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**Series: Exposition of Jonah**  
**Message: You Can't Outrun God**

**Transcribed Message**  
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I think a lot of you are familiar with, or at least you've heard of, Francis Thompson and his poem "The Hound of Heaven". It is said by some to be the greatest ode in the English language. That got my attention, so I looked up the word "ode". An ode is a lyric poem in the form of an address to a particular subject. Obviously Thompson is speaking about a particular subject. An ode is often elevated in style or manner and written in a varied and irregular meter. This is what kind of gave me pause. It's a poem that is meant to be sung. So I was going to share that with you this morning until I saw that. I'm just going to limit my comments to one measure. I think if you do just one measure you do not have to sing it. You remember that he said in that the famous ode: "I fled Him down the nights and down the days. I fled Him down the arches of the years. I fled Him from those strong feet that followed, followed after." It turns out that Francis Thompson was running from a lot of things in his life. He evidently was running from a bad relationship with his father. He was running from failure in his life in terms of his educational experience, in terms of his profession. But primarily, he was running from God and that's what he writes about in "The Hound of Heaven." It is his attempt to run from God. I don't know what your experiences have been like in that way. I think before we're done this morning we'll probably all confess that at some point in some way we've all done that. We've all found ourselves running from God about something.

We're looking at a guy who knows a lot about running from God and his name is Jonah. If you want to turn again to the little book of Jonah tucked away back there in the Old Testament in that group of 12 minor prophets, this little prophecy of only 48 verses. This is our third look at this incredible and amazing little book. This morning we want to see that God doesn't let His children go. He's absolutely relentless in His pursuit. Grace's grip cannot be broken.

Let me just do a quick review to get us back together on the same page from our previous lessons in the book of Jonah and just remind you again that Jonah is really all about God. The book of Jonah is a book that is captivated by the big fish story that we'll see, Lord willing, next Sunday. This book is really about God and it is about the heart of God, and especially about the heart of God for the nations of the world and the compassion that God has for the nations and for the peoples of the world. It's really the John 3:16 of the Old Testament. For God so loved the world. The book of Jonah is proclaiming that same message in a very different and unusual way.

Secondly, Jonah is about Jonah. It's about Jonah, of course, because Jonah is a picture for us of the whole nation of Israel. Jonah is really picturing for us what all of his fellow countrymen were acting like and thinking about in the world at that time. They got down the idea, they understood the privilege of being a chosen people. They just forgot the responsibility of being a light to the world. So they were hanging onto the part and the fact that they were God's chosen folks, but they forgot that with that incredible privilege was the responsibility that God had given to them to take that to the world. I think you see the correlation pretty easily and quickly, don't you? We can do that too. We're called the chosen people and very easily we can turn all of our blessings inward. God's heart for us is to do the same as it was for his heart for Jonah.

Then thirdly, Jonah is about us. So it's about God. It's about the people of Israel captivated by the heart of Jonah, and it's about us. We love mercy for ourselves. Do you ever notice that tendency? We love mercy for ourselves. We love God's grace for ourselves. But we're pretty quick at times, maybe too often, to want justice for others. God teach those guys a lesson. Mercy to me. Grace to me. Make sure, Father, that Your justice is given to them.

This morning, let's look at verses 4 to 16, and as we go through these verses I'm going to point out about four different principles as we hit some of these major points that I hope will highlight this lesson for us this morning. So let's begin by looking at this first point which is you can run but you can't hide. That's what Jonah is going to try to do. We start off with the storm in verse 4 and it reads like this: "But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up." I think there's two aspects of the character of God in this 4<sup>th</sup>

verse, two ways that God shows us His attributes and His character and the first one is the fact of His sovereignty. The fact that God is sovereign. When we talk about the fact that God is sovereign, remember He is simply saying that He's the king. He is the ruler. There isn't anybody greater than Him. He's overall. You clearly see in this 4<sup>th</sup> verse that God is sovereign over everything.

You note that it begins interestingly with the word "but" again. Here we go. Here's this adversative conjunction, right? So we start off verse 4, "But the Lord hurled...". There is not to be any question where this storm comes from because the writer Jonah gives us a very clear indication the source of this is none other than a sovereign God. Do you remember back in verse 3 God gives the call and says Jonah, I want you to go do this. And how did verse 3 begin? But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish. So there we had Jonah's response. Here in effect you get God's response to Jonah's response. This isn't a story about mother nature. This isn't a story about some sailors out in the ship when an untimely coincidental storm rose up. We said at the beginning in our introduction that one of the things that people have problems with the book of Jonah is the big fish and the miracle that was required. But we also said there are miracles all through this little story and this is one of those first ones that we see. The storm originates because a sovereign God determines that that is what will be the next course of action. Zac read Psalm 115: Our God is in the heavens. He does whatever He pleases. The psalmist speaks specifically in Psalm 48 of God causing the wind to wreck the ships of Tarshish. He is not talking about this one, but he is talking about a different account. All of those remind us of the fact that God is the one who is over all things.

There are people who when they read their Bible read verse 3 and think Jonah decided to go do something else. In their theology, it's almost like that's the end of the story. God says Jonah, go do this and Jonah says, I'm not going to do it. So now God has to sit and wait and he's got to see what Jonah is going to do next. That's not the God that I see in the Bible. The God I see in the Bible is a sovereign God. One view is very man-centered. Waiting and seeing what man is going to always do and then God responds to what man does. As I read my Bible, it's a theocentric theology. It is a God-driven story. God is the one who is sovereign over all of the details of life, including all of the elements that are around us and all the people, all of life circumstances. God is not

stymied by the disobedience of one of His children. He is going to move and He's going to work. He's going to respond to that.

I think the second piece of this is God's anger. You have God's sovereignty. I think the other attribute of God that's on display in verse 4 is rightly to be understood as God's anger. This storm is described as a great wind, a mighty tempest. The ship says it's about to break up. The grammar of this actually is almost as if it is trying to say to us the ship is speaking. The ship is saying that the storm was so bad I'm about to break up. It might be the only place in the Bible where an inanimate object is almost cast in the role of speaking to us. So here's the ship and it's about to break up. I look at this and I think this is nothing less than the righteous anger of God responding to the open rebellion of one of His children. This is the right response from a holy and righteous God. A holy and righteous God responds to the disobedience and the defiance of one of His children. He is definitely going to be getting Jonah's and everybody else's attention as He does that, which brings us then to the first principle I want to put before you.

Our first principle says this. All through the Bible, you see this principle elucidated in the lives of God's people. God loves His children too much not to discipline, not to bring into their lives a response that is His righteous indignation. God is a holy and righteous God and He will not simply allow us to sin with impunity. He doesn't allow us just to wander away without any consequence. I think what we see here is the beginning of the unfolding of God's sovereignty and of God's righteous anger in response to the rebellion of one of His children named Jonah.

Now, understand that as a believer, we never fall under the wrath of God. I'm making a distinction here. I think the Bible holds this distinction for us that the wrath of God was poured out on the cross and Christ bore that wrath for us. That is what John says in 1 John 4. He became the propitiation for our sins and that word "propitiation" simply speaks of the fact that Jesus became a covering for us. Jesus satisfied. Jesus bore on the cross, on our behalf, the wrath of God. There's a difference between the wrath of God being poured out on the cross and the righteous anger of God, the indignation of God towards one of His children. Hebrews chapter 12 tells us whom the Lord loves He chastens. He reminded us in that Hebrews 12 passage that God's promise to you as a child of God is that He is going to make life difficult, He's going to

make your way hard as you wander away from Him. I don't know how God does that in everybody's life and I don't know the season in which He chooses to do that. That's all a part of the mystery of how God works in individual lives, because sometimes it seems that people do walk away with impunity. But I assure you that Hebrews 12 speaks to us the truth of God and that is as His child, He's going to love us enough to discipline us. Just as we would our own children, right? We would never want to allow one of our children to do something that we know is harmful and wrong and disobedient and rebellious and just act like it's okay. They'll figure it out on their own sometime. Obviously, a loving parent engages in that process. That's what God does. So that's what He's doing, I think, here. He's going to make things very uncomfortable for Jonah. That's what the grace of God and the discipline of God do in our life. They make things very uncomfortable.

Let's look and see what this looks like in this case. The second part of the story has to do with the sailors. Look at the first part of verse 5 to get this: "Then the mariners were afraid and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them." I would think that this is a pretty seasoned group of sailors. I doubt this is the first time these guys pushed off from Tarshish to go out onto the sea. I've got a feeling that within this group you've got a group of guys that have pretty much seen it all. This is going to get their attention and they are, first of all we're told, afraid. They're scared.

I don't know about you. I don't know what your appreciation is, what your interest is, but for me the last place that I want to be in a storm is on the ocean. I just don't want to have anything to do with being on the ocean in the middle of the storm. God bless you, Navy guys. You can have it. I don't want to be out in the middle of nowhere when I can't see any land anywhere around and a storm comes up. I think of that tragedy that happened a year ago when that cargo ship came up in the midst of that hurricane. Never heard from it again. They found the wreckage not that long ago. All lives lost. I can imagine the horror, the terror that gripped those seasoned sailors at that time. I don't want to have anything to do with that. I love the ocean. I love to look at it from land. I love a storm. I love to watch it out of a window. I don't want to be on the ocean. I don't want to be on a lake. I don't want to be on a small pond. I want to be in a secure

place. But these guys don't have a choice now. They're out and they're scared. They're caught up in a storm like no other, which brings me to principle number two.

Principle number two is this: Sin is never an isolated event. It always involves other people. Isn't it interesting how that always is a life principle? We think we may be doing something that is just about us. It's never just about you. Sin always puts other people in harm's way in some way or another. It always puts others in a place of jeopardy. Often innocent people get put in peril when we choose to walk a path that God says we shouldn't. That is the untold story, isn't it? The world never tells us of the consequences, of the heartache, the pain, the peril of sin. It never does that. You can watch your TV all day long. You can see the enticement of the world, the flesh and the devil all day long. You can see the enticement of sensuality and sexuality and all of the pleasure that Hebrews talks about that is there for a passing season, and the world will never tell you a word about all the heartache that comes if you make those kinds of choices. Addictive behaviors of all kinds. The world oftentimes glorifies it, puts it out there as if it somehow is to be appealing to us, never shows us the shattered lives, the shattered families, the innocent children that get caught up in those kinds of behaviors, those kinds of circumstances. Just name the sin and it doesn't matter if you think it's only about you. It's not just about you. Even as a child of God, if you think this is somehow a personal and private matter, know that it's impacting you and it's affecting your spiritual walk with God that is going to in turn affect other people around you. This is the story that God wants us to see.

Remember Abraham and Sarah when they head down to Egypt? Sarah is a beautiful woman. Abraham said, you know what? These guys have a tendency to kill the husbands of beautiful women. Let's just say you're my sister. Sarah agrees to do that. And what happens? She gets swept up into a situation where she's put in peril. She was brought into the palace of the king of Egypt and placed in a place of danger. Think of the children of Israel when they leave Jericho. They had been successful, having seen the walls fall. God says don't take anything, remember? Achan takes just a little bit for himself, hides it in the tent. Nobody knows a thing about it. They go on to Ai, victorious, they think, because of what happened at Jericho. They get defeated. Lives are lost, changed forever because a guy says I can do this. I don't have to tell anybody.

God says no, you can't, because sin has consequences. David's life stands as all kinds of things that flew out from the choices that he made that were so harmful to so many others around him. Sin always has unseen, unexpected consequences.

First of all these guys are scared. They're afraid. The second thing we see that they're so scared they pray. Now there's two kinds of scared. There's a scared, and then there's a so scared you pray. That's where they are now. They're there at the second level of scared, or the third level, or whatever level it is because they throw everything that they can overboard, which I guess they did as a very common measure when there was no hope. If you start throwing other people's possessions overboard that you're supposed to deliver somewhere, you figure you're not going to get there if you don't do it. It's a desperation move. They don't think they're going to survive, and they start to pray.

I remember reading this. This happened many, many years ago on a routine airplane commercial flight going to New York. They're on approach. The pilot realizes the landing gear is not going down. They do everything that they know to do to make that happen. It doesn't happen. They circle the airport. They talk to the tower. The tower says your gear is not down. We're prepared for an emergency landing. So the plane is coming in for its final approach. Everybody is told to do what they're to do. Put your head between your knees, hold on to your ankles and expect what may be a bad landing. Here's the last thing the pilot said over the intercom, "We are beginning our final descent. At this moment in accordance with international aviation codes established at Geneva, it is my obligation to inform you that if you believe in God, you should commence prayer now." I think that actually happened. I don't think that's probably the protocol anymore. I don't know. The funny story is that a member of the family of somebody that was on board actually called the airline the following day to ask about that protocol and if that was something that was a common thing. They received a no comment in the story. It was no comment offered on that particular item of protocol. But that's where we are. You're scared? Yeah, you'll maybe pray. You're really scared? Then you definitely pray, right? Sadly, that is so often the case.

So, we have a storm. We have the sailors. Now what do we have? We have the sleeper. We pick the story up at the end of verse 5: "But Jonah had gone down into the

inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, 'What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.' And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know one whose account this evil has come upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, 'Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?' And he said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven..." This story now as we unwrap this is filled with all kinds of ironic things. Before we even look at that, I have one other question. I want to ask Jonah how in the world did you sleep in the bottom of the ship when this stuff is going on? I mean, this was pre-Ambien days, right? There was no way this guy took his Ambien because he was pushing off the shore and he was going to wake up at some point at his desired destination.

I remember back on a mission trip to Russia in the early 90's. We were getting on the plane at DFW and we had this long transcontinental flight ahead of us. Dr. Hough was sitting by me and he opened up a bottle and he handed me a little pill and said take this. This will help you until we get there. I woke up in Moscow. It was amazing. It was, I think, an Ambien. Obviously, Dr. Hough traveled the world all the time, and so he knew some of those things that helped to make the trip a little easier. But Jonah didn't have that. He didn't have any Ambien to fall asleep. It's been suggested that what he did have was a spirit of despair. What he did have was a heart of defeat. Paul, in the New Testament, often uses the imagery of sleep to speak about the spiritual stupor, and he'll say "Awake, O sleeper" to awaken people. You think of the disciples in the garden. What was it a picture of? Probably a picture of just their spiritual lethargy for one thing. Jesus says pray for Me in this hour. They couldn't even do it. Sleep generally in the Bible is looked upon in some contexts as being less than desirable, but here's the irony of this. Who should've been praying? The guy that should've been praying is a prophet of God. The guy who knows, as he says, the one true God. He should have been the one that was praying. The pagan sailors are the ones who are praying. The person who knows the one true God is the one who's asleep and is not praying. With that in mind, the captain comes to him and says arise and call out. If that sounds at all familiar, that's



the exact same phraseology of verse 2 when God came to Jonah and He said Jonah, arise and call out to the Ninevites. Same exact expression. Knowing Jonah's spiritual condition, he probably didn't even make the connection, but here it is before us. God speaking to him through the captain in the same way that He had spoken to him back in His initial call.

Look at the inquiry then in verses 7 and 8. There's a rapidfire of questions here, a whole bunch of questions that that they want to know the answers to. They cast lots to see who among them could be the source of this problem. These are superstitious people and rightly so, I suppose, in the sense of somebody in their mind has caused this problem and it falls to Jonah. It's interesting in the Bible, this matter of the casting of lots. God uses this on occasion with His own people. We are not exactly sure what it was, but it must have been something that they utilized, some physical objects that they utilized, to give them direction to know the will of God. These guys weren't calling out to God on their behalf. They were acting on their own superstition and this was the method that they were using to try to figure out who among us is to blame for this bad circumstance that we find ourselves in. There is one instance in the New Testament where God's people cast lots, then it is never mentioned again. I don't think today we should be superstitious. I don't think today we should be calling out good luck to people. I don't think we should be knocking on wood. I don't think we should be doing any of that. We should be declaring our trust in a sovereign God who directs our steps. We have the Word of God. We have the Spirit of God. We don't need to cast lots. God has promised to guide us in the way that we should go. Jonah was identified as the source, evidently the problem. Why are you caught up in this? So, what you do for a living? Where are you from? What country? What people? All these questions are fired.

I look at verse 9 and what I see is a poor theology. I see a poor theology in verse 9. "And he said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land'." Now why is that a poor theology in verse 9? Because a poor theology makes a poor theologian. What you see is Jonah saying what he believes but what? But living totally contrary to what he says he believes. What is a poor theologian? What is bad theology? Bad theology is when you say you believe something but you don't live based on what you say you believe. That is just being a

bad theologian. Jonah is the one who declares himself to be one who fears the Lord. It would've been interesting I'm sure, this rapidfire discussion going on didn't give them a chance, but when Jonah said this is who I am and I fear the Lord. The proper response at that point would have been: You do? It doesn't look like it. It doesn't look like you have any regard for your God. He speaks of the fact that the God that he worships is the Sovereign Creator over all things. Yeah. That's why you're trying to run away from Him, right? Another case of bad theology on display. We'll give him credit for his honesty. He steps forward and says the things that are to be said, but obviously his theology is very lacking.

Would you notice then the rebuke that comes in verse 10: "Then the men were exceedingly afraid." So, they're afraid. They're very afraid. Now they're exceedingly afraid. "'What is this that you have done!' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them." Clearly the sailor seemed to grasp the seriousness of the situation more so even than Jonah does. I guess you'd have to say they were better theologians at this point than Jonah himself. By the way, when they say to him what is this that you have done! That again is the exact expression out of Genesis 3 when God comes to Adam and Eve and He speaks specifically to Eve and He says Eve, what is this that you have done. The exact same Hebrew phrase here. Jonah, what is this that you have done.

The third principle that I would put before you is a sobering one. It is one that none of us want to experience. It is simply this. It's never a good thing when an unbeliever rebukes a believer for making poor choices. Have you ever had that happen? It's painful. It's painful. It doesn't have to be a direct rebuke. It can be something almost unexpected by the person who makes no acknowledgment of knowing the Lord, but in the midst of some circumstance or some situation, it's obvious that where we are is not in a place of trust and confidence before God. Somebody else just gently, or maybe not so gently, reminds us of what that looks like to them. Here's Jonah. Here's the prophet of God being rebuked by pagan sailors.

Thankfully, we see the solution to all of this beginning in verse 11, and it is, first of all, an unacceptable answer that we encounter in verse 11: "Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?'" It's interesting that they

make that connection right away. “For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, ‘Pick me up and hurl me into the sea.’” Do you know what I wondered at that point? Why do they have to hurl him into the sea? Why couldn’t he just jump into the sea? Maybe he was too afraid to do that. I can understand that. “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.’ Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.” Do you see what is going on here? Jonah would rather die than obey God. Jonah would rather die than do the will of God. He’d rather die than repent of running away from God. It’s rather striking to realize that in contrast to the sailors who don’t want to kill him and don’t want to throw him overboard. They’re thinking in their own mind if we throw this guy overboard, we’re guilty of taking a man’s life. He is not going to survive the storm. They don’t want to do that. But here’s Jonah and he’s willing to let 600,000 Ninevites be judged by God before he would go and bring the light of the gospel to them. God just shows us plainly where Jonah is in his heart right now. It’s not in a good place.

Here’s an unexpected part of the story and is really the unexpected salvation of these sailors. Verse 14: “Therefore they called out to the Lord.” The Lord. They called out to Jehovah. It’s Yahweh that they’re calling out to. You see in your Bible that it most likely has the word Lord all in caps. That’s telling us that it’s Jehovah they’re calling out to. They’re not just calling out to a god. They’re calling out to Jehovah. They’re calling out to the Lord: “O Lord, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.’ So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.” This is an amazing account here as the sailors believe and the storm is calmed. You can’t help but try to visualize what this looked like to somebody. Two or three guys maybe grab Jonah. He’s going willingly, so it is not like he’s fighting them. This is not the United Airline type of removal. This is a guy who’s willingly giving himself up (sorry about that) to go over. So they pick him up and you can kinda see them. He’s flying through the air and hitting the water.

But here's another miracle. The miracle is that the storm stops. It's not just that the storm stops. Most of us have been either on the water or near the water when there is a storm. It doesn't just stop, does it? It slows down and it takes a while. That's not the picture that we have here. The storm stopped. It took me right to the Gospels where Jesus stands up after He was asked by His disciples to save their lives and He said, "Peace! Be still", and the wind and the seas obeyed Him and it was perfectly calm and still. So here you have a similar account.

But here's what I want you to see. I think God intends for us to see in the salvation of the sailors something of a picture of how God works in salvation. Because what was the picture of these sailors before they just give in? What are they doing? They're working as hard as they can to get saved. They're doing everything they can, even to the point after he tells them to throw him overboard. It'll be okay. They say no that they wouldn't do that. They engage the oars even harder because they were good and they were going to pull this out themselves. That is the heart of man before God. We want so desperately to earn our salvation which God says He gives to us as a free gift. That's pictured here.

Finally, they turn to Him and it says: They feared the Lord exceedingly and they offered sacrifices. They believed and they were delivered and they were rescued. Here's principle #4 which is amazing: God can use even a disobedient believer to achieve His purposes. That's what God is doing here. Jonah is in rebellion. He's in disobedience. He is running away from God. He is doing the least that he can as far as what God has called him to do. God, in His abundant mercy and in His sovereign grace, overrules even the disobedience of Jonah to bring a message of deliverance to the sailors. It should not encourage us to disobedience by any stretch, but it should encourage us to realize that God again is not stymied by even our choices, even those that take us away from Him. Because you know what? God doesn't let go of His children. He's absolutely relentless in His pursuit. Grace's grip simply cannot be broken.

What do we take away? I think there's two things I'd love to have us hold on to this morning. One, if you're running away from God you need to stop. If you're running away from God, you need to stop. God is not going to relent. God is going to continue to pursue you. There will never be a point at which God says okay, you win. I'm through.

No, He is going to be relentless in His pursuit. He is not going to let go. He is not going to give up. I don't know what that means in your life. It is possible that somebody that is here or somebody that hears this is literally just in a full-out sprint away from God and anything spiritual and anything to do with their Christian life. That's always possible. It's also possible that we are running from God in an area of our life in which God has said to you: That right there. I need you to deal with that. We're not willing to listen. We're resisting the voice of God's Spirit and the truth of God's word. He continues to speak to us and say that that's the area that I'm asking you to repent of or I'm asking you to turn back to Me. So, it can be that we're doing many things, but there is an area of our life where we are wanting to hold on to our self and God is going to be relentless, I believe, in His pursuit until we come to a point of confession and acknowledgment in repentance before Him.

The second thing that comes to my mind in light of this passage is we need to give unending thanks for a relentlessly pursuing God. What a privilege it is to be in this family of people, God's family, in which a loving Father has committed Himself to us irrevocably. Irrevocably. His grace is going to be flowing towards us even in some instances where His righteous indignation is pursuing us. But it is an uncomfortable grace that draws us oftentimes back to our heavenly Father, and we need to be forever grateful. It reminds me of that hymn that was written for a different purpose, but says: O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee. I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths, its flow may richer fuller be.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you for the way that you speak to us through your Word, through the life of this man who was so much like us. Lord, we want to learn the things that You have for us. We want to walk with You in truth. We want to yield to the Spirit's speaking into our life the things, Father, that we so desperately need to hear. So, I pray that the truth and the voice of your Spirit will be heard and received, Father, and welcomed into each of our lives. Father, if there is someone here this morning who does not know You in a personal way, Your pursuit of them and the fact that they're here this morning speak into their life of Your grace, of the fact that Jesus died on the cross for each one of us, that in putting our trust in what He did, we can lay down the oar that we're rowing so hard to achieve some measure of acceptance before You and

realize that Jesus did everything that needed to be done. Father, we love You. We thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your work. Holy Spirit, cause us to understand and know the relentless pursuit of a gracious God, in whose name we pray. Amen.