

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 11 May 2025

Sermon Title : Swallowed By Mercy

Speaker : Rev Peter Koh

Text : Jonah 1:17-2:10

INTRODUCTION

This is the second of a four-part sermon series on the book of Jonah. In the first sermon, we learnt about how God had instructed Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh to preach against its wickedness. However, Jonah ran away in the opposite direction to Tarshish on a ship instead. When a violent storm broke out, Jonah knew that God was upset with him for not embarking on the mission given to him, but he did not repent and turn back towards the city of Nineveh. Instead, he asked to be thrown into the sea to calm the storm. This shows that we human beings are rebellious by nature. Yet God still loves us and will continue to pursue us in spite of our disobedience. On this Mother's Day, we can also see that a lot of times, a mother's love is a glimpse of God's love as well. The way you love your children, the way you care for them also manifests an image of God loving His creation.

God's Mercy Pursues Us (Jonah 1:17)

Jonah ran away from Nineveh against God's will and mercy, yet God continued to pursue him. In verse 17, a huge fish was sent to swallow Jonah up. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. He was literally in the depths, at rock bottom because he was unrepentant. When he went down into the sea, he could have died, but that did not bother him. Struggling in the belly of the fish for 3 days, 3 nights, God had to bring him to his lowest point. In the belly, he would have been covered in seaweed, drowning in a stomach that would not have smelt pleasant in any way, it would have been horrible.

In this we see God pursuing Jonah, despite all the disobedience he had shown God – running in the opposite direction. He ran but he could not hide. He ran but God continued to chase him, all the way to the ship, and after that God sent the “Grab driver fish” to pick him up, to make him turn back to Nineveh. Many of us as parents are watching out for our children – how much more, our Heavenly Father watches over us. We as humans care so much for our children, how much more, does God care for you and I.

In life, we sometimes feel swallowed by deadlines, expectations, emotions, exhaustion, yet, God sent the fish not to eat Jonah but to save him, not to destroy him but to restore him. You cannot outrun the reach of God's mercy. Sometimes mercy may look like confinement, but it is in this deepest bottom that we recognize that it is God's mercy. God pursues us and chases us because He will not give up hope on us so we must also not give up no matter how difficult our situation may seem.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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- Even when you feel overwhelmed or swallowed by life's chaos, God's mercy is holding you, not crushing you. Like the fish, the overwhelming season might be the very thing God uses to preserve you.

God's Mercy Humbles Us (Jonah 2:1-6a)

Even when we are disobedient, even when we do not pray, God still pursues us. He may wait for us to hit rock bottom before His mercy humbles us. Hitting rock bottom can be the beginning of revival, just like the case with Jonah. Brokenness caused Jonah to finally pray. (Jonah 2:1-6a) His prayer was honest, desperate and poetic. He turned to God and remembered God's faithfulness - thankful for God's mercy, that no matter what, God did not "give up" the pursuit and; understanding the futility of his life, that without God, there is no hope, darkness swallows all.

It is usually at our lowest point of our life, when there is no way out, that it forces us to look to God. Think about your own life when you have backslidden from God. When did you come back to God? Oftentimes it is at the lowest point - when you are sick, when you are lonely, that you hear God speaks to you. Many have come to accept the Lord at their death bed because they realized what is important, what is the essence of life. At your lowest point the only thing you can do is to look up for no one can save you. Some of us may use all our health to gain all the wealth we can get in our younger days only to find that we end up using all the wealth we have accumulated to try to get health in our later years. Our wealth, our health, our friends - all will be gone, but God is always there for us.

- God hears our "belly" prayers and quiet intercessions - prayers that no one else sees. God treasures every sincere, humble whispered prayer.

God's Mercy Restores Us (Jonah 2:6b-10)

When we learn to surrender and humble ourselves, put aside our pride and put God as our source of strength, that is when God delivers us. Sometimes it takes being in the deep for us to remember who God is and surrender to His mission and purpose for us. Some of us may be living a life that is meaningless. We go through the same routine daily and may even be drowning in our life's responsibilities, and God seems silent and does not hear us. God's mercy restores us when we learn to surrender to God. Jonah remembered the Lord, not just intellectually, but emotionally and spiritually. (Jonah 2:6b-7)

- When mercy meets surrender, that's where we are restored and find our purpose.

In Jonah 2:8-9, Jonah praised God from the belly of the fish where God was forming Jonah for a new life when he remembered that salvation belongs to God. The fish that was sent to swallow up Jonah, was not to punish him, but to protect him. Not to forget Jonah, but to form him. God is not in the business of punishing us, but in the business of protecting us from bigger harm. God is not in the business of forgetting about us. He is in the business of forming us. When we learn to surrender, when we learn to humble ourselves, put aside our pride and put Him as our source of strength, that is where He delivers us. God's mercy

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restores us, when we learn to surrender. Sometimes God grows us the most in places that feel constricting. Restoration may not always be as we expect, but it is real. When Jonah said his sincere prayer to God, he must have expected God to answer him in a certain way. But God did not answer him. Instead, God spoke to the fish. The fish could have spat Jonah out in the middle of the sea, but God specifically told the fish to spit Jonah on dry land in Nineveh so he could continue with the mission God has prepared for him. God brought Jonah out into a new life and mission. (Jonah 2:10)

- God does not discard us after our failure. He repositions us for a purpose.

God often does to us what He did to Jonah. He waits for us to surrender to Him before saving us. We may feel like Jonah, swallowed up by circumstances in our life – filled with guilt, regrets and many more other things. Take heart because God will still chase after and pursue us because God still provides, God still hears and God still delivers.

CONCLUSION

When we cry out to God, He will provide a way out because He hears us and He will deliver and restore us to give us a purpose. So do not despair, do not give up but give in to God. When our surrender meets God's mercy, God will use us to fulfill the ministry that God has given to each one of us, which is the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19) - to reconcile man to man and man to God. That is our purpose in the marketplace, in our home, in our community. We need to live out our purpose because there is somebody out there who is depressed, who needs help, who needs hope. Let us also celebrate the God who meets us in the deep, swallows us in mercy, and brings us out again - renewed, revived, and ready for our purpose.

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A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Jonah 1:17-2:10 slowly. Reflect on your life when you were in the lowest point in your life.
 - a. Why were you in that situation?
 - b. How has God's mercy pursued you, humbled you and restored you?
 - c. How has that changed you?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. *God's Mercy Pursues Us*

- a. Reflect if your group has not heard or disobeyed God's purpose for you in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19)? What prevented you from obeying Him?
- b. Do you feel that your group life is meaningless with members going through routine at every meeting without a group purpose?
- c. What is one thing your group must do for God to reposition you for a purpose?

4. *God's Mercy humbles Us.*

- a. When you pray for God to deliver you out of a difficult situation, do you usually expect God to answer in a certain way?
- b. If you were Jonah, would you accept God's way of delivering you? What does this tell you about your posture towards God?
- c. How has Jonah 2:10 spoken to you? Is there any change you need to make in your posture towards God and the way you pray to God when in need?

5. *God's Mercy Restores Us.*

- a. When you feel swallowed up by circumstances in your life – filled with guilt, regrets and many more other things, have you ever considered that it could be God's mercy holding you, not crushing you, and like the fish, the overwhelming season might be the very thing God uses to preserve you?
- b. How can Jonah 2 help you remember God intellectually, emotionally and spiritually for full restoration when going through a difficult situation?
- c. How can your group members help you to achieve 5a and 5b above?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

6. Share if you are going through an overwhelming situation and are unable to see God's hand in your situation. Come together as a group to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in discerning the restorative work God is doing in your life. Seek God's merciful restoration by praying in humility and surrender.

OR

Give thanks to God for His mercy that pursues you even when you have been disobedient, to reconcile you to Him, so you can fulfill His ministry of reconciliation in your life.

7. As a group, seek the mercy and grace of God in humility so that you will be obedient to His leading of your daily lives as a Christian. Pray also for wisdom and the Holy Spirit's empowerment upon our church so we can all take the ministry of reconciliation that God has given us as our purpose seriously.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Holy Forever – Chris Tomlin
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkHgxKemCRk&ab_channel=ChrisTomlinVEVO
2. Christ Jesus Glorified – JPCC
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFNKNjIJ6Sc&ab_channel=JPCCWorship
3. Goodness of God – Bethel https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4MUUMWMV4&ab_channel=musicmeetsheaven

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