

Well, hey. You can be seated. If you have a bible, why don't you do me a favor: Grab it and turn to Jonah. That's where we're going to be. We're going hop back in Jonah this morning. Jonah chapter two. If you don't have a bible with you, you can grab the one in the pew, out of the back of the pew in front of you. I think that Jonah two starts on page 774 in the pew bibles. So turn there.

While you're turning there, let me just kind of, for those of you who missed a couple of weeks ago and that weren't here for our initial morning in the book of Jonah, we'll be looking at Jonah's life throughout the summer as Matt's on sabbatical. We're going to look at the life of Jonah and specifically we're drawing to see over and over and over again woven throughout Jonah's biography; this is biography of one of the prophets of God written by, it's an autobiography. Jonah wrote the book. Over and over and over again through the biography there's three things that we're really trying to catch this summer. One is how a religious, religious man was transformed by The Gospel. And we're really trying to paint a picture between religion and The Gospel. There's really only three types of people in the world: There's people that are, and I would say probably only two but there's people who are just secular. That say that they have no religion at all, no relationship with any kind of religion and then there's people that are religious and then there's people that are believers in the gospel. And so in the book of Jonah there is a strong, strong distinction between being religious and and being transformed by The Gospel. And so we're looking at that. Secondly, I already mentioned briefly we're trying to see in Jonah you literally, you can see a concrete picture of The Gospel working in Jonah's life. You get to see a concrete picture of how The Gospel works. And two weeks ago we saw Jonah sin; we saw a concrete picture of Jonah sinning, running away from God. We saw a concrete picture of God's grace, God in his sovereignty despite Jonah's sin, chasing Jonah, sending a storm, hurling him into the sea. And this week we're even going to see a little bit more how The Gospel plays out concretely in our lives. That's the second thing that we're looking at this summer. And the third thing, don't forget this: that at the heart of this story is a city that God loves. And it's really easy to dive in and start talking about Jonah and forget one of the primary reasons, if not the primary reason, God is transforming Jonah's heart by His Gospel is so that He can send Jonah to preach to a city that needs to hear the gospel. And so those are the three things we're looking at.

Let me do this: Let's read through Jonah two, and then we'll pray, and then we'll jump in to really seeing this morning on how the Gospel drops in Jonah's heart. And interestingly enough, in the Hebrew chapter two starts in the English bible in chapter one, verse seventeen. So let's look at one, seventeen which is really the beginning of chapter two in Hebrew. And so let's look at that starting in verse seventeen. And then we'll just read it and then we'll pray and talk about it.

" 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. Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying, 'I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, I am driven away from your sight; Yet I shall again look upon your holy temple. The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain

idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD! And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.”

Father, I pray and ask now by You Spirit that You would speak to us this morning. I confess in front of my friends and in front of our church and the guests here, that without the Holy Spirit coming and empowering this time, all I've got is cute words. All I've got is wise and persuasive words. And although they may be true, they'll be void of power if Your Holy Spirit doesn't come and speak to our hearts. And so I pray that whatever needs to happen in our heart – individually and corporately this morning to hear from You. That even now, you would prepare us. Even now, You would heighten the sense of hearing in our spiritual ears – that You would unveil the eyes of our heart. That we might really see Your love for us through Jesus Christ and His Gospel as played out in the life of Jonah. And so I thank You. Holy Spirit, we love You this morning and ask You to transform our lives and take us to Jesus for the glory of the Father. And it's in Jesus name we pray, amen.

Well, let me just start off this way by throwing out a thesis. I believe whole heartedly, I believe whole heartedly that every single one of our problems, every single problem, and notice I say problem and not necessarily circumstances. Every problem that you are led into: every storm, every pit. Every problem that you are led into by your sin has one remedy. Has one root and one remedy. And here's what I believe: I believe that at the root of every single one of our problems, every single one of our pits, every single one of our sinful little storms that we've led ourselves into and that we lead ourselves into each week, at the heart of it is one thing. And that one thing is you and I fail to believe the Gospel. That's why we end up in pits. That's why we end up in storms. You and I fail; in a million different ways we fail to trust the Gospel, to trust all that God is for us in Jesus Christ. And so because we do all these different things happen, all these peripheral things happen, all these ramifications happen but at the heart of them all is one thing: you and I really don't believe the Gospel. And if you got my e-mail this week, I send a weekly e-mail out to the Denton campus – if you're not on that list, take the guest card and fill out your e-mail and we'll start sending that to you as well. But on my e-mail this week you might have even heard that language – that for the entire year I've been praying one thing for our campus. Corporately individual – one thing for us. And here's why. Because I believe that at the bottom of all your prayer requests and all your prayer needs and all these things that we think is going on in our lives, think we need. At the core of all of em I think we really need one thing: You and I need the Gospel to penetrate our hearts. We need to believe the Gospel with all of our mind, all of our heart, all of our soul, and all of our strength. We need to believe all that God is for us is in Jesus Christ – listen – and until we do, we're going to white-knuckle it. And white-knuckling it means that we'll be good for seasons, we'll be good for days, we'll be good for even weeks at a time but it will always come back and we'll stay in this insanity cycle until it's pierced and changed and transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But every single one of our problems is rooted in a disbelief or an ignorance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And I'm telling you – this is real for my life. This is not just something that I am saying to you, like Hey, let me tell you what your problem is. Let me tell you what the root of your problem is. In my family, my wife and I were talking about some things that are going on in our life right now. At the core of it – at the very core of it the problem is not this circumstance or this circumstance or this person or this happened or my bank account or this. At the core of it – the core of all of our problems, our storms, not all of circumstances but all of our storms, how we react to them. Our joy, how full our joy is or how lacking it is – at the core of it is the Gospel. What do you believe about the Gospel? And two weeks ago we left Jonah drowning in the Mediterranean. And literally Jonah, if anyone has led himself in by his sin, by his blatant disobedience to the Lord, to God the Father through His voice, Jonah ran away from the Lord and has led himself; he's quite literally dug his own grave. And we left him last week as he was chucked over the side of the boat into the storm. And what we said last week was that his problem wasn't.... Essentially his problem was wrapped up in that he thought that he was righteous and he wasn't. He doesn't understand the Gospel. He doesn't understand that he's not righteous – Jesus Christ is righteous, not him. And until he find his righteousness in Jesus Christ, not being a Jew

whose more religious than the Ninevites, he's gonna remain in the watery sea. Do you see how that works? Martin Luther would say it this way – that every breaking of the commandments, talking about the ten commandments, every breaking of the commandments is really a breaking of the first commandment. If you would keep the first commandment you would keep all the other commandments, right? That You would have no other gods before me. The Gospel. This is the Gospel that God in Jesus Christ is reconciling the world to Himself. And unless you believe that and trust in Jesus Christ as God, unless you believe that, you're going to break all of the commands. Why do we lie? Because at the end of the day, we want people to think that we're good-looking. We make people gods and so in order to impress them, we lie. We don't believe the Gospel – we've made more gods. Why do we steal? And I'm just going through some of the basic commandments; why do we steal? Because at the end of the day we heighten, we make an object that we think we need or want, we make it ultimate and so we'll break the law to get to it. We make an object, we make something god. We don't believe the Gospel. We break the first commandment so we lie, we steal, we murder, we do all these things. Every single one of your problems is rooted in the Gospel.

And so what we say around here and what we pray around here often is for the Gospel of our lives to be all that they can be in Jesus Christ by the power of His Holy Spirit. What we believe needs to happen is for the Gospel to spread from the top of your head to the bottom of your heart. The Gospel needs to drop. That's the language that we use. And the visual imagery we kind of use around here is it's like a Coke machine. That the majority of us here this morning have had the Gospel deposited in us. We know the information, right? I mean we know the information and it's like a Coke machine where sometimes you put a coin in the Coke machine and the coin gets stuck – it doesn't make it. It doesn't drop. And so what do you have to do when that happens? You shake it, you have to beat it, you have to kick it, you have to ... Whatever, however your anger heightens in that moment, that's what you do but you have to do something. You shake the machine, you beat the machine, you kick the machine and then what happens? Well, hopefully the coin drops. And fruit comes out – ice cold Coca-Cola or whatever it is that you enjoy. And our faith, if we are to live the best possible life, the life that Jesus came to give us and to lead us into. For that happen, the Gospel has to fall. If the Gospel doesn't fall, and listen, you're going to spend the rest of your life dwelling on circumstances and blaming your lack of joy of that circumstance. I'm telling you; I mean, just think about those of you that are in a pit right now or those of you that are coming out of one – think about it. What fuels your thoughts? What fuels your joy or lack thereof. What steal your joy? Why do you get depressed? Why do you get lonely? Probably because you're making a god of something other than Jesus Christ. And until it drops in you, that He's God and that He loves you and that that's enough. You're going to live your life on this insanity cycle, always wanting more, always wanting better, never being enough, always being lonely, always being somebody's fault, always needing a new spouse, always needing a new job, always needing more money. And we go around and around, and around we go. And it doesn't matter what the circumstances are. The problem at the core of is we don't believe the Gospel.

And you need the Gospel to drop because when it drops, I'm not saying that your circumstances get better, obviously. Obviously husbands still die suddenly. Obviously bank accounts still get depleted but your joy doesn't get depleted with it. And what we're going to see in Jonah two this morning, what we just read, is beautiful a picture as I know of what it looks like when the Gospel drops in our heart. Because remember, Jonah was a religious man who had had the Gospel message, the message of God's grace, even though he didn't call it the Gospel. He didn't know it was the Gospel necessarily, but it was the Gospel. That God's grace, he had had that deposited but he was still a self-righteous sinner that ran away from God; why? Because it hadn't dropped in him. And what we're about to read through is how it looks when the Gospel drops.

And so my hope this morning is that we get a front and center seat to watch the Gospel drop in Jonah's life. That's amazing and if you have never sat front row let me just tell you happens. Kimberly and I put this in the e-mail. A couple of weeks ago we went and saw Carrie Underwood and we sat front row. And for those of you that think that I'm a dork,

that's fine. My wife really loves her voice and I might have a bit of a celebrity crush on her, OK? Maybe, but I would never admit that to you if I did, OK? And as my mamma said, Kimberly is much much more beautiful than Carrie Underwood; and that's the truth. But we went and we sat front and center. And whatever you think about that, let me tell you what happened in that experience because a friend of ours knew her drummer and so they got us tickets. I mean, we were right there. I could, I was going to say, I could spit on her, but that would have been rude. I mean I could touch the stage. I could literally reach out and touch the stage. And she was singing right here. And whether you like it or not, somebody who won American Idol, which is a big deal if you didn't know, if you're not tuned into American culture, American Idol's a big deal. This larger than life figure – what being front row did was, this larger than life figure Carrie Underwood, who you see on TV, who 90+ million people vote for who; I mean, she's just all over the place. She just turned into a super star. Simon Cowell's brilliant – he really is. This larger than life figure, sitting front row, took this ambiguous idea of this person and made it real to me. Made it real to me and made it close to me, and she went from being this super star to being this normal twenty year old girl that's on stage doing her job. I mean I'm sitting there I mean I could almost feel it that she was doing her job. It's just a facade; it gets past the facade, past the ambiguous idea of the Gospel dropping and into what does it really look like? How does it really play out? and what would it look like if I actually got close enough to it that maybe it would do the same in my own life.

That's what I'm hoping this morning. That as you and I sit front row in Jonah's life that we'll get close enough to the Gospel falling that maybe, wherever you're at, maybe wherever you're at the Gospel in essence. So let's read back through this starting in one, seventeen. I'm not going to spend too much time on this verse but this is what it says 'cause, well let's just read it together. One, seventeen says this: And the LORD, after Jonah's in the middle of the sea, And the LORD appointed a great fish, and notice it says 'fish' and not 'whale.' Right off the bat, it doesn't say whale, it says fish. Now some of you are like, Well, seriously? You think that a trout could swallow Jonah? Is that what you... No, but it says fish. I just want to point out how off we've made this story. We've gotten so off from this story. And this verse has become the point and it's not the point at all. But ...a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. My teacher, Sinclair Ferguson says this in his commentary about Jonah. He says, "This fish must be the most criticized fish that ever swam in the Mediterranean." He says, "One sometimes hopes that there may be provision made to speak in the new earth so that this poor creature can have the opportunity to answer it's critics." Which I think's true. I mean this is the most criticized fish in probably the history of the world. And what's sad is the fish isn't even the point of the story. But I do want to spend some time, I know most of you, a lot of you would love for me to spend the rest of our time together proving to you how that could really happen. How a fish could really swallow a man, and more amazingly than that, because we have plenty of documented history of that, more amazing than that, after he swallowed a man, the fish, the man could actually live inside the fish for three days and three nights. I just want to apologize right up front, I'm not going to spend the rest of the time doing that. And I'll submit and quote my teacher Sinclair as to why because he says this: "While it is commendable that we should carefully examine the authenticity of such tails, there are reasons for caution as we do so. The most important is, of course, that too much discussion about the great fish can divert us from the real issue. The narrative is not really about a fish at all. The fish as only a walk-on part in this gripping drama. Focus on this great fish and we may lose sight of the great God." And some of you, I mean you'd be amazed. Honestly, the book of Jonah, this verse that we just read has been historically for so many years used and been a catalyst for great adventures, sometimes by Christians, a lot of times by non-Christians – great adventures of completely missing the point. This fish is not the point. And you'd be amazed how many people this becomes a stumbling block for, how many skeptics I sit down with and they say, Okay, Christianity. I get the whole deal. Let's talk about Jonah. Let's talk about the fish or let's talk about the Red sea. Let's talk about a man splitting the Red sea. Or even more important, let's talk about an ark. So you're telling me that this dude built a boat and he put all the animals on the ark and you're telling me a fish swallowed this dude whole and the guy survived in him and then the fish spit him back out? Yeah, that's what I'm telling you. I believe that. Well, you see, that's why I can't believe Christianity. I just can't go there.

And some of you in here are going, That's absolutely right. That's why we should spend time trying to prove that it could happen. Let me tell you the story about a fish that swallowed a horse. Woah, woah, woah, woah. Maybe that's the way but let's try a different angle this morning. Turn to Matthew twelve, keep your finger in Jonah but turn to Matthew twelve with me. Maybe instead of arguing about a fish we can take this back to Jesus and see what, if anything, he has to say. And maybe, in doing that maybe Jesus himself can become the stumbling block and the fish not because here's my hunch and I tell skeptics this all the time: You're problem's not with a fish or with a sea or an arc. Your problem's with Jesus. And if you can get people to go back to Jesus, which by the way, they don't want to. They want to talk about the ark because they don't want to deal with the person of Jesus. But if you deal with the person of Jesus necessarily you deal with Jonah, you deal with the arc, you deal with everything else, and let me tell you why: Matthew twelve, we read this last week. Start in verse thirty-eight. It says, "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Jesus, saying, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.' But he answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.' " So there's our boy, Jonah. Jesus, apparently has read Jonah, probably memorized Jonah, quotes from Jonah a lot. "...no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Personally, pastorally the reason I believe that Jonah was literally swallowed by a fish, whether it was a blue whale. Whatever kind of fish, you guys that are in zoology can tell me about that later. I believe he was swallowed by a fish because Jesus Christ believes that he was swallowed by a fish. And here's the issue: What do you believe about Jesus? Because what I believe about Jesus is that A, the New Testament documents paint historical, accurate picture of who Jesus Christ was. And because I believe that, I believe that Jesus Christ is who he said he was. And he said that he was the son of God. And not only did he say that he was the son of God he said that he was born of a virgin. He said he was God in the flesh. Fully man; fully God. He lived a perfect life and never sinned. And then he went to a cross to impute to us the righteousness that was due him, he let us share in that so that the Father's wrath could be appeased. And not only that, after he went to a cross three days later he was raised from the dead. That's your stumbling block because if you can believe that story, if you can believe that news you have no trouble believing that a fish swallowed a man. No trouble at all. If a man can be born of a virgin and God can become flesh and be resurrected on the third day I don't have any problems believing that a fish could swallow a man and a man could stay in a fish. And most of which because the man who said he was God who I really believe he was God said that he did it. Jesus didn't say, He was swallowed by a fish, and by the way that was allegorical but here's ... No. Jesus believed it.

And so here's the question. And by the way if you talk to skeptics around and they say that at your work and at your office and they want to make that the issue, just take them to Jesus. What do they believe about Jesus because that's the issue. It's so sad to me that people want to make a fish the issue. The fish is just a part in the story. He's a vehicle by which God is going to cause the Gospel to fall in Jonah's heart. And men and women make him the issue. I think, because they're scared to death to look Jesus Christ in the face and do something with Him. They do not want to answer that question because they know that if they answer that question all the other questions have to get answered. All the other questions deal with themselves. Deal with that and you can deal with the fish.

Alright, turn back to Jonah. So a fish literally swallows Jonah. Jonah literally is in the belly of the fish and this is literally his response. And in his response, you and I, here is the front row picture: He's finally in a pit, he's finally cornered, he's finally having to look at his own heart and his own life in a relation to a holy God and listen to what comes. Chapter two verse one. Then.. So 'then' is transitioning from Jonah's been running, Jonah's been sinning, Jonah's been avoiding God, "Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying, 'I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol" Which is a very Hebrew word of saying grave, "out of the belly of Sheol [out of my own grave] I cried, and you heard my voice." So almost immediately two chapters in you see this

amazing transition that in chapter one, Jonah's been running away from the Lord, running from Him, getting as far away, going to Tarshish, going as far away. He's running as hard and as fast away from the Lord as he can and God puts him in the whale and his first response is he runs to the Lord. He repents. Repentance begins inside the whale. The Gospel is starting to fall in Jonah's heart and we know it is because the first step toward having the Gospel fall is repentance. It's always repentance in response to a holy God. And Jonah, who's been running away then out of the belly of the whale he starts running toward the Lord instead of away from him and let's finish. Verse three through verse seven: "For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away...'" And the language in the Hebrew is I was divorced; I was divorced from Your sight. "Yet" Which is going to be a huge word for us here in a minute and it happens twice. "Yet I shall again look upon your holy temple. The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains." I mean he's saying, I'm as low as I can possibly... I'm at the root - at the bottom. The mountains and the sea, at the very bottom, the seaweed is wrapping around my head. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; [the doors of Sheol] yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple!" Stop right there. So this is it. This is the picture of the Gospel falling. Two things happen and I want you to see this with me. Two things happen that cause the Gospel to fall in these seven verses. Number one, for the first time in his entire life Jonah realized the depth of his own depravity.

I would guess, I conjecture, for the first time in his entire life Jonah realizes his depravity before a holy, righteous God and look what it took to get him there. He has nowhere to go. There's no religious activities for him to do. There's nobody for him to impress. There's no place for him to stand up and quote the Scriptures, quote God's word. He's all by himself inside the belly of a whale and at that point finally he gets it. I am a sinner and this is where my sin has led me. I am an absolute sinner and it had led me to the absolute deepest place I can be. And listen to how many times he uses the word deep here. Let me find these. Verse two, he says it at least five times in these six verses; he uses deep. He's realizing the depth of his sin. He's using even language to explain it. And this is a song. In this song he's saying, I have gone, I am a deep sinner. The depth of my sin is awful. And listen to some of these: Verse two he says the belly of Sheol, which is the grave, the very belly of the grave, as low as I can go, verse three he says, "You cast me into the deep." Verse five he says, "The deep surrounded me." Verse six he says Weed were around me at the roots of the mountain, at the bottom of the ocean, as low as you can go, the weeds in the bottom of the ocean, the mountains at the very bottom of the ocean; that's where my sin took me. That's how desolate I am before a holy God. That's how deep my sin is. In verse six, the pit.

So at least five times. No less than five times he says this is who I am. And for the first time in Jonah's life, I think, for the very first he realizes the depth of his depravity. And listen, this is not... because before now, what was his sin? He thought he was righteous and he thought the Ninevites were a bunch of sinners; he thought they had some deep issues. And in the belly of the whale he's going, I've got issues. My sin is deep and I have no reason to boast. And he's singing a song and what comes out of his heart is "...out of the depths, lead me God. I am as deep, I am as wicked, I am as sinful, I am as depraved as the Ninevites, if not more, and I'm dead. I'm dead because of it. That's the first realization.

I just wonder, do you and I really get the depth of our own depravity? And here's why I wonder that because, not because I want you to be depressed, I mean believe me, I've struggled with that my whole life; it's not fun. I don't want that for you. But until you realize the depth of your depravity, until you realize the bad news, the good news just isn't going to be that good to you because you're going to think that you deserve it. And Jonah is saying, I get it. I get it. I'm deeply sinful. I'm a deeply sinful man. Not just what I do is sinful but who I am, I am a sinner. But that's not the only thing that happens. If that was the only thing that happened, he'd just become a depressed human being waling around the earth, Oh, poor, pitiful me. But that's one thing that happens. The second thing that collides with that is this: That Jonah, despite, despite the depth of his sin Jonah realizes that God's grace is infinitely deeper for him and covers his sin. And

look back at verse four with me: "Then I said, I am driven away from your sight; [I'm a sinner, I'm low, I'm dirty]...Then I said, I am driven away from your sight; Yet..." Yet despite my sin, despite the depth of my depravity, "Yet I shall again look upon your holy temple." Look down in verse seven: "I went down to the land whose bars closed [over] me forever." And that land he's talking about is death. "Sheol." I took myself to the grave. I'm so dirty and so... I belong in death "yet, you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, [in] your holy temple." And listen, what's crucial here is not just that Jonah realized that, yeah, that though he was a sinner yet what's crucial is what he looked to, to inform him of that. Look back at verse four with me. "Then I said, I am driven away from your sight; Yet I shall again look upon your holy temple." Depth, yet I looked at the temple. Verse seven: "I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple."

And so here's a great question for you and me. Why in the world is he thinking about the temple? I mean, this man is in the belly of a fish. He's got a lot of things he could be thinking about. Why in the world is he thinking about the temple and why in the world are his thoughts of the temple causing his faith to rise even as he sinks? What's so important about the temple? Well, the temple, if you know anything about the Old Testament, the temple was where, God is omnipresent, but the temple is where God chose to manifest His presence and communicate and relate to people on earth. We sang a song earlier about the veil being ripped away, and if you don't know the symbolism in that, the temple was this big building, much like this. But inside a building, it wasn't like this at all actually. It was really nice and they didn't have carpet; they probably had gold. Neither here nor there. The temple was a building. Inside the building there was a room called *The Holy of Holies*. Separating that would say the outer courts... That's kind of Pharaohish, kind is scares me a little bit, but imagine if you walked in here and then there was a big curtain. And then behind that curtain sat The Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant to the people of Israel was the place where God manifested His presence. The temple, The Holy of Holies, within The Holy of Holies, through the Ark of the Covenant was where God specifically designed it and desired to communicate with His people. And in The Ark of the Covenant was what? For those of you who do know some of the Old Testament was The Law.

In The Ark of the Covenant was The Law and so Jonah is thinking back to the temple and he's thinking two things: One good news; one bad news. Let's do the bad news first. The first thing he's thinking, he's thinking back to The Ark of the Covenant and he's thinking about The Law that's in The Ark of The Covenant in the presence of God where God literally says over The Law, If you want to relate to Me, a white hot holy God, if you want to relate to Me the only way you can relate to me is over The Law. If you want to be in relationship with Me, if you want to be in fellowship with Me, you have to be holy like I'm holy. And that is what The Law said. And some of you are like, Well man, that's a rigid god. Really? Doesn't this play out every day all over the place? I mean, think about a symphony. I wish Carl Brower was in here. He plays the french horn. He's playing for some symphonies. But think about a symphony. If the entire orchestra is playing one piece and one of the musicians is playing another piece, what's the conductor going to have to do? Well, first of all he's probably going to get really frustrated even though he's not obligated to get frustrated we all know he's probably going to get frustrated. Then he's going to go to that musician and say, Listen, man. If we're going to have a relationship, you're going to have to follow the script. And he says, Hey man. You can't... I'm an artist. I'm being artsy here, OK? I'm improvising. That's what we do. Great, but the law of music says if you don't follow the script, there can be no beauty – at least in this team, at least in this relationship. And what's eventually going to have to happen is what? The musician's going to have to either repent, and not repent for being a musician, repent for wanting to be the conductor. He's either going to have to repent or he's going to get kicked out of the team. Because the only way that that relationship works is over The Law. And God is saying the same thing though the temple. The only way you relate with Me is over The Law and that's really bad news. Why? Well because Jonah is in the belly of a fish. Obviously he didn't get The Law right. And he's realizing he didn't get The Law right and he's looking to The Temple and he's thinking about that going, The only way

to relate... So you're going, Why would that make his faith rise? Why is that helpful? That's not encouraging. Because that's the bad news. The good news is that on top of The Covenant sat a golden seat. On top of the law of God sat a golden seat and one a year what they would do is they would shed the blood of a lamb and pour it over the seat that was called The Mercy Seat. And what God was saying to His people through the temple, through The Ark of the Covenant was despite your breach in our covenant, despite the fact that you don't obey the law, I'm going to propitiate, which propitiation is a word, I know some of you are like, Great, Hughes. I don't go to seminary. Well, you don't need to go to seminary. You need to learn this word if you are a Christian. Propitiation is a word that means The wrath that is due you has been paid for by someone else.

And so Jonah is thinking about The Law, thinking about the temple, meditating on the temple, thinking about, Oh, here's the law. I'm not holy, God's holy, I'm not holy but praise the Lord for The Mercy Seat, with the blood of the lamb sacrifices and makes atonement for me so that the veil was torn and I can go in to Him even though I am completely unworthy. And so what Jonah is doing is he's looking upon the temple; what's colliding in his heart, he doesn't know this yet but what he's doing is he's preaching to himself The Gospel. The temple is Jesus. Jesus is the good news and the bad news of God in one – he is the wrath, he is the lion and he is the lamb and the grace – at the same time. And Jonah in the belly of a whale, as his depravity is becoming real to him what's also is becoming real to him, if not more real to him, is the grace and mercy of The Gospel. For him, through The Mercy Seat; for us, through Jesus Christ – the lamb of the world who takes away the sin of the world. I mean, isn't this profound? This is what's happening. I know some of you are going, Oh, I don't know. I thought that this was about a fish. It's not about a fish. He's in a fish and what collides in his pit, in his storm, in his grave are these two things. And what causes to happen in Jonah is when The Gospel falls, when these two things collide: The depth of his depravity and the greater depth of God's love for him through Jesus Christ, through the temple. When those two things collide, Jonah's faith rises and as it were he's born again.

I mean, this whole story is about The Gospel. Look back with me. Listen to his response. So these two things collide; The Gospel drops when those two things collide. And we'll talk a minute about where you are on that and why maybe The Gospel's kind of disconnecting with you and why it doesn't mean to you as much to you as it should, why it doesn't control your life, why circumstances control your life. But The Gospel, those things collide in him, The Gospel falls, and his faith rises. Listen to this, verse eight: Here's his response. He's still in the belly of a whale. "Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you." You hear what he just said? I'm done with my idols. The Gospel collides. I'm done. I'm done with the approval of man, I'm done with being self-righteous, I'm done with what people think about me. I'm in the belly of a whale. My circumstances haven't changed but I'm done. I am smashing my idols, i.e. I'm smashing my self-righteousness, I'm leaving it here, and I'm going to follow and pick up the cross and pay my vows to The Most High God. I'm gonna follow Him. This is profound. This is what happens when The Gospel collides. This is what happens when it drops in your heart. He says, I am smashing my idols.

And so I don't know what your idols are. I have an idea of what some of them might be; I don't know all of you, but for Jonah, his self-righteousness just died as The Gospel fell in his heart. His self-righteousness died; he smashed his idol and he says, "Salvation belongs to the Lord!" Let me quote rather than try and explain it. Let me quote one of my favorite heros, pastors, Tim Keller says about this verse: "When God called Jonah to go to Nineveh the first time, Jonah ran in the other direction." This is two weeks ago that we read it. "Why? The reader assumes it was just fear but chapter four reveals that there was also a lot of hostility in Jonah towards the Assyrians and the Ninevites." Keller says, "I believe the reason that he did not only have pity on them was because he did not sufficiently realize that he was nothing but a sinner saved by sheer grace. So he ran away from God and you know the rest of the story: He was cast into the deep and was saved by God from drowning by being swallowed by a great fish and the second chapter," he says, "we see Jonah praying, and his prayer ends with the phrase, 'Salvation is of the Lord.'" And Keller says his old teacher, Ed Clown used to say that this was the central verse of the bible. It is an expression of The Gospel. Salvation is from and of the Lord and no

one else. Period. Self-righteousness is not my salvation. Salvation is from the Lord. "But as a prophet," And here's where it goes for us this morning. "But as a prophet, doesn't know this?" Keller says. "He knows it and yet he doesn't know it at all." Martin Luther said, "That the purpose of ministry [The purpose of my job] was not only to make the Gospel clear but to beat it into your people's heads and your own continually. You might be able to get an A on your Justification by Faith test but if there is not a radical and concrete growth and humble love towards everyone, even your enemies, you don't really know you are a sinner saved by grace. And if there is not a radical, concrete growth and confidence and joy, even in difficulties, even in husbands dying, you don't really know you are a sinner saved by grace." So then he says, "So what must you do if you lack the humility, love, joy, and confidence you need to face the life issues before you? You should not try to move on past the Gospel to more advanced principles, rather, this gets back to what we've talked about this morning, you should shake yourself until more of the Gospel corns drop and more of the fruit of the Spirit come out. And until you do that, you've been having trouble following me all morning, until you do that, despite your sound doctrine you will be a selfish, scared, over-sensitive, insensitive, anxious, and as undisciplined as every one else.

Those were the attitudes characterizing Jonah. If he had know the Gospel as deeply as he should have, he wouldn't have reacted with such hostility and superiority toward Nineveh. But the experience and the storm and in the fish brings him back to the foundations. And he rediscovers the wonder of the Gospel when he says, Salvation is really from the Lord. He wasn't learning something brand new but was rediscovering and realizing more deeply the truth and wonder of the Gospel. In verse ten. And when this happened, when the Gospel fell his faith rose. And verse ten, "And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land." Jonah got what the Lord wanted him to get – the Gospel. And when it happened the fish vomited him out and now finally Jonah is equipped and ready to go love a great city that God has asked him to love. Not until the Gospel fall though.

Let's pray. Why don't you do this while we... Get comfortable for a minute. I just want to talk because here's the reality. There's three types of people; there's three groups of people in here. And no, I don't need you to figure out for everybody else what group they're in this morning. But there's three groups.

The first group of people are those who have never really grasped the depth of your own depravity. Like to talk about hell and to talk about a holy God and to talk about storms of merciful wrath, to you seems rigid, to you seems ungodly and unloving. The idea of hell frustrates you because you don't grasp it. You don't grasp in accordance and in contrast to a holy God how sinful you really are. And listen, again, I'm not trying to make you depressed but until you understand as much as the Holy Spirit allows you to understand the depth of your need for grace, you will remain a self-righteous individual. And not only that, probably more cancerous than that, you'll continue to believe that what you get from God, He owes you. And if you don't realize how sinful and undeserving you are, the good news will never be great news to you because you deserve it. And I'm telling you, you're in here. You grew up in church, you do religious things, you're a religious person but you aren't transformed by the Gospel. And you're not transformed by the Gospel because you've been told your whole life how good you are. You're not good. Jonah wasn't good. He thought that he was good until he wound up in the belly of a fish. And that's the first group, and can I just tell you here? Until you realize how bad you are – until you look that in the face, the Gospel's not gong to be good news to you – it can't be because you don't need it. You deserve it. And that is the most antithetical thing to the Gospel imaginable. That's the first group.

The second group for those of you that are in here, you do realize how sinful you are but you don't realize how much infinitely more gracious God is. And you live on the other side of the coin where as the prideful, self-righteous person wallows in their own pride about being good, you wallow in your own pride and make yourself a victim because you're too bad. You're too bad for God. There's no way that God could love you. And I know that sounds really humble but really it's proud. What you're saying is I'm worse than God is good. There's no way He can forgive me. There's no way He can love me. There's no way He knows what I was thinking, even on the way in this morning. Even last night. Even when I

was, I mean, there's no way. If I did this and I did this and... You don't understand grace, friend. Or maybe you understand grace but maybe you don't understand the grace of an infinite God. Infinite. You can't – His grace is infinitely deeper than your sin. And until you realize that, you're going to remain a victim. Well, God doesn't love me. Nobody loves me. I'm bad. No. He does love you through Christ. That's why we sing. That's why we celebrate that the veil has been torn.

And the third group of people in here, the Gospel has fallen in you. And where I want to encourage you is that it can always fall to deeper places. Grace is like a mansion, right? It's like a mansion and it's a mansion with unending rooms. It's not like you go into the house of grace and then you got it. Ope. Got it! No, there's always another room; there's always another closet, there's always another – there's always grace. There's always more. It's like a gym – there's always another angle you've never seen. There's always a way the Gospel can fall deeper in you this morning – always.

And so what I want to do before we come to the Lord's supper is, can you and I just together preach the Gospel to ourselves? Can we practice that? Because listen: This is what I want you to do every day. Because if you don't learn how to do this, I'm telling you, you're going to wind up running away, you're going to wind up in a storm, and you're going to think that the storm is because of this or that or that or this or that. The storm is always because you don't believe the Gospel. And so if you can learn to preach the Gospel daily, I'm not telling you that it's going to get better or easier. But what I am telling you is that like Brenda Bailey you'll be able to say. "He's enough. Him through His people is enough. Him through His Word is enough. He loves me. Even though circumstances come, even though trials come, he loves me. If you can learn to preach the Gospel to yourself. So as we come this morning, literally as we come to the temple; if we come to Jesus Christ represented in broken bread and juice. Jesus said, "Hey, destroy this temple and in three days, I'll rise it up again." And he did that. And as we come this morning to remember that he is the temple, he is the Gospel, he is the one that we come to in this. I don't know where you're at but if you, whatever group you're in, maybe you need some prayer, maybe you need to talk to someone, maybe you've got some sins that you just think are too big. Maybe you just think that you're too good and you know that. There's going to be men and women. We'd love to pray with you. We'd love to pray with you, we'd love to talk to you because listen, I know what it's like to be self-righteous and I know that it's like to be the kid that everybody thinks is beyond saving grace – I've been that kid. I still wrestle with hating myself over that. And so these aren't pastors back here that are going to tell you what to do and tell you how to fix your life. We're just going to sit in the Gospel with you. But if you want to do that before you come to the Lord's supper, do it. And if not, come to the Lord's Supper joyfully. And saying with Jonah, saying as we're even going to sing, as we've even sung this morning, that "...out of the depths I have cried to You, and you heard me." You didn't have to hear me and You heard me and You took me out of the pit and You set my feet on dry land.