

Taking it Home:

- As you look at your own life, is there any area where you need to reach out to God and trust His provision for your life? Maybe you're in the belly-of-the-fish experience right now, how can the narrative of Jonah's terrible experience help guide you to find comfort and solace from God while in the "belly of despair?"
- READ 1 Peter 5:6-7. This is an Old Testament symbol of the power of God working in the experience of men, always accomplishing His sovereign purpose, just like God's sovereign purpose was for Jonah's life. When Jonah realized running from God was not going to be successful, and he knew he was going to die, he cast his cares, fear, and terror upon God through the vehicle of prayer. God desires to hear from His children, especially prayers of repentance and adoration. If you are living a Jonah "belly-of-the-fish" moment today, pray 1 John 1:9, and Philippians 4:6-7 and seek God's face.
- God's amazing grace, comfort, care, compassion and mercy are available to those who seek it. READ Psalm 25 and interpret.

Serving Opportunities for Growth Groups:

- **The Pink House:** cooking dinner for foreign students attending NDSU.
- **The Salvation Army:** Helping serve food to homeless and needy people.

For more information please contact Sueann Chase or Pastor Jonas for details.

For a restatement of Pastor Matthew's sermon points, visit pastormatthew.net and click on the "Write This Down" tab.

A Seafarer's Prayer

Notes:

For more information about Growth Groups, Growth Group homework, and a podcast of sermons with homework, visit www.bethelfc.com.

Growth Group Homework

For the week of October 2, 2011

Jonah 2

Quick Review: Jonah is spiraling deep into the depths of the sea. A great fish, prepared by God swallows Jonah. Yahweh grants Jonah another chance; an opportunity to live, demonstrating the power of His great grace in the face of obstinacy and humility. This sets the stage, of course for the “other-centered” opportunity in Nineveh to which Jonah was called to preach. In the midst of Jonah’s certain peril, he cries out to God, acknowledging His sovereignty, grace and salvation. God spares Jonah and offers him another chance to carry out His will to preach in Nineveh.

My Story:

- This weekend we looked at the jam Jonah got himself into. Is there a time in your life that you got yourself into a similar belly-of-the-fish experience and reached out to God in the midst of it? What did you learn from that experience?
- What challenges or fears could a person face in sharing their belly-of-the-fish story with others? What kind of people do you find it easiest to share your story with?

Growing Deeper:

- While in the belly of the fish, Jonah finally surrendered to God and committed himself to do His will. Jonah’s surrendering to God took place in the form of a prayer. Clearly Jonah’s prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving and praise rather than a prayer of repentance. How could Jonah praise God while in the stomach of a fish? What does surrendering to God look like to you? What does Scripture say about surrendering to God? (Cf. Prov. 3:5-6; Luke 7:36-50; Romans 12:1-2).
- Jonah’s prayer is very similar to a number of prayers recorded in the Book of Psalms. These prayers are called lament Psalms because they express concern over a difficult situation the author is facing. Read Psalm 28 for a good example of one of these psalms. Lament Psalms provide a great model for how to pray in the midst of very difficult circumstances. Looking back at Jonah 2, write the verses which match each element of the elements listed below.
 - Description of the present need
 - Prayer for help
 - Commitment to offer thanksgiving & praise
 - Sincere thanks to God
- Besides the great fish that swallowed Jonah, Jonah is swallowed up by God’s provision of amazing grace and generosity. READ Jonah’s prayer and write out how many times Jonah talks about God’s amazing provision for him while in the belly of a fish. What about you; have you ever been swallowed up by a horrible circumstance only to be swallowed by God’s tremendous care, blessing, peace, & compassion? If you do not have a personal story of your own, what about someone you know? Discuss.
- There will always be consequences for believer’s who rebel against God or, like Jonah, attempt to flee from God. Why does God discipline His children? **READ Hebrews 12:4-11; 1 Peter 1:6-9 & interpret.** What does the Scriptures say are the benefits of God’s discipline? Do you see any benefits from Jonah’s discipline from God? Discuss.