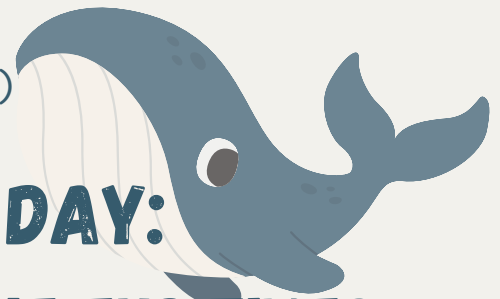


Lent 2024 - Week 3 (06 March 2024)



# THE COMING OF THE LORD'S DAY: THE GRACIOUS APOCALYPSE AS THE END TIMES

## THE REPENTANT PROPHET JONAH – DEEP DESIRE FOR GOD

### *The Incubation Period*

Three days and three nights is a running theme when God's time is to begin. It was three nights and three days that Lazarus remained in the tomb. On the fourth day, Jesus called him out of the tomb back to life.

When God saved the Israelites, Moses stretched his hands and darkness covered Egypt for three nights. God has a way of saving humanity even from the extended dark. The dark is not thence of God, but that is God's kitchen where the meal of salvation and freedom is being cooked. The God of light is busy in the dark – Jonah will be called in the dark to remember who God is and God will hear Jonah.



The belly of the fish is a secluded place. If I recall well, there are moments when God takes people to a secluded place and when they came out, they are on fire to do God's work. God took John to the wilderness and when he came back, he was preaching the life of repentance. Jesus would also go to the wilderness, and he began a life of transforming lives, healing and teaching like no other teacher ever before. The seclusion is a moment of preparation at times for our connection to be stronger with God.

### *Jonah's Reliance on God*



In the belly Jonah was restless. It was a deeper place, the inner place that was different from the deck that was comfortable for Jonah. No time to sleep in an unfamiliar place. Had Jonah been on another ship, chances are he would have been complacent. Familiarity is never a stimulus. But, we must also watch carefully, still in the ocean, the vessel is different. The world around Jonah has not changed, but the thought of being in the belly of the fish brings vulnerability to Jonah. Jonah can no longer trust his instincts. He can no longer rely on the man made security – only God matters.

When we can no longer trust our instincts, we can rely on God and submit ourselves to his saving grace.



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## Prayer as a Pillar of Strength

We notice a strange conversation taking place in the belly of the fish. Jonah is praying, but reminding himself of who God is. Opportunities of spelling out who God is are moments of prayer. Prayer is not only about asking God for anything, but a reminder of our encounters with God. Some people call this meditation when seek truths about God and our lives. Jonah does exactly that. Listen to the past tense being used by Jonah. This is not only with the distant past, but the immediate past in Jonah 2: 5-6. This prayer is laced with remembering his distress and how God saved him from such. This twinning and weaving of life experiences is called supplication when we remember our trouble and in adoration we learn to trust God with the future.



The the prayer almost takes Jonah to remember his path away from the Lord. In not so many words he speaks of clinging to worthless idols by so doing turning away for God's love for them. Prayer can remind us of the dangers of the choices we make in life. Just through prayer we can make different choices. In other words prayer can work more for us than it does for God. As we pray, we discover our way back to God. We can be cognizant of the choices that took us away from God's love and turn back.

Jonah sums this journey up as an act of salvation. Jonah makes a commitment to offer his life to God. The first step for Jonah is to be grateful as a matter of offering something to God; sacrifice for Jonah is not a painful act, but an act of gratitude. The popular theology is that a sacrifice is about deprivation, but we get an inspiring paradigm form Jonah, that with shouts of grateful praise, Jonah will sacrifice to God. Not with a sense of parting and resistance, but with openness and cheerfulness.

The second aspect to understanding salvation is the commitment to to live differently, "What I have vowed I will make good." (Jonah 2:9b). We can examine our vows and make good. This is both vowing to do good and do good. This could also mean vowing to be rebellious and turn around and do good. All this is examining our vows.

When we trust God with our lives, commit to offering our lives to God and examine our vows to be in line with God's ways, we discover that salvation comes for God. The incubation period ends and we are born again. The fish vomited Jonah on dry land.

### PRAYER:

Help me Lord to  
be born again  
this week as I  
spend time in  
prayer.  
Amen

## Participatory work

This week, please read through Chapter 2 carefully. Examine your understanding of prayer. Are there ways in which you can start praying differently rather than asking God for things and begin to think of who God is for you? Can prayer take you on a journey to examine your path away from God and perhaps trace your way back to God? Can prayer help you think differently about your life as you remember what God wills for you? How can you trace your journey of salvation this week as you look at how Jonah realized the gift of salvation as coming from God?



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