

Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual
Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

August 27, 2023

Day 1: Jonah 3:1-2

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, 'Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.'

It is nice to have a second chance. Notice how God does not change the command to go, He just says it again. We, like Jonah, are to tell God's message, not what we might dream up. Jonah had to go to Nineveh, to people that he did not like; nor did Jonah think they deserved to be saved. Some commentators have wondered if Jonah's refusal to go to Nineveh was because of Jonah's prejudice against those who were, in his mind, foreigners.

Question: How often did Jesus instruct us to forgive?

Challenge: Think of a person or group that you do not think are worthy to be saved. What would you have to do to talk to them?

Scripture: Romans 10

Day 2: Jonah 3:3

So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across.

Jonah had time to formulate his message as he walked to Nineveh. Nineveh was a large town if it took three days to walk across it. Perhaps Jonah had to go through an experience of total dependence on God before he could take such a journey. To get to Nineveh he had to go through hostile territory and when he saw the city it must have been overwhelming. Jonah might have wondered, "How can I, a foreigner, begin to persuade these people to believe me?"

Question: What empire was Nineveh the capital of?

Challenge: When have you been almost struck dumb by the largeness of something?

Scripture: Acts 28:23-30

Day 3: Jonah 3:4-5

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

Jonah was warning the people of what was going to happen to them but he never says *why* it will happen. We know from the first chapter that God said, "Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me." However, we do not know if Jonah made God's displeasure clear. Repentance is more than a verbal saying of, "I am sorry." It is a calling us out of our normal existence in order to align ourselves with God's redemptive purpose. They had 40 days to change the way they lived their lives. At the end of that time they still did not have a promise that God would relent. They were willing to change without any quid pro quo.

Question: What other times in the Bible has the number 40 been a part of the story?

Challenge: Why do you think the people complied with Jonah's call to repent?

Scripture: Genesis 18:16-33

Day 4: Jonah 3:6-7

When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water.

Notice how the king also repents and orders all others to do likewise. I believe that the reason God does not destroy the city is because its leader changed his lifestyle. It is easy to tell people what to do but a lot harder to do it along with them, especially if you are the king. If the leaders are not willing to come up alongside the people and be with them, they are not leaders.

Question: Why did the animals have to repent?

Challenge: If we today do not use fasting or sackcloth and ashes, how can we show a life changing experience?

Scripture: I Kings 18:33-19:6

Day 5: Jonah 3:8-9

Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.'

Here we see the big change that was necessary. They had to turn from their evil ways and from violence. They had to change the way they related to those weaker than themselves. Violence is not done just by hitting, it is often done by words. We, in our time, need to hear that violent words are not part of God's plan for redemption. Christians need to be firm in addressing problems in society but not become violent with their words and not make fun of others as a way to diminish their opinions.

Question: Do you think they bargained with God?

Challenge: Have you ever made a bargain with God?

Scripture: Daniel 8:25-9:8

Day 6: Jonah 3:10

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

God changed his mind when he saw that their repentance was not just a few moments of feeling bad but a real life change. God is not interested in wiping out people but God knew that if Nineveh's violent behavior continued it would bring devastation to those around them. God will allow destruction to come to a nation not because God is offended by their actions but because their evil action is causing great harm.

Question: Did you think that God could change his mind?

Challenge: Without reading the next chapter - how do you think Jonah responded to the success of his mission?

Scripture: Psalm 145