

Jonah

“Young Lions”



*“And Jonah cried to the Lord
‘Therefore now, O Lord, take, I be-
seech thee, my life from me; for it is
better for me to die than to live.’ But
the Lord said ‘Doest thou well
to be angry?’”*

Jonah 4:3-4

Jonah is perhaps one of the best known people in the Bible by all ages. His stubbornness and the story of the fish have captivated people for years. His feelings as expressed in the Scriptures written above are very strong. He was so angry he just wanted the Lord to take his life away. Were things really that bad for him? Just because he didn't like some other people to the extent he didn't want them to know about God's goodness!

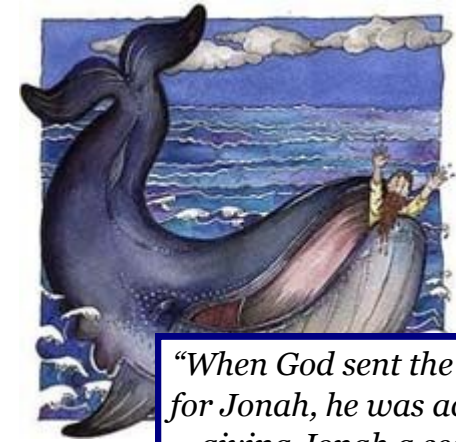
Even if people don't know anything

else about the Bible they seem to know the story of a man being swallowed by a big fish or a whale! The story has been referred to in many songs and stories over the years. Many of us are familiar with a song by Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen that goes something like this:

*“To illustrate my last remark
Jonah in the whale, Noah in the ark
What did they do just when everything
looked so dark?
They said we better
accentuate the positive
eliminate the negative
latch on to the affirmative
But don't mess with mister inbetween.”*

Isn't it interesting that the stories and people in the Bible are everywhere in today's world, centuries later, they are still telling the story in many mediums. People in the Bible were real and had real problems like we do today. Jonah was one of those young men that fought the Lord. Whether you believe Jonah was swallowed by a whale or a great fish sent by God is immaterial. The truth is that Jonah learned the hard way that he better listen to God. Sometimes we have the same problem today.

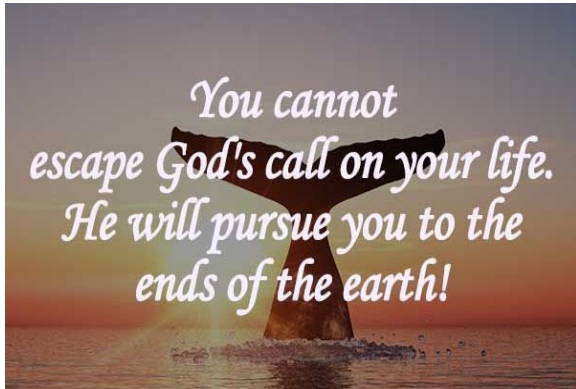
Jonah did not like the people of Assyria for some reason. God called him to go to Nineveh and preach to the people of Assyria so they could be saved from destruction. Typical of the way many of us might feel, Jonah rebelled and decided



*“When God sent the whale
for Jonah, he was actually
giving Jonah a second
chance. Otherwise he was
destined to drown. Does
God send a whale for each
of us when we are
outcast?”*

he did not want to go. He did go for a ride on a ship, but he went to hide and he fell asleep. While on the boat trip, the waters got so choppy that the people on board were afraid of a ship wreck and drew lots to see why this was happening. They decided that the problem was Jonah. Jonah told them to throw him overboard because he would rather die than go to Nineveh. So they did!

However, God still had not abandoned his plan. He sent a great fish or whale to swallow him up and save him. Finally, against his wishes, he boarded a ship, went to Nineveh and many thousands of people were saved from destruction. Jonah had done what the Lord commanded, but he wasn't happy about it and so he

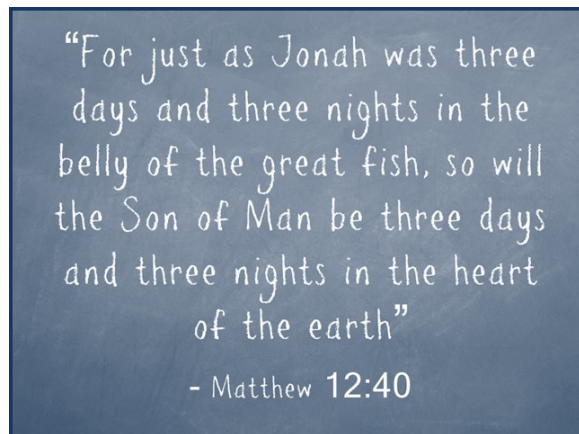


sulked. He still didn't like the Assyrians!!! God sent a tree to protect him from the hot sun. He was happy for a short time but then God destroyed the tree and he was left in the blistering sun again. God was trying to tell him that the people of Assyria were being left unattended, just like he had left the tree unattended, so they would be left to die just as the tree was left to die by Jonah. It was a "tough" lesson!

Is there a message for us in the story of Jonah's rebellion? There are many times when we know what we want to do. We know it is not God's will for us, but there are so many other people in the world that God won't even notice what we are doing!!! Wrong!!! God lets us get away with doing things our way sometimes, and sometimes he decides that it is time for us to realize that we have great potential to do good if we will only use it.

We don't get swallowed up by a great fish or be given the task of building an ark that everyone thinks is a joke, but we are given little jobs that will not only bless us, but those around us.

This same issue is with us today. So many are not saved or have never been told the Good News simply because we Christians have been too fearful to tell it. We have no way of knowing what someone will decide about Christ, we only have the obligation to tell people about Him. Miracles can happen in people's lives when we share the Word of God with them. By withholding the Word, we are failing in our responsibility.



Prayer: Father in Heaven, we don't see the picture the same way that You see it. We see our own world, our own weaknesses. Help us to see the potential for each one of us that You see, and help us to more importantly seek to use that potential. Amen

1. Jonah must have wondered if there wasn't someone else that could go see the Assyrians, someone who cared more than he did about them. Why did God choose him?
2. Do you ever want to run and hide? Do you get caught as Jonah did?
3. By God's push, Jonah realized a potential he had that he had not seen as a gift. Do we have any gifts that we have not realized?
4. Or are you the one that can give someone else a push to realize his potential?
5. What does Jonah's story tell us about the character of God?

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