



RUNNING WITH THE GIANTS

Jonah

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Discussion Notes

The Crossing Church

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OPENING

This week we are continuing a series called “Running with the Giants.” The idea for this series comes from the Book of Hebrews where the author gives a long list of people who were giants in the faith. The race of life is a constant challenge, but we don’t have to run it alone. Now we are looking at the lives of biblical giants who ran with endurance and faith, and used their stories to build our own. This summer, we will be running with giants and discovering inspiration for our own journeys. We have these giants of the Bible who have gone before us, sharing their life lessons and helping to keep us from making the same mistakes.

SCRIPTURE¹

Jonah 1:1-3 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me. “ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

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

Jonah 3:3 Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”

Jonah 3:5 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

Colossians 1:15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

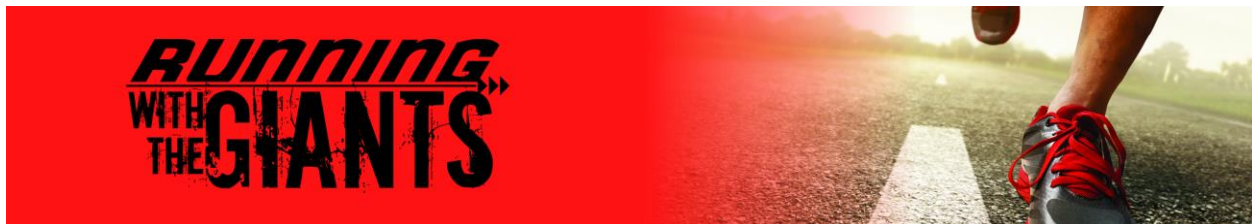
OBSERVATION

This week’s giant is Jonah – the guy who ran away from God, ended up in a storm and then a big fish, and finally did what he was told. That sounds a bit like some of our own experiences, doesn’t it? Except for the fish. There is something in all of us that thinks we can fix our problems on our own, but life and Jonah teach us that bad things can happen when we don’t deal with something the right way. Jonah was disobedient to God. He knew what was right to do – he was a prophet after all – but he did the opposite. He was being sent by God to preach to the Ninevites – a particularly evil group on the level of Isis – and yet God wanted them to hear a message of grace. God’s call to Jonah was a hard call and it would change his life and yet that was the will of God. His will is not always comfortable or easy. He asks us to do things that we would never have planned for ourselves. Jonah learned that he couldn’t outrun God’s grace no matter what his past looked like.

Question: When have you run away from the will of God in your life? How did that turn out?

Question: What is the greatest fear you have experienced since giving your life to Christ? How did you deal with it?

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated



APPLICATION

Jonah is running with us this week to teach us about Justice, Mercy, and Grace because God wants us to understand how incredible and amazingly gracious and merciful He is, not just with other people, but with US. He wants us to extend that mercy to other people in our lives whom we need to forgive.

1) Some of us are struggling with a relationship or someone who has done us wrong.

Question: Who in your life are you struggling to forgive? What is holding you back?

2) Maybe there is a specific sin or hidden issue with which we are wrestling. It is something very few people know about and it is keeping us from a church community because we don't want people getting too close. This is why we need to know that God is merciful. He is the only One with the power to set us free. But we think we have to clean ourselves up before we can come to Him. We need to learn that God's mercy is for everyone – cowards, killers and everyone in between.

Question: What is your hidden issue? Why are you willing/unwilling to share it with your group?

3) The third reason we need to know about God's mercy and grace is for those of us who have unfulfilled desires. We are struggling with our circumstances and have a dream that we've had for our entire lives – it's becoming more and more difficult to believe that we'll ever see it. We might think it is being withheld because God is angry with us or we aren't good enough to receive wonderful things from God. But we are hearing from Jonah this week because God wants us to know that the way He works is to give grace and mercy to people who don't deserve it.

Question: If you are staying away from God because you are angry or disappointed, what are you studying that will help you to understand that He is merciful and you can go to Him with your concerns?

Question: What is your understanding of God? How do you view Him in relation to your circumstances, good or bad, and your blessings?

Question: What things have you chosen to do in your past that hurt you or other people and ultimately hurt your relationship with God?

St. Peter certainly was a man who was brash, full of passion and zeal, who messed up over and over again. Some of us see ourselves in his life, but we need to remember what a giant for Christ's church he became, preaching the Word of God like a Billy Graham. There is hope in that knowledge.

In summary, we need to differentiate between these three pertinent words: 1) **Justice** is getting what we deserve; 2) **Mercy** is not being punished when we deserve it; and 3) **Grace** is getting good things that we don't deserve. In our case, maybe that dream we mentioned. There's a perfect story about Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia of New York that explains these concepts perfectly. A woman was arrested for stealing bread because her children were starving. The Mayor told her he had to punish her because the law allows no exceptions, so he gave her the choice of spending ten days in jail or paying a \$10 fine. He proceeded to pay the \$10 himself and then fined everyone else in the courtroom \$.50 for living in a town where such a situation could occur. He then gave that money to the woman. He gave her what she deserved (Justice), then didn't give her what she deserved (Mercy) and finally gave her a good thing she did not deserve (Grace). No one can outrun God's grace.

Question: When has God extended justice, mercy and grace to you? How have you thanked Him?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all the many times You have extended grace to us. Help us to remember those times when You give us difficult tasks to perform. In Jesus' name. Amen.