The Running Man

The title of todays message is the running Man.

Someone just thought as I said that of the dance from the 90’s lol

Turn with me to the book of Jonah Chapter 1

Reading verses 1-10

**Jonah Flees the Presence of the Lord**

**1**Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, **2**“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah%201%3A1-10&version=ESV#fen-ESV-22534a)] has come up before me.” **3**But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

**4**But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.**5**Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. **6**So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

**Jonah Is Thrown into the Sea**

**7**And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, (flipping a coin) Rock paper scissors, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. **8**Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” **9**And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” **10**Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

My guess is that when we think of Jonah we think of Jonah being in the belly of a whale.

This book is so important to study and seek to understand why it was written for us to read.

Jonah was a prophet his purpose was to speak to others on God’s behalf.

So we see in chapter 1 verse it says “now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai saying”

This is seen with all the prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, the coming word of the Lord and then what they were to speak on behalf of God. This language affirmed the very calling or functioning as a prophet.

So Jonah gets the word of the Lord & he basically resigns, it’s not just like he says not today, it’s way beyond that, it says in verse :

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, **2**“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah%201%3A1-10&version=ESV#fen-ESV-22534a)] has come up before me.” **3**But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah is basically saying, I’m not going to do what you said. I’m going the opposite direction and my identity has come from being a mouth piece for God, but I’m going to do what I want to do now and run my life on my terms.

The book of Jonah opens up with an outrageous request. [**Jonah 1:2**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jonah%201.2): *Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh.*

You’re not shocked are you?

In fact Nineveh probably means very little to you. Or maybe you’ve heard Nineveh compared to Las Vegas, and you think a trip there doesn’t sound too bad. But Nineveh was not like Vegas, it was much much worse.

Let me give a slightly more modern example.

Imagine if Jonah lived in 1943 and was a Jewish Rabbi. God shows up and says, *“Hey Jonah… I want you to go to Berlin. You know the Nazi capital. And I want you to tell them who you are and tell them to repent for their evil. And by the way, if they do that, I’m going to forgive them.”*

How’s that going to play our for Jonah? Not very well. Nazi Germany wasn’t very friendly to Jewish Rabbis. And no Jew in their right mind would choose to go there.

So it makes sense why Jonah runs away to Tarshish ([**Jonah 1:3**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jonah%201.3)). The 1943 equivalent of Australia. He does what any of us would have done.

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire; to put it mildly, they were evil. Worse than you are thinking.

They were an effective war machine that specialized in being brutal. When they captured an enemy they would often cut off their legs and one arm, and as they slowly bled out they would shake their remaining hand mocking them in their defeat. Often they would force family members to parade through with the decapitated heads of their loved one. They’d pull out tongues, flay people while alive, burn boys and girls, and cut off extremities. They were bad people.

This isn’t just for prophets.

God has always spoken words in Genesis it says the word of the Lord spoke and there was light and stars nothing existed and then God speaks words.

And nothing exists just to exist, all things exist for a PURPOSE.

God has a design and purpose for everything.

So we have an identity. Given by God.

Jonah had an identity a design by God as a prophet to function as a mouthpiece for God.

Jonah basically says I am heading the opposite way, I am going to build an identity without the word of God.

On my terms, it’s not just disobedience, like yah not today God.

Its building an identity apart from God. Basically, the essence of sin. My life on my terms.

I heard recently someone ask a theologian: Thoughts on why Gen z is leaving the Church – he said Gen Z is leaving the Church like Millennials left the Church like Gen X left the Church, They all leave for the same reason: they want Jesus on their terms, this is less the failure of the Church and more the power of secularism.

It’s an identity without God and it can’t be done & for Jonah as soon as he does this, destruction follows.

So Jonah is running from God- We read in Chapter 1:4

**4**But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.**5**Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. **6**So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

Even the Pagan sailors are worried when they understand that JONAH is running from his God.

**7**And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, (flipping a coin) Rock paper scissors, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. **8**Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” **9**And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” **10**Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

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Here is this religious man, this prophet, this preacher man, who is running and trying to build an identity apart from the word of the Lord.

He was the running man:

What does it mean to run from God. How can we truly run from a God who is omnipresent, he’s every place, Even Jonah knows this when they asked him in verse 9, they are asking him like identity questions and he’s saying everything true, I am a Hebrew, I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven who made the sea & the dry land..

In the Hebrew every place it says Jonah is running from God literally in the Hebrew is means the face of the Lord. He’s running from the face of the Lord. Jonah is not running from the spatial presence of God, you can’t- he’s running away relationally from God. It’s symbolizing in his face or the intimacy of God, the centrality of God in your life.

Jonah was running from intimacy with God and God holding center place.

Ex. Dad won’t you die If anything happened to mom- she was my world

Making anything besides Christ the highest love of your life.

Many people can relate to holding something else centrally, wanting influence, amass wealth, purpose, making a name for yourself, and Jonah had this he was a mouth piece, he was a successful leader, In fact he is mentioned in 2 kings 14:25 saying that because of the word of the Lord through Jonah King Jeroboam was leading a successful kingdom.

He restored the border of Israel from Lebohamath, as far as the sea of Arabah, according to the word of the Lord the God of Israel which he spoke by his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gathhepher.

This is a mighty man, a prophet and he is running from the centrality of God holding the most important place in our lives. And for all of us when we seek to have an identity that anything else is the voice, the validation, the hope, it’s a pathway to destruction.

The storm arose in fact It specifically said “But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea..

Jonah was in a deep sleep it said, like anesthesia one text would describe it.

People often who are running from God spend a lot of time sleeping.

Jonah tells the men, God’s after me not you. Throw me over.

Pick me up he says and hurl me into the sea & the sea will quiet down for you, for I know that it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.

It says the men didn’t want to do that. They wrestled and in verses 14-17

**14**Therefore they called out to the Lord, “O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.” **15**So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. **16**Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

### A Great Fish Swallows Jonah

**17**[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah%201%3A14-17&version=ESV#fen-ESV-22549a)] And the Lord appointed[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah%201%3A14-17&version=ESV#fen-ESV-22549b)] a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Your disobedience impacts others, just like our obedience does.

Here God even works in Jonah’s rebellion it says these pagan Sailors cried out to YAWEH.

This is the point where love was found beneath the waves. The fish saves Jonah.

This story goes on to show how Jonah ends up having a change of heart in the belly of the whale and he goes to Nineveh and preaches repentance and the People of Nineveh repent. From the King to the people. God relented and was merciful to the Ninevites.

But Jonah is until the very end still self focused.

Makes me wonder if he ever had a true change, the only hope I have is that Jonah must have been the source of the book of Jonah and if you notice when you read this book, he is not shining bright its as if he has experienced GRACE, and speaks the story from the place of transformation and not pride.

The final verse of Jonah says And should not I pity Ninevah, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle.

Gods heart is for people, all people, Jonah didn’t want to see mercy for the evil Assyrians and was angry when God was merciful, we want mercy but not for people we think should have wrath,

This is the beauty of God and sending Jesus the perfect example of justice and mercy on the cross.

For all have sinned and fallen short.

We must be ones who go and share this gospel and make disciples everywhere.

Story of Israel’s Dad

Some of you will be called to go to people you wanted God’s wrath for.

Story of going to people and the mercy of GOD!

Isreal Talamantes- Story

I am from a city called Jimenez Chihuahua which is located in the northern part of mexico. While living in mexico, my parents (who are pastors)  had a ministry to reach out to people in the gangs. There was a neighborhood in our city that was very dangerous. In order to visit that neighborhood, you either needed to know someone there or have a family member, otherwise you were in serious danger. By the grace of God, my dad knew the mom of the gang leader of that neighborhood. The gang leaders name was Benjamin. Benjamin ran the streets. He controlled the drugs coming in and out, he controlled the prostitutes living in the neighborhood. He knew every person who was coming in and going out. My dad started reaching out to him which for me, i thought that was insane. I was a teenager so of course i was afraid of Benjamin. My dad did not see the danger he only saw him with the eyes of Jesus. My dad kept saying, God has a huge plan for Benjamin. I honestly thought my dad was delusional because if the type of person he was. One saturday, my dad tells me, ‘son, i have felt in my spirit we need to invite benjamin and his crew to church tomorrow morning’.  when i heard that, i was like, ‘dad, are you out of your mind?? Are you aware of what you are saying???? You know what he is capable of - but my dad did not care. We also knew benjamin was a heavy drug user so he was pretty unstable. But, the following day we went to his house to get him and two of his friends - those who were his left and right hand men. When we arrived to his house, I remembered being terrified. I couldnt believe we were doing it. Of course, when we showed up, Benjamin and his two friends Ezekiel and Martin were shooting up drugs. They were so high that at first they didn't recognize my dad. When we arrived at their house i was terrified because they did not recognize us and they wanted to hurt us. In a spilt of a second, I remembered my dad saying, (en el nombre de Jesus) in Jesus name, he called out Benjamin and said, ‘hey, Im pastor Ramon, i came to bring you to church’ once he heard that he snapped out of it. He said, ‘oh yeah my bad pastor Ramon, i did not  know it was you’ I remember as if it was yesterday. My dad literally had to pick up Benjamin and his friend because they couldn’t stand up by themselves.   
  
We brought them to church in our car. I was still in disbelief. I was thinking, these guys are very unstable and at any moments they can start fighting or worse. We arrived at the church. When we got them out of our van, the church ushers were in shock! They also thought my dad was crazy. They helped us carry them into the sanctuary. I remember telling my dad, ‘dad, lets sit them at the very back by the door in case we need to take them outside’ My dad refused. He wanted us to bring them all the way to the front and sit them right next to my parents. The looks on peoples faces were terrified and unsettled. Worship began and as soon as the music started they tried to stand up to dance. You can picture three young men super high dancing at worship music. The ushers came to the front trying to sit them down because they were embarrassing the worship team. When my dad saw that, he told them to leave them alone. My dad knew worship was preparing their hearts for what was to come. It was time for my dad to preach. The three of them were in and out, very high, but were listening to the word of God. At the end, my dad did an altar call to those who wanted to accept Jesus as their lord and savior. My dad was done preaching about the prodigal son. These three identified themselves as prodigals sons. When my dad did the invitation, no one stood up except, Benjamin, Ezekiel, and Martin. They came forward. The Holy Spirit did a supernatural work in their lives even when they were high. These guys were all tatted up, baggy clothes, did not smell great, but the three of them were kneeling at the altar asking for forgiveness. They had committed multiple crimes. They had done the unthinkable, but at that moment, the blood of Jesus was making them clean.  
  
Once the service was done, we had to pick them up and loaded them in our van. People in the church and myself included did not truly believe the decision they had made. We were all thinking, ‘well i dont think they knew what they were doing. The pastor is going to have to preach at them again’ I remember my dad telling me, ‘son, the Holy Spirit can change and transform a person even when they are high’ i wasnt too sure about it. We left them at their house and we went back to church. The following Sunday we went to look for them and we couldn’t find them. My thoughts were, ‘i knew it! I knew nothing happened. These guys are a dangerous and they need help’ my dad and i went back to the church and to my shame, i was a bit relieved we didn’t didnt find them. But my dad was still convinced God had done something in their lives. Two sundays after they had received Jesus into their lives, the service was about to start when all of a sudden, we see three guys from afar coming to church. The interesting thing was that these young men were dressed nicely, wearing slacks and ties. We didn't recognize them at first. When my dad saw them, he ran and hugged them. It was then when we knew it that the lives of Benjamin, Ezekiel and Martin had changed forever. The three of them no longer looked like criminals. Now, they were dressing up, smelling nice, ready for church. My dad asked them how come they hadn't come to church the sunday before since we went looking for them. Their answer was, ‘pastor, we were handing over our leadership to other gang bangers. We told them we were done with that lifestyle. They were shocked at what we were doing. We told them the neighborhood needed to change. We went to ask forgiveness for the families we hurt and now we are here’  
When the church people heard that, the Holy Spirit fell and had a supernatural service. From that time, Benjamin became a powerful preacher, reaching out to gang members. Churches from all over our city wanted Benjamin to come and preach. Ezekiel and Martin started serving at church and helped plant another church.   
The miraculous work that God did in the lives of Benjamin and his friends was truly remarkable. Now because of Benjamins testimony, his neighborhood changed, all of his family is saved, and now his continuing to preaching the gospel. Im just glad my dad obeyed the Holy Spirit of going after Benjamin and his friends. Only God could do such a miraculous work.