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Jonah 1:1-16 – *Stilling the Storm*

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Jonah 1:1-16

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup>“Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”

<sup>3</sup> But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.

<sup>4</sup> Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. <sup>6</sup> The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”

<sup>7</sup> Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup> So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”

<sup>9</sup> He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

<sup>10</sup> This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)

<sup>11</sup> The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?”

<sup>12</sup> “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”

<sup>13</sup> Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. <sup>14</sup> Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.” <sup>15</sup> Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. <sup>16</sup> At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

Have you ever been caught up in a bad storm?

One with lightening and hail?

One where you didn't know if you were going to make it?

I grew up playing travel baseball in the summer...

And at one tournament I was playing in the outfield.

Over the course of the game, you could see the storm clouds rolling in.

The sky had turned pretty black, pretty quick.

The temperature dropped and the wind picked up.

All of a sudden there was the blast of a nearby tornado siren...

Warning people to take cover.

The coaches didn't have to call us in...

We were already running for our lives.

We took shelter in the local school...

And huddled in the hallway together—

Some with their baseball helmets on for protection...

Some with little ones crying out of fear.

A tornado touched down in a town not too far from us...

But we were spared...

Only some heavy rain and damaging hail.

Our buddy Jonah and the sailors...

Are out on the open water when a fierce wind kicks up.

A violent storm comes out of nowhere.

Waves start crashing over the sides of the ship...

And the sailors fear that it might be torn apart.

Now, I want you to appreciate the magnitude of this storm.

Jonah is on a boat headed for Tarshish.

That means he's with sailors who are familiar with crossing the Mediterranean.

These are experienced sailors who have seen plenty of storms...

And it takes a lot to rattle their nerves. (shiver their timbers)

It's kind of like when you're riding in an airplane...

And you start to experience bad turbulence.

You tighten your seatbelt and start to panic as the plane bounces up and down.

But then the calm voice of the captain calls out...

Reassuring the passengers that this is normal and everything is okay.

They are used to choppy skies...

They've flown plenty of times to know there's no danger.

Well, the sailors start to panic...

And this is not a good sign.

They know this isn't any normal storm:

The winds are too strong;

The waves are too rough;

The sea is too angry.

Each sailor begins to pray to their gods.

(When sailors start to pray, you know you're in trouble)

Not only do they pray...

They start to throw cargo overboard...

Hoping it will keep the ship from sinking.

There is panic and pandemonium as they try to figure out how to survive.

All the while, our friend Jonah is having a nice sleep down below...

Enjoying the rocking motion of the ship.

The captain comes down surprised to see Jonah sleeping...

And it eventually comes out that Jonah is running away from Yahweh...

The One who made the sea.

Jonah is responsible for bringing this violent storm on the ship.

His direct disobedience to the Lord's command—

Jonah's sin—

Causes the Lord's wrath to come upon the ship and everyone on it.

The Lord commanded his prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh...

But instead he turns the exact opposite way...

And gets away as far as he can.

The sailors are right...

This is no ordinary storm.

This is a storm aroused by the anger of the Lord...

A direct consequence for Jonah's actions.

## **PAGE II**

In our life we encounter storms.

Some storms are of our own making...

And some are the result of living in a fallen world.

Storms that are of our own making are a result of our sin...

They go against God's design for his creation. (Tim Keller)

Now, most of the time the storms that come from our sin...

Aren't as sudden or as violent as the one that comes on Jonah's life.

For instance, when you smoke a cigarette for the first time...

You don't all of a sudden drop dead.

But, over time, your lungs are damaged...

Which can lead to lung diseases like emphysema, chronic bronchitis, or lung cancer...

A self-inflicted storm.

God did not design our bodies to take in the smoke or chemicals.

Or, if you get into the habit of nursing grudges and holding onto resentments.

At first it might feel good to justify your attitude toward that person...

But sooner or later you'll become a bitter person—

Controlled by the resentment—

And eventually that relationship will get stormy and break apart...

A direct result of our sin...

Self-imposed storms.

To be clear, just because you're experiencing a storm in life right now...

Doesn't mean that it's the direct result of something you've done.

Storms are not always attached to a particular sin in our life.

A lot of our storms come from living in a broken world.

Whereas Jonah brought the storm upon himself...

The sailors are relatively innocent—

They're in the storm because of something someone else has done.

It can be the same with us...

We get caught up in family storms:

When our son, daughter, or spouse has an addiction...

To drugs, alcohol or pornography—

It tosses our life around and threatens to pull us under.

Or maybe a family illness (cancer or depression) has been a storm cloud over our family for months or years...

You've been battered by waves and rain for a long time...

And you don't know how much more you can take.

Sometimes literal storms wreak havoc on our lives...

Where melting snow floods our basement...

Or hail damages our car.

The fact is that we live in a broken world...

A world that was designed and created differently.

God created it to function a certain way...

But we broke it and now all kinds of storms enter our lives:

Some we cause;

Some storms are someone else's doing;

And some are just being residents in a fallen world.

Perhaps that greatest storm out there is the wrath of God against sin.

Our sin and God's wrath are not things we like to talk about...

But God's word to us is very clear:

God does not mess around when it comes to sin.

It does not belong in his good creation...

And it does not belong in his holy presence.

There will come a day when God deals with sin once and for all...

And I'm sure that day will be terribly amazing.

Sin must be dealt with...

And we see God dealing with it quite dramatically in our passage.

The sailors try to row back to land—

So that Jonah can make things right with his God—

But Jonah's sin must be dealt with.

The only thing that will stay God's wrath is Jonah's life.

"Pick me up and hurl me into the sea" ...

"My life...that's what it's going to take."

### **PAGE III**

And that's exactly what happens:

God's wrath is satisfied—

The raging sea grows calm—

Once Jonah is tossed into the violent waves.

God's wrath is satisfied with Jonah's sacrifice.

Now, we don't know Jonah's motives for doing what he did:

We don't know if Jonah recognized his sin...

And knew that he needed to pay for his disobedience with his life;

We don't know if this was Jonah's last-ditch effort from having to go to Nineveh...

"Hey, if I'm dead I cannot preach to those wicked people..."

"Throw me over!"

We don't know for sure...

But there are some clues.

It seems like Jonah starts to show concern for his fellow travelers:

"Pick me up and throw me into the sea..."

"And it will become calm for *you*."

"It's my fault that this storm has come upon *you*." (Tim Keller)

Jonah's gaze turns toward the panicked sailors...

And he begins to understand their situation.

Maybe he realizes how good these sailors have been to him:

For not killing him as soon as they found out he was responsible for the storm;

For refusing to throw him overboard when Jonah first tells them to...

Instead trying to row against the storm;

Then crying out to Jonah's God to forgive them before tossing him over.

Maybe Jonah is moved by pity for these sailors...

These sailors who are suffering valiantly for Jonah's sin.

Whatever his motivation is...

Jonah gives up his life...

Calming the storm...

And saving the sailors.

And isn't this the highest form of love that one can show:

Giving up your life for another...sacrifice.

This is what our officebearers do...

Giving up their time with family and friends on a weekly basis—

Putting themselves in uncomfortable and unfamiliar situations—

In order to serve God as Elders and Deacons.

This is what parents and grandparents do...

Caring for their children and grandchildren who are totally dependent upon them for years...

Children who don't have much of anything to offer in return.

This is what grown children do...

Caring for their aging parents...

Sacrificing their time, energy and resources to honor mom and dad as their health fails.

This is the purest form of love...

Giving up our lives for the other.

This is what we're called to...

Sacrifice.

We're called to expend our resources;

We're called to give up our comfort;

We're called to exhaust ourselves...

All for the sake of the other.

Why?

Because this is what has been done for us.

Jonah's sacrifice calmed the storm—

Jonah's sacrifice satisfied God's anger toward him—

And the sailors were saved.

They weren't plunged into the Mediterranean where they surely would have met their death...

Their physical lives and material possessions were saved.

And in this sacrifice...

Jonah becomes a “type” of Christ...

A foreshadowing of Christ.

Jesus Christ sees us out on the open waters...

Lost in the storm of our own sin and the sin of the world.

He sees us panicked...

Stuck out on the raging sea...

Not knowing what to do...

Unable to row ourselves out of the storm.

Jesus Christ—

God the Son—

Joins us on the boat...

Even though he is without sin.

He enters into the storm that isn't his.

And, like Jonah, Jesus offers himself in order to calm the storm.

“Pick me up and throw me into the water,” says Jonah.

“Now is the time for judgment on this world,” says Jesus (John 12:31)

“But when I am lifted up...I will draw all people to myself.”

“When you lift me up and put me on the cross...”

“It is me, giving my life for you...”

“Calming the storm of God's wrath against sin.”

Unlike Jonah, this sacrifice saves more than our physical life:

This sacrifice satisfies God's wrath against us for our sin once and for all.

This sacrifice guarantees that our relationship to our Creator is restored.

This sacrifice says that no matter how bad the storms of life get—

And they do get bad—

That Jesus Christ calms the ultimate storm...

That God's love for us is so great that Jesus gave up his life for us.

The book of Jonah is just like every other book in the Bible...

It points us to Jesus.

It tells the story of God's love for his people...

And how he saves them through the sacrifice of his own Son.

So first, may we know love of God for us...

Christ's sacrifice for our lives...

And then may we offer our lives in sacrifice for those around us.

Amen.