

The Fear Of The Lord

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[0 : 00] Well, it's good to be here, as I said to the young people. I'm going to continue in the study of Jonah.

When we were together back in November, we looked at the first three verses of chapter one, and we looked at what the Word of God was, what the Word of God was to Jonah specifically, how Jonah then responded to the Word of God, the direction that it took him in, and the cost of his response.

And finally, we looked at what is our response to the Word of God, not just this morning, but each and every day of our lives.

So if you've got your Bibles and you're able to follow it, we're going to look at the progression of Jonah's story, as we find it from verse four down to the end of the chapter.

And as we see with Jonah, we had reflected that the direction that his response had taken him was down. He had gone down to Joppa. He had gone down into the boat.

[1 : 27] And we see this morning that his trajectory took him down further, as he went down into the bottom of the boat.

And then, as we later see, he went down into the bottom of the sea. But as we look at the Word this morning, if I was going to give you a title.

For this morning's sermon, it would be the fear of the Lord, or alternatively, the three fears of the mariners on the path to salvation.

We see in verse five, verse 10, and verse 16, that the mariners were afraid, they were terrified, and that they greatly feared.

And as we study the passage, and as we look at these verses, and what it was that put these men in fear, and what their response to the fear was, I want to have a look and see what it teaches us as we meet here this morning in Carlway as to what it means for each of our lives.

[2 : 46] So if we look at the first occasion that the men are in fear, we find it mentioned in verse five, the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his God.

And the question that we may have is, what is it that they were afraid of? What is it that caused them to fear? If we just step back into verse four, we see that the first fear that they have is because of the situation and the circumstances that they find themselves in.

In verse four, but the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. And then we read, the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his own God.

How had they found themselves in this situation? What were the circumstances that led them to be where they were? Each one of them was a sailor.

They were going about their own task. They had loaded up the ship, and they would have checked the charts, and they would have seen that it was going to be safe to go to sea.

[4 : 06] But they had taken a passenger on board. They had taken Jonah. Jonah had paid his fare, and he had gone down into the heart of the ship. But God had unfinished business with Jonah.

We think back to the first three verses where God had spoken to Jonah, and God had asked Jonah to go to Nineveh to cry out against the great city because of its sin.

But Jonah had sought to try and get away from the presence of God. And we saw before that it's impossible for any of us to get away from the presence of God.

We reflected back on Psalm 139 the last time we met. For even if we go down into the depths of hell, God is there with us.

Even as we are formed in our mother's womb, God is with us. There is nowhere we can go that takes us away from the presence of God. But Jonah tried as he could to get away from the

presence of God.

[5 : 14] But God wanted to get a hold of Jonah. And in the situation that he was in on the boat, we find that God, the Lord, hurled a great wind upon the sea.

It wasn't something that was anticipated by the sailors. It wasn't something that any of their charts had shown them. Even as they would have looked at the clouds, they would have looked to see that it was safe to go to sea.

But God hurled a great wind upon the sea. Each one of us knows what it is to pick up a ball and hurl it and then see where it may land.

You could say that if I was to play golf, it's like hurling a golf ball down the fairway and crying out, four, in case it hits anybody on the way down.

But here God hurled. It wasn't just he placed it. There was veracity with it. And it was thrown upon the sea. So much so that these mariners, who would have been at sea most of their lives, were greatly afraid.

[6 : 24] And they cried out to their own gods. What does this teach us? What does it teach us this morning? What is it that makes you afraid?

What is it that you're dealing with or trying to deal with on your own that makes you afraid this morning? Is it debt?

Is it failure? Is it being found out in your sin? What is it that causes you fear this morning? And what do you do when you find yourself in that situation?

What we see here is that the men cried out to their own gods. You could say they were religious men. They believed in a number of gods.

But they didn't believe in the one true God. I think there's something just to reflect on here because of the situation and the circumstances that these men faced.

[7 : 27] These men went to sea every day. As we said, they would have checked the charts to see that it was safe to go to sea. But God hurled a great wind upon the sea.

Why? Because God wanted to get a hold of Jonah. Jonah's sin had an impact on the people round about him. And we have to ask ourselves the question.

Does our disobedience, our sin, not only impact ourselves, but does it have an impact on those round about us?

We see that Jonah was actually totally oblivious to the impact that his sin was having on the people round about him.

How do we know that? Because we go on and we read that Jonah had gone down into the belly of the fish. Not the belly of the fish, the belly of the boat. And he'd gone to sleep.

[8 : 31] He was so comfortable in what he was doing that he was totally oblivious to the impact that it was having on the people round about him.

Are we so settled in our own position that we are happy to go to sleep and not concerned about the impact our sin, our disobedience may have on those round about us?

The sailors cried out to their gods. They didn't cry out to the one true God.

The hymn writer writes, I tried the broken systems, Lord, but ah, the waters failed. Even as I stooped to drink, they fled and mocked me as I wailed. What were these false gods going to be able to do for the men at sea?

Absolutely nothing. So much so, what does the captain do? We go on and we read that the captain, trying to account for everybody on board, it was his responsibility, went down and found Jonah.

[9 : 55] And where did he find Jonah? Fast asleep. And what does he do? He says to Jonah to wake up, to wake up and call upon his God and see whether his God would be able to do anything.

Arise, call out to your God. Perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish. Jonah had gone to sleep.

And the captain had come and woken him. Woken him from his slumber, but also, as we may see, maybe woken him to the situation that he found himself in.

Woken him to the situation that God was responsible for the trouble that they were in. And the captain also pointed him back.

Pointed him back to God. Told him to call out to God. God had spoken to Jonah. He had asked him to go for him.

[11 : 10] But Jonah had sought to flee from the presence of God. And here was the pagan captain on the boat who had previously been calling out to his own false gods.

He was telling Jonah to wake up and call out to God. How many of us in our sin have been pointed back to God by the person we least expected?

Who has woken us from our slumber and taken us back to the path that we had departed from?

Which one of us here this morning is needing to hear that call arise and call out to God?

I don't know your situation, your circumstances, but God has taken each one of us here this morning and God is laying upon our hearts that we must call upon him.

Not to try and do things in our own strength. Not to try and rely on what we may have done in the past. But to rely fully upon him.

[12:34] We saw that the soldiers, the soldiers, the sailors had tried to do their own thing. The very thing that was going to make them money, they threw it over the side of the boat.

They trusted in their own strength as to what they were going to be able to do. But that had no impact because their fear was in the situation and in the circumstances that they were in.

Their fear wasn't a fear of the Lord. So Jonah woke up and Jonah went up onto the deck. The sailors became aware that there was something different about this storm and they decided that they were going to cast lots to see who the lot would fall upon.

And as we read on, we see that the lot fell upon Jonah. Casting lots isn't something that we do nowadays.

I am aware of a situation where lots were cast during the war when an individual, there was two individuals who had a specific skill set that they were basically getting sent on a suicide mission in the war and lots were cast and one man stayed and the other man had to go and sadly they never returned from that mission.

[14:11] But in the Bible, where we see lots cast, the first time that we ever see a lot cast is in Leviticus 16 verse 8.

That when the people brought two goats or two sheep to the priest, the priest had the responsibility of casting a lot to see which one was going to be sacrificed and which one was going to be the scapegoat.

And here we have the lot being cast and the lot falls on Jonah. And as we go on in the passage, we see that Jonah becomes a scapegoat for the others on the boat.

And it doesn't take us too far a stretch to recognize that on another occasion, when there was lots cast, it was for Jesus' garments, months, when Jesus was our scapegoat on the cross at Calvary.

So as we read God's word and as we see these things unfolding, each and every time we recognize that it points us directly to Jesus.

[15:29] And keep that thought in your mind, that while casting lots is there that we have to think about what God is teaching us through the casting of lots on this occasion and where it takes us.

So the lot fell upon Jonah, which then takes us to the second fear. Lot fell upon Jonah and the men started an inquisition, asking him where he was from, who were his people, why had this happened?

And we very quickly see the answer that Jonah gives them. In verse 9, and he said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

And then in verse 10, we read that the men were exceedingly afraid. They weren't afraid. In the circumstances, they were afraid in the circumstances that they were in.

But here we find a different fear. They have a fear of the knowledge of God. They would have heard of the God who had been with the people of Israel as they came out of the land of Egypt.

[16:57] The God who had separated the Red Sea. The God who had poured out a flood upon the nation before that.

The God who had been with the people of Israel when the walls of Jericho fell down. There was a fear in the knowledge of who God was.

But that didn't change the men's hearts. The men continued to look and think about themselves. While they asked all these questions of Jonah we see in verse 11 that their thought is still with themselves.

What should we do to you to make the sea calm for us? They were looking for their own situation to be made better. While there was a fear of the knowledge of who God was and why God that it was God that had brought this storm upon them their thoughts were still with themselves and how the situation could be made better for them.

And we see that they then ask Jonah what it is that they have to do. And this is where Jonah tells them to pick him up throw him into the sea and the sea will become calm.

[18 : 28] Can you imagine being in that situation faced with the thought of having to throw one man overboard to save everybody else on board?

And that's where the men were. Did they do what Jonah had told them to do? Not on this occasion that while their thought was for themselves their trust was also in themselves.

What did they try and do? They tried to draw all the more harder and they tried to make sure that they could get away and get back to land God.

But they couldn't. Because tried as they might in their own strength what do we see happened? The sea grew more and more tempestuous as we see in verse 13.

While they trusted, looked to sort things out for themselves and trusted in their own strength, the situation became worse for them. we see that they had a knowledge of who God was and there was a fear of the knowledge of who God was.

[19 : 46] But it didn't take them to God. Have you been coming here Sunday after Sunday? You may have been coming for decades. You may have been coming for weeks.

This may be your first time here this morning. And God has taken you to here. That while you may know Him, if you don't fully trust in Him, you're really rowing against the tide.

Do you need to call out to God and put your trust in God and not in yourself this morning as these men did? Because then this is where we see the third fear.

A true fear of God. A reverent fear of God. In verse 15, they pick up Jonah and they throw him and hurl him into the sea and the sea ceased from its raging.

And at this, the men greatly feared. Verse 16. But we also see that as they feared God, it was a very different response.

[20 : 59] they'd witnessed the power of God for themselves. The stories of the past had filled them with fear. But what it didn't do was bring them to God.

But now they'd had a personal experience with the Lord. They'd seen with their own eyes. And now they came. And not only did they come to know God, they came and made sacrifice to Him.

And they made vows. It doesn't tell us what these vows are. But what we do know is that they praised, praised God, praised Him in the situation that they were in and called out to Him.

It says in Psalm 111 at verse 10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have a good understanding and His praise endures forever.

And again in Proverbs 9 and verse 10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. Do you have a reverent fear of God this morning?

[22 : 19] A God that loves you? A God that knows you? A God that cares for you? my prayer would be that you would call upon Him.

It's interesting if we flip forward in Jonah chapter 2 and we see verse 8 and 9 those who will say to! love but I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

While Jonah was on the boat he had witnessed the men on the boat crying out to their own gods. and he cries out to God here that those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

Who are you crying out to today? Are you forsaking the hope of steadfast love that can only be found in God this morning?

[23 : 32] I think the other thing that's really interesting in verse 9 but I with voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay.

Salvation belongs to the Lord. Jonah was thrown overboard and he left these men thinking that they were lost. Lost forever.

Lost men that were crying out to a false God. But as Jonah fell to the bottom of the sea as Jonah was then swallowed in the belly of a fish the lives of these men had changed.

They had seen God their eyes had been opened and they made sacrifice to God and they made vows to God. And as Jonah prayed and praised God on the bottom of the sea these men were praising God and sacrificing to him on the top of the sea.

Jonah was unaware that these men's lives had been changed. He had contact with them, God had intervened and their lives were changed.

[24 : 51] As we pass through this life we come into contact with many different people. Are we leaving a contact of Christ that will turn these people to Christ?

Or are we turning people away from God? God. My prayer would be that we are turning people to God. Not because of who we are but because they see God in us and they desire to know him better.

These men when they threw Jonah into the boat cried out to God that they wouldn't be guilty of an innocent man's blood.

We spoke earlier on of how when the casting of lots takes us to Jesus' clothes being fought over and lots been cast over them as he hung on the cross at Calvary.

But before he went to the cross at Calvary people weren't saying God forgive us of an innocent man's blood. The cry was crucify him.

[26 : 08] crucify him. And why was Christ crucified? It was all part of God's plan that Christ would be the scapegoat for each and every one of us.

Jonah had to be a scapegoat for the men on the boat to be saved. Jonah had to be the sacrifice that was made. God had ordered it and the sea became calm.

Now I'm not for one minute saying that if we come to Christ that the sea of life will be calm for us. There will be times that it is difficult. There are times that it will be challenging.

But as God promised Joshua when he commissioned him to go with the people of Israel after Moses had died, if you walk by my word, if you have my word on your lips, I will never leave you.

I will never forsake you. Now we know that Joshua went off and there was battles, but he was through to God's word. If you're in fear this morning because of things that are happening in your own life, things that may be responsible for yourself, things that may have impacted you because of others' actions, come to God.

[27 : 38] Don't try and deal with it on your own. We saw here that the men in the boat tried to deal with it in their own way. They lost everything that they had that they could have made money on.

They called out to false gods. They tried to do things in their own strength. And things got worse for them. But only when they came to know and understand what it is to fear the living God who is a loving God who cares for each and every one of us did they really find true rest and true happiness. And my prayer for each one of you is that you would know that truth, you would know that happiness, that can only be found in coming to the true God.

Let us pray. Let us Thank you.