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Sermon- Jonah 2:1-10  
Sunday, August 13, 2017

### Not just fear; disobedience

1. Last week I talked about fear, and how fear is a big reason we fail to serve God, or to seek his will in our lives. There is another thing that causes this, and it is actually very simple, though I doubt we generally think about it in this way: we just don't want to do what God wants of us.
  - a. It isn't that we don't want to do anything that God wants of us. There are specific things that we don't want to do or don't like. This is obvious in how many people interpret the bible in ways that allow them to hold specific views that Christianity has rejected for 2000 years.
  - b. It is also obvious from our general refusal to do the last thing Jesus commanded of his followers before ascending into heaven- to go into the world and make disciples.
2. I do believe that fear is a big reason we don't do this, as I covered last week. We don't know what to say; we are afraid to get things wrong or to be asked questions we can't answer; we are afraid of what people will think of us if we try to talk about Jesus.
3. However, I think the bigger reason, and if we are really honest with ourselves, we would admit it, is that we just don't want to. We may have [what feel like] good reasons for not wanting to. It may be that the people we are supposed to share God's love with are the kind of people we don't particularly want to see receive God's love.
4. At my previous church, I couldn't get the people to serve and minister to the local Mexican population, and the primary reasons were political views on immigration, and a subtle, beneath the surface racism that no one wanted to confront.
5. I certainly don't want to put any harsh motivations behind anyone's reasons for not wanting to obey God. I do know that it can be hard to say, "Yes, God. I will serve *those* people," when *those* people are people who have wronged us in some way.
6. It is ok to admit it. In fact, admitting our faults and sins is the first step toward repenting of them. Not wanting to obey God's call to serve or preach to certain people is also one of the central themes to the book of Jonah. That means that this isn't something new- but God has faced this even from his own prophets.

### Jonah pays for ignoring God

1. When we look at Jonah 2, what we have is Jonah praying to God from the belly of the great fish that swallowed him. In this prayer, Jonah recounts God's goodness in saving him- by having a fish swallow him- instead of letting him drown when thrown overboard.
2. What got him into this in the first place? God had called him to go to Nineveh and call them to repentance. As I have preached at least a dozen times, Nineveh was full of horrible people who were enemies of Israel. Jonah didn't want to see *those* people receive the mercy and love of God. He figured that if the word of God simply wasn't preached to them, then they couldn't respond to it.
3. When people give their own testimonies, they often recount ways that they tried to get out of obeying God, and then have funny stories about how God eventually led them to where he wanted. Of course, the message is that God gets what he wants. But I do think

that we can downplay God's response to our disobedience- especially our dislike or disdain for what he has called us to.

4. Jonah didn't just have a funny little story to relay later. He had a horrendous experience whereby he learned that God isn't playing around. God takes his work seriously. When he wants people to hear the good news of his mercy, he doesn't find it to be a funny little story to tell over coffee that we have refused to do it.
  - a. Jonah was thrown into the sea to die in order to placate God. God *is* merciful, so he rescued Jonah, but not without putting him through some intense hardship. Jonah had to know how important obedience is, specifically on this point of sharing God's offer of mercy and forgiveness.
5. Jonah hated Nineveh, so he didn't want to tell them. How about us? Why don't we tell people? Listen to this quote from atheist Penn Gillette:
  - a. I've always said, you know, that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell, or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that, well, it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward... How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?

### God doesn't celebrate forced obedience

1. As Jonah sat in the belly of the fish, he lifted his prayer up to God. He was saved, so he thanked God. He promised to remember God's goodness and to sacrifice to God. He doesn't exactly say he will be obedient, but he does show signs that he understands his error.
2. Here's how this scene ends: "And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land."
3. God didn't retrieve Jonah. He didn't tell Jonah that he was glad he finally came around. God showed his displeasure in Jonah's disobedience, even now as he vows somewhat better obedience, by vomiting Jonah. That might strike us as funny, but I don't think that is what we are to take from it. We are to see God's immense displeasure at the lengths to which he must go to get Jonah to do as he says.
4. God doesn't celebrate our forced obedience. He doesn't rejoice when we finally give in and agree to do what he has been asking us to do for a long time. As his people, God desires and expects obedience. Yes, he loves his children- saved by his grace by the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus- even when we disobey. That doesn't make disobedience okay.
5. I fear that this message has a bit harsher of a tone than I intend it. I just want to be honest about what I see in the scriptures. I also want to admit that I fall into the Jonah category as well. I have not always been obedient.
6. The point, then, is that we do need to examine ourselves and be honest with ourselves about our level of faithfulness- particularly when it comes to fulfilling the great commission. And we need to repent and ask God to conform us to Christ through the Holy Spirit, so that we become less and less like Jonah, and more and more like Jesus.