

An underwater scene featuring a large whale on the right and a smaller whale on the left. A person is visible inside a bubble of air in the water. The background is a deep blue color.

JONAH

FAMILY DEVOS

God's Mercy to Nineveh

Scripture Passage: Jonah 3

Memory Verse: John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

For My Family:

“Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” Jonah 3:10

The Ninevites had sinned mightily against the Lord. Their wickedness was so famous that, as we read in chapter 1, Jonah refused to obey God because Jonah wanted to them to be punished. God, however, had other plans. The Lord again said to Jonah to enter the city and preach to the Ninevites. This time, Jonah obeyed the Lord, entered the city, and shouted to everyone who would hear, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown!”

Whenever we read a proclamation like this in Scripture, there is always an unwritten *unless*. In this instance, what God is really saying is, “In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed, *unless you repent and turn to the LORD for forgiveness.*” Jonah knew that the Lord is merciful and kind. He knew the truth found in 2 Peter 3:16, hundreds of years before it was written, “The Lord desires that no man should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” This is why Jonah didn’t want to go to Nineveh. He knew that if the Ninevites repented, God, in His mercy, would love them and forgive them.

Verse 5 tells us, “The people of Nineveh believed God...”, and they repented. They put on sackcloth and ashes and didn’t eat any food as they cried out to God. The word “repent” means to turn away from doing the wrong thing and turn to God instead. This is exactly what the Ninevites did, and of course, God did not bring judgment on the city.

In Romans 10:13 we read that, “Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” God’s mercy was not just for the Ninevites, or the sailors in chapter 1, or even just for Jonah. God IS merciful, so of course, His mercy is ready to be poured out on anyone.

Just like the Ninevites, you and I have broken God’s Law. We have sinned against God and because of that, judgment is coming. But God has done something even greater for us. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to free us from the curse of sin forever. Jesus died on the cross, and God poured out our punishment upon Him, so that anyone who believes in Him shall never perish, but have everlasting life.

If you have never repented of your sins, this is wonderful news. Today you can turn to God and ask Him to forgive you. He will come into your life, walk with you, and help you every day here on earth, and then be with you forever in heaven.

Questions for Young Children:

How did the Ninevites show God that they were sorry for their sins?

In what way are you and I like the Ninevites?

What did Jesus do to show mercy to us?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens

Why didn't Jonah want to go to Nineveh?

Would God have been right to judge the people of Nineveh and destroy the city? Why?

God chose not to destroy Nineveh. What does that teach us about Him?

What does the word "repent" mean? Can you give an example of a time you were repentant?