

TAKEAWAY

Mission Uncomfortable Lessons from inside a whale

RUNNING FROM GOD

Sunday 8th September 2019

INTRODUCTION

This week we began a four-part series looking at the book of Jonah. We noted that Jonah is a sort of dramatic comedy – we're supposed to laugh at Jonah in his absurdity but also see him as a mirror to our true selves.

READ

Jonah 1

NOTE

1. Jonah was asked to head East to Nineveh, but instead went West. He tries to physically run away from the will of God. (Tarshish = Gibraltar)
2. Jonah identifies (when questioned) primarily as 'a Hebrew'. We know from 2 Kings that this same Jonah was politically active and had every reason to hate the oppressive Assyrian empire. As becomes clear later in the book, Jonah's revulsion to God's call was not merely fear – he didn't want the Assyrians to repent and experience the grace of God. This perspective is more important to Jonah than God is.
3. The sailors are pagans

who don't know God – but the story very deliberately portrays them as being more virtuous and likeable than Jonah. One of the sub-plots of the story is to demonstrate that merely identifying oneself as one of God's people (as Jonah did) doesn't necessarily mean greater virtue than those who do not.

DISCUSS

1. Have you ever known, clearly, that God wanted you to do something that you then didn't do? What happened?
2. What do God's initial call and Jonah's response tell us about Jonah, and how do they shape the rest of the story?
3. Jonah builds his identity on his ethnicity rather than his relationship with God.

What do we commonly build our identities on here and now? (Think both generally and personally).

4. Who, like Jonah, are we Christians tempted to see as undeserving of God's grace? Why do we do this?
5. Why, despite everything, does God still look to pursue and work with Jonah when He doesn't need him?

READ

Matthew 12v38-41

DISCUSS

6. Jesus tells the religious leaders who want a miraculous sign that they will get only one - the 'sign of Jonah'. Think back through Jonah's story. How is Jesus like Jonah? How is he not like Jonah? (See how many things you can list)



7. Nineveh represented all the awful injustices of the Assyrian Empire. Yet Jesus says they'll be better off on judgement day than the religious leaders of Israel. How can this be?

PRAY

At each of our services, we wrote down three names of people we might invite to Alpha. Pray for opportunities and boldness to invite

the people on your cards, and that this term's Alpha course in general will see many people come along and get to know Jesus.

