

Community Group Discussion Questions

“Resurrection Hope”

Jonah 2:10-3:5, 4:10-11; Matthew 12:38-42

Setting: Jonah is one of the minor prophets sent to preach to his enemies, the capital of Assyria, Nineveh. He runs away, is thrown overboard, gets swallowed by a fish for three days, repents, and preaches God’s word of judgment to Nineveh. They repent, God relents, and Jonah is infuriated at God’s compassion. Jesus says that the sign of Jonah is pointing toward God’s redemption through His resurrection.

Summary: In the story of Jonah, we see an unfaithful prophet barely preaching God’s word to people he hated. In the sign of Jonah (the resurrection), Jesus is shown to be the greater prophet, displaying God’s word and work to people He loved. Through this sign, we are led to repentance, God’s love, and hope.

Main Point: *“Jesus’ resurrection leads to our repentance and hope.”*

Sermon Points:

1. The Story of Jonah
2. The Sign of Jonah
3. What It Means For Us

Opening Question

1. What do you know about the story of Jonah?

(Copied from the outline:

Jonah is the first prophet called to go to a Gentile city and preach to it. It’s more shocking he is called to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, one of the cruelest and most violent empires of ancient times. They are the enemies of Israel.

Jonah doesn’t want any part in proclaiming judgment in Nineveh because he fears they would listen and repent, leading God to relent and spare them. Jonah then goes “downward” and boards a ship sailing to the other end of the world.

God sends a storm to stop him and reveals to the pagan sailors that Jonah is the cause. Jonah says that he needs to be thrown overboard for them to be saved. Although Jonah doesn’t care about them, the sailors risk their lives to try to save Jonah.

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Jonah is thrown overboard... maybe as a sacrifice for the sailors... maybe saying he would rather die than obey God. This could have been the end of the story, but it's not. God directs a great fish to swallow Jonah, so he can remain alive in the belly of the fish for three days. He is transported to Nineveh, and Jonah learns his lesson. He repents and is grateful in his prayer in the belly of the fish.

However, his heart is not completely right as we see the fish "vomits" him back onto shore, near Nineveh. He preaches and the people of Nineveh repent. His message is only of judgment, and yet there still is repentance. You would think that this is the end of the story.

But we see Jonah waiting outside the city to see its destruction. We see God's heart of compassion, not just for Nineveh but also for Jonah. To teach Jonah, God raises a shade plant for Jonah and then destroys it. Jonah is infuriated. If Jonah cares so much for a plant that is here for only a day and he didn't even create it, how much more does God care for the Ninevites?)

We will meditate on the truths of Jesus' resurrection through the story of Jonah.

Read Jonah 2:10-3:5, 4:10-11; Matthew 12:38-42

2. What does the sign of Jonah show us about the heart of God in Christ?

(God's heart is full of compassion and grace. Compassion here means to grieve over someone or something, to have your heart broken, and to weep for it. We see God's compassion not just for Nineveh but for Jonah himself.

He controls all of creation to send storms to bring Jonah back from his disobedience. He sends the fish to sustain Jonah and to bring him to repentance. He uses the plant with gentleness to teach Jonah about His compassion.

For the Ninevites, though they are wicked and sinful, God describes them as people who don't know their right hand from their left. He sees them with compassion. He uses His word, gives time for repentance, and relents of impending judgment. We see that He loves them more than He loves plants and animals.)

3. What does the sign of Jonah show us about who Jesus is for us?

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(Jesus is the greater Jonah:

- *Jonah was thrown into the sea to die to save the sailors on the boat; Jesus was thrown into the sea of judgment on the cross, where He did die to save sinners like us.*
- *Jonah went to His enemies, whom he hated; Jesus went to His people whom He loved.*
- *Jonah declared impending judgment, Jesus declared impending salvation.*
- *Jonah came with words; Jesus came with words and deeds.*
- *Jonah was a man of God; Jesus is the Son of God.*
- *Jonah preached reluctantly, hoping for destruction; Jesus preached lovingly, willing to be destroyed so the people may be saved.*
- *Jonah waited outside the city to see the judgment of God; Jesus wept for the city (embodiment of compassion in Jonah 4) and received the judgment of God for His people.)*

4. How does the resurrection give us hope?

(Jesus' resurrection gives us a REALISTIC hope. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says that there were over 500 witnesses of the resurrected Christ. The first eyewitnesses of His resurrection were women, which would not have been the case if this story was made up. The cowardly, weak, and unfaithful disciples become bold and fearless because of this resurrection. Christianity explodes under intense persecution because of the reality of the resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection gives us PERSONAL hope. The resurrection is the sign of God's heart of compassion, love, and mercy for us.

Jesus' resurrection gives us PAST hope. It is God's stamp of approval on Jesus' words and work. Jesus is the true Son of God, the Savior of the world. Our sins have been atoned for; we are justified and adopted into His family.

Jesus' resurrection gives us PRESENT hope. The resurrection of Christ means that we have resurrection life now by the power of the Holy Spirit. New creation is the new heavens and the new earth... and new creation has entered the present through our resurrected hearts. Heaven and future have broken into the earth and the present.

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Jesus' resurrection gives us FUTURE hope. One day, everything will be made right. We will be resurrected in glory. There will be no more tears, shame, sin, and death. And because of that day, we can persevere today.)

Final Thoughts: *In 1 Corinthians 15, we see Paul saying that our faith and lives are futile if there wasn't a resurrection. No resurrection means that Jesus is not the savior. No resurrection means that we are still in our sin and death. No resurrection means that there isn't any love, peace, and hope for us in Christ. But if the resurrection is true, then that changes everything. Does it change everything for us?*