



## The Nourishing Vocation Project

### Engaging the Living Word

[Jonah 2:1-10](#)

#### What is this particular text?

- Psalm of Individual Thanksgiving
  - Embedded within a story
  - Narrative praise by a single person
- Personal prayer of gratitude for deliverance from a specific distress
  - Report of answered prayer
- Application of the message of the story to the audience
- Jonah's version of what happened
  - God acted
  - Jonah prayed
  - God delivered

#### How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Recognizable psalms of individual thanksgiving
- Intended to be heard by others
  - A word for others in crisis
  - A word for those who feel like they are going under
- Proclamation
  - God hears and answers (v.2)
  - God delivers (v. 9)
- Teaching
  - Forsaking covenant love with God has consequences (v. 8)
  - In desperate circumstances, the only thing to do is pray

#### How can this text function in the church today?

- Speaks a word of hope to "shipwrecked" people
- Speaks a word of hope to people at the end of their rope
- Speaks a word of hope, even in chaotic circumstances of our own making
- Invitation to call out to God amid any and all circumstances
- Invitation to "be the fish" that rescues those who are sinking

#### What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- Gives me hope amid my own sinking times
- Draws me to personal experiences of "crying out from the depths"
- Reminds me of my personal "inner Jonah"
- Gives me pause
- Makes me push back a little
  - We don't all get rescued from the deep (in this life)
  - Not everyone gets a fish to scoop them up from trouble and despair

### **What do you have to say to the text?**

- I can relate to Jonah
- The deliverance of God can be a hard Truth to hold onto
- God doesn't always swoop in with a "big fish" to save us from ourselves
- The promise of this psalm is lifegiving

### **What do you see through this text from the story itself?**

- Nothing can separate us from God
- No rebellion can cut us off from God
- God will find us, even when we run away
- God is working to save us all the time

### **What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)**

- The church is Jonah
  - To whom does the church not wish to bring the good news today?
  - Who isn't "worth our time and energy?"
  - From whom does the church run away?
  - Does the church see that it is sinking?
  - Is the church crying out from the Pit, or is the church stubbornly ignoring God's call today?
- The church is the fish – pure grace for Jonah
  - What does this mean for the church?
  - For whom is the church called to be pure grace today?
  - How does the church fall short in embodying grace?
- People reach the end of the rope all the time
  - Who hears their cries?
  - Who is there to help?
- Crises of our current time
  - Mental health
  - Unemployment/underemployment
  - Broken relationships abound – personal, communal, societal

### **What do you see within yourself?**

- Times when God has rescued me from the pit
- Times when I have been sinking
- Times when God has used me to be a presence of grace for others
- Times when God has used others to be a presence of grace for me

### **What is the context – textual and historical?**

- Pivot point of the story
  - God called
  - Jonah unsuccessfully ran away
  - Jonah experienced the consequences of rebellion
  - Jonah is rescued *by the fish*
- Jonah sings from the belly of the fish
- Precedes Jonah going to Nineveh as God called him to do



### **What questions does this text raise for you?**

- What about those in distress or despair who don't get rescued?
- What does "the big fish" look like in everyday life?
- What made Jonah so rebellious?
- To whom do I not wish to go with God's good news?
- From whom is my church turning away?
- What does the "Pit" look like today?
- Has the bottom dropped out of the church yet, or are we still Jonah, not wanting to go where God is calling us?

### **What words/themes seem of particular import?**

- Called
- Distress
- Deep
- Brought me up
- Remembered
- Forsake
- Voice
- Deliverance

### **What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?**

- "No pit is so deep, God is not deeper still." Corrie ten Boom
- There is no place that God is not
- Resurrection is real
- New beginnings are real
- God answers our cries of distress
- God does not abandon us to the deep

### **What is the as-over-againstness of this text?**

- The depths are real
- Brokenness is real
- That sinking feeling is real
- We do get into circumstances from which we cannot save ourselves
- Sometimes we shipwreck our own lives
- Sometimes our lives get shipwrecked by circumstances beyond our control
- Sometimes the depths are so deep that it is hard to know how to cry out for help

### **Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?**

- God works to save us
- God hears
- God answers
- God delivers

### **What have others said about this text?**

- ["The language of his prayer](#) from the belly of the fish is heartfelt and figurative language that Jonah used to describe just how awful his descent away from the LORD really was. In 2:1, Jonah



finally qara (“calls out”), but instead of calling out against Nineveh he was forced to call out to God for rescue. Jonah says that he called and cried out to the LORD from the depths of Sheol.”  
Park River Bible Camp

- [“In Jewish literature](#) the sea represented chaos and certain death for those who presumed to try to control it....But remarkably, God is present in those depths. Like the Psalmist who sings, ‘Where shall I go to hide from your presence? If I go down to the depths... you are there.’ Jonah realizes that God is with him somehow even in the face of certain death.” Leon Bloder, Presby-Musings blogger
- [“And Jonah got thrown overboard](#) and found himself in the belly of a big fish. He had a lot of time to think in there. He sings the song recorded in today’s scripture reading right before he’s vomited out on the shore. Can you imagine, just for a moment: being isolated in a space. Unable to go out. Nothing on your calendar, everything canceled. If you do go out, you might die. Everything outside of your isolation is suspect. Can you imagine such a scenario? Maybe the pandemic lockdown last year?” Rev. Luke Lindon, Senior Pastor, United Church of Christ, Congregational of Medina, Medina, Ohio

### **What will I teach or proclaim?**

- God heard Jonah’s cries; God will hear your cries
- God rescued Jonah; God will rescue you
- God transformed Jonah; God can transform you
- The pit is real
- Shipwrecks are real
- The depths are real – name them
- God’s deliverance is real – name what that looks like in everyday experiences
- God will not abandon you to the pit
- You find yourself in the depths because of your own doing or because of circumstances beyond your control: still God will find you there
- Being rescued from the depths is not a “one time punch card”
- God calls us to be the fish
  - What does that mean?
  - What does it not mean?
- Jonah is rescued by undeserved grace
  - What does that mean for individuals?
  - What does that mean for the church?

