

Jonah is Thrown into the Sea

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 May 2024

Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] Good morning, good morning. Here we go, right. Man, those last few words to that song, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.

! Prone to leave the Lord I love. Maybe many of us aren't actively running away from God. Maybe we are. But, man, aren't we just prone to wander?

If you're not running away from God, don't you have those moments where you just wander?

Actually, that song speaks to me. Honestly, there's some of the lyrics in that song, that's old English that takes me time to digest.

But that last bit just always gives me a nice final left hook. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Don't you feel that wandering? Like every day as you leave the body of Christ, as you leave Sunday, and then you go to your work, and your heart just is prone to wandering.

Mine does. Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the Lord I love. That just sounds so ironic. I've also been thinking about Jonah this whole week, and it's just, what's the Jonah in me?

[1:06] Actually, I was talking to Aaron and a couple of, Aaron and a few of the Young Life staff, we were talking about just talks, I think, and she had this idea about presenting a series through the form of almost like a TV series.

And it just made me think, man, this story is so rich. This story is so rich with just following the story of Jonah, and it just, I had, who's watched 24 here? Has anyone watched 24, the series, Jack Bauer?

Oh, actually, one thing. Is it still stuffy? Is it? Danny, would you mind checking just behind this curtain, the air con, what the situation is? Is it high, low, medium? High.

We're all high. There's a few just all along that curtain. If you can just have a look. As long as it's all. As long as we're high, then that's good. We're all maxed out.

Okay, that's good. Yeah, 24, Jack Bauer. Before, every episode is like previously on 24. And as I was just looking, man, previously in Jonah, this last week, last week I started Jonah, verses 1 to 6, and I was talking to Danny, and it's like, man, even within six verses, there's so much that's packed to there.

[2:11] You know, I asked the question, do you want to hear the voice of God? And then I said, do you really? Do you actually really want to hear from the voice of God? What if he tells you something that puts your people's lives at risk?

What if he tells you something that you don't really want to hear and you don't really want to do?

Then what do you do? Do you have a God of your own making? You have a God that you want him to tell you about things, to do things that you want.

Do we have that? And are you running away from him? Are you actually trying to run away? And is the devil providing the transportation for you? He goes down to Joppa. He goes down to the pit. He goes down to the boat.

It's just easy to do it. And every time we want to run away from God, I'll tell you, the devil is right there, just going, hey, there's a right. Come along. It's easy. And then you're going to get eaten up by a big fish.

Do you want to hear the voice of God? Are you actually trying to run away? Is the devil providing transportation? And what do you actually rely on when you are in a storm?

[3:10] When you're in a storm, that's what I've been thinking about this week. If I'm in a storm, what is God trying to reveal to me? What is he trying to use the storm for to grow me, to wake me up? And then finally is my private faith of any public good.

As people come to me, hey, this world is on fire. Our office is filled with just toxicity and gossip. What are you going to do about it? Are you contributing to it?

Or are you in slumber? Or are you running away and just completely trying to hide and not be any public good? Are you even just heavenly minded with no earthly good? So that was previously in Jonah.

And now we move into the next one. And remember I said last week, Jonah is not about the fish. It's not about the great whale. It's about sin. And what is sin? Sin is just running away from God.

Sin is ultimately God. I don't trust you, so I'm going to choose my own way. That's what it is. That's what Jonah is about. That's what life is here about. We are constantly, constantly trying to remind ourselves, do we actually trust God?

[4:10] Do we trust God? Are we choosing our own way? Or are we choosing his way? The harder way. The way that goes up and not down. And so we're going to move in now into the second half of chapter one.

And it just continues. It continues. And you see Jonah's heart. And actually, I'm going to go through verse by verse. We did six verses last week. Today will be 11. But don't worry. There will be short ones. And it's fascinating.

As the story unfolds in this episode today, you will see Jonah's heart exposed even more. And they're right in the thick of it in the storm. I'm going to ask Juju to come up and read us the word of God.

So can I invite you? Can we stand for the word of God? And let's prepare our hearts to receive from him what it is that he wants to say to us today. Again, completely aware that you can neither see me nor, or definitely not Juju, nor the, but I hope that you can just open your heart and just really just receive the word.

This is the word of God, God Almighty of heaven and earth. And he speaks to us now through Jonah chapter one, verse seven to 17. Jonah chapter one, verse seven.

[5:20] And they said to one another, come, let us cast lots that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us. So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

Then they said to him, tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you? And he said to them, I'm a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.

Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, what is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord because he had told them.

Then they said to them, what shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, pick me up and hurl me into the sea.

Then the sea will quiet down for you. For I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you. Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

[6:25] Therefore, they called out to the Lord. Oh, Lord, let us not perish for this man's life and lay not on us innocent blood for you. Oh, Lord, have done as it pleased you. So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea and the sea seized from its raging.

Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

This is the word of the Lord. Praise be to God. Thank you. Please take a seat. So Jonah's about to turn. He's about to, I mean, he was angry and he was running away, but he's about to turn.

He's about to do what God asked him to do, but not before a big fish intervenes. And you see a little bit more about his heart. Okay, so the sailor wakes him up. He's sleeping. He's having a nap in the hardest storm that these sailors have experienced.

And he's having a nap deep in the boat. So he goes and goes, what are you doing? How are you still sleeping? Cry out to your God. You look like a prophet. You look like a religious man. You've got to have something to help us with here.

[7:32] And then it jumps to verse seven. And it's interesting because it says, and they said to one another, come, let us cast lots and that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us. What does that tell you?

What does that tell me? That even with that sailor going up to Jonah and saying, hey, what have you got? How can you help us? Jonah does what? Stay silent. He knows what the problem is, but

he stays silent.

To the point where they have to cast lots to find out whose problem it is. Isn't that interesting? So he gets woken up from his slumber, doesn't really still say anything, please the fifth, and just stays completely silent.

And the sailors are all still trying to figure out what to do. So they don't know what to do. And near ancient times, they would cast lots, which is just an arbitrary way to just kind of draw straws and to see whose problem it is.

And God uses even something like that to show them that it is Jonah. And it's only at that point, it's only at that point does Jonah start confessing. And it's interesting. So he stays silent.

[8:29] They start to do a castle, usually just either using some rocks. And then from there, they're highlighted that it is Jonah who is the cause of this. And then they said to him, tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us.

What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you? They just bombard him with questions whilst the storm is happening. So you can imagine just the drama that's unfolding.

You can see it. If it was a TV series, you could actually see it happening. It's dark. It's got to be dark. It's raining. And they're just getting tossed back and forth. And go, why? Who are you? Who sent you?

What do you do here? And it tells me one thing. When storms happen, actually, they serve as great exposures to what our identity actually is. When we have storms in our lives, it reveals who we actually are.

And what we have here is the sailors going to Jonah, tell us who you are. And what do they ask him? They ask him three things, actually. They ask him what his purpose is, occupation. They ask him which place he comes from.

[9:27] And they ask him the people, what kind of person he is. Purpose, people, place. It's all about identity. Every time a storm happens in my life, it actually challenges my identity.

Does it challenge yours? It actually exposes what I'm doing, where I'm going, what I think I'm doing. The moment there's something that's happening in my life that is out of my control, let's say the storm really is just a symbol of just us living a life that is out of our control.

Okay? We are helpless. It's in that moment our identity gets revealed. It's in that moment we actually find out what we were actually here for. That's the question that you have. Once you have something that's happened to you that isn't what you want, what are you asking?

Oh, what on earth am I here for? What's my purpose in life? What's my mission? These people are asking him that, what is your occupation? What do you actually do? Now, bear in mind, they're not asking him because they're interested.

They're asking him because they want to try and save themselves. So they're trying to find the answer to the problem. And so they bombard him and they ask him, what is your purpose? And it makes me think, when we tackle storms, do we think about that?

[10:35] Or if I asked you right now, what is your purpose? What is your occupation? What is your mission? Would you have an answer? Stephen Covey in his book, The Seven Habits of Highly Successful, Effective People.

Sam, what is, I completely just tongue-tied there. Yes, actually Sam is the expert on this. He trains and teaches about this. So I'm going to embarrass him a little bit. One of them is about, you need to have a mission statement, right?

If you're going to be highly successful and highly effective, you need to have a mission statement. What does that mean? You need to know what you're doing in life. You need to know which direction you're heading in. Why? Because, now, again, I'm quoting, actually, I have a quote.

I have a quote. It says, a personal mission statement becomes the DNA for every other decision we make. A personal mission statement becomes the DNA of every decision that we make. When you have your mission statement, when you know what your life is about, it will impact all your other small decisions.

Why do we keep, repetitively remind ourselves of the mission statement here? Because our hearts are prone to wander. We can turn up, not really thinking about why we're gathering. And instead, we're not gatherers, we're just wanderers.

[11:39] But when we sit down and we go, okay, I'm sat here in this crowded and stuffy room on a Sunday morning because of this. That's our mission statement as a gathering.

But really, what we're trying also to do is that each person here has their own mission statement, has their own statement that, okay, this is why I was created. Now, of course, there is a bigger picture here. Genesis 126.

Why was mankind created in the first place? To create culture, to organize culture so that it would reflect the glory of God. So whatever field you're in, you're supposed to take those elements and arrange them and reorder them so that they would reflect the beauty and the glory of God.

That's why you're here, whichever field that you're in. The mission statement is so important. And these guys are asking him, what is your mission statement? What is your occupation? What do you do? Out of interest, put your hand up if you feel as though I'm not going to put you on the spot and ask you to recite it.

Who here has a good idea of what they're made for, what their mission is? Don't be shy. Again, I'm not going to embarrass you. Brilliant. We've got about 10%, 20% of people here.

[12 : 45] You see, that's key. We need to know what we're actually here to do. And if you didn't put your hand up, that's okay. So go find Sam. He's at the back there. And he, the one who's carrying the baby, he's pretending to look elsewhere.

He, he will help. What's your occupation? What's your mission? What's your purpose? What are you here for? Then the second is, what place are you from? What country are you from?

Why? Because when you find out where you came from, that'll give you a little bit of a better idea as to your trajectory, your direction, where you're heading. Sometimes I'm at, I feel as though I'm often, always at crossroads going, God, where next?

What next? What do, which way do I go? What do I do? Do you have that? And at that moment, I found it supremely helpful sometimes just to look back. Just to look back and see, man, where was I born?

What were the experiences I had as a child? The cultures that I was seeped in. The experiences I had in work. The call of God on our lives, on Christina and I on my life as we, as we went into ministry in England.

[13 : 47] As we went from England to Hong Kong. Now, when I'm stuck at a crossroad and going, I don't know where I'm supposed to head, looking back has helped me. Because it helped me get, oh, okay, I may not know exactly where I head, but turning my, just doing a 180 and turning around, I can see where I came from.

And that helps steady me, and that helps remind me of the direction that I'm heading in. It's interesting what storms can do. Let's not despise the storm when it comes at us. Let us look back and go, okay, storm, you have something that God is trying to reveal to me about my purpose, about the place that I'm from, and the people.

Finally, the people. He says, who are you? Where are you from? Who are your people? Why are they asking that question? They're asking that question because during that time in this polytheistic culture, which is where everyone had multiple gods, often the God that you worship was tied in with the people that you are.

Okay? So whichever culture you were born in, whichever race you are, that's the God that you are worshiping. Why is that important? Because what they're trying to ask as the storm is happening, as they're constantly losing balance is, who do you trust?

Who do you trust and can we trust that person? Can we trust that God? We want to know who you trust to see if he can help us here. Every storm, every storm reveals our identity.

[15 : 01] Every storm within that identity reveals our purpose, or at least asks us that question. What is our purpose? What is the place that we've come from? And who are the people that we are coming from? That is what the storm is doing to Jonah here, through these sailors.

And then comes his answer. His answer is fascinating. His answer says this. He stands up and then he says, verse 9, I am a Hebrew.

If you're following in your notes or your Bible. 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. He answers their questions backwards.

He starts with their last question. They ask him at the end, you know, who are your people? He starts with that. He says, I am a Hebrew. What does that tell you? In the midst of the storm, your identity and your priority will be surfaced and it will be revealed.

What was Jonah's? The fact that he was a Hebrew. And you can kind of imagine how he would have responded to them. I, pagan sailors, sinners, people that I'm trying to run away from.

[16:08] I am of a people that are more superior to you. I am a Hebrew. Remember last week I told you, Jonah was a nationalist. He supported the King Jeroboam II who had an expansion policy that would be ruling over all the nations around Israel.

So he was all for, he was highly partisan, he was racist. So he starts up by just saying, I am a Hebrew. In the midst of the storm, the key identity that you hold on to will be the thing that is exposed.

Have a think back to the last storm that you've been in. The last time you felt as though things were out of control, when your identity was threatened, it's at that moment you'll realize what you were holding on to as your core identity.

It's in the midst of a storm when a banker realizes, man, the market hasn't been good these last few years, but so much of my identity is in that thing.

And you see, when we hold on to something that is our key prime identity, and when things are going out of control, that's when we get crushed. If your core identity is as a banker and the markets go down, then you get crushed and then you're all over the place.

[17:20] When your identity is as a boyfriend and your relationship doesn't go well, suddenly you're crushed. Why? Because your main identity is in that very thing. I told you when I first got injured and Kenneth and I had the same injury, as for basketball players, that injury is called the kiss of death.

A little disclaimer to that, that injury is the kiss of death to professional basketball players. Why? Because your performance, your margins are so thin.

The Achilles being weakened really reduces that first step and that explosiveness, so it's the kiss of death for them because their margins are so thin. For me, it's not really the kiss of death.

Because my margins, it really doesn't matter how well I play. So my identity wasn't threatened because my Achilles ruptured. Does that make sense? Because I, well, I was heading towards the NBA, but I wasn't quite there yet.

So my identity wasn't as an NBA player. But every time we have a storm, it reveals what you actually truly, really, deeply care about.

[18:26] The key here is, for Jonah, it was in his status as a Hebrew. His biggest thing was politics.

Have you met people like that? Has Hong Kong gone through something quite similar? Maybe even not so far in the distant past? Whereas, hey, we were identified as first name or actually, it came a point, it often didn't even really matter what your name was.

It was just which color you were, which side you supported. And so through the midst of things going out of our control, suddenly we, is revealed what our core identity is.

Jonah here exposes himself, and he's like, I am a Hebrew. And then it gets even more stupid.

Honestly, his answer, he goes, I am a Hebrew. He doesn't actually talk about his occupation and his mission.

He's like, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land. Just stop a second. They are being thrown back and forth in the sea.

[19:30] And you've got here a nationalist saying, I am a Hebrew. I fear the Lord who is in control of the very sea that is going to kill us. Can you see the hypocrisy?

Can you see the irony in this? Isn't this one of the biggest challenges that the world has when they look at Christians? Because you say you worship and you follow a God whom you completely trust, and yet you are riddled with fear.

You are holding on to every single little thing that you have. Our actions betray us. Our anxiety betrays us. Our fears betray us. You profess to believe.

I profess to believe in a God that is in control of everything, whose grace is sufficient for me, who will supply every single need of mine. Yet, the moment something happens, I'm like, ah!

God, will you really give me that? Will you really look after my family? Will you really do this? Don't you find that interesting? Isn't that the hypocrisy that people look at and go, well, you know what?

[20:35] You have the same worries as me. You have the same idols as me. You're fighting for the same things as me, and yet you profess to have a God that is in control of everything, who loves you dearly. If he loves you so dearly, why are you so worried?

If he loves you so dearly, why are you so worried? So you see here, Jonah is just, again, once again, exposing, exposing what we as Christians often have.

Now, they ask him, what have you done? Who are you? And then they ask him, and of course, they're outraged at this point, because they said, he said, verse 10, what is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord because he had told them, I am a Hebrew.

I fear the Lord who controls the whole heaven and earth, and I am trying to run away from him, and that is why you guys are going to die. Can you just imagine?

But again, often I think I say the same things, maybe not in those specific words, but my actions, my thoughts, my worries betray me. And so they look at him and they go, what have you done?

[21 : 33] You idiot. You're running away from the God who controls this whole sea, and now we're going to pay for it. So they ask him, what can we do? So they first ask him, what have you done?

And then they say, what can we do? And again, I don't see, now commentators here are saying, okay, he then offers an idea. He offers a suggestion. Pick me up and hurl me into the sea, because that will solve it, because he's just confessed that he's the cause of all of this.

And so commentators here are wondering, okay, well, did he have a change of heart? Did he suddenly repent and go, okay, well, actually, no, I really should start following God now. Or actually, is he almost just continuing down this path of just being resentful?

Tim Keller, in his book, The Prodigal Prophet, which has a lot of incredible ideas about this book, he says it's probably somewhere in the middle. As I look at this, I'm like, you know what? I don't think Jonah really still gets it.

I don't think he's truly repentant. He's looking at these people going, okay, well, these people are going to die. It's because of me. The solution really is that they're going to have to pick me up and hurl me off into the sea.

[22 : 40] The question is, why didn't he just jump off himself? If he knew he was the problem, why didn't he just jump off? He's like, guys, I'm sorry, man. That lot thing that you just did with those little pathetic little stones shows me, and you're right, it's me.

I'm running away from the one who you can't really want to run away from. My bad. I'm just going to go. You guys stay here. I'm just going to go to the back and jump off. No, he says, okay, pick me up and hurl me off the sea.

And I just have this image of just a defiant, defiant Jonah going, that's it. I would rather die than go to Nineveh. I would rather die than surrender my core identity, which is as a Hebrew, which is to hate the Assyrians.

I would rather die than trust in you, God. I would rather die and be hurled into the sea than go there willingly myself. For me, this passage here, this scripture seems to show that.

Because otherwise, why else would he say? So he puts it onto them. And interestingly, the sailors show that actually they are better human beings than even him. And they just say, okay, well, that's a bit of an awkward solution.

[23 : 49] We've just started getting to know you. Verse 13 says, nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

And these guys are like, okay, I know that might be the solution. We know that might. But you know what? We're not going to do that because that's a jerk move. We're going to try and get through this together. We're going to try and survive this together.

So we're going to row harder and harder. Now, what they didn't understand, of course, that this really was about Jonah and his God. And this really would have been stopped if they just won't want. If he could jump into the sea himself, that would be great.

So they would be innocent. But then, actually, that really was the problem. So they tried to do the very thing that often we try to do whenever we're in a storm, which is, you know what? We're in trouble. We're just going to try and row harder and harder and harder and harder to see if we can get back there ourselves and see if we can save everyone.

Unfortunately, that's a message, again, in the gospel that tells us you'll never be able to save yourself. The sea just gets more and more tempestuous. It just gets more and more violent.

[24 : 51] And the whole point is that you can't get back there yourself. However hard you try, however admirable your intentions are, you won't be able to get back there yourself.

Has anyone been in the ocean? And, I mean, who's a regular swimmer in the sea? I guess surfers often have to do some, right? Somewhat. Again, I'm still sat here, so the story ends well.

But I remember there was one moment. I think we were on our Young Life staff retreat in, where was it? And we took out the kayaks, and we're all grown adults, so I thought we'd be safe, and life jackets are for losers.

And then they're not for losers, by the way. They are not for losers. They are very important. I remember going out in the kayak with some of the colleagues that we had, and it was just a really nice time, and it's summer.

And then I was like, you know what? The shore is not that far away. Probably maybe that back window there. And I'm like, hey, it's so nice. I'm so hot. I'm just going to jump in. Guys, you guys carry on.

[25 : 53] I'm just going to meet you at the shore. And then I jump in, and then I just start swimming. And then a minute into it, I'm like, I'm still in the same place. In fact, the shore seems to be moving further and further.

And I'm just swimming. I'm like, okay, come on, come on, come on, come on. I mean, I'm not the greatest swimmer, but I got all the badges. I swam like 200 meters and 400 meters in the swimming pool. I had no waves, by the way. I'm completely ill-equipped for this.

And I'm just swimming, and it's just not moving. And then I was like, man, this is going to be a really sad way to go. Like, no one, no one. Of course, at that point, the staff have all just gone. They're just like, they're kayaking and elsewhere, and they're just all laughing.

And I'm like, this will be it. No one will even know. I mean, it'll take them half an hour. They'll only realize when no one's paying for the kayak. It's like, oh, where's the guy who's, oh, where's James? Nice.

So I'm just saying, oh, man. This is, of course, I had to take lots of breaks. I did make it back just about in the end. Actually, my brother and Alex have a really fun story that is on similar notes. Because my brother, feeling as though he was a very strong man, when he proposed to Alex, he said he would borrow our inflatable kayak from Decathlon, which has one or two holes in it.

[27 : 03] But they're only very small ones. So as long as you go fast, you're OK. And so he took his girlfriend at the time and his bearded dragon, because he thought that would be cool.

It's overcompensating. So then from there, he goes towards Round Island. So they set off Deepwater Bay, and they head towards Round Island, which isn't really that far.

OK, it's the same as me looking at the shore, granted. And of course, it took them a fair while to come back. How long did it take? The first 30 minutes when we did our travel.

Yeah. The first second now and after. So you're saying that when you did it on your own with me, it took 30 minutes. But without me, it took an hour and a half.

Just clarifying, that's what you're saying. So of course, I think it was Uday who was waiting for them at the shore. Was that you, Uday? Because you were tasked to kind of renew their parking, and you just had to keep going and going.

[28 : 00] All that to say, man, the ocean is quite something, and you'll never get to the shore yourself.

Despite how strong you think you are, we're all really just as weak as Joe when it comes to the gospel message. You cannot get there yourself.

It reminds me, when they asked Jonah, what must we do to be saved? It reminds me of Acts 2.37, when Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, preaches the gospel to them. Preaches the kerygma, which is, hey, we are sinners, but through Christ, we can be saved.

And they're cut to the heart, and they ask him, what must we do to be saved? And he says, repent. Repent, and you'll be forgiven. And that's all you have to do. It's not grow harder. It's not find a stronger partner.

It's not find a stronger church. It's just repent. Just flow. And there were moments as I was swimming back again, I was getting out of it. I was like, you know, I'm just going to rest here for a second and just let the waves just take me.

[29 : 07] But honestly, the gospel really is that we can't row back ourselves. What must happen, though, what has happened is that there was a sacrifice that was made.

And that's where the story continues. So you can imagine Jonah, completely reluctant, completely defiant, says, just pick me up. I don't know how they would have done it. It would have been a little bit awkward. Maybe he just like planked and say, just take me.

I would rather die than do what God says. And they take him. And then they say, God, please don't blame us for this. It's completely out of our control. This guy says it's his fault. We've tried everything we possibly could to save him and us.

And it hasn't worked. So then what do they say in verse 14? Oh, Lord, let us not perish for this man's life and lay not on us innocent blood. For you, oh, Lord, have done as it pleased you. God, you do whatever you need to do.

But may we be innocent in this. And they throw him overboard. The moment they throw him overboard and he splashes straight into the ocean, the seas come. Can you imagine being a sailor in that exact moment?

[30 : 13] They've been fighting this for maybe hours. And in that moment where they finally throw Jonah overboard, the sea completely stops.

Completely stills. I ask you, would you be filled with relief or terror in that moment?

The answer for me is probably a bit of both. One hand, it's kind of like, oh, my goodness. We can actually just stand still and not be rocked and not think about our wives and kids and all the people that we're going to lose because we're going to die.

And I would have imagined just going, you throw him overboard and you look, you see where he's gone and he's just plummeted straight down into the bottom of the ocean. So you can't see him pop back up.

And then you look up and then you realize it's actually stopped. The storm from the sky to the sea has actually stopped.

[31 : 17] At that moment, if I imagined myself being there, I would have been absolutely terrified. Why? Because I'll be like, guys, we are not alone.

Do you guys get what I'm getting at? They would have looked. They've tried everything. And yet all they did was this. And suddenly someone who must have been watching pressed pause.

The one who was in control of the land and the sea. I would have been absolutely terrified. And so were they. You look at what they say here. Verse 16.

Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. I would have totally done the same. Man.

This prophet that was sleeping, that was running away from this God. Who can, like, all our lives we've been worshipping all different kinds of gods to help us. Basically with our livelihood.

[32 : 22] If we worship this God, maybe he'll give us more fish. Maybe this God, God of fertility. All these things. All our lives we've been worshipping all these gods. But honestly, we haven't really seen any difference in our lives. We haven't actually seen something happen.

But now this guy running away from his God. And we hurl him into the sea. And suddenly, everything that was out of our control completely fizzles down and stops. I would be terrified.

I'd look over and I'll see, nope, Jonah's gone. The next thing I'd do, I'd just go straight onto my knees because that God is watching. And so they fear him exceedingly. They offer sacrifices and they make vows.

Interestingly, they do it all after the storm. You and your storms. Me and my storms. When we have problems, we go to God. Because we know he's there. Right? When things are going well, we're a little bit too busy.

We don't really need him. So we're just kind of like, God, you just stay back here. We'll confine you when things are wrong again. And these guys, after the storm, instead of just kind of going about their way, they're like, something has happened that has completely changed the way we think about what we do here.

[33 : 23] What our understanding of life is completely. And they make vows to him after the storm. Last time you prayed to God in the storm. Last time you prayed to God about something that was out of your control and then actually resolved itself.

Did you remember to go back to God afterwards? That will show you a little bit of your heart too.

That's how the storm shows the heart. It shows what our identity is. It shows, actually, it shows us whether we actually truly did trust in God or we're relying on God once the situation is over.

You see these guys, even though it's over, they're like, man, there's something about this. Now, there's no guarantee that they then just completely repented and left all the other idols and gods that they were chasing and just followed God.

So there's no saying of that. But I like to think, even if they did keep all their other Pokemon cards, they would have looked at this one and go, actually, I've got all these other cards and I don't quite know enough yet.

But man, this one, this card, this card is powerful. This card is to be feared. Exceedingly. And then, finally, we reach the main character of the show that you guys have been waiting for, which is the fish.

[34:37] But before the fish, I wanted to ask you a question about this. What's your understanding of the wrath of God? Tim Keller here says that, actually, the storm itself is an expression of the wrath of God.

The wrath that God had towards his rebellious prophet. The act where Jonah is thrown in and suddenly the sea calms is actually an old hymn in Christ Alone says towards the end.

The wrath of God is satisfied. As a sailor, he would have, they would have experienced that. They would have seen the anger of God in that storm. And they would have seen in one moment what we would sing many years later, the wrath of God is satisfied.

And this is where I'll stop. But I want to ask you about what your perception of the wrath of God is, because this is essentially what is happening in the storm. There is no way to escape this. God is angry at Jonah.

And so he creates a storm to wake him up that reveals his identity, reveals his idol. But here comes the biggest thing that a lot of people really struggle with, which is, man, this is one angry God.

[35:48] Do you have that? Isn't that the perception that you had? When I asked you last week, what is Jonah about? Oh, it's about the fish. It's about the great whale. And can't remember much else, apart from the fact that it's because if you disobey God, you'll end up in the ocean and you'll be swallowed by a big fish.

And we stop there. And then we look at, man, the Old Testament is brutal. The Old Testament doesn't quite make sense because it's not a God of gentleness and kindness and love.

It's a God of wrath. He's trying to drown his prophet. We actually can't ignore this because it's very important for us to understand what the wrath of God actually is.

The wrath of God actually is basically God treating sin incredibly seriously. There's a strain of Christianity now that's kind of saying, hey, it doesn't matter what you do.

It doesn't matter what you do. Live your life. You do you. There is grace. God will forgive you. He'll meet you exactly where you're at and you're good. He loves you no matter what. All those things are not false.

[36:52] God does love you unconditionally. Your grace, his grace for you, his mercy for you is always, always there. But if we ignore the wrath of God, which is when we rebel against him, what we're doing is sin.

And he takes sin extremely, extremely seriously. Those areas of Christianity that say, hey, it doesn't really matter about sin anymore because it's all about love. No. You see, the sin points to love.

The wrath of God is satisfied by the love of God. Tim Keller says this in his book. He says, to deny God's wrath upon sin not only robs us of a full view of God's holiness and justice, but also can diminish our wonder, love and praise of what it was that Jesus bore for us.

This act, this storm, this wrath is showing that God takes sin very, very seriously. Very, very seriously. Why? Because sin, us choosing our own way, ultimately leads to our own death.

If I see my children running into the street, running in front of a bus, you can bet I'm going to shout as loud as I can and it's going to sound so angry. Why? Because when they choose to run away from me and you know a bus is just about to come, man, you are going to shout.

[38:01] And you, that is the wrath of God coming out because he treats sin seriously, because that sin leads to death. We can't ignore that, that we are all children that have run away from him down a path that leads to destruction.

That is why he is so angry. But, but, in case that triggers all sorts of thoughts for you, the wrath of God is satisfied by the love of God.

Because what you see here is that instead of watching you die, he would rather throw his son into the ocean to catch you in front of that bus. We cannot not talk about the wrath of God because it's the wrath of God that points us to the love of God.

And you see here, even through this storm that he's using to wake Jonah up, to cause him to repent, to bring him back, whilst also saving a whole bunch of pagans.

Ultimately, what we see here is love. We need to understand that. When you have someone ask you, wait, what about the Old Testament? What about all this angry God stuff? Well, if you just read the Old Testament, if you just watched episode one and two, and you don't finish the finale, you won't know the ending of the story.

[39:14] You'll just see the beginning of it. You'll just see a parent in his love for his children, not wanting them to destroy themselves, not wanting them to hurt themselves, create boundaries and create things that will protect them.

But you see at the end of the finale, you realize that actually this parent realizes the only way to save these sheep, the only way to save these lost children, the only way to save these rebellious prophets is to actually throw your son into the storm.

So then you see the wrath of God is counted with the love of God. And that's how the wrath of God is satisfied. Let us remember that. Let us have that same fear that the sailors had.

Okay, man, this God is something else. Let us fear him exceedingly. Let us worship him. I'll finish with this. Of course, the fish is there.

But I also said last week, let's not get distracted by the fish. But apart from the fact, it says, verse 17, and the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. I can see this is how episode two finishes.

[40:18] So Jonah says you've got the sailors who are completely starting. Now the sailors have learned their lesson. They are finished. And you're not going to see them again in episode three or the rest of the series. And then I can imagine the episode finishes with just Jonah's body just floating in the ocean, in the deep, dark ocean.

And then you see the fish come out, just waddling along, swimming along, and opens its mouth and just swallows Jonah. And, of course, all I really think of that, and there's nothing much more deep theologically here for me right now, but it's just that God controls the fish.

He appoints the fish. The fish doesn't come just accidentally because he's looking for food. God, the creator of heaven and earth, the one whose voice started this whole thing off, the one who does whatever he wants to do, appoints a fish to go and save Jonah.

So whilst the sailors have learned their lesson and they graduate and they move on, Jonah's story continues. And what we have reached is really just the halfway point nearly. And next week we look at actually what Jonah learns from this whilst being in the belly of the fish for the next three days. But for now, would we take heed of what the lesson that is being taught here? Have a think, even right now, and we're using the DBS questions here. As we've just looked through chapter one, what's God trying to tell you about him?

[41:41] That's what I've been thinking about. As I mull over the whole of chapter one, I'm looking, God, what is it about you that you're trying to show me here? Have a think for yourself.

I'm going to use a few minutes now. There's two things I want you to think about. One, what is God trying to show you about him in this first chapter? All the way up to this fish point. And the second is, what is God trying to tell you about you?

Are you the Jonah? Are you the pagan sailor who's trying everything, crying out to all the different gods, rowing as hard as you can, and not understanding the gospel that you can't get there yourself, that you need grace, that we all just need grace?

What are you? What's God trying to say to you? I'm going to invite Alex and the team back up here to just lead us in a time of reflection. But I want us just to start with asking that question for ourselves.

And we won't need you to share with the people around. But I truly believe the Lord has been speaking to me through this book. And I hope he's speaking to you. I know he's speaking to you.

[42:42] The truth is, it's whether we're actually listening or not. Can I invite you just now just to spend a few moments with me? Whether it's to close your eyes or just open up your hands. As Alex said earlier, we're here to worship him not just through song, not just in our minds, but in our souls, in our body, in every part of our being.

Thank you.