

Jonah 3:1-10
The Reluctant Prophet

There are a variety of reasons that a person may choose not to speak a word that could bring about great change for the good. But there is none more sinister than to do so because you are hoping for the worst, recognizing your words could lead to the avoidance of catastrophe. What would compel one to withhold, possibly, lifesaving words? Hatred, selfishness, wickedness, fear, pride maybe. As it concerned Jonah, it was hatred of people he viewed as enemies not worth saving. As I considered the circumstance of this story it dawned on me how we, humans, have the propensity to speak when we should not and to become reluctant or fail to speak at all when we should. But thank God when it comes to God's word, God will make the reluctant speak. And this is where we pick up in this story. Jonah, who, initially refused to go to Nineveh and deliver God's message to the Ninevites is convinced to do so after three days in the belly of a fish. God's discipline of Jonah has eased his reluctance, his initial refusal to obey, and he makes his way to Nineveh and delivers this lifesaving message. So, today I want to share three lessons about God drawn from the story of Jonah, the reluctant prophet. **First lesson, God is determined. V1-3a** "Then the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time: ²"Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message I have given you."³ This time Jonah obeyed the Lord's command and went to Nineveh." Church, God never yields to the will of man. God is merciful, gracious, patient, kind, but never wavers. What God wills to happen will happen with or without or cooperation, by force if

necessary. Furthermore, God has no problem in allowing us to take the long route. Jonah, because of his disobedience took the long route. Some, may be many individuals are not where they should be because they have not cooperated with God and thus, have chosen the long route. It is always in our best interest to yield to and obey God. We can't outlast him. God is determined; determined in his word, his mercy, his grace, his love, his patient, his forgiveness and so much more.

Luke 1:37 "For the word of God will never fail."

Psalms 136:26 "Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy *endures* forever." **NKJV**

2 Cor 12:7b-9a "So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.⁸ Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. ⁹ Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."

Jeremiah 31:3 "Long ago the Lord said to Israel: "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself."

Psalms 145:8-9 "The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. ⁹ The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation."

Psalms 103:12 "He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west."

Second lesson, God's word can change dire situations. V4-5

"⁴ On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!" ⁵ The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their

sorrow.” The message given to Jonah for Nineveh was not a complicated message. It was not warm and fuzzy. There was no massaging of the words. It was short, to the point, but very powerful because it was from the mouth of God. This word, right here, has the power to make all the difference in the world. We simply need to hear it and believe it. The only response to Jonah’s message was repentance. Not contemplation, not debate, only repentance and the people wasted no time doing just that! God’s word can change the direst of situations.

Isaiah 55:11 “It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.”

2 Tim 3:16-17 “¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Heb 4:12 “¹²God’s Word is living and powerful. It is sharper than a sword that cuts both ways. It cuts straight into where the soul and spirit meet and it divides them. It cuts into the joints and bones. It tells what the heart is thinking about and what it wants to do.”

Third lesson, God is magnanimous. V10, “When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.” Its not my point here to impress you with a big word. The truth is it is the only word I could find that captures what verse 10 reveals about God. It is defined as being generous and forgiving. Has anyone come to know God as being generous and forgiving? God had every right to destroy Nineveh. Verse 2

of chapter one makes clear the situation, “² “Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.” Church, make no mistake about it God hates sin, and he will punish, eternally, those who embrace sin by rejection of His Son, Jesus the Christ. The people of Nineveh received God’s word as true as evidenced by their repentance. And God, in his magnanimity, responds in kind. When we turn to Jesus, in confession and repentance, we receive the same treatment from God. Utter forgiveness!

John 6:38-40 “³⁸ For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. ³⁹ And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For it is my Father’s will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day.”

Romans 10:11-13 “¹¹ As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” ¹² Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. ¹³ For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”