

Old Testament Characters (Bible Study 1)
Jonah: Running from God (Jonah 1:1-3:3)
August 16, 2009

When do you run from God? This study takes us through the story of Jonah and the whale. The story begins with God commanding Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and preach against the evil that the Ninevites were plotting against the Lord. Now we all know that Jonah and the majority of the people of Israel did not like the people of Nineveh. So Jonah strongly ignored God's word and headed towards Tarshish to Joppa; the opposite end of the known world and hopped a ship! God did not like that Jonah did not listen to him, so he sent a violent storm upon the sea where the ship was sailing. Jonah knew that the storm was raging because he turned from God's word and he decided to go below deck to sleep. The storm became very violent and the sailors were extremely scared

Running to Jonah, the sailors asked, "Who are you and what have you done?!" Jonah told the sailors the he is a Hebrew who worships the Lord, but is now running from the Lord. The sailors were terrified because the sea was so violent and wanted to know what they could do to please the Lord. Jonah knew that to calm the storm it was his fate to cast his faith back to the Lord, but he was willing to accept death because he really hated the Ninevites. So, Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard and that the sea would calm. The Ninevites thought he was crazy and tried to row back to shore, but the seas grew wilder! They all began to cry to the Lord and accept him as their God; made sacrifices and vows to try to calm the sea. Ultimately, it resulted in throwing Jonah overboard to calm the sea.

Jonah was thrown into the sea and swallowed by a great fish. He stayed for three days and three nights. He prayed to the Lord while inside of the fish and praised him. God heard what Jonah was praying and commanded the fish to vomit Jonah to dry land where he was to fulfill his promises that he made to the Lord while in the belly of the fish; to go and preach to the Ninevites.

We all sin and turn our backs to the Lord, mostly because we don't want to do what is the right thing--what the Lord is calling us to do. Often times we sink so low before we have a change of heart. The Holy Spirit guides us to turn to the Lord to ask him for forgiveness.