

## "HEROES AND VILLAINS"

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*(Vs) Jonah 3:2-9 - "Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time..."*

- Jonah didn't get here the easy way... A lot of us need to remember that...

**God told Jonah, the prophet, to go to a foreign city called Nineveh and tell them about their sin...**

- It was an immoral city, the capital of one of the most brutal nations in the world's history— Assyria.
- Jonah didn't think that was such a good idea...
- For Jonah both... "His Safety and His Piety were at Stake!"
- So instead of listening to God, he ran in the opposite direction from what he was called to do. **Notice:** He couldn't stay where he was...He sought passage on a boat to cross the Mediterranean Sea, and he fell asleep there.

**Of course, God had other plans. He sent a storm, and Jonah knew it was his fault.**

- It's at this point, Jonah told the crew to throw him overboard.
- Question: Why not just jump in yourself? i.e. Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego

**"Often we need a storm to drive us into a place quiet enough for us to hear God speaking."**

**But God wasn't done with Jonah yet. He had work for this wondering believer to do.**

- So, he swallowed him up in a fish. Just listen to the way that Jonah describes this experience...

*(Vs) Jonah 2:1-3 - 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."*

**What must have gone through his head?**

- Huddled and hiding in the darkness...do you think he was afraid?
- Do you think he had doubts?
- Do you think he wondered what God was doing?
- Do you think he wondered if God even cared about him anymore, or should care about him anymore? - I'm sure he did.

**It's finally here in this eerily quiet place... Jonah could fully express those fears and doubts to his Maker!**

*(Vs) Jonah 3:2-6 - "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."*

**"What do you have in store for me God?" What's next?**

- After I ran the opposite direction from what you told me to do...
- After I have failed to obey your word and trust in your mercy and promises...
- After I have been so slow to believe... what will you do with me in the belly of this fish?

**Consider a parallel picture of what the disciples were feeling during those three long, dark, lonely days that Jesus lay in the tomb...**

- Do you think they were afraid and had doubts?
- Do you think they had questions?
- Do you think they thought, *"Lord, what are you doing?" "You died!? How could you die?" "You were the Christ, the Son of the living God, and we confessed that. We trusted you. We followed you!" "But you died! What's going to happen to us next?"*

**Doubts and Fears come in so many different shapes and sizes.**

- They creep up on us in the darkest of times and we wonder, we question, we doubt, we feel stuck!
- Three long and lonely days for Jonah *and* for the Disciples...
- Truth: *"We will all have days of wondering and days of uncertainty."*
- There were days of questioning God...

**That's what this next part is about, for here is where we can really experience the depth of what's being shared through Jonah's Story.**

**"For years now, the Church has been a spiritual factory producing people who only know how to think in Black and White concepts."**

- While Jonah was in that fish, we know he struggled with fear and doubt, but He also showed remarkable faith.

*(Vs) Jonah 2:6b -7,9b - "... 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... Salvation belongs to the Lord!"*

**"Jonah was both running from and to a God he knew would both convict and save him all at the same time."**

- Jonah knew his God, and he knew how great He was when it comes to loving His people.
- That's the only reason Jonah could confess that last line, *"Salvation comes from the LORD!"*

**The same thing was true for the disciples of Christ...**

- Oh, how they must have been wrapped in despair after their Savior—their Teacher—their Lord had died.
- But Jesus had promised to them that he would rise after three days.
- He even connected His glorious resurrection to Jonah the prophet who was in the fish...

*(Vs) Matthew 12:40 - "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."*

**Though it must have felt as though those disciples had every reason in the world to doubt and question and despair a Promise had been made...**

- Christ promised: *(Vs) John 11:25 - "I am the resurrection and the life..."*
- Christ also said: *(Vs) John 14:19b - "Because I live, you also will live,"*
- And so, they stayed together, huddled and hiding in the darkness.

*(Vs) Luke 24:10-12b - "Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb..."*

- It seems as a group they both doubted and ran to the tomb... both running from and to a God they knew would save them all at the same time.
- Death no longer had mastery over Jesus, and death no longer had mastery over the disciples!
- Yes, fear & doubt are around, but Jesus lives nonetheless!

### **Do you have Fears and Doubts? Take them to the empty tomb...**

- See in that empty tomb a God who keeps His promises.
- See in that empty tomb a God who made prophecies for thousands of years, who made promises to people who put their trust in Him.
- In the empty tomb, see a God who keeps every single one of those promises and who extends them to you.

### **In Christ, all of God's promises are fulfilled!**

- This is why we can confess our Fear and Faith at the same time...
- Jonah knew these promises too! That's why he could confess just like we can confess...  
*"Salvation comes from the LORD."*
- See the empty tomb, know that salvation comes from the Lord, and see that He is already where you are running...