

“The Beginning of the Gospel”  
Jonah 1:9  
(Preached at Trinity, November 1, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, God is the God of all the earth. All nations must bow before His sovereign dominion. As the God of the nations He commands all to repent. This is a wonderful act of God's mercy and condescension. What we all deserve is God's wrath and condemnation. Instead, He offers His grace.
2. God was sending Jonah to the pagan nation of Nineveh to preach His redeeming grace. But Jonah was not interested in being God's agent of mercy upon Nineveh. He wanted only to see God's fiery wrath poured out upon them.  
As soon as we read God's charge to Jonah in **Verse 2** we find Jonah refusing in **Verse 3**. Jonah's response was immediate. Instead of going Jonah ran from God.  
"But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."
3. Jonah fled to Joppa where he boarded a ship and made his escape towards Tarshish which was in the exact opposite direction as Nineveh.  
**Jonah 1:3 NAU** - "So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."
4. We are not told much about the sailors onboard the ship. They are simply referred to as "the sailors" in **Verse 5**. They were pagans, most likely of different nationalities. Each had his own god – **Verse 5** - "Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god"  
They were syncretistic, willing to accept a multitude of gods.  
As sailors they would have been accustomed to storms and tossing waves. But never had they experienced a storm like this.
5. The captain implored Jonah to pray to his God –  
**Jonah 1:6 NAU** - "Get up, call on your god. Perhaps *your* god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish."
6. It wasn't that he believed Jonah's God to be greater. The captain superstitiously wanted to cover all his bases.  
This was exactly the position of the Athenian philosophers in Paul's day.  
**Acts 17:22-23 NAU** - "So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. <sup>23</sup> "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.'"  
They were also simply trying to cover all their bases by acknowledging a god that perhaps they were unaware of.

7. Upon enquiry as to the identity of Jonah he declared himself to be a follower of the one true God.  
**Jonah 1:8-9 NAU** - "What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" <sup>9</sup> He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."
8. Jonah points these pagan sailors to Yahweh, the Creator.
9. This is very instructive to us as we consider the nature of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know the Gospel of Christ? Can you share it with others? Do you know what to say? Where do you begin?

I. How do we define the Gospel?

A. Word Study

1. εὐαγγέλιον – Glad tidings, good news
2. The Gospel is good news – though most do not perceive it as such or receive it as such

**2 Corinthians 4:3 NAU** - "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

B. The Gospel is the eternal plan of God for the salvation of His elect people

1. Paul continually held the Gospel as the focus of his life and ministry  
**2 Timothy 1:8-11 NAU** - "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, <sup>9</sup> who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, <sup>10</sup> but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, <sup>11</sup> for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher."
2. The Gospel is the message of Christ
  - a. It is the declaration of His birth, His perfect life in fulfillment of the Law's demand for perfect obedience
  - b. It is the message of the cross, the atoning sacrifice of Christ through His shed blood.
  - c. It is the message of His resurrection on the third day having accomplished the redemption of His people. He lives that we might live in Him.
3. The Gospel is the full revelation of God redemption through Christ. It encompasses both the Old and New Testaments. It is the fullness of the Word of God which must be preached  
**1 Peter 1:24-25 NAS** - "All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, <sup>25</sup> But the word of the Lord abides forever." And this is the word which was preached to you."

4. It is the only way of salvation  
**1 Corinthians 15:1-4 NAS** - "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures"
5. The Gospel alone has the power to save  
**Romans 1:16 NAS** - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
6. The Gospel demands faith and repentance  
 We must trust in Christ alone  
 He must be followed as our Lord and King.  
**Romans 10:9-10 NAS** - " that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; <sup>10</sup> for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

II. But now I'm going to make a statement that may sound startling at first, especially after everything I've just said. The Gospel doesn't begin with Christ, our Redeemer. It begins with God, our Creator

- A. The Apostles often referred to it as the "Gospel of God"  
**1 Thessalonians 2:9 NAS** - "For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God."  
**1 Peter 4:17 NAS** - "For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"
  1. The Gospel finds its source in God – it is rooted in God's eternal purpose
  2. God is the Author of all things. All things exist by God. All things move by God. Paul preached in Athens:  
**Acts 17:28** – "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."
  3. The Gospel is about being reconciled to God.  
**2 Corinthians 5:18-20 NAS** - "Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

4. I'm not trying to confuse things. I'm not calling into question the deity of Christ. Jesus Christ IS God. But salvation is about being reconciled to God through Christ. The Father sent forth His Son to bring about reconciliation.  
**2 Corinthians 5:18 NAS** - "Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation"
  5. We should think of salvation in terms of the Father and His glory. He does all things for Himself.
- B. The Gospel begins with God, Creator of Heaven and earth.  
**Jonah 1:9 NAU** - "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."
1. We often presuppose this knowledge.
    - a. We presuppose that people know about God, the Creator and so we begin with the Good News of Christ.
    - b. But it is a fatal flaw to presume that people understand God's right to rule over them, that He has the right to demand obedience to His commands.
    - c. It is a fatal flaw to presume they understand their failure to bow before the God of heaven and earth.
  2. The Gospel must begin God's sovereign rule over all Creation. It begins with His right to reign and with our failure to acknowledge His Law. We must acknowledge our sin. The Gospel will have no relevance otherwise. It is only Good News for the perishing.
- C. So we begin with God the Creator, the Righteous King
1. This is where Paul began with the pagan people in Athens  
**Acts 17:23-30 NAS** - "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; <sup>25</sup> neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; <sup>26</sup> and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, <sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; <sup>28</sup> for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.' <sup>29</sup> "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. <sup>30</sup> "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent"
  2. This is where the Prophet Jonah begins with these pagan sailors  
**Jonah 1:9 NAU** - "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."

D. Jonah describes His God

1. Jonah describes God as Yahweh – the self-existing God, the Great I Am. All that God is comes from within Himself – He is fully self-sufficient. He does not have any unmet needs or unfulfilled desires. He is all in all to Himself.
2. Jonah describes God as the “God of heaven”
  - a. God is transcendent – He is high and above His creation.
  - b. We acknowledge this is the Lord’s Prayer – “Our Father which art in heaven.”
  - c. God dwells in the heavens. God exists independently of all outside influences. He is sovereign in His actions – He receives counsel from none
3. Finally, he describes God as the Creator
  - a. All of creation has a beginning. God IS  
God is the source of all being – God is the God that causes to be.  
**Genesis 1:1** – “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”
  - b. He created all inanimate matter – the heavens and earth
  - c. All life comes from God. Again, Paul before the Athenians  
**Acts 17:24-25** – “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; <sup>25</sup> neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things”  
**Acts 17:28** – “for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.”
  - d. The existence and form of all things comes from God
  - e. Stephen Charnock – “His name is glorious and his attributes are excellent in all the earth; in every creature, as the glory of the sun is in every beam and smaller flash; he is seen in every insect, in every sprit of grass.” (Existence and Attributes p.42)
  - f. God is the source of all things. He owns all things, governs all things. He has the right to rule. All of creation must bow before Him.

III. These pagan sailors bowed before God – but was it true conversion

- A. There is no way for us to examine their heart
  1. They were syncretistic – they worshipped many gods. It may be that they were merely adding God to their list of gods
  2. God will not share His glory with any. We can’t know by what we see here if they were calling upon God alone. The great problem with some is they embrace Christ but maintain the love of their idols.
  3. We must never soften the Gospel. There is but one God, the only God of heaven and earth. He alone must be worshipped and obeyed.

4. These sailors clearly understood the mighty power of God – Jonah’s God raised up a storm unlike any they had ever seen.  
There are cases where a man temporarily turns to God during a great time of trial or trauma. We’ve often heard of battlefield conversions that turn out to be spurious
  5. True faith is always characterized by a transformed life.
- B. But the text does tell us they turned to God
- Jonah 1:14 NAU** - "Then they called on the LORD and said, "We earnestly pray, O LORD"
1. All that they knew about God was what Jonah told them  
**Jonah 1:10 NAU** - "For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them."
  2. Jonah told them of the God of heaven and earth, Creator of all, God of all. God is the God of life and death.
  3. They understood that God was worthy of their service  
**Jonah 1:16 NAU** - "Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows."  
Calvin – “When, therefore, the sailors vowed a vow to God, they renounced their own idols. Now then they made their vows to the only true God; for they knew their lives were in His hand.”

#### Conclusion:

1. The Gospel begins with God, Creator of heaven and earth who demands our total allegiance. We have all fallen short of this and all of us are alienated from God. All of us are justly under God’s Divine judgment. We need to be reconciled to Him.
2. This is the point where the Gospel becomes good news.  
**John 3:16 NAU** - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."
3. Regardless of whether or not these pagan sailors experience genuine conversion their reaction must be our own.  
**Jonah 1:16 NAU** - "Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows."
4. And, finally, we must never be disappointed if we never see the results of our witnessing. Jonah did not see the sailors cry out to God or make vows to Him. God demands that we be faithful and trust the results to Him.