

Well, if you've got a Bible, why don't you turn it to Jonah. That is where we're going to be this morning. If you don't have a bible, there should be a black one in front of you and that is yours to take if you don't have a bible at all. That is our gift to you, but if you do have a bible leave that here for somebody that doesn't. And I think in that black bible, the pew bible, it's on page 771. And if I'm wrong, there's no shame looking at the table of contents. I know not a lot of you don't spend a lot of time in Jonah. So 771 is what page I think it's on.

While you're flipping there, let me kind of tell you what's happening around The Village. Our lead teaching pastor, Matt Chandler, who is usually the one who teaches on Sunday mornings. If you haven't been here before, we have a video and we do video sermons here and so Matt is usually here teaching. We're going through the book of Luke together. The elders have asked him to leave the church for five weeks to go on sabbatical and get some rest. He's been going hard for five years and so the elders didn't really ask, they kind of just said hey, would you get out of here and go rest, go spend time with your family, go seek the Lord, wait on the Lord. Nothing's happened, he's just going to rest and so that just leaves you and I together for the next five weeks. And so what I thought what I would do is, rather than doing some random stuff, we'd just go through a book of the Bible. And so we're going to go through the book of Jonah. And I'll tell you more here in a minute why we chose to go through that book but this week we'll be in Jonah one. Next week, we're going to have our celebration services. If you've never been to a celebration service here at The Village, you need to be here next week because it is in-credible by far, in a way the favorite service of mine and many others that we do each quarter. And then the weeks after that, we'll do Jonah two, three, and then finish out with four. But that's where we're gonna be.

If you're in Jonah one why don't you look with me. Let's read just chapter one together and then I'll pray and then we'll chat a little bit about what's going on through Jonah's life that I sense that the Lord wants us to hear and see as well.

Jonah one starting in verse one says, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.' But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. 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. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, 'What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we might not perish.' 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 am 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 we was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. Then they said to him, '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 they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, 'O LORD, let us not perish

for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.' So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows."

Father, we pray this morning as we worship through reading Your word, that You would give us by Your holy spirit eyes to see and ears to hear what's happening in this story. And not just what's happening for Jonah, and not just what was happening for these men over 2,000 years ago, but what's happening and how it relates in our lives and how You still want to speak to us by Your Holy Spirit about our lives. Would You help us? I confess in front of my friends and in front of our church family this morning, that there are not enough wise or persuasive words to change hearts. Nothing I will say today without Your Spirit doing it will cause us to repent, will cause us to run to You, will cause us to see you and want you, even as we have sung more than we want everything else. And so, help us this morning. Help us pay attention. Help us listen well and help us respond as You want us to respond. In Jesus we pray, Amen.

Well, let me just tell you, let me just give you a little insight into my pastoral mind about why Jonah. Why Jonah for the next five weeks? I could pick anything to go through with you while Matt's out, but the reason that I picked Jonah, there's actually three really really big reasons, OK? Here they are:

Number one is that I feel like, in this story of Jonah, there is a concrete example of sin and grace. And here's what I mean by that: I know a lot of us have been in church a while, a lot of us are around religion, a lot of us hear the word sin, a lot of us hear the words grace. And if we're not careful, it can kind of become somewhat of an ambiguous idea, these words. Sin, what really is sin? And grace, what really is grace? And if you don't know what sin and grace is, you can't really have a concrete idea of what the Gospel is because part of the Gospel, the news of Jesus Christ is sin and grace. And so, in the story of Jonah you have concrete examples of sin and grace. And I think that's good for us to see. And what I mean by concrete examples is, even this morning, the example of sin being Jonah running away from God – sin. And the concrete example of grace, God, a sovereign merciful God, despite Jonah's sin, chasing Jonah – that's grace. And that's the first reason into my pastoral heart. And so if you are wondering the next four or five weeks, OK, really? Why Jonah? Why are we reading this biography? It's kind of a minor prophet and it's kind of an obscure book in the bible. Why are we reading it? Because I think in it, the Gospel is painted in such a clear, concrete way that even if you aren't listening you have to try hard to try to miss it. You really have to try to miss what's going on – that Jonah is blatantly sinning and running from God and God is blatantly offering and pouring out His grace out on Jonah, despite his sin. And in that, you see the Gospel very clearly.

The second reason that I wanted to go through this is because I think most of us, if not all of us in this room can relate to Jonah. Let me tell you what I mean by that: Jonah here is a very religious man who grew up in a very religious culture. And you and I, whether we know it or not, are religious people who live in a very religious city. And I don't mean that Denton is religious in the way that Highland Village is religious where there's a lot of evangelical churches around. There is that but even more so, a block that way, you have a Mormon church, a block that way you have a Unitarian church, three blocks that way, a half a mile that way you have a Buddhist gathering. You have everything under the sun a block that way on U.N.T.. And Denton is a very very religious city. Religion is everywhere. And you and I are very very religious people but what religious, you can do religious things, you can be a religious person who lives in a religious environment and never have your heart transformed by the Gospel. Religion and Gospel, I want to make a stark contrast in the coming weeks of what that looks like. And so that's the second reason.

The third reason why I want to go through Jonah is because woven in throughout this story, what you're going to see is God's love for a city. And if you're new here at the Denton campus or maybe this is even your first time here, we are very very aware, we being the staff, the church, the Village church, we're very aware that God has placed us where we

are in the city of Denton which, if you don't know, is the ninth fastest growing city in the nation. We have, a block away, a campus of 35,000 students, a mile and a half away, another campus of 15,000 students. So within two miles, we have 50,000 college students who, by the way, let me tell you why college is such a strategic place, because from colleges scatter everywhere into the world those who will influence this world. And a mile and a half away, we're right down the street from downtown. The neighborhood we're in is one of the most urbanized and continuing to be urbanized neighborhoods in the city, if not the most. And so we're very very aware and believe that God put us in this city for a reason. And the reason is because God loves the city of Denton. And because God loves the city of Denton and the people of Denton even though they may not love Him or care about Him, God loves the city, and so we as God's people, love our city too. And throughout the book of Jonah, you will see God desiring a city of people to worship Him. A city of people that don't care about Him, don't want to worship him. He want them, he loves them and he wants to send his people into the midst of that city as He has us so that city can be loved and hear the saving grace and gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so those are really the three pastoral reasons why I chose this book. And so if you are kind of between your devotional studies; you don't really necessarily have a book that you are reading through right now in the Bible, or maybe you have haven't read the Bible and you don't know where to start, Why don't you for the next month, just start reading through Jonah? Just start reading through Jonah. It's a short book, read it, reread it, reread it and look for those three things. Look for sin and grace. Look for the Gospel. Look for a religious man who God is beckoning to have his heart transformed by the Gospel and look for God's love for the city of Nineveh, the great city that it talks about, OK?

So let's just do this: Let's jump right in. I'm gonna try to unpack it as best as I can for ya. Give me grace. Here we go, Jonah one starting in verse one, this is what it says, Now the word of the Lord... So God's speaking. The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai. Now let's stop there for a second and let me try to, as best I can, give you a description, a biography of Jonah. He's kind of an obscure figure in the Bible. There's not much said about Jonah. I mean obviously there's a whole book about him but other than that it really doesn't talk about where he's born. It really doesn't talk about where his life was up until this point, but if you want to look a little bit more about his biography you can look in second Kings fourteen. And from second Kings fourteen here's what we know about Jonah: Jonah is a prophet of God. And so a prophet is one who has the privilege and the calling of hearing from the Holy Spirit. And so that was the word of the Lord coming to Jonah. He's a prophet of God, and not only a prophet of God, one of the leading prophets of God in Israel. And so Jonah in Israel, as a religious figure is a kind of a big deal. This is what we know just from a few passages of Scripture. We know that Jonah is a big deal and he is a prophet to his people at a time when they really really really need to hear from the LORD. And so he's known as a prophet, and to be known as a prophet, listen, you have to not just prophesy but your prophetic words actually have to come true. So if you God and he really communicates it, and it really happens. And so people in and around Jonah respect him. He's a man of respect, he's a man of extreme spiritual and religious leadership in the environments that he's around. Now legend says, and this is legend, this is Hebrew legend, if you want to look in first Kings seventeen, Jonah is coming on the coat tails of two of the most famous popular prophets in the Bible, Elijah and Elisha. He came right after them. And what legend says is that there's a story in first Kings that talks about that there was a widow in Zarephath. And her son died. And one of the prophets came and rose her son from the dead. And the legend goes that that son of the widow was Jonah. And so from that relationship, Jonah went into the prophets school and was trained by these great prophets. Now, that's just conjecture; it's a fun, little story. Thought you'd be interested, but the idea is that Jonah was called out from a very early age, he's a very religious man, a very powerful man, a man who has great, great influence among all those he's around.

And so that's what we know of Jonah – this is who the word of the Lord came to. It says, The word of the Lord came to Jonah. And this is what the word of the Lord said: Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me. And this is a remarkable statement, and I'll try to unpack why: Nineveh, in the time of Jonah,

was about 550 miles east of where Jonah was living. And Nineveh was known as the biggest, baddest, cruelest city on the face of the earth at that time. Right about where Iran and Iraq is today, that's where Nineveh was. And let me just give you some of the specs of the city so that you can have in your mind what God just asked Jonah to do. This is from the history books what it says about Nineveh. Nineveh was about sixty miles in circumference. OK, and I know for you and I are going, Well, that's not that big. I mean, think about Dallas. The airport in Dallas, DFW airport has more land than New York city. Some of you are like, well, sixty miles... Listen, back then, that's a huge deal. And not only that, those sixty miles around, there were walls that were a hundred feet high. And not only that, those walls were high and so wide that three chariots could fit on top of the wall. You can run around the wall. I got something in my throat – that was awkward. Umm, run around the wall, simultaneously. So it's high, it's wide, and then there's 1500 towers around the walls. And those towers are 200 feet each. It took, let me give you the numbers on this because I'll defiantly misquote these. In building the city, there were no less than 140,000 men for eight years – a myriad being 10,000, the number of men working on the city, must have been 1,400,000 people to build the city. And some believe the city itself, at the time of Jonah, had close to 2,000,000 people in it. I mean, this is a massive city. And not only massive, but a massive city known for its brutality to its enemies. One of the executions that was invented by the Ninevites was this: They were out in the desert, obviously, and they would get those that they have captured and they would take them and they would bury them alive up to their neck and leave them in the sun to die. So they would actually from heat go crazy before they passed away. This was wicked, brutal, massive in intimidating and God just said to his prophet, I want you to go to Nineveh and tell them to repent. I mean, could you imagine? Could you imagine being asked during the height of World War II in Nazi Germany's power, to go into Berlin, knock on mister Hitler's door and tell him that he needs to quit sinning. That's what just happened. Or, at the height of the cold war, at the height of the Soviet power, to go into Red Square, get up in the middle of town and say, You guys need to repent; you're not doing God's will. Or even today. Like going into Iran and getting amongst the leaders and saying, Uh, stop building nuclear weapons even though you say that you're not, stop building them. I mean, this is just what God asked Jonah to do.

Let's be clear about this: What he just asked Jonah to do was irrational if not crazy. If not crazy, and so look how Jonah responds in verse three: But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish... And as far as he can go. So he not only says, Uh, not a good idea, God, it's Uh, that's not a good idea; I'm getting out of here fast, as far away as I can go. And so Jonah, it says, rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Now, at first glance, your going, Absolutely, he did. I'm not going to Nineveh; I'm going to Tarshish too. I'm on that train with him. But here's the deal, here's what's surprising about this: What's surprising is not that Jonah ran, what's surprising is the reason that he ran. Because the reason that he ran in Jonah four, which we're about to read is gonna tell us is not because he was, A, afraid of his life or B, didn't think that God could cause the whole city on Nineveh to repent. Remember, this guy's a prophet. He's seen God do some miraculous things. And if he was risen himself from the dead, that's not a struggle of faith for him. That is, for us Westerners, but not for Jonah. That wasn't why he left. Listen to why he left. Look over to chapter four with me starting in verse one: And we'll talk about this later on but God has just caused the whole city to repent. And so if you were hoping that this was going to be like a surprise, and we were going to build up, the repented. And Jonah, after the people of Nineveh repented, listen to his response. And we'll dive into this a little bit deeper in the weeks to come but it says in chapter four, verse one, But it displeased Jonah exceedingly and he was angry that they repented and came to the Lord. And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was yet in my country? And that is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish;" This is why I left. "for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." Hear what he just said? He just said, the reason that I got up and left was not just because I was afraid and not because I didn't think that God could cause them to repent, but because He would cause them to repent and I didn't want them to. The reason I got in a boat to go to Tarshish is because I am a self-righteous, racist bigot, even though I am a prophet of God. What!

And so you can, as a preacher, you can go a lot of different places from here, but here's where my mind went just reading through this story: Why in the world, if God is all-powerful and all-knowing and sovereign over the universe, which He absolutely is and we believe here he absolutely is, knows everything, knows the future, He knows everything. If God is that God, why in the world would He ask a man, who He knew hated these people, He knew was a self-righteous racist bigot, to go and to proclaim and tell them to repent? Why would He do that? And I've thought about this, I've chewed on this, I've sat in Jupiter House and gone, What in the world's going on here? And here's what I think: I think God asked Jonah to do this because He knew that Jonah was a bigot. Not despite it. I think He asked him to do that because He knew how Jonah's heart would respond, and what He wanted to do in His prophet was inform him that though you act religious, though you look religious, though you do religious things, your heart has not been transformed by My grace like it should be. And I'm going to reveal that to you by asking you to do something. It's absolutely the love of God that caused God to say this to Jonah. And so you're going, OK, really? That's love? Why is that love? Because up until this point remember, Jonah is respected. He's religious. He's got his act together. He hears God. He really hears God. Not kind of like you and I think that we hear God and we have to wait and see if it's true, and sometimes it is. But he hears God in a real, big way. And when he says things, they happen. How easy do you think it would be for Jonah to walk around and find his identity in that? How easy do you think it would be for him to just coast, do these religious things, know he's religious? OK, really easy, How unloving would it be for God to let Jonah walk in his religion and walk in his religious activities and never truly experience His grace in a way that transforms him to love a city that's unlike him? How unloving of God would it be to allow him to continue to walk in that facade that I've got it, I'm religious, I do what I need to do, I've got it all together. How unloving of God would it be? It would be completely unloving. And let me just, my teacher Sinclair Ferguson says this, "It would be unloving of God to for him to allow Jonah to continue to lives for God is not a guarantee, of the closeness of our lives to His will. So in other words for God to go, that Jonah's life is fruitful, that he prophecies, that it happens, and for God to go, that's it, you're good to let him believe that because there's fruit from his life, that he's in accordance and in alignment with God's will. For Him to allow Jonah to continue to walk in that until he would die would be so unmerciful of God. Or John Calvin would put it like this:

"Though one may excel in heroic virtues, yet all his virtues are mere fumes, which shine before the eyes of men, except the object be to obey God. The call of God then, as I have said, holds the first place..." Obedience holds the first place. "...as to the conduct of men; and unless we lay this foundation, we do like him who would build a house in the air." How unmerciful of God to continue to let Jonah build a house in the air and think it was on sure foundation? And let me tell you why this is good news for you and me. Because every single one of us is self-righteous just like Jonah. Some of you are going, Well hey, wait a minute. I don't know you, first of all. So that's awkward. Second of all, I'm not racist, I'm not a bigot. Well maybe you're not but maybe you're self-righteous about not being racist and not being a bigot. Or maybe you're self-righteous about not being like Jonah in the sense that you have had your heart transformed by the Gospel and so you know it's not about religious activity, you know it's not just about religion, you know that you're not building your house in the the air and so you're self-righteous about that. Every single one of us are self-righteous in here. And not just that, let me just tell you why that's so deadly: Because it's not just that we are self-righteous but we have a tendency and a proclivity to build our complete identity on what we're self-righteous about. So for Jonah, he wasn't just self-righteous about being a religious man, the one who knew the true God, the one who understood it. He had a proclivity; his self-righteousness led him to build his entire security and find his complete identity in being that guy. That make sense?

So let me tell you how it plays out so subtly in our lives. For me my father, when he was thirteen or fourteen, on his thirteenth or fourteenth birthday, I can't ever remember which, his father passed away from cancer. On his birthday. And so from that, my dad, the father figures and the men that raised my dad were two coaches. One of which was the all-time, is the all time winningest high school baseball coach in the history in the United States of America. And so what was woven into the fabric of my family ethic was work. We work hard. We're disciplined – this is what we do, OK? My dad,

this is how he was raised, this is how he thought. And so my dad did a phenomenal job at raising us. And the Hughes boys may have been a lot of things, alright? And we were. We were a lot of things but one thing that we were defiantly going to be was hard workers. We were going to be hard workers and I grew up with this ethic and it infused and impacted every single arena and sphere in my life. I worked hard no matter what I did, whether it was school, whether it was sports, whether it was being a friend, I was a hard worker.

And so about a year ago, a year ago last Sunday actually, Kimberly and I get married. And Kimberly was not raised by the all time winningest baseball coach in the history of the United States of America, okay? Which is a good thing, by the way. And Kimberly and I get married and right off the bat, though I didn't know it, I had built my entire identity on how hard I worked and how much I earned stuff. And Kimberly didn't grow up in that kind of environment. My wife is not a lazy woman at all. Not a lazy woman at all but because my identity was so wrapped up in working hard, when my wife was transitioning out of college and for the first time was working forty hours a week. Up until that point she had worked part time and she had gone to school and paid off part of her school. And so she's transitioning and working forty hours a week and it's a difficult transition. Man, that transition from just working twenty hours and doing school to forty hours – that is a hard transition. And you know what? I didn't have any mercy for her. Why? Because I rooted in that, in order to make myself feel better, I've got to compare myself to her and put her down so I can put myself up. And my self-righteousness my entire life had been rooted in how hard I worked. And let me tell you why that is so cancerous: because there is nothing more contrary to the Gospel that you work hard to earn it.

And that's my self-righteous, what are you self-righteous about, I wonder? Because you are self-righteous about something – even if it's about you not being self-righteous. What is it that you have a tendency to build your entire identity around? And because you do, not only that you have to work for that, think about that, let it be an idol in your life, but you have to put others down that aren't as good as you with that. Or don't have as much as you with that. Or don't understand that like you do. My prayer this morning is that the Lord would be merciful to rip away whatever we're hiding behind, whatever we're putting our identity in. And let me tell ya; I'm trusting He's gonna do that. And you're going to respond of one of two ways this morning if you're honest with yourself. Every single one of us. You're either going to repent. You're going to repent and say you're right, that's sin, that's idolatry, that's pride, I build my identity on this and not Jesus. I build my identity in being thought of like this and not Jesus.

You're either going to repent or you're going to do what Jonah did when his self-righteousness was exposed. You're going to flee as far away as you can. You're going to flee as far away as you can and listen to why that's not good. Pick it back up with me in chapter one, verse three: "But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." So God reveals that your identity is not in me; your identity is in what you do and being religious and he runs as far away as he can. And "He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD." And let me just give you a quick, little lesson here: There's always going to be a ship leaving to go to Tarshish. If you want to run away from the Lord there's always going to be a ship waiting for you. And just as your pastor I get real nervous about some of you when you come in to talk to me. The way that you hear God is by open doors. Well, God just opened the door. So did God just open the door on the ship to Tarshish? Well, I mean in His Sovereignty, I guess so but did that mean that he was being obedient, then he walked through that opened door? No, he was blatantly sinning. And so if you're basing hearing the Lord on how many open doors that you're able to walk through, that's a dangerous, dangerous, dangerous thing to do.

Let me just say that. That there will always be a ship going to Tarshish, and hear me, the ready way is not always the right way. Let me tell you; you girls that are lonely there will always be a boy to fill that gap – he will always be waiting. You men that like to fantasize on your thoughts? There will always be a computer ready; there will always be a way around the Covenant Eyes. There will always be a way around accountability; it will always be there. It's not as if you have this

moment and you run away from the Lord and you just hope that it's not going to be there. It will be there, you need to know that. It will always be there. And one of the most profound things that you can know about yourself is how you specifically and uniquely run away from the Lord. What do you do when you run? Where do you go cause it's going to be ready and waiting. Even today, you can come in here, you can repent, you can hear from the Lord, you can want to run away and you can walk out the door and that phone is going to be there to call that person that's going to be there, right?

I mean that person that's always going to tell you about your marriage, that it's your spouse's fault, you'll always find them. That's why I think the most ridiculous thing that me and Kimberly can do as a young couple is go get around a bunch of other young couples and ask them what your wife no matter what she does. I can always go and find the guy that will tell me that it's her fault and that she's a bad girl, I can find that. They're always there.

And Jonah goes down, and guess what? Guess what just happens to be waiting at the dock? Oh, a ship to where I want to go to flee from the Lord. And he's right on time, and he gets in the ship, pays the fare and he goes and then in verse four, here's where we shift. So up unto this point we've seen a concrete example of sin where you and I live daily – running away from the Lord. Hearing from the Lord, running away from the Lord, doing it our way, thinking our way is better than His way and in verse four through the rest of the story that we're going to read this morning you're going to see a concrete example of God's love and His mercy in chasing sinners even though they want nothing to do with him at that moment. Verse four, let's read. "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 I've heard this preached on, man and people say see what the wrath of God does? This is what the wrath of God does: He's gonna send a storm and He's gonna... Listen, this is not God's wrath for Him to send a storm on the ship; this is His mercy. You want to see God's wrath, you look for the man that gets on the boat to get away from the Lord and the Lord does nothing. And he let's him go to Tarshish – that's wrath. In God's mercy He sends a storm to the boat that Jonah is on. Verse five: "Then the mariners..."

And I latterly just found out what the word mariner meant about five years ago. I was living in Portland and I went up to Seattle and I was like, Mariner? What's a Seattle Mariner? I don't even know what that... Like any of you used that word in a conversation this week? So anyway, I ran into some mariners the other day and uh, good times, good times. I just love that the bible uses that word here; I'm sorry, I'm a dork.

But the mariners, it says, "were afraid." OK. This is such a wicked, bad storm that theses hard-ened fishermen, and if you don't know much about men, when we get in groups we don't tend to get afraid and let each other know that we're afraid. Theses hardened fishermen who are used to storms started to get afraid and not only that, "...each cried out to his god." So these guys are pagans. "to his god. And they [started hurling] the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it." So, not only are they just kind of nervous and they're kind of scared; I mean theses guys absolutely freak out because this storm's so bad and they start hurling the cargo of the ship. I mean God just kind of, it doesn't start raining, it's not even just sideways rain, He sends a massive storm in His mercy to Jonah. And to them, as we're going to find out. So the mariners were afraid; they start throwing stuff off the ship but Jonah, it says, "had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep." And I was kind of, this morning, in the night I was like, Seriously, how did he go asleep? I'd have trouble going to sleep. And this little girl came up to me afterward and said, "I'll tell you why he went to sleep. Because when I'm running away from God and I'm intentionally sinning I don't want to think about it and so the first place I run is sleep." I thought that was profound, that he is so intentionally trying to get away from the voice of the Lord, the Spirit of God. And not only does he get on a ship and go away he just goes to sleep. Just let me go to sleep so I can not think about it. And let me tell you, that's been part of my place I run. That's not good. Maybe you sleep because you love you some naps and I love me some naps too but maybe you sleep because you're running from some-thing and running from something In a big, big way.

So Jonah is downstairs asleep. The storm's coming, verse six, "So the captain came and said to him, What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish. And they said to one another, Come, let us cast lots, that him out, they cast lots, you're busted. I mean, can you imagine Jonah? You know that feeling, just busted. It's like the time I went to the fireworks stand after my parents told me not to; I rode my bike. Said, "You'd better not go to that fireworks stand." And then we go out there, my brother and I, and we come back. Apparently there was someone there from the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal who thought it would be a good idea to our picture on the front page. And so we wake up the next morning and my dad was like Hey, how's the fireworks? And I was like, What are you talking about? He's like this. Busted. Jonah's busted. And we laugh but again, this is the mercy of God. I pray for God to bust you. Those of you that are having premarital sex, I hope that you get busted. And I'm not saying that I hope that bad things happen to you but I hope that God in his mercy busts you when you're running, bust you when you lie, bust you in your sin. He's merciful to bust us when we get on the road that's running away from him.

So they cast lots; it falls on Jonah, and listen to these men: "'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 am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.'" And what's interesting about this, he answers every single one of their questions except the first one, what's your occupation? The very thing that he had put his identity in, he was ashamed to answer him now. He was ashamed to say that "I am a prophet of God." I am a Hebrew, I worship the Lord. I'm not going to tell you what I do. Because up until this point he had put everything in, and he's so ashamed that it's been ripped away from him. And now he can't even utter what he had put his identity in. And not only does he just feel shame, it gets worse than that. It says, verse ten, "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 him, '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" OK, his shame just went from shame to outright depression. Kill me. I mean I'd be going, Well, let's throw more stuff in, guys. What are you doing? Keep rowing; let me help you row. And Jonah goes, nope. Busted, I'm ashamed, throw me in, just kill me, just kill me. Well, that's what happens when you so put your identity in something other than the Lord, Jesus Christ. When it's ripped away, if you're not careful and you keep running, you're going to go to a really really dark place.

And if you're there this morning, let me just tell you: There's help for you. I've been there. I've struggled with depression my entire life. I've been on medication my entire life. There's help for you. You don't have to just throw me into the sea attitude. There's help for you, there's recovery for you, there's groups here for you, there's people here that want to talk with you about that. Jonah said, Just throw me in, just throw me in, "Then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." And so the weight of his sin is starting to settle in. "Nevertheless" Listen to this, "the men rowed hard" which literally in the Hebrew means the men dug in their oars. And what a great picture of when you're stuck in your sin, these men tried to get out and though they dug in even harder to get back to the dry land, "they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore" And listen to this shift that though Jonah is sinning against God, God is using Jonah, even in his sin, to save other sinners. It's phenomenal. These mariners start going, Oh, it's you. It's your god. This is a real god, OK. "Therefore they called out to the LORD, O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.' So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging." And then the men feared the Lord. These brothers just got saved.

Because He does what pleases. And this is not an excuse for Jonah to sin and go, well, see, the Lord used it for good. Yeah, He could have done it without you sinning though. But even in your sin, He used you and He saved other sinners. "Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows." And don't miss the irony here. Please don't miss the irony here, that the very thing that Jonah was trying to avoid by running from the



Lord, running and doing it his own way, the very thing he was trying to avoid, preaching the Gospel to lost pagans, i.e. Ninevites, i.e. the mariners, running from discomfort even death. The very things he was trying to avoid in running from God and doing his own way is exactly where it led him. Hmm, so ironic.

Why don't you do this for me. We're done. You can close your bible and put it under your chair. I'm just going to chat with you for a few more moments leading into the Lord's Supper. Get comfortable. If you got your arm around your girl, maybe take it off from around her. If you got your hand around somebody else's girl, defiantly take it off from around her.

Three things. One's corporate and the other two are individual. Let me take a sip of this so my throat doesn't do what it did about thirty minutes ago. It was real awkward. Three things.

Number one, corporate: How are we going to continue to respond to the city that God had put us around? And I am going to continue to ask this. I'm going to continue to ask myself this: How are we going to respond to the calling of God for us to be good neighbors, a city of God's people within the city of Denton that loves the city. Even though they don't agree with us, even though they don't think like us, even though they don't do anything for us, that we love them and we're the best neighbors that this city knows about. Are we going to continue to respond like you have? And you have done a phenomenal job. Transform last week, those of you who showed up, overwhelmingly one of the humbling moments I've ever experienced in ministry. To be able to stand with the principle Calhoun and to see bleachers full of you. But out of this text how are we going to respond? Are we going to grow self-righteous towards our city? We're going to grow self-righteous corporately. And some of you may be there. Some of you may be, yeah I mean I get that what's we do, I just really kind of like the preaching here. I don't really care about the city, I don't really care about... In fact, I don't want to go to my neighbor's. I don't even like my neighbor. His grass is long. He's got flamingos in his yard. I just don't like that guy. I'm just not going to love him well. How are we corporately going to continue to respond to God's call to love our city?