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Series: Exposition of Jonah
Message: God of Second Chances

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We all enjoy having second chances. The officer has pulled us over and says to us I'm just going to give you a warning this time. Slow it down a little bit. We are so thankful. Yes, sir, I promise I will never speed again for the rest of my life ... or something like that, right? Or maybe you've been given a second chance at work. Maybe there's some circumstance that you found yourself in, some project that you are part of, some presentation you need to make, some task that you had been given and it didn't go as you had wanted and your supervisor, your boss was kind enough to recognize that you are worthy and deserving of another opportunity, of a second chance.

I can actually remember back in our first year in college and we were in a freshman class. We had a first-year professor. He was a great guy, a good teacher, but he had not yet learned the art of testing. The entire class bombed this major exam and it would have a big impact on all of our grades. He realized that a big majority of the class failed. He actually came back to us and he said this was probably a little bit too much for the first go-round and he gave us a second chance. Interestingly, I did not know Bonnie that well at that time. She claims to this day she got an A on that exam. She is still holding on to that. Do y'all believe that? You do? It is Mother's Day, so we're going to be extra nice today.

We love second chances, don't we? I don't know if you saw during the Final Four Frank Martin, the head coach of South Carolina. Did you see his story? He asked his future wife out seven times and she turned him down every time, but he didn't give up. He kept asking and asking. The interviewer asked why did you keep asking her out? He said she always had a good reason. It didn't seem like she was making it up. She had a good reason so he just kept coming back and kept asking. He gave her many extra chances.

We come in our study of the book of Jonah this morning to the last verse of chapter 2 and the first four verses of chapter 3. It's the story of the God of second chances. I actually thought it was providential that on Mother's Day we are looking at the God of second chances because if there's anything that I'm thankful to my mother for, which is many things, she gave me many, many, many second chances way more than I deserved. So God is not only the God of the second chance, He is the God of the 999th chance. A gracious mercy comes to us through the cross.

Let's do a quick overview to catch everybody up since some of you haven't been with us in our study of Jonah. We are progressing through. We're starting the third chapter, as I just mentioned, but in chapter 1 you have Jonah really missing the point. If you want to capture of the essence of chapter 1, it's Jonah just missing the point. Jonah had come to believe that Israel and the Jewish people were the beginning and the end of God's blessing. He had come to see that instead of being a conduit which the blessings of God were to flow to the world, he began to see Israel and the Jewish people as just a cul-de-sac. It was us four and no more. God, we're so thankful You've blessed us and we're going to keep all the blessings for ourselves. Instead of understanding what God intended, which was to go into all the world and be a light to the nations, Jonah had totally missed the point of what God's intent was.

You come to chapter 2 and it's really the lowest point in Jonah's life. When you run away from God, you never know where you're going to end up. I think of the prodigal son. The prodigal son runs away from God and ends up in a pigsty. I had to wonder as I thought of that this week if Jonah wouldn't have picked the pigsty over sinking to the bottom of the ocean and spending three days in the belly of the fish. But that's where Jonah headed up. Jonah is cast overboard and the seaweed is wrapping around him as he sinks to the bottom of the sea, only to be swallowed by a large fish to spend three days and three nights there and to fall into a place of total despair. He misses the point and then he comes to the lowest point.

When we come to chapter 3, we come to the highest point. We're going to just introduce it or look at it in the first part this morning. We'll finish it up next Sunday, Lord willing, because what we have in chapter 3 is the highest point because it's the greatest revival that has ever taken place in the history of humanity. That's what unfolds in Jonah

chapter 3. Let's look at the recovering grace of God this morning. As you know, this is an amazing story. I hope and I know you do grow in your appreciation of the Word of God, because it seems like no matter what book we're studying, whether it's Colossians like we just did or Philemon after that, and now we're in the book of Jonah, aren't you just amazed every time we're progressing through the truth of God's Word. Aren't you just amazed at the story that God puts before us? That's clearly the case here in the book of Jonah. Jonah is the story of a man that God called, a man who turns away from that calling, and yet here God comes back to him again. It's really this picture of the reoccurring grace of God that we're going to start with this morning.

I want to begin with just this little exercise of the perspective of human reasoning. I want to step back for a minute and as we think of where we are in the story, I want to invite you just to put yourself in God's place for a moment. I know we can't do that because human reasoning just is a part of who we are, but if we can just step back and pretend for a moment that we're looking at this story through the eyes of God rather than through the eyes of human reasoning, what is your natural response from the human viewpoint? What is your natural response when you have finished chapter 1 and chapter 2 of the book of Jonah? Here you have a man who was a prophet of God. He has a spiritual insight because of that into the times in which he lives.

We know from our opening study in 2 Kings that he was a successful prophet to this point. He had been used by God in the northern kingdom of Israel. So we have a prophet of God. We have a man of spiritual insight. We have a man with a successful ministry record. He's been called now to a huge assignment. I mean this is a big league assignment when God says Jonah I want you to go to Nineveh and I want you to preach there of my redeeming grace and love. Jonah flat-out simply refuses. I think he's the only prophet in the whole of Scripture who just simply says no to God. There is a lot of instances in the lives of people where there was hesitation, where there was excuse making, but I can't think of another prophet in the Old Testament who flat-out in the light of God's call on his life who simply said no I'm not going. And not only am I not going, I would rather die than go. I would rather die than obey you. That's where Jonah is.

So you're looking at this and you see his refusal and instead of obeying and doing what God has desired, God steps in to this circumstance and He rescues this

man. He brings him to a place of repentance. You could, as you come to the end of chapter 2, just from a human perspective say you know what? This is grace enough. This guy just flat out said no to God. God steps back in and rescues him and brings him to repentance. Who could expect more from God at this point than what He has done already when you come to the end of chapter 2? His life has been spared. He has been brought to this place of repentance. God says thank you, Jonah. I'm ready to move on. Here's an early prophetic retirement package. Enjoy the rest of your life. I've saved it for you, but I really don't have anything else in mind for you. God not only didn't do that, He didn't even send him down to the minor leagues for a while. He didn't put him on probation. What does he do? He steps back into this man's life and He does for us the unexpected, the unthinkable. God gives him another chance. Let's look at the workings of God this morning.

We're going to start with this matter of up and out. So we didn't quite finish chapter 2 purposely last time so we pick up in verse 10 and it says: "And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land." At some point in the next couple of weeks when we finish the book of Jonah, I am going to show our little video of the sock puppet and Jonah. That is so funny and I've got to see it again. The very last line is he vomited him up onto the shore, and that's what verse 10 tells us. You can almost look at that and go, okay, here is the final act of discipline of the part of God. A whale. A large fish. Whatever it was brings Jonah to the shore. Yet, here is the mercy of God functioning in this man's life again. One thing that you take away from the story at this point is there's 48 verses in the book of Jonah. Three of them talk about the fish. I know when we play word association and I say Jonah, you say fish, right? That is the first thing that comes to mind. But literally out of 48 verses, only three of them talk about the fish. Here's the point. Every reference to the fish, the fish does exactly what God tells him to do. The fish does exactly what God tells him to do...unlike Jonah.

So here's Jonah. He is back on the shore. He's back to safety. I've got a feeling, I don't know this for sure but I'm going to ask Jonah, I don't think he ever got on the boat again. You know what I mean? I don't even think he went into a swimming pool. I think he was done with water. I think that was all he needed right there. He was done with the whole water aquatic experience.

Let's just stop in the story for a minute because we have this event of Jonah being cast overboard, swallowed by a fish, in the fish for three days and three nights, and then evacuated out of the fish on the shore. There is a spiritual lesson of huge significance in this story. It is what Jesus Himself said about Jonah. In Matthew chapter 12 and in verse 38, this is what Jesus said about Jonah: "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.' But He answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'" Do you know what we call this? We call this Biblical typology. Biblical typology tells us that there are things that happen in the Old Testament that are giving us a foreshadowing of something that is to come. Biblical typology, as I understand it, has three components to it. There is a spiritual correspondence, a spiritual lesson, a spiritual truth that is going to be communicated in this connection between the old and the new.

The second thing that you see about this whole matter of the Biblical typology is that there is something historical that happens. It's not just something that we're reading into the text. No, there is a historical event. There's a historical person. There's some historical thing that we're going to look at and when we get to the New Testament, we're going to realize that's what that was foreshadowing.

Then the third thing. There's a predictive element. There is a foreshadowing. There's a predictive element in this matter of Biblical typology. So what it is that we have in Jonah's experience is rightly understood through the words of Christ Himself as being a type of Christ. Jonah is used by God, not just to take this message to Nineveh, but Jonah is used by God in a matter of typology to give us a picture and a foreshadowing of what was going to happen to Jesus Himself. It's not hard to think of an Old Testament picture or a better person who foreshadows the work of Christ in His death. There's lots of examples that you can probably think of from the Old Testament that fit this matter of spiritual correspondence and historical reality, predictive in nature that are directly specific to the death of Christ. Psalm 22 is a psalm that just speaks from beginning to end about the about the crucifixion of Christ hundreds and hundreds of years before it

happened. Isaiah 53 would come to all of our minds about the suffering of the Savior. But here's my question. Where do you go in the Old Testament to get a picture of the burial and resurrection of Jesus? Do you know where you go? You go to the book of Jonah. Listen to what Luke writes about this whole matter. Actually what I want to do is to go to 1 Corinthians 15 and the 1st verse. Listen to this: "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance when I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says you can find in the Old Testament Scriptures a foreshadowing of the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus. We already talked about how easy it is to find references typology to the death, but what about the resurrection? Listen to what Jesus said after the resurrection. He is walking on the road to Damascus with the two disciples. In Luke 24 and verse 27, this is what He said: "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Do you know what He was doing? When he got to the book of Jonah as he made his way through the Old Testament He said do you know what just happened? Do you see what Jonah was foreshadowing? Do you see what was pictured in Jonah's experience three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, three days and three nights in the belly of the earth? I believe that's why the book of Jonah is under such ridicule. Why? One of the reasons is because it points people ultimately when they understand what the Spirit is saying and the truth of the Scripture, it points them right to Christ. This book is ridiculed and mocked and made fun of for the very thing that Jesus said is a foreshadowing of the work He would do on our behalf.

Back to the outline. Back to the workings of God. So we're up and out. We're out of the fish. Here we go. Chapter 3. One more time. This is amazing. "Then." Okay, so we've got this word that is introducing this timeline: "Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time saying..." Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time. Do you know what that is? That's what we call grace. That is a word of grace. Instead of Jonah, go home. Instead of Jonah, thanks but no thanks. It's the word of the

Lord came to Jonah the second time. We just need to relish the grace of God in our life, the mercy of God at work in our life.

Listen to Isaiah chapter 30 verse 18: "Therefore, the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore He exalts Himself to show mercy to you." Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in my life, I am so not like anything in that statement in Isaiah. I'm so judgmental of other people. I'm so quick to come to conclusions about them. I'm so quick to want to see them get their just due, to look at people and say they're getting just what they deserve, and if they're not then they should. Our God is a gracious God. He loves to show us His mercy.

I heard this quote. I am not sure how it related, but I really liked it this week. The statement was: when you're a hammer everything is a nail. Isn't that good? Think about that. When you're a hammer, boom! Everything is a nail. There's no grace in that, is there? If you live your life like a hammer, there's no grace in that. God is not a hammer. He can be. The Word is described as being a hammer, but not at all the time in our life. Here we see the grace of God. It's not just Jonah, is it? We don't have time to go all through just the Old Testament and examples in the New Testament. Think about Abraham. God says I'm doing to give you and Sarah a son. They get it so messed up that they say here is Hagar, my handmaid. Why don't you just have sex with her? Maybe the son is going to come that way. Or Moses kills a man when God's calling him to deliver the children of Israel. We know about David. Everyone knows about David, but he was a man after God's own heart. Elijah got to the point where he was so depressed that he was ready to quit. God steps back into his life and raises him up again. Peter denies the Lord three times. God says through His Son to Peter, you know how much I love you. I love you that much. That's the storyline of Scripture and I hope you see that in your life too, because the grace of God, the mercy of God is poured out in our life every day. We don't just have a God of second chances. We have a God of 999 chances plus. We need to grow in our appreciation. Who of us hasn't been a Jonah as we said a few weeks ago. Who of us hasn't lagged behind when God's put His call on our life? Who of us hasn't been captivated by the things of the world to where they've replaced our love for God and our love for Christ and our love for the Word and our love for people? Who of us hasn't just stepped out in open disobedience and said to God no.

I won't do that. I don't want to. But we all have. And we all need a lot of second chances.

So let's look at the recommissioning of Jonah. The recommissioning of Jonah. We come to it in the second verse and I look at the second verse and it's basically the same command: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I will tell you." Now, if we expected when we came to verse 2 for God to have changed His mind and to have adjusted His command in light of Jonah's initial response, it ain't happening. God says go. Jonah says no. God says oh. And God comes back the second time. He comes back the second time and He basically gives him the exact same command. How long does it take children as they come into this world to learn how to manipulate their parents? It really does not take very long, does it? It doesn't take very long at all. It's in our DNA. It is who we are and we carry that right on up through all of life to where we are manipulating people all the time to get what we want. The sad thing is we've learned by experience that enough manipulation of the right kind will result in the command being changed. God's not that way. God comes a second time and it's the same commission and the same command.

Here's what I want to see. God takes Jonah back again to the place where he said no. That's what you have in the second verse. God is not willing to overlook our sin, to move us down the road to the next step. He takes us back to that place and He says here is where we had our problem. Here is where we have to start again. He brings him right back and He brings him right back to the place where he said no to God. God just gives him almost the exact same command that He gave them the first time to remind him that it is not a loving thing at all to overlook sin in somebody's life. It's never a loving thing to overlook sin in somebody's life. In fact, it's the most unloving thing that you can do. That's why God won't do it. He brings Jonah right back to square one.

Remember this is what I told you the first time. Let's revisit it again. There is a slightly different emphasis. When you look at chapter 1 verse 2, there's three verbs. He says arise, go, call out against it. When you look at chapter 3 verse 2 there are three verbs. He says arise, go, call out against it the message that I tell you. All of that simply again to say God is dead serious about His plan to bring a message of judgment against Nineveh.

Both times you notice that He says great city. This is a great city. When you look at verse 3, as we will in a moment, it is an exceedingly great city. God is just underscoring not only the massive population, but it's a place of influence. The impact of Nineveh in that time period was immense. It was the Washington DC, New York City, London, Paris of its time. It had great influence and so God acknowledges that. He gives this statement to Jonah. Jonah, you go there, and I will tell you what say. It is very similar to what Jesus says in Luke 12. Remember when He sent the disciples out and speaking of them being called before the synagogues and the rulers and they are not sure what they're going to say. Jesus's reassurance to them was I will tell you at that time exactly what you need to say. So that is all Jonah needs to know. He is brought back and he is issued the same commandment with just a slightly different emphasis that I will tell you what it is you need to say.

And now look. We get to see the obedience of Jonah in verses 3 and 4. It begins with Jonah being in the right place. Jonah 3:3 – “So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth.” We're going to stop there for right now. Look at how verse 3 begins. It begins with this wonderful word “so”... Jonah arose. Remember what we saw back in 1:3? Remember that adversative conjunction? That word “but” that interrupts and impedes and causes trouble. That's what we saw back in 1:3, but now it's 3:3 and it is “so” Jonah arose and went. Three days spent in the belly of the fish with all the gastric juices you could ever want and some sushi on the side is all that Jonah needed to get to a point where he was willing to say I think I got that lesson. I understand exactly what it is that you want me to do. When we do in accordance to the Word of God, we put ourselves on a pathway of blessing and fulfillment. It is a wonderful thing. It is a wonderful thing to walk in obedience to God. None of us do it perfectly. We know that. But it is a wonderful thing to be on the path of obedience as opposed to being in the storms of disobedience. Mark it, my friend. God is not going to relent in His love for you. We covered this last time that God is unrelenting and He will bring storms into our life commensurate with what we need to get to a place of obedience. Here is this beautiful picture of Jonah being at the point of saying yes to God and obeying. Psalm 1. Blessed is the man, blessed is the woman, blessed is the young person, blessed is the

child who does what? Who walks in the truth of God's word. Not the path of the world. Not the path of least resistance. Jonah finds himself in a good place.

Let me just again push pause here in our story because I want to speak to this matter of God as the God of second chances and God as the God of 999 chances. There's a balancing word that we have to bring when we hear that truth. That balancing word is there are no guarantees as to when that grace is going to come to us. The point of it all is obedience at the point of the Spirit speaking conviction into our heart is the time to obey. I do believe that God is the God of the second chance and I believe He is the God of the 999 chances. I stand before you to say He is the God of a million chances, but we cannot presume on the grace of God. The doctrine of the grace of God does not say to us, as Paul spoke to so plainly in Romans, what do we do? Should we just continue in sin that grace may abound? This is a wonderful thing. Let's just keep on sinning so we can keep seeing the grace of God. What does Paul say? May it never be! May it never be that we would find ourselves presuming on the grace of God in that way, because a part of the sovereign, mysterious working of God is we don't know how that plays out in our life from one time to the next. So the safest place, the place of blessing, is when the Spirit of God speaks through the truth of God into your heart and into your life about that, and then deal with it. Turn from it. Repent of it. Whatever it is that needs to be done. Seek help for it. Whatever that looks like. We don't presume on God's grace. Today is the day that we want to respond as we're called. You'll never be in the right place if you're in a place of disobedience. You're never in the right place when you're in disobedience.

Now look at the right message in verse 4. We'll close here. So he says that he will go: "So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, 'Yet 40 days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!'" There's a lot of question about the geography of the city and about this language here in these verses talking about this matter of three days. If you take what was common in that day of being able to walk 20 miles in a day, that was kind of the standard. If you were to go a day's journey, you basically were going about 20 miles. If we read this correctly, and it's interpreted differently, but if we read this

correctly, it may very well be saying that it was a three-day journey so that would be 60 miles around the city of Nineveh. It's more likely that what he is saying is not just the city of Nineveh proper, but the Metro, as we would say Metroplex area. There were more areas than just Nineveh that were involved in this particular geographic area. It is likely that he makes this day's journey into the city and we are to understand it as being kind of like we would the Oklahoma City Metroplex which is probably more than 60 miles around, I guess. I don't know what it is.

In any event, he brings the message and the message that he brings is 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. It is eight words in the English standard version that I'm reading out of. Eight words. In the Hebrew text, it is five words. We wonder is this all that Jonah said? Forty days and if you don't repent, God is going to overthrow you guys. We don't know that for sure. He may have said more, but this is what we know. This is what we'll discover in some lessons to come. In Jonah's mind, it's about 39 days too many. Maybe even 40 too many, because he is still stuck in a place that we'll see the grace of God has come to him but he's not quite ready to extend it to the city of Nineveh. God is not only the God of second chances, my friend, He is the God of the 999 chances. He is that because of the wonderful grace and mercy that comes to us through the cross of Christ.

So do what we take away this morning? Here is I want us to think about as we wrap up. The God of another chance is more interested in you than in what you can do for Him. That's the underlying point this morning. That just calls out to us from every word of this section, and even what we read previously in the second chapter. God is more interested in Jonah than He is in what He has called Jonah to go and do. If God's heart was simply to take a message to Nineveh, He had right there in front of Him in Jonah's contemporary Hosea who was a wonderful prophet and He had Amos. Those were contemporaries of Jonah. If all God cared about was getting the message to Nineveh, He would have just said forget Jonah, I'm on to Hosea. Hosea, come here. Bring your buddy Amos. You guys will go to Nineveh for me. That's not the extent of God's concern. Of course God's concerned for Nineveh, but His greater concern regarding Jonah is the man Jonah, about whom He cared so much.

I can say to you this morning based on this and the story of Scripture that God cares and He loves you that much too. That's the storyline of the Bible. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. I don't know what circumstance you find yourself in this morning, but whatever it is, I know God is more interested in you than you have ever imagined. I know God is more interested in you than He is necessarily in extracting you from the circumstance or in getting you to do something for Him. He wants to see you brought into a relationship of obedience and harmony with Him. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6: today is the day of salvation. Today is the day of rescue. The word "salvation" is the word "rescue". It's the word "deliver". Today's the day to be rescued. Today's the day to be delivered.

If you don't know Jesus in a personal way, today would be the day to believe and put your trust in Christ alone for salvation. That's what the Bible calls us to. The Bible tells us that it's not by works of righteousness that we do that we had a relationship with God. It is what God has done for us. So if you're here this morning and you've been on the treadmill of performance and trying to earn God's favor or blessing in your life, then I say to you step off the treadmill and step into the grace of God. The grace of God is what comes to us to rescue us. It says to us you can't do enough because what God requires of us is 100% perfection. The only one who has ever done that His Son Jesus. That's why He came, to die on the cross for us. If you're on some kind of a treadmill as a child of God, if you're in some kind of bondage, you know what? God's interested in your deliverance. He is interested in your salvation. He's interested in rescuing you. Listen to the voice of God's Spirit. Listen to the truth of God's Word. Submit your heart and your mind to Christ this morning.

Let's pray. Father God, what an amazing God we serve. What an amazing story You have written for us, Father, in your Word. Lord, just give us in unending hunger and passion to know You and to know Your Word. The wonder of this book, Lord, amazes us every time we open it because we learn yet again of the mighty acts of God. We learn again of the awesome grace of God. So Lord, speak this truth into the heart of each one here this morning. Do that work by Your Spirit of bringing somebody into a place of understanding the gospel of your grace. Bring us as your children into a place

of freedom and deliverance from the binding nature of reoccurring sin, and cause us to see the greatness of Your love and grace through Christ. We're so thankful. We love You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Jesus's name we pray, amen.