The 6th Sunday after Pentecost ~ Sunday, June 26, 2016
“Unsung Heroes: Great Lessons From the Lesser Known ~ Jonah: Returning to God
Jonah 1:1-17

THREE IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT THE BOOK OF JONAH

• It is a _____________ story. It is only 4 _________; 48 ___________ and just over ___________ words. It is a compelling story about the power and ___________ of God.

• It is a _____________ story. Contrary to some scholars, critics and skeptics, I believe that this story is ___________ truth.

“An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”  (Luke 11:29)

• It is a _____________ story. It is so much more than just a ___________ and there is a lot that we can learn from it about God and ourselves.

JONAH’S 5 STAGE RETURN TO GOD

Stage #1: God’s _________________.
“The word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying, ‘Go to the great city of Ninevah and preach against it because its wickedness has come up before Me.’” (Jonah 1:1)

It’s not the message that was strange, but rather the _______________.

The Assyrians had a reputation for _____________ and Ninevah was a _____________ city

In this first stage that we always have a _______________. God gives us the _______________ of either accepting His plan or rejecting it.

_______________ lies at the heart of creation–God’s given us free will to choose right or wrong; good or evil.

Whatever choice we make, there will be _______________.

So often we blame God for the _______________ in our lives and for the tragedies we see in the world, when in reality they’re nothing more than the consequences—the natural outcomes—of our _______________.

What is your Nineveh? What is that thing that God wants you to do that you don’t? How well have you embraced God’s will for your life? What has been the consequences of your choices?

Stage #2: Jonah’s _______________.
“But Jonah ran away from the Lord and he headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.”  (Jonah 1:3)

Jonah had no desire to go to Ninevah and preach God’s word of repentance to them–He wanted them to _______________ for their wrong doing–he wanted them to get what they _______________.

Jonah’s decision not to go to Ninevah may not have been ________ rebellion, but it was _______________ nonetheless

Indifference, lukewarm commitment, and just plain ___________ can also be rebellion.

Every step out of God’s will is ultimately a _______________ step. Jonah’s problem wasn’t with Ninevah–it was with _____________!

Have you ever run away from God? What has been your Tarshish? Where do you run to when God calls?

Stage #3: Jonah’s _______________.
“Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.”  (Jonah 1:4)

Because when we run from God, we’re only heading for ___________. It may be immediate or it may be delayed, but you can count on it.

Every time we run from God, there is a ___________—there is a price tag for ______ ___________ God’s will and choosing our own way

Verse 12 tells us that the storm got so violent, the ship was about to crash, so Jonah says; “Pick me up and throw me into the sea and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”

Whenever we go against God’s plan for our life we’re not the _______________
What have been the storms in your life? How have the consequences of your choices hurt you and others?

Stage #4: Jonah’s _______________________.
Things were definitely not going as Jonah had __________________. So, what’s the first thing he does when his life falls apart? He _____________________.

“From inside the fish, Jonah prayed.” (Jonah 2:1)

After all that running, Jonah realized the __________ of his ways and prayed; “In my distress I called to the Lord and He answered me. And from the depths of the grave I called to Him for help.” (Jonah 2:2)

Sometimes we have to hit _______________ before we’re willing to ask God for help. That’s what happened to Jonah—the bottom had to fall out before God could get his _________________.

There’s nowhere that we can run that God can’t ______________ us.

What has been the giant fish in your life? What has God used to get through to you?

Stage #5: Jonah’s _______________________.
“And the Lord commanded the fish and it vomited Jonah out onto dry land.” (Jonah 2:10)

The story of Jonah reminds us that God never ________________. He is always ready to _______________ us home when we return to Him.

In the raging of the storm, and as he sank to the depths of the sea, Jonah expected _______________ as a consequence of his sin and disobedience.

However, beneath the surface, while God held the storm of His _______________ in His left hand, with His right hand He had prepared _______________ and deliverance.

The great fish was a sign of God’s _______________—the instrument of God’s _______________—a rescue that was nothing less than a _______________ from the dead for Jonah.

“Then the word of the Lord came unto Jonah a second time. Go to the great city of Ninevah and proclaim the message I give you.” (Jonah 3:1)

The word of God came to Jonah a second time—this is the __________ of God in action.

Great things happen when we _______________ with God and live within His _______________ and purpose.

What second chances has God given to you? How have you experienced God’s gift of restoration?

Jesus sought me when a stranger, 
Wand’ring from the fold of God.
He to rescue me from danger, 
Interposed His precious blood.
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, 
Prone to leave the God I love.
O to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be! 
Let thy goodness, like a fetter, 
Bind my wandering heart to thee.

This song illustrates how quickly we are prone to _______________—and how far we can go. I think how easy it is to _______________ ourselves and others when we’ve stepped out of the _______________ of God.

TWO REASONS WHY WE WANDER

• _______________. We think we _______________ more than God. We think we know what’s _______________ for our life.

• _______________. We are afraid of what God _______________.

Real success comes from knowing _______________ for our lives and being right in the _______________ of it.

Jonah’s story teaches us that _______________ in the past doesn’t release us from _______________ in the present. God is a God of second _______________.

The message of Jonah is simple: If you’ve been running from God, stop! turn around and run back to Him. Open your life to Him and He promises to fill you with a new purpose, a new plan, and a new peace.