

"We are all Jonahs"

Have you ever run from God? Ok let me rephrase that. Do you remember or are you willing to admit when you ran from God? Do you know the areas in your life where you are running from God right now? We are going to spend several weeks looking at a man in the Bible who ran from God.

God specifically told Jonah what He wanted Jonah to do and Jonah did a 180 and took off the other direction. He found himself in dark circumstances...but even in the most desperate places...in the smelliest...most disgusting places that we find ourselves....Jonah learned that God never ran from us. When Jonah cried out...God was there.

Jonah 1:1–3 (ESV) 1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

Every time I think about Jonah I think about Moses. Not the Moses of Bible, but rather the Moses of the Dumpster.

Years ago we were on a mission trip to the Dream Center. We were getting ready to go to one of my favorite places in LA- Skid Row. **PHOTO 1** I love Skid Row because it is where the most desperate people in US live. They are the leper colonies of our day and I know that Jesus specifically reached out and touched Lepers. **PHOTO 2**

As all the buses were getting ready to leave the Dream Center they realized that one bus didn't have an adult leader and they asked me to switch buses **PHOTO 3**I have to admit that I was disappointed that I would be going to another area of town, but I reluctantly volunteered.

PHOTO 4

When we finally got to the area where we were going, as I got off the bus my first thought was..."Wow, these are some pretty nice homes." But I soon saw a strip mall of older small businesses and a laundromat and hotel where many of the prostitutes and drug addicted folks hung out. LA is weird that way.

I was leading a group of teenagers who were there to witness to folks. They all soon engaged with folks in small groups praying and sharing. We had been there about 30 minutes when I asked God to show me what He sees.

I looked over toward a dumpster that had the gate partially closed and I saw a foot through the crack in the gate. I was concerned that it might be a body so I went there by myself.

When I pulled the gate back...there he was...Moses. Moses was sitting on some boxes, next to dumpster reading a book of Mormon. It was like the Dumpster was his cubicle.

I asked him what he was doing and he told me, "I am trying to figure out why I am here" I joked with him and asked if he was wondering why he was here on earth or just next to the dumpster. He told me...I am trying to find out both...how did I end up here?

I told Him that I believe God sent me all the way from Sarasota Florida to tell him that the answers he was seeking could be found in a different book. Not the Book of Mormon.

As soon as I said that he immediately stood up and bowed up. I thought he was going to hit me. Expecting a rant on the Mormon faith, instead he said...You are NOT from Sarasota, stop lying to me! He was getting more and more agitated. So I pulled out my drivers license and showed it to him.

He plopped back down on the boxes...his hands started shaking....and he started crying. I had no idea what was happening.

It took him a few minutes and then he said...that is my home. I used to deliver washing machines for the Sears store at the mall. Sarasota is home. Sarasota is where I lived before....and then he started crying again...before I ended up here.

I asked Moses if I could pull up a box. And I began telling him about Jesus. I remember sharing with him the story of Jonah.

He looked at me and said, "Doc, I guess we are all Jonah's"

I asked him a very penetrating question....Moses, has God given up on you...or have you given up on God?

If God didn't lose sight of Jonah inside a whale, He hasn't missed you next to this dumpster. He rearranged my world to get me on that bus and to this moment.

We talked for quite a while and I encouraged him to come to church with us that night. He rode back with us on the bus along with some others and we sat in the back of the church service that night.

When the Pastor did the altar call...Moses was more than ready to surrender to Jesus.

Moses story is Jonah's Story. Sometimes when you run from God you run right into Him.

I have met a lot of Jonah's in my day. The streets are full of people who ran from God and found themselves sleeping in boxes or living in tents in the streets.

But let's not kid ourselves. I have met Jonah's in Country Clubs, living in gated communities, in big homes on Longboat Key, at the Yacht Club...

I have met Jonah's of all races, all walks of life, all circumstances, all economic realms...and most importantly I have met Jonah in the mirror.

Moses was right....we are all Jonahs.

We are all more like Jonah than we care to admit. When we run from God it doesn't take long for a whale to swallow us. Maybe the darkness you feel is the belly of alcoholism, drug abuse, a painful relationship, the emptiness of wealth, the uncertainty of cancer, or the arrogance of racism. Whales come in all sizes and shapes but the darkness is the same.

Maybe you have resisted what you know God says to do. Now you are dealing with the circumstances...the very real consequences of the decisions that you have made. It is dark and it feels hopeless..

Maybe God seems distant to you and you are ready to give up on God because you feel like He has given up on you. Actually, you may have given up on you.

Perhaps you think that you are unworthy. That what you have done is too bad...that you are not good enough...that you have always failed...never seem to have succeeded at anything except making mistakes.

We are going to see that Jonah was a prophet of God but he was messed up. He is not a happy prophet. In fact, it is almost embarrassing that his story is even in the Bible.

Jonah is arrogant....he is self-righteous...he is prideful...he thinks he knows better than God...

He is a racist. A card carrying supremacist. He hated certain groups of people...hated them with fury.

And yet God did not give up on him....and He will never give up on you. If that is you, I am glad that you are here for this series. I would encourage you with the words I told Moses....

Don't give up on God because he has never given up on you.

We can all learn a lot from this incredible short book...we can see ourselves in Jonah.

Jonah is one of the Books of Prophecy. It is a unique Book because it is prophetic...Like all stories, scriptures, and books in the Old Testament they all tell the story of Jesus. We will see in Jonah's story a foreshadowing of Jesus.

But this prophetic book is a bit different than all the others. Most prophetic books are about God's Message. This one seems to be about Jonah the prophet and his interaction with God.

Jonah is also one of the best known books in the Bible. Those who challenge the Bible often choose this book and this story as their weapon. Most of us grew up with Jonah on a felt board or on Veggie tales. It is a nice children's story.

Children, do what God says or a whale or something worse will eat you! Great motivation in preschool. It certainly captures their imagination and it seems like a fairy tale to be honest

But this story is not about a fish....It isn't even really about Jonah. This story is about God....and specifically God's compassion.

It is in Jonah that we see God's compassion for those who follow and love Him. And the same compassion for those who do not.

Jonah is a racist. He absolutely hates with fury....the Assyrians. He is furious at God for having compassion on them and not destroying them.

Remember that the Assyrians were the invaders that God used to punish the Northern Kingdom Israel for rejecting Him. We will explore that historic event later. But Jonah saw these invaders come into the Northern Kingdom and pillage, rape, murder and destroy the Israelites. He hated them and he felt like he had good reason to want them to suffer and die.

We all have negative feelings about other people. If you don't, we think you are lying and we hate liars.....joke. We all wrestle with jealousy when God gives others what we think they don't deserve.

We have all been in a mess that we brought upon ourselves. We find ourselves in the consequences of choosing our way instead of God's way. We know what it is like to be jealous of others....we have often blamed God for what has happened to us...because many of us just can't accept that our decisions led us where we are.

I think all of us have experienced Jonah moments. In the darkness...the belly...of the whale of a problem..that we brought upon ourselves.

We are going to learn that this book, like every other book of the Bible. It can be read on the surface and understood as a cute children's fable or we can dive deep and find the deep spiritual truths that God planted for those who are willing to dig for gold. But let's go ahead and answer the obvious question.

Is this book a true story?...YES. Was Jonah a real person? Scripture interprets Scripture.

2 Kings 14:25 (ESV) 25 He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher

Was Nineveh a real place? Yes...

First Mentioned in Genesis 10, a great city and the Capital of Assyria built by Nimrod who was the Great Grandson of Noah. God tells us in the historical Scriptures that Nimrod was the "First on earth to be a Mighty Man". Nimrod built a mighty city- Nineveh on the Tigris River in Assyria.

Ok Real Person...Real Place...but its a fable right? I mean no one really believes this is true right?

Matthew 12:39–41 (ESV) 39 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. 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. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Jesus compared the truth of this story to the truth that He would resurrect after 3 days. It is either true or Jesus is a liar. I'll go with true. It was a true story for Jonah...and it is a story that is true for us. But to help us understand it, I need to give you a bit of Old Testament history

Historical Context of Jonah

Remember that King David lived about 1000 years before Christ. His reign was the greatest reign of peace and prosperity. When he died the nation essentially split. That occurred in about 920BC. They Split into Israel in the North and Judah in the South. And they hated each other. **MAP 1**

After that split the Assyrians were posturing to their North. **MAP 2** They were known as a ruthless group of people who hated Jews and anyone who got in their way. They were the big dog of world power at the time and they were eyeing both Kingdoms but particularly Israel to the North because they shared a border with Damascus.

Jonah arrived on the prophetic scene around 800BC and his ministry lasted until about 750BC.

TIMELINE Jonah was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom Israel. His contemporary was Amos and Hosea.

During Jonah's lifetime, Israel was at peace and they were feeling arrogant about the way God would always protect them. They were beginning to live in the blessings of God and beginning to believe that they deserved those blessings.

They had turned so far from God and worshiped false God's that God inflicted His punishment on them.

God was going to judge his unfaithful, disobedient, covenant-breaking people. Despite the Lord's special choice of Israel and his kindnesses to her during the exodus and conquest and in the days of David and Solomon, his people continually failed to honor and obey him.

God's imminent judgment on Israel would not be a mere punitive blow to warn, but an almost total destruction. The unthinkable was about to happen: Because they had not faithfully consecrated themselves to his lordship, God would uproot his chosen people by the hands of a pagan nation. Even so, if they would repent, there was hope that "the Lord God Almighty (would) have mercy on the remnant"

It was in such a time that the Lord sent Amos and Hosea to announce to his people Israel that he would "spare them no longer" but would send them into exile "beyond Damascus"

During this time the Lord also sent Jonah to Nineveh to warn it of the imminent danger of divine judgment. **MAP 3**

Nineveh was a large Assyrian city that is currently called Mosul in Northern Iraq. It is on the east bank of the Tigris River.

Nineveh was an important junction for commercial routes crossing the Tigris on the great highway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, thus uniting the East and the West, it received wealth from many sources, so that it became one of the greatest of all the region's ancient cities, and the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

Now we know some other dates as well...Assyria did indeed almost completely destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel just as Amos and Hosea had said....in 722 BC. **TIMELINE** Some thirty years after their warning.

Jonah was to tell the Assyrians that God was going to destroy Nineveh...It is the prophet Nahum who tells us that story which was fulfilled in 612 BC.

The Babylonians would rise to power at that point and turn their focus to the Southern Kingdom which they would invade and destroy as God's judgment in 587BC.

The Assyrians were horrible people.

Powerful and well developed civilization. Poised on their border like a hurricane in the gulf. The greatest enemy of the Jewish Nation (North and South) at the time. Vicious attacks and inhumane treatment....Buried people in the sand....staked their tongue...left the to die. Unspeakable things to women. The epitome of everything the Jewish people hated and they knew God hated.

Most Jews felt that the Assyrians were godless monsters who deserved God's full wrath and punishment. When they conquered an area they weakened their enemy by deporting them and bringing in other races to intermingle, intermarry and weaken their national or racial pride. Years later this would lead to those in the Northern Kingdom to be considered Half-Breeds....

So here is the Backdrop for our story. Jonah knew of these people and their atrocities. He hated them. He wanted them destroyed. His hate for them grew into racism...Although Israel was at peace when Jonah lived....it was evident the Assyrian Beast was hungry, salivating and poised.

So to recap for our purposes. **MAP 4** The Assyrians are an evil people poised to the North and ready to pounce. The Northern Israel felt God was required to protect them even though their hearts were far from Him....a lesson for us today in the US....

Yet God was bringing judgment on them and using a horrible pagan nation...the Assyrians to do it.

Picture the most Pagan....God hating people....on the planet. Ruthless, no compassion, no heart, cold blooded killers....Much like ISIS. Then picture an entire nation of them.....growing and poised to our north in Canada. They hate Americans and they want to kill us.

Now imagine...and it is not hard at all....that we had been a nation blessed by God...living in the blessings and protection that He had provided...yet at the same time...worshiping other gods and turning our backs on Him.

Now imagine that God is going to bring punishment on us and on Isis, but he is going to use ISIS to punish us first and then He will destroy them.....Imagine that picture and this begins to come into focus.

Now we are ready to go back to Jonah 1

Jonah 1:1–2 (ESV) 1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me."

God give a specific command to Jonah. Probably a routine prophet instruction...not too complicated. Go to Nineveh...tell them to turn back to me. Clear, concise...not confusing. Part of a Prophet's Core Curriculum. Pretty simple isn't it?Is it?

From the very first verse the tension develops and it is all around prejudice, hatred and racism. God specifically chose Jonah with this specific message. God is going to use Jonah to expose an area of blindness. He is going to use this situation to shape and mold Jonah

Those in the South would not have got past the first 10 words. The Word of the Lord came to Jonah.....Jonah!...He is from the North. They betrayed the Jewish Nation.They deserve God's judgment. Why would the Word of God come to a Northern Jew? God chose Jonah to speak for Him? How can this be? Their own prejudice would begin to rise up within them. Some of them were still drinking Haterade.They had judged others and held onto bitterness, unforgiveness, and hatred

Just a few verses in and I can feel the temperature rising.

For Jonah the tension comes in verse 2..."Arise" Yes Sir" Go to Nineveh" Finally....God is going to blast them. He is going to protect Israel by wiping out Nineveh. He is going to show those people what they deserve...He is going to avenge what they have done....Packing for Nineveh God... All my bags are packed...I am ready to go..I am standing here outside the door...

"Call out against them" Wait a minute.....God you only call out against someone when you want them to turn to you... It is through your compassion that you warn someone...God you are not going to annihilate them...you are going to rescue them! God I have already decided that they don't deserve you. They are not like I am...They are not one of us....Look at all they have done....Do you know about all of their sins?...Keep reading

"For their evil has come up before me" God you know about their sins...you know what they have done....and you still love them? You aren't bringing wrath and destruction but rather love and compassion? Oh God! You are not going to forgive them... are you? I don't want you to care about them...I don't care about them. I can't forgive them! I will not forgive them!

We are going to learn that this book is all about God's compassion contrasted with our prejudice. And it starts in the first verse.

Let me put this in perspective for you. This would be like asking a Jewish refugee to go to Berlin at the Height of Hitler's Power. March to the City Square of Berlin wearing a Star of David. Tell them that the God of a Foreign Land had noticed their evil and they had better repent or that God would destroy them. Jonah we will see did not want to deliver that message. Not because it seemed like a suicide mission...it wasn't fear that drove him to flee west, we will learn in Chapter 4 that Jonah's hatred for Assyrians fueled his flee.

From Jonah's perspective...Assyrians and everyone in Nineveh deserve nothing but God's full wrath. Not me God...send someone else. I would rather die....than live to play a part in an Assyrian being forgiven and saved. Jonah was so full of hatred....and that is exactly why God chose him. God does not randomly do anything. When God chooses us to do something for him it is because there is a lesson for us to learn. Often God's requests chisel away at our shortcomings. We will see that even though Jonah flees from the Lord, even though he wants God to pick someone else, God pursues Jonah because this lesson is for him God is going to chisel away at Jonah's prejudice and hatred by showing him..... That God still loves everyone....even those who Jonah hates and who have hated God

God is going to use this situation to expose prejudice. The Word of God is a light and it is exposing in Jonah what he was otherwise blind to. Jonah's heart was displeasing to God. We will see that God goes to great extremes to pursue and change him

Jonah's Hatred and prejudice vs. God's Love and Compassion for all His people. Not just a children's story anymore. Much more than Felt Boards, Coloring Books and Veggie Tales. God has exposed Jonah's weakness. Revealed to Jonah what He wants him to change

The Word of God does that. It always reveals...what we don't want to see and what God wants to change. So Jonah heads to Nineveh excited to see how God is going to change him....Not exactly.

Jonah 1:2–3 (ESV) 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

Tarshish? Suburb of Nineveh right? **MAP** ...Nineveh is East over Land. Tarshish is directly West over Sea...It may have been in Southern Spain.It represented a place as far away from God as Jonah could get. At least that is what he thought. He will soon learn that things can get much worse

. We are also given a purpose for this new destination. "Away from the Presence of the Lord"....Repeated twice...Jonah was a prophet. He likely knew that he couldn't run from the Lord

Psalms 139:7–12 (ESV) 7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," 12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

From the Presence of the Lord is better translated...From the place and land where God is known to be. Jonah just wanted to get away. He is running from the truth of who God says that he is....He is running from what God wants him to confess and change....In rebellion, Jonah's first instinct is to get away from all things "God"

From God's people....From God's Land....From the Holy Scriptures....From the presence of God in the Temple....From anything and anyone who could remind him of the real reason that he is running

Tarshish was that place for him...as far away as possible. Reload...fresh start....No one knows me there

Jonah 1:3 (ESV) 3 He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

Not every opportunity is God's Will. Jonah went to Joppa...wow a ship...where is it Going? Tarshish? Wow what a blessing! If God didn't want me to go to Tarshish...why would this ship be here? Not only that but others are going there too! I am not the only one going to Tarshish. Everyone is doing it!

You must remember that when you start to run from God, Satan will put wind in your sails...Satan cannot make you go somewhere you don't want to go, but once you decide to go....he is all in.

Which lead to another key observation. Note that Jonah paid the fare. Running from God always costs you something. Jonah paid the fare, but he will soon learn that he has not yet paid the price for running from God.

One observation. Running from God takes us down. Down spiritually, physically and emotionally. Jonah went down all right. Down...To Joppa....Down into the ship....Down in the sea....Down into the belly of a fish

So the Word of God came to Jonah and he ran.....what about you? The Word of God has come to each of us....There are instructions and commands in this book that God brings to us....As you are reading the Bible...God highlights things for you to do. Confess that sin....help that person... Change that attitude....love that person....Give to others....forgive others. Admit to yourself and others what I am exposing....Use those I have surrounded you with to help you change.

When the Word of God comes to you...When the Holy Spirit highlights an action step....Do you rise to join God in His presence?...Or do you try to get away from all things God?

Let's bring this home a bit... When God reveals something in your life that displeases Him...the Holy Spirit highlights God's message for you....In Scripture...through circumstances....in prayer... and through those believers who love you. There is nothing random about it. You have been chosen for this lesson. The Word of God came to you. It has been crafted just for you. God sees something He doesn't like and He is going to work with you to change it. He plans to use those He has placed in community with you to help you change

The Word of God challenges us in our areas of weakness. That is why we like to skip over certain passages. Avoid certain group studies, people, or even change churches. We want to go to a church that doesn't expect change. We want to feel spiritual. We want to rationalize or spiritualize our disobedience. And we want to be around people that either don't know or will allow us to live our spiritual life as a sham. The Commands of God always go against our sin nature and selfish desires

When the Word of God comes into our lives and we are vulnerable and exposed...Our first response is the flee to Tarshish and away from the presence of the Lord. To avoid the light of exposure and run to darkness. We don't go down to Tarshish and get on a boat....We just begin to move away from the Presence of the Lord in our lives...We run to our Tarshish by getting away...Away from ...Those who know us, love us and will hold us accountable....The people of God ...our small group....our closest Christian friends....our accountability relationships

The places or Land of God...Church is no longer a priority....Or if we are more polished: That Church where I am known is no longer a priority....Another church....like a boat going to Tarshish....becomes our escape from what God has exposed. There perhaps we can...We pick new accountability partners....New small groups....Find views that are less stringen..... Look for people who will agree with us or at least not speak truth to us...Set the opinions of others, even other Christians, over the truth of God's Word.

Gain a fresh start to avoid the accountability that comes from being around those who know us the best. Certainly not going where God wanted us to go spiritually- not Going to Nineveh.... But not running all the way to Tarshish either. We spiritualize our decision to run but it rarely works because we forget that the lesson God chose to challenge us with is the lesson God has for us to learn....You cannot flee from the lessons God has for you....yet we all try to run to our Tarshish

We have all run to our Tarshish and as a result....we have all spent time in the belly of our fish of rebellion....Before we cried out to God to be rescued from the mess that we created and submitted to the One who loves us too much to let us stay where we are.

This is what it means to surrender. I trust that God knows best....I want God's best...so the answer is Yes Lord....Now what is the question or assignment that you have for me?

The message of God was given....to.....Jonah. It was not only to teach the Ninevites something...but to teach Jonah something. So when you read the Word of God...and the Holy Spirit comes to you and prompts you to action...to forgive someone...to admit your sin...to submit to His Lordship....That message and lesson tied to it, are first for you....God could have given His message to any prophet...but He chose Jonah.... Because Jonah needed to change ... And so do we.

The next time God's Challenges You to Change...ask yourself this question, "Why do I want to run?"... The reason we run is the key to learning what God has for us... Often the key to learning the lessons of God is to understand why we resist what God wants us to do.....Like I said Jonah probably should have been fearful about going to Nineveh....But fear was not why he ran. He had all the faith in the World.He knew God would confront them...He knew the Truth of God would cause them to repent.....He knew that if the truth of God got to Nineveh...they would turn to Him and be saved.Jonah did not run out of fear or out of a lack of faith...He ran out of hatred.

Jonah was full of hatred. We are going to see that he would rather die than be part of the salvation of an Assyrian...The Word of God came specifically to Jonah to force him to come face to face with the ugliness of his prejudice

When you know God wants you to do something and you are packing to flee...Ask yourself what is driving that decision? Understanding your motive is the key to learning the lesson. Our motives are where God does His major work in our lives. That is where He transforms us.

Moses told me that "We are all Jonah's"...I think he was right...in more ways than he knew

Are you running from God? From the truth that you just didn't have the courage to face? Running from the people of God who know you the best? Running from the places of God? Certain passages of Scripture? Your prior church? Prior relationships? Are you running from your past? Trying to hide what you have done from God? God had love and compassion for the Assyrians- He loved those others hated. I know He has grace and compassion waiting for you. The Word of God has come to you...take your eyes off of Tarshish and stop running. Tarshish is not your answer and the Assyrians are not really the problem.

Or maybe it is a person.... An ex spouse? How about the man who slept with your wife ,Stole your family,And now lives in your old house?.....How about the person who sold drugs to your kids? Or to you?.....How about the person who used you for their own perversion...and took away what can never be replaced?....What about the friend who was always there for you, but was sleeping with your husband? Maybe the adult who took advantage of your innocence as a child.....Maybe a parent who was not there for you or was there but hurt you.....Perhaps a "Man of God" who was anything but that

Why are you running? Has the Word of God revealed what you want to hide? Are you sipping on Haterade today? Is your heart full of prejudice and hatred for someone else? Is there anyone that you would rather see judged by God than saved by God? Maybe for you it is a race of people or a group of people....Those rich people.....Those of other religions...Muslims, Jewish people....others.....Black people....white people....hispanic people...you know "them"Maybe Republicans or Democrats.....Maybe for you it is us.....Those who claim to follow Christ. The church

Is there anyone on this planet that you really don't want to see saved? You want to get to the heart of your anger and prejudice? If God told you to go share the Gospel with someone...who would you hate for that someone to be? If you would rather die than help someone become saved by Christ, then you are beginning to understand Jonah and why he ran and you are beginning to understand that this is more than a children's story

The Word of the Lord has come to you...today. We are all Jonah's.The light has exposed something we wanted to hide. Our head screams to run to Tarshish, but the quiet voice in our heart...our soul... tells us to run to the altar.....Our way back to God...back to Nineveh.....begins on our knees in a desperate prayer of confession and repentance

All who run to Tarshish eventually are driven to cry out to God....No matter how hard you try...you cannot run from His presence. Come right now....come to the place of His presence....we have people ready to pray with you. Just tell them...."My name is Jonah....I am tired of running....My place is at this altar...." Maybe for you it is to let go of the bitterness and hatred that is in your heart toward someone. Come. Tell them "My name is Jonah....God wants to change my heart...My place is at this altar" Maybe you need to surrender to God for the very first time. Tell them.."My name is Jonah...I have been running my whole life...I want to come home. I believe God has created a place for me....and it starts at this altar."

Jonah turned and ran from God....you can turn and run to Him. We are all Jonah's. Let's pray.