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SERMON TEXT: JONAH 1:1-16  
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## PIDDLING JONAH

I want you to turn in your Bible to the book of Jonah.  
Jonah 1: 1-5; 15-16

1. Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah  
the son of Amittai (a MITT eye), saying,

2. Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city,  
and cry (or preach) against it;  
for their wickedness is come up before me.

3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the  
presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa;  
and he found a ship going to Tarshish:  
so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it,  
to go with them unto Tarshish  
from the presence of the Lord.

4. But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea,  
and there was a mighty tempest in the sea,  
so that the ship was like to be broken.

5. Then the mariners were afraid,  
and cried every man unto his god,  
and cast forth the wares that <were> in the ship  
into the sea, to lighten <it> of them.  
But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he  
lay, and was fast asleep.

Now verse 15 and 16 ...

15. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

16. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows.

If you're a Christian tonight  
your most important assignment is  
to find the will of God for your life and to follow it.

In [Romans 12:2](#), the Bible says:

Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

**It is one thing to be  
uncertain about the will of God, and miss it;**

**It is an altogether different thing  
to know the will of God and refuse to do it.**

**The classic illustration in the Bible  
of refusing to do the will of God**

**is the life and the times of Jonah,  
the man I call the fugitive, in the Old Testament.**

The real problem in Jonah  
is not the miracle of the fish

but it is the problem of a man named Jonah  
who didn't want to do the will of God.

The real emphasis of this book  
is not upon a whale  
is not upon a storm

it is upon soul winning.

In fact the star,  
the central character,  
the main personality of the book

is not a backslidden prophet  
but rather it is a compassionate God.

This book is the book which is  
the equivalent of John 3:16 in the New Testament,

It is God's beautiful picture in the Old Testament  
of His love for a world that reaches out  
in compassion,  
in forgiveness,  
and in salvation.

Now you know when you're piddling  
that means you're just kind of wasting your time.

Somebody says, "Well, what did you do yesterday?"  
"Oh, I just kind of piddled around  
and did a little of this and a little of that.

Well, that is exactly what Jonah is doing in chapter 1,  
Jonah is wasting his time.

You always waste your time  
when you try to run away from God.

Folks, you can't run away from God  
and Jonah illustrates that is very, very true.

Verse 1:

Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah.

In verse 2:     God said to Jonah:  
                    Arise, go, preach.

It's a wonderful thing to know  
that God loves you so much  
  
that He has a plan for your life,  
there is something that God wants you to do.

The most important thing in life  
is to find God's will for your life and to follow it.

God gave Jonah a command:

Arise, go, preach...to Nineveh, that wicked city.

And the mention of the city Nineveh  
caused a cold shudder to go through Jonah.

Now we know some things about Nineveh.

Nineveh:

located on the banks of the Tigris River  
in what is today modern Iraq.

They would take the people that they had victimized  
and bury into the sand, exposing only their neck,  
  
to leave them to scream and to beg water  
as they died.

Others they would skin their bodies,  
impale them  
and leave them to die in the burning sun.

Sometimes before the very eyes of their doomed victims  
they would burn their own children.

So wicked, so cruel, were the Ninevites  
that hearing the Ninevites were coming  
  
whole villages, would commit suicide  
rather than face the cruelty of these people.

This was common knowledge to the Israelites,  
  
and already some raids had taken place  
in the northern cities of Galilee, by Assyria,  
  
and Israel knew that the Ninevites  
had their eyes on Israel  
  
and that their purpose was to attack Israel  
and devour the chosen people of God.

So when God said to Jonah,  
  
[Arise and go to Nineveh](#)  
it shook him to the very core of his being.

Now I just want to insert here:  
that Jonah had a will  
  
and that Jonah could defy the will of God.

God has created you a human being,  
you have the ability to either choose  
to obey the will of God or disobey it.

The most important assignment in your life  
is to find the will of God for your life  
and to follow it.

God said to Jonah: Go to Nineveh.

Jonah said: Not on your life, God;

I'm going to get just as far away as I possibly can.

So one morning Jonah walks out on the porch

and he looks to the right  
and the road leads to Nineveh,

and he looks to the left  
and the road leads to the seacoast.

Now you've got to keep in mind  
Jonah was a prophet,  
Jonah knew his Bible,  
Jonah was a man of God,  
Jonah as a preacher.

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He knew he couldn't  
get out of the presence of the Lord.

He knew that God was the God of the sea  
as well as the God of the land.

But, you know, he's just like a lot of Christians isn't he?

You see, a lot of us know things in the Bible  
and yet we live our life as if they are not true.

Sin has a way of blinding us to the truths of scripture  
and when we make up our mind to disobey God  
we attempt to do the impossible,  
we attempt to run from the presence of God.

And so the Bible says in [verse 3](#)  
[he went down to Joppa.](#)

Folks, I'll tell you what,  
every time you make up your mind  
to get out of the will of God  
it is always down.

Folks, you don't fall up in disobedience to God  
you fall down.

If you make up your mind you want to run from God  
the devil will arrange the circumstances

so it will seem like everything  
is going to be working out just right.

He found a ship.

So I can see him now, he goes on board that ship  
and he knocks on the captain's cabin door  
and a gruff voice says, "Who's there!?",  
and Jonah opens the door, he walks in,  
and he says,

"I hear this ship is going to Tarshish."

And the sea captain can tell by his look  
that here is a guilty man that will run at any price,  
and he said, "Yes, we're going to Tarshish.

You want to go?"

"Yes. How much is the fare?"

And I have a feeling that the captain  
probably tripled the fare,

because he knew that a guilty man,  
a fugitive,  
was willing to pay just any kind of price at all.

And so the Bible says he paid the fare.

When you decide to get out of the will of God  
you'll always pay the fare.

Sin will take you further than you want to go,  
it will keep you longer than you want to stay,  
it will cost you more than you want to pay.

Oh, But, I've got some good news;  
if you'll turn your life over to the Lord  
the Lord will pay the fare.

Jesus paid the fare for our sins at Calvary's cross?

So there he is, he's paid the fare,  
he gets down into the boat.

Verse 4 says:

But the Lord sent out a great wind.

And then they noticed  
that the skies start getting kind of dark.

We all have our storms in life for a variety of reasons.

Verse 5 says:

Then the mariners were afraid,  
and cried every man unto his god,

Now, folks, these were experienced seamen.  
I mean these men had weathered many a storm.

And when the scripture says that they were afraid,  
so much so **that they got religion**.

Verse 5:

and cast forth the wares  
that <were> in the ship into the sea,  
to lighten <it> of them.

**When you get out of the will of God,  
you can effect others around you.**

Those Sailors were counting on the goods  
that the ship carried to pay their wages  
and support their families ...

now; there will be no wages

**This backslider has cost those around him  
to lose their family support.**

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Verse 5:

But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

And as these men were throwing over the cargo  
trying to rescue the ship  
he slept through it all.

Now listen to me.

None sleeps so soundly  
as the backslidden Christian  
who is out of the will of God.

And none is more oblivious to the storms,  
and the turmoil,  
and the problems,  
and the difficulties of life

like that Christian  
who is running from God,  
defying the will of God in his life.

Oh, I'll tell you,  
the worst thing in the world  
is a sleeping Christian.

Let me ask you a question:  
 who was the big problem on the ship?

Was it the pagan sailors

No, the problem was not the praying sailors,  
 the problem was the sleeping preacher,  
 the backslidden believer.

Verse 6:

I can almost imagine it:

a rough hairy hand reaches in there into Jonah's bed  
 and begins to shake old Jonah.

Here it takes someone  
 who doesn't even know the Lord,  
 to wake up the PREACHER.

Well they cried unto the Lord,  
 then in verse 15

they took up Jonah  
 and they threw him into the sea.

When they threw Jonah into the sea  
 the storm went down with him  
 and the sea ceased raging.

Verse 16, I believe it means the sailors got converted,  
 it says the men feared the Lord exceedingly.

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Fear is not a bad motive to get saved.

I'll tell you one thing,  
I'd rather scare people into heaven  
than lull them into hell.

There are three great reasons tonight  
why you ought to be saved if you're lost:

Number one, you don't want to go to hell.

Number two, you don't want to go to hell.

Number three, you don't want to go to hell!

Piddling Jonah;

yeah, that's what I'm going to call him Piddling Jonah.

He's wasting his time,

he's wasting his time trying to run from God.

Why would you run from one  
who loves you like Jesus loves you?

ARE YOU RUNNING FROM GOD TODAY ?