

**Welcome to the
Common Ground Café!**



Sunday, August 12, 2018

**A Whale of a Tale
A Study of Jonah 3:1-2**

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below:

Can you be completely honest and say there is absolutely no group of people with which you would rather not associate? Think of one uncomfortable group for each geographical area

- In Austin? _____
- In Texas? _____
- In the USA? _____
- In the World _____

If God were to call you to go and share the good news with any of these groups, which statement best represents how you might react?

- “I know Jesus died for all people and no person is beyond His grace, so I set my personal prejudice aside for the sake of God’s call on my life.”
- “God said it, that settles it, I’m on my way but I hope I fail!”
- “God, can we talk about this, maybe there’s some other mission I can take on.”
- “OK God, now you have just gone too far-see you later.”

Studying Jonah’s story should cause us to review our response to God’s leadership in at least three ways:

1: “We can run from God’s urges, but we cannot hide.”

Read Jonah 1:3; 3:5-4:4

- What rationalization does Jonah use for His initial reaction to God’s instruction?
- Why was Jonah angry? Was his anger justified in his mind? In God’s mind?
- Have you ever felt less than excited in any of these situations?
 1. God urges you to forgive someone who has wronged you and you want to continue the grudge.
 2. God leads you to stand in the minority for a righteous cause and you refuse because it's easier to go along with the crowd.

3. God invites you to get involved in a situation and make a real sacrifice for the good of someone else and you avoid doing so because it would be inconvenient.
 4. God urges you to begin a spiritual conversation with a friend, relative, neighbor, or even a stranger and you stay silent because you are not comfortable doing it.
- Is there any justification for not responding to God's leadership, invitation, urges, or calling?

2: "In God's Universe, there are no categories other than lost and found."

Read Jonah 1:2, 3:2, 3:9-10, & 4:11

- With what was Jonah most concerned?
- With what was God most concerned?
- Pastor Bruce mentioned some ways we subdivide or categorize people. List negative labels for groups that are common in our world today.

- According to verses like Galatians 3:28, Luke 15:32, or Colossians 3:11, how does God categorize or subdivide all humanity?

3: "Not following God's instructions is, at its root, a point of personal pride."

Read Jonah 4:1-9

- What fatal flaw does Jonah exhibit in his reaction to God's sparing the people of Nineveh?
- Why is hesitation to follow God's leadership really just a declaration of pride?
- How is responding to God sooner rather than later a better course of action?

Conclusion

When we decide to be followers of Christ, we make a commitment to actually follow Christ. That means we may have to step outside our prejudices and our comfort zone to respond to the urging of the Holy Spirit. Change and growth are often difficult. When we resist or refuse we stifle what God wants for us. We go through unnecessary consequences and suffer avoidable pain. The tale of the big fish isn't really about a fish at all, but rather it is:

1. A story about tolerance and understanding. It says that God is the God of all people. God loves Nineveh as much as Jerusalem, Moscow as much as Middle America. So, who are the people (or even the individuals) you despise and distrust? Can you see that they are as important to God as you are?

2. A story about saying "yes" to God's call. Where is your Nineveh? Could it be Austin?

3. A story about spiritual humility. When we wish for God to do one thing while knowing in our hearts that it is God's will to do another, can we grow past our anger and be excited for what God wants to do in, around, and through us?

4. Finally, the story is about the nature of God. God is a merciful God. He is focused on eternity and the redemption of all. God is patient. He gave Jonah a second chance. God is wise. God will let us flee and fail.

God keeps giving opportunities to follow his instructions and experience the Joy of seeing His kingdom move forward because we said "Yes, Lord, Yes," early and often.



Close with praise reports and prayer requests