
Engage

Dear Lord, thank You for calling us to run this race with You. Strengthen our hearts to stay faithful, our feet to walk in Your ways, and our voices to share Your truth with others. Fill us with boldness and love, that our words and actions may reflect Your grace. Help us to persevere, not for our own glory, but to bring others closer to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.





SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

Run Like Jonah? #3:

God's 'With'ness

Pastor Benny Liew

Jonah 3

*Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time:
“Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”*

Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.

This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

“By the decree of the king and His nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from His fierce anger so that we will not perish.”

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened.

Introduction

God asked Jonah to go to Nineveh for the second time. God's desire was for Jonah to proclaim the message of destruction so that the people of Nineveh will have the opportunity to be saved through earnest repentance. In Chapter 3, you God gave Jonah a second chance to obey the call to go to Nineveh after he was vomited out from the big fish. There are three lessons we can learn from Scripture and apply.

1. **God is with Jonah and gave him the power to witness** *Jonah 3:1-3*

God gave Jonah the message and gave him the strength to witness to the people of Nineveh. He was given a second chance. He learned to turn and run with God. He walked for 3 days around the greater Nineveh (not just the walled city) proclaiming the message that God gave him. God's presence was with Jonah despite his past failure. God's power enabled him to deliver a strong message to a hostile nation. Jonah's obedience unlocked divine empowerment that saved 120,000 people.

2. **Running with God requires humility and genuine repentance** *Jonah 3:4-6; James 4:10; Matthew 6:16-18*

The Ninevites, from the greatest to the least, fasted and put on sackcloth as an outward sign of deep repentance. Sackcloth of that time was a coarse material typically made out of goats hair and worn for deep mourning. The king of Nineveh led by example by putting on sackcloth and fasting. This act itself was so important as it signified first and foremost humility before God. It was an outward sign of acknowledging their sinfulness. Secondly, it was a sign of sincere repentance showing willingness to turn from evil. Lastly, it was an appeal for mercy in the hope that God will relent from His judgement. Though we don't wear sackcloth today, its meaning still applies. True repentance must be from the heart and not just an outward action. It is more than just saying sorry. It is more about the heart turning from evil, towards God and seeking His mercy. Humility before God is necessary for revival within our hearts. Jesus Himself affirmed fasting as an inward sign of humility and taught that it was to be done in secret - less we get caught up in wearing it as a badge of honour and falling into the trap of outward performance.

National repentance (like Nineveh's) can bring divine mercy to our church, community and nation. Just as sackcloth was an outward sign of inward humility, fasting and prayer today leads us into a deeper relationship with God. Come join the upcoming DUMC 3-days Fast and Prayer from 9 to 11 April where we come before God as a corporate body in humility and repentance to pray for our nation.

3. With God, there is restoration and transformation *Jonah 3:10; Malachi 3:6a; Jeremiah 18:7-8; Matthew 28:18-20*

Jonah 3:10 indicates that God relented from bringing on the destruction He threatened when the Ninevites turned from their evil ways. Did God change His mind? No. There is a difference between God's unchanging character and conditional warnings given. Malachi 3:6a tells us that God's nature never changes - His character of justice, mercy and love. In Jeremiah 18:7-8, we learn that many of God's warnings are conditional. Our God is a God of mercy. He is the God of second changes, and we Christians enjoy hope and salvation in Christ Jesus.

Everyone deserves a second chance to repent, run towards God and run with God. But what about others out there? People in the cities today need to hear His message of repentance. Let us preach the message to the people in the walled cities and beyond. The same message is given by Jesus as the Great Commission to make disciples. This is not just to teach head knowledge but to teach others to obey God! We are God's ambassadors, branches to the true vine of Jesus. Let us bear fruit.

BIG IDEA: We have the call, the courage and the confidence to witness for Christ because God is with us.

Our response

Repentance is not just about saying sorry but is the changing of our direction - turning away from sin and running to God. Our response must be to:

- Respond with repentance *Acts 3:19*
- Receive with faith *Ephesians 2:8*
- Walk with God *Micah 6:8*

Conclusion

God has given us warnings through our leaders. We can either choose to hit snooze or to go forth with urgency in sharing the message with those around us. There is no better time than now. Like Jonah, we have the same command, call and message to share with others. We have the call, the courage and the confidence to witness for Christ because God is with us.



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Activity/Questions

- Put yourselves into small groups of 3 or 4. Following in the footsteps of Jonah, trace out the route you would use to proclaim God's message to the greater community around your CG area within a day. Which team can do it with the least roads travelled?



Photo by John Tyson on Unsplash

- Blindfold one person and have them navigate an obstacle course guided only by the voice directions from their group members. Discuss the experience after completing the obstacle course. (*Note to facilitator: Jonah ran from God's direction but was ultimately led back by His presence. Just like the blindfolded person, we need to trust God's voice and guidance even when we don't fully see the big picture.*)

Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- Have you ever been given a second chance after failing or making a mistake? How did that experience shape you?
- The Big Idea speaks of the call, the courage and the confidence to witness for Christ because God is with us. Even so, what are some reasons hindering you from stepping out and sharing your faith in God?

Suggested Questions linked to the Sermon:

- Where in your life do you need to be more aware of God's "with"ness (i.e. His presence guiding and sustaining you)?
- God's presence was with the city of Nineveh and offering a chance to repent though it was utterly sinful. What does this tell us of God's heart for both Christians and those who have yet to know about Jesus?
- Share how God has been restoring and transforming you lately. What are some ways that you can extend God's grace and restoration to someone else around you this week?

Suggested Activity linked to the Sermon:

- Take turns to name a person that God has prompted you to share your testimony or to invite to church this Easter. Pray for the person to your left (or right), that God will provide the opportunities for each member to approach the persons that they have named.
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SERMON REFLECTION



Photo by Tina Witherspoon on Unsplash

It is 8am on the second day of Hari Raya. At the time of this writing, I have yet to turn in the complete piece of Engage that will be used by CGs to reverently ruminate over the Word as we grow deeper in our relationship with God.

It was just impossible to write with clarity after what has been a tiring 3D2N holiday and the journey back from Port Dickson taking longer than anticipated. Point to point journey on paper was by all accounts merely 1 to 1.5 hours. However, my family and I took 5 to 6 hours instead due to a little misadventure.

Our eldest son, codenamed L, was there for the weekend Trailblazer camp. It was the first time our son was away from home without us and naturally, we wanted to be close by in case any need arose. We literally stayed a stone's throw away from the campsite, adjacent to a good stretch of beach, walking distance from our hotel. Throughout the planning and actual trip, I was in a dilemma on whether we were overthinking it and whether there was a lack of trust (on our part) of the volunteers and most of all, in our son's ability to take care of himself.

We decided to pick L up directly from the campsite instead of when they were back

at DUMC. I guess it was a case of running ahead of God again. When you do the planning math, it makes sense. Picking L up directly meant that we could leave earlier, have a scrumptious lunch, take a leisurely drive home and still be home before other parents picked up their kids from DUMC. But God had a different plan in store for us.

L recalled just before we arrived at our lunch destination that he left his journal and stationeries under his dorm pillows. He confirmed that was the case after a thorough search of his bag. No sweat, since we had the car, we could return to the campsite. The only catch was that our lunch destination was literally at the edge of PD town. Retracing meant adding an extra 30 min. It didn't help that I took the wrong route by turning off earlier and ended up adding a total of an hour before we could turn from the direction of KL and back to PD! At this point, I was feeling really silly with myself and berated myself for piling errors upon errors. Anyhow, we managed to get back to the campsite and L was able to retrieve his belongings, all thanks to the ever accommodating caretakers. In fact, the supervisor told us that we needn't have to turn back as he wouldn't have minded bringing it down on his planned trip later the same day. What can I say, having the benefit of hindsight always meant that we could have made better decisions. It was my wife that pointed out that perhaps, in our "disobedience" (fears and worries about our son), God turned that into a strong lesson that He knows best. Even in such a situation, He is always in control. We can say that it was divine providence that we had a car and could retrieve what was highly valuable belongings for L.

Who knows (God certainly does), that perhaps the whole incident happened so that it may be a living testimony of God's goodness, love, mercy and grace. In the act of turning to God and running to God, we learn through baby steps to run with God. That when He says "(let) go", we must say "Yes, Lord".

Contributed by **Darren Lim**



MISSIONAL

Note to CGL: Inspire and encourage the Cell Group members to participate in the activity suggested below (from our CrossFields, Missions department) together to cultivate a culture of being a missional church.



CrossFields

MISSIONS
PRAYER
MEETING

 5 April 2025

 9.15am

 Room 103, Dream Centre

Join us for breakfast at the
Garden at 8.30am

Missions Prayer Meeting

As Richard Foster wisely said, *"All who have walked with God have viewed prayer as the main business of their lives."*

Prayer is the heartbeat of missions. It's where we connect with God and align ourselves with His purposes for the world.

We invite you to join us in prayer as we lift up the nations and intercede for the unreached. Let's make prayer our business and trust God to move in mighty ways.



5 April 2025



9.15am



Room 103, Dream Centre



Breakfast will be served at the Garden at 8.30am

Stay connected: [@crossfields.dumc](https://www.crossfields.dumc.org)



PRAYER

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

DUMC

3-Day

FAST &
PRAYER

Consecration

9-11 Apr 2025 | 5.30am - 7.00am
Hall 1, Dream Centre

"If you repent, I will restore you that you may
serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless
words, you will be my spokesman."
Jeremiah 15:19a

Lent Corporate Prayer

Almighty God, blessed be Your Name for You are greatly to be praised. May we rejoice in Your faithfulness and be humbled by Your mercy. Because of Your great compassion, wash away all our iniquity. Cleanse us and purify us, that we may be set apart for You.

In this season of Lent, help us to seek You and draw closer to You. May we be a blessing to others and be faithful servants in Your kingdom. We look to You, the source of life, for strength and faith to lead the life that You have assigned for us and called us to.

From the rising of the sun to its setting, Your Name is to be praised. You are high above all nations, and Your glory above the heavens. May You reign forevermore.

In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.