

Jonah 1

"A Wild God and a Servant without a Servant's Heart"

**God makes the most massive assumptions.
God pursues the most recalcitrant servants.
God contrives the most amazing triumphs.**

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Morning if you would turn to Jonah chapter one, please. A clause from the hymn and dark is his path on the wings of a storm kind of sums up. Jonah chapter one in in one cents. That's a very familiar passage really among the minor prophets, but let's get read in front of us.

Jonah chapter one beginning at verse one. Now the word of Yahweh came to Jonah son of a mid-eye saying to get up good and nine of that great city and preach against it where they're evil has come up before me, so Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh and he went down to Joplin found the ship going to Tarshish pace its fair and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh, But Yahweh hurled a great wind on the sea, so great storm came up on the sea and the ship seemed likely to be smashed then the sailors began to fear to cry out each one to his God and they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to make it lighter for them, but Jonah had gone down below deck had laying down and was sound asleep then the captain came near to him and said to him, what are you doing sleeping away get up call to your God, perhaps the God may give a thought to us and we won't perish.

Then they said each man to his companion come on and let's throw lots so that we may know on who's account this disaster is come on us so they threw lots and the lot fell on Jonah and they said to him tell us on who's account this disaster has come upon us what's your work, where do you come from what's your country from what people are you and he said to them?

I'm a Hebrew and Yahweh the god of heaven is the one I fear. Who they deceive and the dry land then the men feared a great fear and said to him, what is this you've done for the men who he was fleeing from the presence of Yahweh for he had told them and they said to him what a way to do to you that to see may settle down for us for the sea kept storming on and he said to them pick me up and hurled me into the sea and the sea will settle down for you for I know it's on my account that this great storm has come on you.

Now the men tried to break through to return to land but they were not able to do so for the sea went on storming against them though, they called out to Yahweh and said oh now he always don't let us perish for the life of this man and do not charge us with innocent blood for you Yahweh have done as you please.

I picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea and the sea stopped. It's raging. Then the men feared Yahweh with a great fear and they offered sacrifice to Yahweh and vowed vows. It's gonna one versus one to sixteen. Well, sometimes we're surprised by surprises. I think times like that of something my father did.

He was a pastor and every year he would write up at the end of the year for the congregational meeting a kind of a summary of his ministry over that year. It was just a one-page type written affair and he would read this and go through it at the congregational meeting.

I have copies of these things from way back in the 1930s on. Up into the 1950s and 60s and I take them out look at them once in a while. There's one in which he said I forget which congregation it was. This is about 1953 or so. I think he he said as as part of his report his pastor report, he said now your pastor has received two invitations to candidate at other churches during the last year.

Family considerations prompted us to refuse these invitations though, they did. Offer nice increases in salary. One faster would do that. You just don't do that. You don't do that kind of but and see my father wasn't exactly conventional. And he got away with it. And, The Hulu Jonah begins with surprises.

Jonah isn't exactly conventional but neither is the Lord as though we look at this. Wild God and the servant without a servant's heart. Now before we get to the surprises, there's one point, I just want to look at the testimony basically of Jonah one. What's it teaching us? And before we get to the surprising part, I think there's something we need to look at first.

And so, this is the first point. First notice that God makes the most massive assumptions. You see this in verses one and two God makes the most massive assumptions. You see what he says verse? Two get up he says to Jonah go to Nineveh that great city and preach against it for their evil has come up before me.

Now, you know how an assumption can sometimes be more powerful than just a direct statement or assertion. For example, I. Let's say you're in a family now now this doesn't pertain to any of you but but take for example you have an extended family and here's a couple that has a number of children and you always have to debate well are we going to spend Christmas with my side of the family or your side what about Thanksgiving do we go there or here what about Easter, you know, those sorts of questions and and let's say as I say, none of you.

Situation, well, let's say you kind of have. Hearing mother figure in this network and so she's talking to you maybe as the the husband of the family and and she is saying to you now when you come for Christmas. Notice that's an assumption that's not a question it's not a request it's not even an assertion it's an assumption that's kind of a powerful thing isn't it well you always make certain assumptions here doesn't he in verse 2.

The first one is that every nation is accountable to him go to Nineveh that great city and preach against it for their evil has come up before me. Nineveh the a prime city of asterium a Syria and and Yahweh is the God of Israel but he assumes that this pagan nation is subject to his judgment as well.

I so Yahweh is the God of he may be the covenant God of his people but he is the creation God of all and as Syria is subject to his judgment. For their evil has come up before me assumes the nearness of judgment and therefore the urgency of Jonah to go so.

God assumes that all pagan non-covenantal nations like the United States of America and Assyria, for example are subject to his judgement he's no little league deity. Yahweh is a world class deity, that's one assumption second assumption he assumes that his servants of obedience to him he says to Jonah get up go to Nuba.

's Metro here it is on the individual level isn't it not would you please if the way be clear but get up and go to Nineveh and so here he rightly assumes that individual servants. Obedience to him that he commands our obedience as individuals. Now, here's the interesting thing and I want you to put these two assumptions together.

See what a full orb view the Bible has of the God of the Bible. Now on the one hand, we call it sovereignty, don't we God's rulership over all international sovereignty. A serious subject to his judgment. On the other hand individual sovereignty, Jonah, you're to go. Both the international and the individual the total package is sovereignty includes both the universal scope.

And also the particular attention. So that's a struck me when I was re-reading some I think was a biography of Jefferson Davis the President of the Confederacy during the war between the stage and there was one of he he had a request from a young woman in South Carolina.

There was a fellow who was serving in the South Carolina fifth and his sweetheart back in South Carolina. Who was not a very grammatical young lady. I wrote Jefferson Davis and this fellow's name was James and he wanted this this girl wanted a President Davis to see that James could come home from the Army in the Confederate Army and marry her and she wrote to him.

James is willing. I is willing his mammy says she is willing but James Captain he ain't willing. Now when we are all willing Septon James Captain, I think you might let up and let James come. She promised to to have her beloved return to the Army as soon as they were were married.

And so Davis before he sent the request on to the Secretary of War turned paper over and wrote Let James go. Now Jefferson Davis, whether you liked his management style or not and all of that doesn't matter I but he's present. The Confederacy he's got a war to oversee he's got a government to look after but here's this girl who can't right straight grammar in South Carolina who has a personal request and he attends to that as well.

So you have the big stuff and you have the particular stuff. Now, that's the way it is with Yahweh sovereignty. The, He's in court charge of the maxi is in charge of the many. And when you put those together you have a full view of the god of the Bible okay?

God makes the most massive assumption now number two, notice God pursues the most recalcitrant servants versus three to seven God pursues the most recalcitrant servants now we're going to get to that but I think we need to lead up to the this main point. I want to touch on several items on the way notice you have straightforward rebellion right off in verse three the, Lord said get up go to minimum, so Joe got up the fleet of tarsus from the presence of Yahweh and you have three times in verse three tarshish mentioned, we don't know where tarshish was well, maybe somebody does.

I know some people think it's in Spain or somewhere like that, but at the other end of the Mediterranean see a distant place and so on we don't really know need to know where tarsus is it isn't none of that that's the point and and that's where Jonah is headed.

Straight forward rebellion against what the Lord is saying now this this is surprising this is shocking because prophets don't do this. I think about Isaiah and Isaiah chapter six and he has this vision of God in his holiness but then he says when God says who will I send whom will he send I hear my send me.

Or Jeremiah chapter one the Lord calls Jeremiah and he says, oh I'm too young and experienced etc but but if there's always there's that shrinking on his part but there's no rebellion Ezekiel goes in the bitterness of his spirit Ezekiel and chapter 3 may have been angry about the Lord's called but he went aimless and aimless chapter 7 is told to go back to the nation of Judah down south and prophesy there, but get out of the, Northern kingdom and Amos said to the priest there look wasn't my idea the Lord took me from following the flock, etc.

But here's a prophet like no other prophet. Lord calls it. And he says, no. I won't do it just outright rebellion now there's a strange combination here. I want you to notice in verse 5, it talks about what Jonah had done when he went to the ship but Jonah had gone down below deck had laying down and was sound asleep.

I think that's interesting there's no evidence that Jonah was chewing his guts out over his rebellion against Yahweh, he can go to sleep. Down below deck.

You know, you may be running from God and yet you can have great personal peace he's not main lighting mainlining my land to or anything like that he's no one now this isn't always the case you go to solve 32 verses three to five and you know, sometimes when you're in sin and in rebellion and unrepentant etc that David there is on 32 talks about how it even affected his physical health and so what we would call it psychosomatic effects of unconfessed in and so on so sometimes.

Stir you up and disturb you and and you lose sleep and and you fret and so on until you resolve this and repent but in Jonah's case there didn't

seem to be that and that shows the danger doesn't it of relying on mere subjective feelings? Sometimes you have to pinch yourself as a Christian and say my feelings are just feelings.

They may not be any true indicator of the true status of things. Jonah was great personal peace here apparently but he was in rebellion against his Lord so the fact that your devotional times for instance may have been very rich lately just means that your devotional times have been very rich it's not necessarily an indication of your faithfulness.

I maybe pressing things too much but see I I can remember the fellow who. Told me who was a? Who was carrying on an adulterous affair with another woman then his wife and yet told me oh but during this time I've had the most rich and and and intense devotional times well, okay, but that's no indication that you're walking with the Lord have to be careful about putting too much weight on mere feelings.

Jonah didn't seem to be disturbed here now there's a particular problem. In this little section here and that is this whole matter of the presence of the Lord or the presence of Yahweh, especially in verse 3 fleeing from the presence of Yahweh what's that involved now? I think we we could look back and say, oh Jonah was so foolish thinking he'll get away from the presence of God.

I don't think Jonah was a numbskull don't don't read this as though Jonah didn't know Psalm 139, he knew he couldn't evade God's. Not like he that's all like he didn't believe in God's on the presence. I think here when it's using fleeing from the present to go from the presence of Yahweh, it's using the presence of Yahweh in a technical kind of a technical sense in this sense, sometimes the prophets would use this phrase like in First King 17-1.

Elijah says to Ahab as Yahweh lives in whose presence. I stand. Kind of a literal translation. Elijah's a prophet he stands in the Lord's presence what does that mean that's the place where he's he he is when he receives the Lord's word and the Lord's direction for what he's to do as a prophet and then in First Kings 18 verse 17, he says to Obadiah Ahab's assistant and so on he says as Yahweh lives before whom I stand.

Or in the present in whose presence I stand so the Lord's presence sometimes can be used in a kind of restrictive way if you want to put it that way or technical way it was the place where prophets were in order to receive their direction and their their word from God in order to deliver it now.

I think that's a more of a that kind of a confined meaning of the presence of the Lord here. Jonah in other words is trying to opt out. Of his office as a process. And if he's not on site. Maybe the Lord will get somebody else for project minimum now that doesn't die with it no worries.

I'm not you know, I'm gonna shed blood over it but seems to me that that that's the idea here that he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord. In the sense of when he that that that in which prophets stand when they receive God's word and so on he doesn't want to have any part of prophesying in in this and so he's he's vacating now what are we going to do let's get to the application of this what happens well the Lord pursues for calcitron service, look at verse 4, but Yahweh emphatic subject.

Yahweh hurled a great wind on the scene, so great storm came up on the sea now that verb hurled is used for times in Jonah chapter one, this is the first in verse four. I in verse five the sailors hurled the cargo into the sea and in verses 12 and 15 talks about hurling Jonah into the sea but here it's Yahweh Yahweh Pearl a great wind.

On the sea. The unmanageable God. Jonah rebels and God starts throwing things. Now he's not going to let him get off with this what I want you to seek particularly here is how this mixes. What I call divine gentlemen theology. Let me give you example of divine gentlemen theology a few years ago, there was a book from a Christian publisher and the author I was talking it of the way God works with us in our Christian life and so on and this is a quote in you don't need to know the whole context he says he God will stop at nothing.

Except our unwillingness to cooperate that is a boundary he has chosen not to cross. You know, what Jonah would say to that he would say, really. Jonah would say how I wish that were true. It's a boundary he's showing if you won't cooperate then then. God's chosen not to cross that boundary.

And Jonah would say he will if he wants to. God started throwing things he hurled a great win on the sea now in the sort of like the situation with Abraham Lincoln when he was president there was cabinet meeting and and Lincoln was summing up the votes on a particular issue in the in the meeting.

Lincoln himself was in favor of his proposal but he was seeing that the cabinet members were not and so he taller than me says, let's see there are seven days and one eye the eyes have it. Now you can't do that you might not oh yeah if you're president you can.

And if you're the sovereign god. You can go after recalcitrant servant. I know watch this so-called divine gentleman theology, what is it don't know one telling us here you might think oh God would never do that, but but he does. Jonah one is telling you that Yahweh is not some celestial wind who is imprisoned and frustrated by your recalcitrance.

He may leave you in your recalcitrance. He may perslay you to change. Or he may simply smash your recalcitrant. God is not tamed. He starts throwing things. And your tiny free will is a house of cards against Yahweh's determination. Notice that God pursues the most recalcitrant servants now let's go to a third point.

The tax is telling us that God can try the most amazing triumphs versus eight to sixteen latter part of the chapter. God contrives the most amazing triumphs. Now you notice in verse nine when when Jonah draws a short straw as it were and the men know, oh it's because of this fellow that this problem has come up and they interrogate him and so on.

The first time in verse 9 that Jonah actually speaks and actually if you get the gurus Old Testament gurus, who? Break these things down in a

certain structure verse 9 is really the very heart and center of Jonah chapter 1. He says, I'm a Hebrew and Yahweh the God of heaven is the one I fear who made this sea and the dry land.

So there's Jonah's confession of faith. He's in rebellion against the Lord's orders, but he confesses the Lord's truth. This is this is the CREE and the Creed you might say that Jonah confesses is right. That's true. That's Orthodox. Then in the following verses you have the authentication of this creed or this truth.

Now you notice in verse 12, they they wonder what what can we do to you to get this storm to stop and so on in verse 12, he says pick me up in hurled me into the sea and to see we'll settle down for you for I know it's on my account that this great storm has come on you.

Notice he doesn't say well I realize.

They know no Jonah has no intention at this point of repenting. I'm going to David Jones Locker. I'm not going to change my mind but you can grow me overboard and and that will that will bring a stop. Well, they try their best to get back to to land a camp and so they they ask the Lord not not to hold it against them and in verse 15 they pick up Jonah Harlem into the sea and the sea stopped its raging.

Now, it's important to connect that with verse 12 because that's what Jonah predicted, isn't it? And in verse 15, that's what happened. He predicted it ahead of time and then it came about verse 15 just like that which shows that Jonah is a true prophet of Yahweh as far as speaking the truth.

That was a true prediction.

And. What response did that bring then the men and I'm translating here with a the Hebrew idiom fairly literally then the men feared Yahweh with a great fear and they offered sacrifice to Yahweh and valed vows. God contrives the most amazing triumphs. He brought pagan sailors to worship him now you though are 21st century Christian and you're just a little bit cynical about this baby and you may have your own Christian response and you may say but worth it.

Or you might say but did they persevere and so on? Well don't press it too far the last we see of these sailors they're fearing and worshipping. Yahweh. I sleep at that. God contrives the most amazing triumph. Now the wonder of all this. In spite of Jonas rebellion and disobedience.

Yahweh uses even that. Together a pagan congregation. To himself. Isn't God grand. I think that's where we shall we should react know now we see different evidences of this sort of thing there was a. Clip a few years back in the Sudan interior mission male out that was rehearsing some of the history of their mission in Africa and talked about I think it was three men who had started a work in Ethiopia and that area about staking out about 25,000 square miles and in spite of disease and opposition through medical work and language learning and visiting with people in their home.

S the first believers were soon standing firm and then came a little thing called World War two and the Italians came in Italian army came in and conquered Ethiopia, this would have been fact before World War two actually started the Italian invasion in a 1938 all missionaries were excluded from Ethiopia leaving in this case three partly organized churches 150.

Less than 150 believers. Now during this time when the Italians were in charge there in Ethiopia there was an one occasion anyway in Italian commander who wanted to impress an intimidate the locals with Italian power and so he required all of them around the area of sadhu to attend a parade of tanks and artillery and soldiers doing their strutting and so on the impress them with Mussolini's war machine well, so they did that and people came from miles around some had to.

Walk. Long long distances in order to get there and they came from places that had not yet been reached with the gospel but the the local believers hosted them overnight and the guests heard about Jesus and some of them believed and took the news back to their villages the next day so by 1941 the Italians are kicked out of Ethiopia and what do you have well they found?

Over 70 well organized churches active evangelists, and an estimated 10,000 believers. God contrives the most amazing trial. I'm gonna do.

Oh well, I've got the Italian army, thank you that's the sort of thing the Lord does and that's what he does here even through Jonah so with this truckullet prophet he gathers the worst. Creation. How he turns man's rebellion to his glory that's something you see supremely in that text and acts for 27 to 28 where the early church prays, you know, there was in this city gathered against your holy serving.

Jesus both here and Pontius. Pilate the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel to do whatever your plan. The predestined to take place he works through also works of instruments. Now. How did you see that this happens in your own personal experience, don't some of you have stories? That you can recount.

Of the way God works like this and what should I response be well with the sailors adoration and worship? Now let me press your patience and bring up the fourth point notice here that God spreads the most healthy fear the last of verse 15 and verse 16. God spreads the most healthy fear.

They hurled them into the sea and the sea stopped it's raging then the men feared Yahweh with a great fear and they offered sacrifice and may and vowed vows now notice their response and know that the great fear. Follows the calmed sea. Now you can slip into an error here.

You may say oh yes, I see how they respond with that fear. But believers in the New Testament age are not a respond that way, that is the Old Testament way. Or we may say well, that's what we may expect from primitive pagans, but we are disciples of Jesus after all we shouldn't be trembling like that, but you won't get that idea from the new testament.

There's a parallel passage to Joan of Chapter 1, you know, it's called mark 4 verses 35 to 41 remember when the waves were coming into the boat and Jesus disciples wake and him and say don't you care Lord that we're perishing and so on and Jesus rouses himself and speaks to the wind and to the storm you can almost translate it.

I don't mean this in a in a nasty river play but quiet shut up. And see it was a great calm. And then it says that the disciples same idiom marks writing in Greek but it's as if it's Hebrew. They feared a great fear. Why?

Where they afraid before the storm yes they were but now Jesus is called as the storm and they're shaking why do they fear a great fear after this storm is over? Because a realized coup it is that sitting with them in a boat on the sea of Galilee at a certain longitude and latitude they realize they know about Jonah one they know about Psalm 65:89 and 107 were at talks about God being the one who stills the seas and the storm and that's what Jesus has done who then is this they ask.

And when you realize that the God of creation. Is sitting there near you in the boat. Your knees somehow go out from under you. And you really do fear a great fear. Trembling and fear is a right response to Jesus. I think we could say if you never tremble in the presence of Jesus, you probably don't know him very well.

Then the church by and large in our day as far too little of this fearing a great fear. So if God sometimes spreads fear or terror it may be the most healthy terror orest, well the temptation as you look at Jonah one can be with an interesting text like this.

To focus on the human character. Jonah's call and he is colorful. Jonas called Jonas flight. Jonas predicament was really wrong. The voted Jonah is not really so much about Jonah. It's about a stormy and sovereign God before whom you and I are to vow. In adoring worship.

Oh Yahweh our God what? What an unusual God, you are how you surprise us.

How.

How different are your ways oftentimes than what we expect and therefore you are so refreshing. Thank you oh Lord for being such an interesting God. And caused that this fascination. With you and your ways. Would lead us not just the mere fashion and fascination. But lead us to bow with those pagan sailors in worship and adoration of a great and soft.

God we pray in Jesus' name amen.