

Be Repentant!

Jonah 3:1-10

Let us turn to page 553 in your hymnal and sing together verses 3 and 4 of “And Are We Yet Alive?”

As we continue our sermon series, “And Are We Yet Alive?”, we are taking time to find ways to revive and renew our lives, our church, our denomination, and our nation. Today’s message is about our repentance. Revival is God’s outpouring blessing from heaven to those who have repentant hearts. Repentance is turning back to God to journey alongside God toward God’s Kingdom. Where there is a repentant heart, there might be revival from God.

When King Solomon dedicated the Temple to God, he prayed this prayer for Israel. “**When your people Israel, having sinned against you, are defeated before an enemy but turn again to you, confess your name, pray and plead with you in this house, then hear in heaven, forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land that you gave to their ancestors.**” (1 Kings 8:33-34 NRSV)

God responded to his prayer: “**If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.**” (2 Chronicles 7:14-15 NRSV).

The Temple dedication was a time of joy, appreciation, and festival. Still, Solomon repeatedly prayed about Israel’s possible sins and their repentance in his prayers because he knew that “**there is no one who does not sin**” (1 Kings 8:46 NRSV). Solomon prayed for Israel’s renewal, contingent on their repentance, turning away from their wicked ways and returning to God.

What is Jesus's very first message in his public ministry after being tested in the wilderness? It is “Repentance.” **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.**” (Mark 1:15 NRSV).

Before God allows His people a revival, God calls them to arise and pray. God called Jonah to arise. “**Arise, go to Nin’evah, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.**” (Jonah 1:2 RSV). He didn’t pray even though he was struggling in his heart. Then, the captain of the ship came to Jonah and asked him to arise and pray. “**Arise, call upon your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we do not perish.**” (Jonah 1:6b RSV). Again,

Jonah didn't pray but asked the people on board to throw him into the sea. He wanted to give up his life. He wanted to avoid his call and God's presence. After the big fish vomited Jonah onto the dry land, God called Jonah again to arise. **"Arise, go to Nin'evah, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you."** (Jonah 3:2 RSV). This time, after his prayer, Jonah obeyed. He arose and went to the city of Nineveh (Jonah 3:3).

However, he was still reluctant to be faithful to God's call. Please remember that God's call is ultimately to reveal God's saving grace. Hear Jonah's proclamation. **"Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!"** (Jonah 3:4 NLT). We don't find the word "God" in his proclamation. We also can't find their necessity of repentance or God's message of salvation. It was a message of judgment. Even though Jonah experienced God's special grace of salvation, he pushed down the grace and followed his own desire in his heart. Partial obedience is not obedience at all. Let me quote Tremper Longman and Raymond Dillard on this.

"The fish was not an instrument of God's judgment, but rather of his salvation since it saved Jonah from death by drowning. More perplexing, however, is the fact that Jonah affirms his loyalty to God in a most profound way in the psalm [in Jonah chapter 2], but then, in the following chapter, he is the reluctant prophet once again. Indeed, in the last chapter, he is antagonistic toward God as well ... Jonah is not a flat but a complex character. That is, in his spiritual ups and downs, he acts like a real person. This roundness of character (Berlin 1983, 23–42) is one of the reasons that Jonah is such a fascinating and rich book."
(Tremper Longman III & Raymond Dillard, *An Introduction to the OT* (2006), 447)

God can use any response of His people for His own plan and purpose. The people in Nineveh regarded Jonah's message as God's warning even though they didn't hear the name of God from Jonah. The king in Nineveh also didn't hear the message directly from Jonah, but he took the situation seriously. He arose and decreed fasting, prayer, and repentance for all the people in Nineveh. Even animals had to join the fasting.

"By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. Humans and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. **Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish."** (Jonah 3:7-9 NRSV)

God responded to their repentant hearts, their changed way of life from wickedness. **"When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways,**

God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it.” (Jonah 3:10 NRSV)

Around 100 years later, Prophet Nahum proclaimed the same message - the impending destruction of Nineveh. However, this time, they didn't repent. The message of destruction came again to Nineveh through the Prophet Zephaniah (Zephaniah 2:13), but their hearts remained unchanged. They were finally destroyed by the coalition of Medes and Babylon in 612 BC.

There was a Canadian Methodist missionary and physician who came to Korea in 1890. His name is Robert A. Hardie. He was sent by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and served Korea for 45 years. However, he was in deep frustration after 12 years of his ministry in Korea. He served a church in Wonsan for 10 years, but his mission was unsuccessful. Even though people were baptized, their lives never changed. They were still indulged in gambling and cheating. So, he had to cancel their church membership and did not allow them to worship at the church. In his report, he said, “[The spiritual states of the Christians in Wonsan are so disappointing.](#)”

In the summer of 1903, he had a chance to preach to missionaries in Korea at a retreat. All of a sudden, the Holy Spirit touched his heart to repent. So, he started to confess his sins. He said, “[I am a sinner. I was born and raised into a Christian family but I had no true faith. I have just blamed the Korean Christians and treated them with arrogance and pride. It is my fault.](#)” After his confession, a wave of repentance spread, first among the other foreign missionaries and then among the Korean Christians.

Robert Hardie's repentance became the spark for other revivals in Wonsan in 1903, Pyongyang in 1907, and all over Korea afterward. A Korean church historian, Deok-joo Lee, says, “[Robert Hardie was a missionary who taught the Korean Christians what authentic repentance is.](#)” Revivals dwell in the repentant hearts of prayers.

Let me show you the last picture on the screen. Robert Hardie passed away in 1949. He was buried in a public cemetery in Lansing, Michigan. After returning to America, he found his retirement home in Lansing, where his youngest daughter lived. I am not sure, but he might have attended Lansing First UMC when he returned to America. Robert Hardie was known as the father of the Korean churches' revival movement because of his repentant heart.

God's outpouring blessing of revival is given to those who have repentant hearts.