did you know?

\* Jonah heard God's call in some manner. How do we hear God? How have you heard him in your life?

\* Do we pray the hardest when we are in the midst of troubles? If we do, is that necessarily a negative? When is it easiest to pray? When is it hardest to pray? Do you ever struggle to find the words to pray? If so, remember what Paul writes in Romans 8:26 – *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.*

life that God caused those difficulties, but I am asking this – does it take difficulty in order for us to be open to what God might be speaking to us and asking us to do?

Jonah certainly turned his attention to God while he was in the fish. Most of chapter 2 is a lament offered by Jonah, but a lament that also is infused with hope. You can take note of this in the following verses, where Jonah expresses his dismay, followed by his affirmation of God's goodness and care –

Verse two – *in my distress I called to the Lord  
you listened to my cry.*

Verse four – *I have been banished from your sight  
yet I will look again toward your holy temple*

Verse six – *to the roots of the mountains I sank down; the  
earth barred me in forever*

*But you, Lord, my God, brought my life up from  
the pit.*

This is a common form of expression – expressing despair but then offering an affirmation of hope – throughout the Old Testament. For Jonah, every time he cried out in despair, he

*...what does it take for God to get our attention?*

*Does it take difficulty in order for us to be open to what God  
might be speaking to us and asking us to do?*

answered that cry with a statement of assurance and hope. This is similar to our own experience when we face difficult struggles. When in the midst of difficulty, we often express our fears while simultaneously expressing the hope that comes because of our faith.

The time in the great fish was a time of reflection and reorientation for Jonah. His dire circumstances – which came as a great interruption in his life – grabbed his attention. Unfortunately, however, his attention quickly reverted to his old prejudices as soon as he was back on dry land. Our task is not different from that of Jonah, as we need to remember the lessons we learn in times of difficulty, and not forget them as soon as life returns to normal or when we enter a time of blessing.

Interruptions – as difficult as they can be – are also times of blessing, as can learn such important lessons from them.

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday – God bless you!