

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

3 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ²“Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

³ Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. ⁴ On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.” ⁵ The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Friends,

During my life I have attended a number of different colleges – many of them taking night classes. The professors for some of the classes I took had the policy that if you got a bad grade on a test or paper, you could retake the test or rewrite the paper for a better grade. Many students thought that was great. You could see what you did wrong, correct it and in some cases move from a failing grade to something more respectable. I thought it was an interesting concept but unfortunately I never had a class with one of those professors and thus, never benefited from getting a second chance. But as we consider this portion of scripture, we see that **“Jonah got a second chance.”** He got a second chance or “do over” and **“It not only made a difference in his life,”** but it also **“Made a difference in the life of the Ninevites.”**

I. Chapter 3 starts out by telling us, **“Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time.”** The first time it came to Jonah things didn’t go so well. Jonah didn’t want to listen to what God had to say to him and didn’t want to follow God’s command so he tried to run away from God and his Word.

God got his attention by sending a great storm to stop his ship dead in the middle of the sea and God sent a great fish to swallow Jonah when the sailors threw him overboard. God got Jonah’s attention in a pretty unique way but it was effective. Jonah thanked God for getting his attention and turning him around (from inside the fish) and God saw the change in Jonah’s heart and had the fish vomit him onto dry land.

When we read the book of Jonah we should note that the name for the Lord throughout the book is in all capitals – meaning Jehovah, the covenant God; the God of grace and mercy. So as God came to Jonah a number of times he was always coming to him in love and not in judgment. Keep that in mind as we continue.

God sent Jonah to Nineveh with a specific message and Jonah went. Think of all the things this meant that were not spoken. Here God was sending his spokesman for Israel to a foreign country – one that was pretty violent and wicked. What did that mean for the Israelites? Was God rejecting them? What did it mean for Jonah? Was God sending him to a certain death? The people of Nineveh had no reason to listen to Jonah but had every reason to kill this foreigner but they didn’t. Remember, we have the God of grace and mercy at work here.

God showed his grace and compassion in calling Jonah to repentance and giving him a second chance to change his ways and to do God's bidding. Jonah showed his faith in God by following his command and he spent three days proclaiming God's message to the city. He didn't worry about the response – this was God's message and not his – it was God's plan and he would let God worry about the results.

How often do we get like Jonah? We don't like what God's Word is telling us so we ignore it or even worse we do just the opposite. Many times our sin then separates us from God – it keeps us away from church – in essence we are trying to run away from God because we don't want to hear what he has to say. Sometimes it's the simple stuff like taking offense at something someone has done or said. Instead of taking their words and actions in the kindest possible way we take them in the worst way we can think of and then we don't talk to the person to try and resolve whatever our issue might be – even though that's the direction God gives us.

Or maybe one of your relationships isn't going well – whether it be marriage or work or with your parents and you just give up or the other person gives up and it frustrates you and it gets so easy to try and pin the blame on someone – even God. Maybe you've struggled with living together outside of marriage, or had some kind of addiction to drugs or alcohol or the internet or the list could go on and on. There are so many things that can come into our lives that try and drag us away from God and at times we give in or even run away from God.

But the amazing thing is that God doesn't give up on us. Instead of giving up on us he calls out to us and forgives us and gives us a second chance to try and do things right – to try and put our lives back together. That doesn't mean that he erases everything that has happened – sometimes we have to deal with the consequences, but he gives us a change of heart so that we can approach things in a different way.

And sometimes we foolishly repeat the cycle a few times but our God doesn't give up on us; he keeps coming to us and so we don't want to give up on him – we want to come and listen to him and follow the direction he gives us in our lives. That's what Jonah did and it had a great impact on his life and the way he was able to approach life and it also had a great impact on the lives of the Ninevites.

II. I always marvel at the message God had for the Ninevites, **“Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.”** Sounds pretty harsh. At first glance it seems to be all Law and no gospel – no love or grace but there is a bit of grace in this message. God's grace is seen in the fact that he gives them 40 days. If he wanted to bring judgment on them he would have done it – boom – but God gives them 40 days to sit up and pay attention.

And they did pay attention and they had a change of heart. We are told they believed God and declared a fast. We should note that they not only said they believed but the whole city took action to show their faith in God and to show their change of heart. They were a pretty wicked people and we have to marvel at the miracle that took place. But it's another example of the tremendous power of God's Word to change hearts and to call people to faith.

And God's reaction, **“When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.”** God had every reason to destroy the people of Nineveh but he didn't because they had a change of heart and turned to him in faith.

Jonah had everything against him as a missionary to a foreign people. He should have failed in his efforts but he didn't because the Lord worked through the message he was proclaiming. If God can do that then what does it tell us?

Don't think that God's Word won't make a difference. Don't think that your children don't get anything out of coming to church – you might be surprised at how the Spirit works in their hearts. Don't think that home devotions are useless and don't make a difference. Don't think that God's Word can't help your relationships because it was written so long ago. Sin hasn't changed and God's forgiveness hasn't changed either. Don't think that some people are too wicked or evil to invite to church – people don't get much worse than the Ninevites and look at what God did for them.

We will have our ups and downs and some days our faith will shine and some days we will hide from God but he is faithful and he doesn't give up on us. The Lord is more merciful and powerful and patient than we could ever imagine. Look at what a difference that second chance made for Jonah and for Nineveh. Don't forget what that second chance with God's Word can do for you. Amen.