



Morningside Church

Sermon Discussion Guide

Title: The Pursuit of God

Date: May 17, 2026

Scripture Text: Jonah 1

Notes:

Today we start a new sermon series on the book of Jonah. Jonah first appears in [2 Kings 14:25](#) as a prophet from Gath-hepher in the territory of Zebulun in northern Israel. He was active around the first half of the eighth century BC. Jonah predicted the restoration of the northern kingdom's boundaries. This occurred during the reign of Jeroboam II. God sent Jonah to deliver a message to the city of Nineveh. Nineveh was a major city of the Assyrians, a cruel and warlike people who were longtime enemies of Israel. Assyrian artwork emphasizes war, including scenes of execution, impalement, flaying the skin off prisoners, and beheadings. This could explain Jonah's reluctance to go there. In chapter 1 we see the trouble that Jonah got into when he tried to run from God's calling. It is a warning to readers that running from God is futile and only invites unnecessary hardship. Jonah 1 also describes God's pursuit of Jonah to be part of His work. The book of Jonah shows God's gracious concern for the whole world, His power over nature, and the futility of running from Him.

I. The Rebellion of the Saint (Jonah 1:1-3)

God had a job for Jonah ("the word of the Lord came to Jonah"). Go to the great city of Ninevah and "cry against it". God did not approve of their cruel, sinful ways and was ready to judge them for their wickedness. Jonah promptly booked passage to Tarshish, in the opposite direction. Tarshish was as far as someone could go to the west. This was Jonah's attempt to run from God.

- The word of the Lord came to Jonah. How does the word of the Lord come to us today?
- Based on what you know about Ninevah, how would you have responded if you were Jonah?
- God could have dealt directly with Ninevah without including Jonah. It was to Jonah's benefit to be part of God's work. How does God include us in His work today?
- Instead of following God's command ("arise, go to Ninevah") Jonah tried to run from God. What are ways people try to run from God today?
- This passage describes Jonah's rebellion of God. How do we rebel against God today?
- God had already used Jonah for His work prior to this interaction in [2 Kings 14:25](#). How can our prior interactions and works for God prepare us for what He calls us to do next?



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II. The Condition of the Sinner (Jonah 1:4-16)

As the ship carrying Jonah made its way to Tarshish, God hurled a powerful wind that stirred up a storm so great it threatened to break up the ship. Initially, the crew called out to their gods with no results. The captain found Jonah sleeping below deck. “Get up and call on your God” the captain told Jonah. After determining that Jonah was the cause for the dire situation, they asked Jonah what they should do. “Pick me up and throw me into the sea” he said. They did and the storm stopped. They experienced the power of the one true God firsthand and offered Him sacrifices.

- The crew initially called out to their gods for deliverance from the storm. What are examples of ‘gods’ people today may have that they rely on for their safety, deliverance, or security?
- Rather than obeying God and going to Ninevah, Jonah would rather perish in the sea. What measures might people go to to avoid submitting to and obeying God?
- As the sailors threw Jonah overboard, the storm stopped and the sea stopped raging. They had experienced the power of God and responded with worship and sacrifice. Describe a time you experienced the work of God.
 - How did that impact your perspective of God?
 - How did that affect how you worshiped, lived, and obeyed Him?
- The crew also responded with ‘fear’ ([v.16](#)). What does it mean to fear God?
- Do you fear God?

III. The Preparation of the Savior (Jonah 1:17)

God sent a great fish to swallow up Jonah. Jonah was in the stomach of the fish for three days and three nights.

- Rather than let Jonah persist in his sin, God intervened to redirect Him. He used a storm and a great fish to get Jonah’s attention. What has God done to get your attention?
- In the midst of God’s redirecting, as He did with Jonah, we may not feel His redirection is in our best interest. How was being thrown overboard and swallowed by the great fish to Jonah’s benefit?
- When was a time when you were in the midst of God redirecting? How was it eventually for your benefit?
- What do we learn about God to see Him pursue those He’s called?

Looking at [Luke 15](#), Jesus shares three parables that describes God’s pursuit of the lost: the parable of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son (a.k.a. the prodigal son). In these parables we learn the degree that our heavenly Father wants a relationship with us. How would you describe your relationship with God? Is it a growing, fruitful, and a maturing relationship? Or is it maybe stagnant? Just as with the parable of the lost son, God is eagerly wanting a relationship with you.