

## **REPENT FOR GOD TO REPENT**

**SERMON FOR SUNDAY 27<sup>th</sup>, AUGUST 2023**

**12<sup>th</sup>, SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

**TEXT: JONAH 3**

*<sup>1</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup>So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. <sup>4</sup>And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup>So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. <sup>6</sup>Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup>And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. <sup>8</sup>But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup>Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? <sup>10</sup>Then God saw their works that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it. (NKJV)*

### **Introduction**

Welcome to today’s sermon that is developed from Jonah 3. My appreciation to all the people who have been consistent in listening and reading my Sermons. This has not been one of my best weeks after I lost one of my Directors on Monday through a fatal road accident. At the same time, it was the season for intensive Church Army Africa statutory activities. But all in all, we leveraged God’s unfailing faithfulness. I can confess that God hasn’t failed us.

In today’s passage, God called Jonah and sent him to proclaim his message to the citizens of Nineveh, a Gentile community, but he was reluctant to go. Instead, he ran away from the Lord and decided to go to Tarshis, the opposite direction but God intercepted him on the way. He saved both Jonah and the endangered sailors. Jonah was provided with a second chance to repent and obey God. God provides a big fish that swallowed him and vomited him in Nineveh on the third day after which he fulfils the commission-to preach God’s message to the people of Nineveh who also repent passionately. God forgives both Jonah and the people of Nineveh. In the Old Testament, two words are regularly translated ‘repent’- ‘*naham*’ that means ‘*to be sorry,*’ or ‘*change one’s mind*’ and ‘*sub*’ that means ‘*turn back, return.*’ This is in harmony with the meaning in the New Testament where the words translated repent are ‘*metanoeo*’ and ‘*metamelomai.*’ In Greek, they usually mean ‘*to change one’s mind*’ and so also to regret or feel remorse over a view previously held.

### **Repentance in Nineveh**

In Jonah chapter three, God commissions Jonah the second time with the same message. This shows us that God is consistent in character and purpose. Obedience to his Word aligns us to his unchanging will. Unlike Jonah’s response to the first commission, the latter is explicitly impactful. He demonstrates the spirit of unconditional obedience to accomplish God’s will after repenting and experiencing his presence and forgiveness. Experiencing God’s presence transforms us radically and enables us to understand and desire to fulfil his will and purpose. The impact of the transformed Jonah among the citizens of Nineveh reveals that he was the fittest instrument to be used by God to proclaim his message-judgment and yet hope of mercy upon repentance. God had prepared the ground for this through Jonah’s ‘fish experience.’ He judges Jonah through the big fish but extends his mercy upon repentance.

Jonah arises and goes after learning his lesson albeit the hard way. He obeys God this time, and goes to Nineveh. The 40 days was a time of testing for the Nenevites. Jonah preaches across the large city with much passion and precision. Consequently, the people of Nineveh

heard and understood God's message. It appears; he preached more than once across the city. This reminds us that we have limited time (40 days) to listen, understand and act on God's Word. The Assyrians had no trouble understanding what Jonah said. This means that evangelists should preach God's Word effectively for it to be received with urgency.

*"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them,"(V.5).* They received, believed and acted on God's Word urgently. It certainly gained him an instant hearing and accomplished God's purpose in the lives of the citizens of Nineveh who decided to turn from their sins (repent) and asked for God's forgiveness collectively. They suspended their daily activities and demonstrated their faith in God's forgiveness through sincere repentance. Jonah's preaching was accepted by the people who expressed a wholesale 'naham' or repentance. They all believed Jonah's message in wholesale, from the king to the least person in the community.

There was a massive genuine change of mind that was represented practically by fasting and wearing sackcloth. The most important thing in verses 5-9 is that they took God's Word seriously and believed that He could repent or change his mind God. *"Who can tell [if] God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?" (V. 9).* I wish there could be such a collective genuine repentance in today's world that is characterized by new manifestation of sin.

### **Conclusion**

As we see in verse 10, God saw their works that they turned from their evil way and repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them. Apparently, God changed his ultimate intention toward the Ninevites because they changed their inner attitude through genuine repentance. On the basis of that change, God forgave them out of his grace. God forgave them, instead of destroying them. One of the strong lessons in this action is that all of us are loved of God and can be saved if we repent genuinely and live Godly lives. God loves us all and is quick to forgive and to set us up in right standing with Him. However, for us to truly experience his forgiveness, we must admit or confess our sins, repent and believe God for forgiveness through Christ, our advocate and mediator. The evidence of transformation is genuine change of attitude, behavior and desire to accomplish God's will. AMEN.

### **PRAYER POINTS**

1. *That we desire to hear, understand and act on God's Word*
2. *That God forgives us our sins*

**HAVE A BLESSED SUNDAY AND THE WEEK AHEAD**

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