

JONAH

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Jonah 1.7-10

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I. Connecting With One Another

Have you had an experience in which your actions resulted in significant blessing to others or negative consequences for them? How aware are you of the impact your words and actions have in the lives of other people?

Before you begin this study please take a moment to pray:

- a. Give thanks for the richness of God's love, mercy, and presence in your life.
- b. Give thanks for the good response to our new weekend schedule - worship gatherings Saturday evening at 5:00, and Sunday morning at 8:45 and 10:30.
- c. For Good Shepherd to be a community of faith that reaches out to others so they can connect with God, grow in faith, and serve in love - in Jesus' name.

II. Introduction to this Study

Jonah is well known as the prophet who disobeyed God's command to go to Nineveh and preach against it. Instead of moving in step with God Jonah seeks to go as far in the opposite direction as he can. It might be worth recalling that the name Jonah in Hebrew means "dove," an image used to describe the people of Israel and, by extension, a name that identifies the church today. In other words, we should not neglect to see ourselves and our tendency to "flee from God" through disobedience.

As we turn to verses 7 through 10 of chapter 1 we find the ship's captain waking Jonah from a deep sleep and imploring him to call on his "god" who might take notice and spare the ship and her crew from the violent storm that is raging around them.

III. Study the Text - Read Jonah 1.7-10

- a. The sailors implore their gods to spare them from the violent storm - to no avail. Verse 7 states that In desperation they turn to an ancient pattern of discernment - "casting lots" - to identify who is to blame for the storm. Turn to Joshua 7.14-26 to get a picture of the "process by elimination" that is behind this practice. Strangely, "casting lots" is a way in which the God of Abraham gave direction and knowledge. 1 Samuel 14.37-44 is another example of casting lots to narrow down the field and identify the guilty party. What do you think about this statement made by John Calvin:

"These sailors would not be so quick to single out one man if each had well considered what he deserved before God. When calamity happens, it is the duty of everyone... to examine himself and his whole life before God; then everyone must confess that he bears a just judgment. These men seek one person to blame for the storm because they did not think that their own sins deserved so heavy a punishment?"

How does this pertain to current national calamities such as recession, on-going warfare, bigotry and discrimination, exploitation of poorer people, and other social ills?

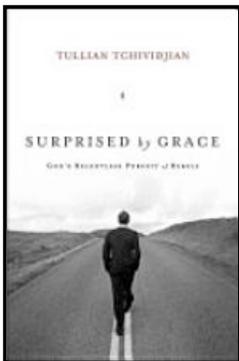
- b. In verse 8 Jonah is identified as the culpable party. Notice how carefully the sailors approach him... "tell us who is responsible for this calamity?" (the Hebrew word found here is "ra-a" which is another form of the word "Havaah" from verse 1 which means evil, distress, calamity, or trouble). But instead of a direct accusation, they ask a list of questions about Jonah's identity. Why do you think the sailors (probably the captain is speaking for them all) are being so careful here?
- c. For the first time in the narrative, Jonah speaks. How does Jonah respond to their inquiries about his identity? What does he reveal and what does he not clearly reveal? **Note: The word "Hebrew" is far more vague than "Israelite." The latter would identify him with a nation and place. "Hebrew" has more of the connotation of "foreigner" or "alien" - a man without a country.**

What is significant about Jonah saying "I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land?" How does this identify who he is? **Note: Jonah identifies God as "the Lord," the holy name of God revealed in Exodus 3.13-14 (see Isaiah 42.8 also), to identify God. Notice he does not identify the Lord as the God of Israel and by doing so identifies God begin over all nations, all the earth, and all the heavens.** Read Isaiah 40.22-23 and Psalm 33.6-8. How do these passages further describe "the God of heaven who made the sea and the land?"

- d. Notice the response of the sailors in verse 10. How would you differentiate between being "terrified" (in this case by the prospect that the God above all gods, all forces, all powers is meting out judgment against them) and "fearing" or "reverencing" God? Do you think this is a moment of conversion or coming to faith for the sailors? What clue do we get from the question they ask in verse 10, that they recognized the reality, activity, and power of this great God?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Reflect on the ways you might tend to blame others for your own "calamities" in life. Can you be honest with God about your need for forgiveness? For inner healing? For humility? For gratitude that through Jesus Christ you are forgiven?
- b. Are there ways in which you, like Jonah, are reluctant to identify yourself as a child of God? How can you faithfully respond to opportunities to identify as a follower of Jesus? How can being honest about failures and guilt help others seek God's mercy?
- c. Reflect on Isaiah 40.22-23 and Psalm 33.6-8. Do you reverence God as described in these passages? How do these verses help you gain a clearer picture of God's greatness?



In *Surprised by Grace, God's Relentless Pursuit of Rebels*, Tullian Tchividjian writes about Jonah's response and its effect:

"What have you done?" the sailors shout. It is an exclamation not a question. They see quite clearly what Jonah has done, and it defies all sense and reason. They're horrified, "exceedingly afraid" - literally "terrified with great terror." The God their passenger has insulted is the creator of this very ocean... and the only controller of this chaos.