

The Great Pursuit

Psalm 23:6 “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life...”

Jonah 3:1-10

1. A willing prophet

Jonah 3:1-3 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2“Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.” 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days’ walk.

- **Willingness means obedience, no matter the issue.**

- Compare Jonah 1 with Jonah 3
- Jonah 1:2-3 Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” 3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish...
- Vs.
- Jonah 3:1-3 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.” 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord...
- But is refusal and rebellion. So is surrender and obedience.
- Are you a “but” kind of Christian or a “so” kind of Christian?

- **Willingness means you don’t need the details, just the mandate.**

Jonah 3:2 “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.”

- Acts 8:5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them.
- Acts 8:8 So there was much rejoicing in that city.
- Acts 8:26-27 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert *road*.) 27 So he got up and went...

2. A repentant people

Jonah 3:4-5 Then Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk; and he cried out and said, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” 5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

- Apart from God’s mercy, we are irredeemable, but because God is rich in mercy, he saved us.

Jonah 3:6-9 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat on the ashes....“Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.”

- **Repentance is a change of mind.**

- Self-directed living creates all manner of trouble for us.
- Jeremiah 10:23 Lord, I know that people's lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps.
- Not only are we self-directed; we're self-sufficient.
- Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

- **Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of actions.**

- Jonah 3:10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way...

3. A merciful God

Jonah 3:10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*.

- The people repented, and God relented.
- The Hebrew word for relented can mean...
 - o To show compassion
 - o To change your mind
- Donald Wiseman: "The Hebrew verb *niḥam* refers rather to a decision to act otherwise, and does not necessarily imply that the first action is inferior to the second."
- Because God is merciful, He wants to show mercy. He wants to offer compassion.
- God's compassionate heart is always sensitive to those who cry out for mercy.
- When Mary discovered she was pregnant, she went to visit Elizabeth, her relative, probably cousin.
- Luke 1:46-50 My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. 49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. 50 And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him.
- Jonah 3 is about being caught or captured by a merciful, gracious God.
- It's a call to surrender, to be a willing follower of Jesus.
- It's a call to change our minds about ourselves and our priorities and go in a God-honoring direction of obedience.
- It's a call to receive and reflect God's mercy.