A Call To Repent

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[0:00] Now as we turn back to the second passage that we read this evening, we're going to take for our text this evening. In Jonah chapter 3 verse 8b, the second half of verse 8 into verse 9, Let everyone turn from his evil way and turn from his fierce anger.

Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we may not perish. The title given for our service this evening is A Call to Repent.
A Call to Repent and hopefully as we go through the passage, we'll be able to see, first of all, the restoration of Jonah.
We'll see the repentance of the people of Nineveh. And we'll see the relenting of God from bringing destruction on the city. As we go through the passage, we'll notice that there are three times that there is a recorded where somebody speaks in the passage.
God speaks to Jonah. Jonah speaks to the people in verse 4. And the king of Nineveh speaks to the people in verses 7 to 9.
[1:15] And as we look at these incidents and these recordings of what's been said, we're going to look at the impact. What was said and what was the impact of it.

And hopefully, as we study it, we'll also learn what it teaches us here in Carloway this evening. So first of all, the restoration.
In Jonah chapter 3 and at verse 1, we read that the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying. We'd already seen, as we went back in our study in Jonah, how the word of the Lord came to Jonah.
We looked at what the word of the Lord was. And the question that we asked at the end, and it applies to us even tonight. When the word of the Lord comes to you, what's your response?
We looked at what Jonah's response was back in the first chapter. And we looked at the cost that it had for him, the direction that it took him in. But tonight, what we see is that despite Jonah's running away, God came to him again.
[2:27] We saw how he was restored, how he came back and said that he would pay his vows to God. And how he recognized that salvation comes from the Lord.

And the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. And we have to pause. And we have to think. The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time.
How many here, either in the building or listening online, have heard the word of God before. And have chosen to ignore it.
Have run away from it. But God has taken you here. Have gotten you to tune in online. And you've got to face that question again. The word of the Lord came to me a second time.
And how did I respond? The word of the Lord came to Jonah. What was the word of the Lord that came to Jonah the first time? It was a message to go. What was the message that came to him the second time?
[3:33] It was a message to go. The message hadn't changed. And the message of God never changes. His word is unchangeable.

He is a God of love. And as we will see, he is a God of compassion. And he calls on each one of us. To come to him.
That message does not change. And the message to Jonah. The same the first time as it was the second time. But every time you read God's work.
The message is the same. That he is a God of love. And he seeks for you to come to him. How do you respond to the word of God?
As it comes to you again. This evening. The message to Jonah was to arise. To go to Nineveh. That great city.

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[4:26] And call out against it. The message that I will tell you. The message that I will tell you. And it is worth to note here that when Jonah was given the message the first time, he was told exactly what he was going to say to the people of Nineveh.

But this time, God says to him, Go. And I will tell you what to say. He is not told exactly what the message is. But he accepts the task that God has given to him.
After all he has been through, he accepts what God has said to him. And that God was going to give him the message when he went. So often, we know when we ought to witness to somebody. We know what it is that we have to do. But we put excuses in our way. I don't know what to say. I don't know how to say it.
But Jonah went on the promise of God. That God was going to tell him what to say. We've looked on a number of different occasions.
[5:40] at the parting words that Jesus had for his disciples in Matthew 28, 18 to 20, when he says to them, We quote the verse.

We hear the verse read to us. And we hear that word, go. And probably like Jonah, we panic. Does God really mean me? Does God really want me to go? And as I say, we make all sorts of excuses as to why we shouldn't go, why we can't go.
But we forget. What was the last words that are recorded there? And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.
God promised to go with Jonah and he would tell Jonah what he was going to have to say. Do we not believe that one who said to his disciples, all authority has been given to me isn't going to then give us the words when the opportunity comes for us to be able to witness.
[7:21] We'll see further on in the passage that Jonah didn't say very much, but the words that he said were used. They were taken and they were blessed.

Remember what we've said before. When we're commanded to go, we're not commanded to go on our own. Remember what we've called it? It's a great commission.
We are never on our own. Jesus has promised to go with us to the very end of the age. So Jonah, in verse 3, he arose and he went.
According to the word of the Lord, now Nineveh was in exceeding the great city. Three days journey in breadth. From fleeing, Jonah is now on his mission.
It's unclear to us how soon after his encounter with the great fish that it is that Jonah went on this mission. We only have the four short chapters, but we encounter him here entering the city.
[8:33] The city of Nineveh. We've already looked at the size of the city. The number of people that were living in the city. 120,000 souls that we read at the end of the book.

People that didn't know their left hand from their right. And Jonah went. And we read in verse 4, Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey, and he called out, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.
Before he even reached the center of the city, Jonah was proclaiming the message that he'd been given. There's no hesitation this time. What a turnaround we see in Jonah.
He's restored to where he was before with God. or maybe asking the question, why Jonah? Why did God want Jonah to do this job for him?
Was there something special about Jonah's abilities? Well, we've seen that Jonah, the first time he was asked, ran away. We know that Jonah was equipped as a prophet.
[9:52] We read about him previously in 2 Kings. Jonah had been a prophet and he spoke to the king in a time of evil. And things changed.

One commentator goes as far as to say in relation to what happened in Nineveh, that if it was just God's will for the people of Nineveh to be saved, God would have sent the fish to prophesy against them.
He didn't actually need Jonah. But what we learn is that God wasn't just working or going to work in the lives of the people in Nineveh.
God was also working in the life of Jonah. None of us come as the finished article. None of us are absolutely perfect to be used by God until God has molded and shaped us.
What does Isaiah say to us in Isaiah 64 verse 8? But now, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay and you are the potter.
[11:06] We are all the work of your hand. Have you given your life to God to be molded and shaped by Him so that He can use you according to the way that He needs you to be for Him to

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use?

Or are you holding back not prepared to give yourself to Him? We are clay in the hands of the potter. He will mold us.
He will shape us. When you see the potter's wheel and the piece of clay that's there and how it's kneaded and bent and twisted and sometimes put back in, it can be sore as God works in our lives. But God has a purpose. We don't always see it. We don't always understand it. But we are clay in the hands of the potter and He molds us and shapes us for work that we might not even know yet. We might not understand but let us be used and molded by God. Jonah had strayed. God brought him back and God was going to use him as He had intended.
[12:17] Jonah had now been humbled. He was restored to the position that he was in. Let's now see what God does with Jonah as he enters the city of Nineveh.

It takes us to our second point of repentance. Jonah as we saw had begun his journey into the city. Yet forty days in Nineveh shall be overthrown.
a nine word sermon. How many of you are thinking just now I wish he'd only said nine words and said Amen. Jonah spoke nine words.
That's all that we've got recorded here. Yet forty days in Nineveh shall be overthrown. What an impact these nine words had.
What does verse five teach us? And the people of Nineveh believed God. It doesn't say they believed Jonah. The people of Nineveh believed God.
[13:23] They called for a fast and put on sack cloth from the greatest of them to the least of them. That's a summary of what happened when God's word was spoken to the people of Nineveh.

We'll go on and we'll see in verses six to nine more in-depth of what actually happened. How the people interpreted what Jonah had said to them about how the city was going to be overthrown, how that would be accomplished is unclear from what we have here before us.
But what is clear is the response of the people of that city. The Ninevites believed God. Nine words. What was so special about these nine words? The word of God. And what does the Shorter Catechism teach us about how is the word made effectual to salvation?
Well, we read in the answer, the Spirit of God makes a reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.
[14:50] salvation. The Spirit of God takes that word and uses it. And as we see here in the passage before us, it can't be any clearer.

What we have recorded is that Jonah spoke nine words and had a huge impact. Verse 6, the word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.
And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God, let everyone turn from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands.
The king of Nineveh knew exactly how evil his people were, and he cried out and made a decree that they were to turn from their violence.
We've got to ask ourselves the question, why does the king of Nineveh issue a decree in such a way? was the king of Nineveh aware of what it says in 2nd Chronicles 714, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
[16:31] The king of Nineveh told the people to turn from their sin and call out to God. We see in the pattern of the behavior of the king, an interesting contrast in the response in Jonah chapter 1.

When the word of the Lord came to the king, he arose. He didn't rise to flee, he didn't rise to fight, he didn't rise to remonstrate with Jonah as to why he had come into his city, on whose authority was he speaking.
We see that the king knew what needed to be done, and he arose, and he humbled himself, and he instructed everyone else to do the same thing.
The royal robes were taken off, sackcloth and ashes were put on to signify a mourning to the Lord. No one was to eat.

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Not even the animals. Everyone was to call urgently on God. We can contrast that with the sailors in chapter 1, who when their very lives were at stake, who did they call out to?
[17:52] They called out to false gods. But the king here instructs his people to call out on the one through God. Not only were they to call out to God, but they were to give up their evil ways.

We read the shorter catechism at verse 89. What does it say at question 90? How is the word to be read and heard that it may become effectual to salvation?
That the word may be effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation and prayer, receive with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.
To turn away from sin, we have to come with all diligence in prayer, receive it with faith and love, and practice it in our lives.
It gives us an indication of the type of city that Nineveh was. Despite being a great city in size and wealth, it was a city where evil was practiced. And here the king orders a decree that they are to turn away from their sin.
[19:08] What brought this about? Well, as we reflected in question 89 of the catechism, the spirit of God moved. The spirit of God took the word that was preached and made it effectual, an effectual means of convicting and converting sinners.

sinners. The king recognized his own sin. He recognized the sin of his people. As we said, Jonah preached nine words, but it was the word of God.
And what do we know about the word of God? Isaiah 55, verse 11, Hebrews 4, verse 12, God, for the word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.
It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. The importance of remembering that the power is not in the one who communicates the word.
It's the one whose word it is. the power of the word is from God and the spirit takes that word and we should never doubt how when we're asked to go and speak to somebody when we're given a word to go and share with somebody how God will take that word if we speak in faith and in truth how God can take that word and use it even through our faltering lips even when we may not be articulate we might not be a great orator if we're willing to go for him and speak for him let's trust that he will do the rest through his spirit we can say about the word here to the Ninevites as Paul said when he spoke to the Thessalonians because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction as it recorded in 1 Thessalonians 1 verse 5 when the word comes like that we can only stand by and see God work verse 9 the last thing that the king said as part of his decree who knows
[21:53] God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we may not perish where did the king get this understanding of God's word there was obviously a point in his life where he was taught where he was spoken to but as we acknowledged with the sailors he had obviously heard at some point in his life about the God of Israel remember the words of the captain in verse 6 of chapter 1 where the captain found Jonah sleeping in the boat and the captain came and he said to him what do you mean sleeper arise call out to your God perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish the king had a knowledge of God's word and as the spirit took the words spoken by Jonah we see them convicting and calling to memory words previously taught to him while he had not lived by God's word when it now came to him in power he immediately recalls a God that may indeed be a compassionate God a God that will not visit them with anger because of their sin a God that if they call upon him would indeed deal justly with them let us call upon God that he may turn from his fierce anger so that we may not perish we may not perish it takes us straight to John 3.16 why?

because God sent one greater than Jonah we read it in Luke 11 that while Jonah was to be a sign there was one greater than Jonah for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life do you hear that?
that if you believe in the son of God you should not perish or shall not perish but have eternal life the king didn't run he didn't run to save himself he issued a decree the king knew about God the words had been recalled to him and he knew what it was to seek forgiveness from a compassionate God and the king shared that instruction with the whole city have you got good news?
have you got good news to share? who are you sharing it with? the king didn't keep this to himself thinking of his own situation he told everybody what they had to do and it brings us to our final point a relenting when God saw what they did verse 10 how they turned from their evil way God relented

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of the disaster that he had said he would do to them and he did not do it this verse reminds us that we indeed have a compassionate God a God that is full of mercy many ask did God change his mind?
Jeremiah 18 verse 7 to 10 may help us to understand the passage and we see that God is a God that fulfills his promise verse 7 of Jeremiah 18 if at any time I announce that a nation or a kingdom is to be uprooted torn down I will relent and not inflict on it the nation I warn repents of its evil then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned and if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it God is a God of his word and we see here God's word fulfilled that as the city of Nineveh called out in their sin asking for mercy they were given mercy by a compassionate and faithful
[26:51] God God had shown grace to Jonah he showed grace to the people of Nineveh and that same grace that same compassion is available to anyone who responds to God's word as it comes to them tonight the words we read at the beginning of the passage and the word of the Lord came to Jonah is the word of the Lord coming to you tonight you've never responded to it before but the word of God is coming to you tonight come I am a compassionate God a God that is full of mercy a God that stands with my arms wide open seeking to welcome any that call upon me the Ninevites heard the word of God they turned from their evil ways on the first time of hearing many of them would have never had the opportunity to hear the word before remember what we read of Nineveh it was an evil city a city whose evil had come up before God we've already recognized and celebrated 500 years of having the word of God and we're blessed to have it to us here but there's a danger that we take it for granted a danger that as we come and we hear it that we just let it wash over us that we don't really listen to the offer that is being made to us

Jonah warned of a day of wrath that was coming in the city of Nineveh and God's word continues to warn us of a day when we will face judgment the Ninevites were encouraged by the king to turn from their evil ways to call upon God and to seek forgiveness forgiveness does anyone hear that word tonight to call upon God to seek forgiveness to go with God and walk with him all the days of his life let us pray to go to to to to to to to tomumbles to whatmumbles tomumbles

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