**Jonah - Running with God**

**(Jonah 3)**

***Pastor Mike Ngui***

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened. (Jonah 3)

# Introduction

## Image result for port of the old city of akko jonah

## Pastor Mike was driving one day. The roads were empty, he decided to turn into a No Entry sign. He was stopped by the police but was pardoned. Second chances are always welcomed.

Jonah was given a second chance. When God asked Jonah to go, he said no. Jonah went all the way to Tarsus. He was willing to be thrown into a watery grave rather than to obey God. God gave Jonah a second chance while he was inside the big fish. God offers second chances but you have to accept second chances on God’s terms. When Jonah submits, God transmits his instruction to the fish, the fish vomits.

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. (Jonah 3:1-3)

There are four chapters in the book of Jonah.

Jonah 1 – 4

Running from God (Jonah 1)

Running to God (Jonah 2)

Running with God (Jonah 3)

Running ahead of God (Jonah 4)



**BIG IDEA**: God offers second chances. But you have to accept it on His terms.

# Jonah Returns (Jonah 3:1-3)

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. (Jonah 3:1-3)

After Jonah’s colossal failure God pursues him and gives him a second chance in life. Failure and disaster in life can be due to our wilfulness or neglect. We can backslide from God. Failures make us hang our heads in shame and bow our heads in guilt. Jonah failed in his relationship with God and in his mission. How God responded to Jonah is how God responds to us. God does not give up on us. Bigoted to think that only he deserves God. Are we like that too? Many of us need to repent of this.

We have failed in marriage, mission, integrity and ministry. When we fail, God offers us a return route. God pursues in our failing to redeem our life and mission to God.

God gave second chances to :

Peter : He denied Jesus 3 times

Saul: He was persecuting Christians. God gave him a second chance to be a disciple.

Mark: Mark did not follow Paul in his missionary Journeys and stayed back. Many years later, Paul wrote in his letters recommending Mark to the church.

David: God forgave David when he sinned with Bathsheba and killed Uriah.

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some f you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Whatever we have done, there is a U turn coming up. God offers you to return. Will you accept his terms.

A second chance only works if you accept it.

The USA was at a time where people were fighting for human rights and against the death penalty. George Wilson robbed a train and was sentenced to death. The then council was rallying to President Andrew Jackson to pardon him. When he agreed, George Wilson refused.

The Chief Justice handed down the court's decision: "The value of a pardon must be determined by the receiver of the pardon. It has no value apart from that which the receiver gives to it. George Wilson has refused to accept the pardon. We cannot conceive why he would do so, but he has. Therefore, George Wilson must die."

You can only receive a second chance when you accept it, submit and obey His will. God’s return policy is to submit and obey.

# Nineveh repents

Jonah realise that he’s weak and he’s not in control. Some of us needs to be in the belly of a fish in order to cry out to God.

The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” (Jonah 3:5-9)

The people of Nineveh had 40 days to repent. If they started running away, God would have destroyed the city and they would have survived. In 40 days, they could get really far away.

They believed the message and beyond that, they believed God. Although they were pagans, they believed Yahweh would be compassionate enough to spare them. They recognised the seriousness and took on sackcloth to mourn, prayed and changed their ways. They were serious about their repentance and reformed their actions.

Just because there is no cars at the red light does not mean that you can break the law. Pornography starts with you justifying “It is only online”, “ It is not real”. Before you know it, you will be obsessive and even practice having real sex because you are not hurting anyone and have mutual consent. In business, you start rounding up small figures and they get approved. In time, you adjust bigger amounts and they get approved anyway.

Confession without repentance is delusion. A man once was crying in church, “Lord, remove the cobwebs” The pastor added “Lord, help him kill the spider”. The cobwebs will disappear when you kill the spider.

God is a God of second chances. When you submit to God, there is a change inward. When you obey, there is an outward change. When you repent, God will move.

# God Relents (Jonah 3:10)

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened. (Jonah 3:10)

When God saw how the people of Nineveh fasted and prayed wearing sackcloth and ashes. When you think of it, it is amazing that a pagan city had a national revival because of the words of a reluctant prophet who almost went to the other side of the city. God spared their city from destruction.

God sent Jesus to save us.

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. (John 1:4)

Even if we think we are beyond redemption or forgiveness or beyond the reach of God’s love/compassion, everything in the book of Jonah shows a God who is compassionate and offers numerous chances to sinners. He sent Jesus into the world to save sinners because He loves us. God is not a reluctant but willing compassionate God. It is said that God will pardon a sinner faster than a mother snatching her child in the fire.

Sermon summary contributed by Abbey Thangiah