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There are moments in life when we wonder whether failure has had the final word. Moments when we've run away from responsibility, avoided a hard conversation, ignored a clear calling, or delayed obedience. These are the moments that present a task that is downright uncomfortable.

Jonah knew that path well. God had already told him to go to Nineveh, but Jonah ran in the opposite direction. Yet Jonah 3 opens with surprising grace: "The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time."

This week we continue our journey through the book of Jonah. In this week's episode of Fish Tales, we see a Jonah who finally obeys. We see a Jonah who finally does what God told him to do. We find a Jonah who warns.

Jonah chapter 3 isn't just about a renewed assignment. It is about God's character and the renewing work of grace. We also get a perfect depiction of the Wesleyan Way of Salvation. We have prevenient grace going before Jonah and Nineveh. We have that awakening conviction that happens before anyone knows how to respond. This is followed by justifying grace that meets repentant people with pardon. Finally, we glimpse the sanctifying grace that call Jonah and Nineveh to a changed life marked by love of God and neighbor. This Way of Salvation is for us too, as those who want to be going on toward perfection.

Let's do a recap of what we've seen so far from our Fish Tales. First, we had Jonah on a ship headed away from God's call. Then there was the storm that exposed his disobedience. Jonah was swallowed up by that big fish, thinking it was all over and then...He remembered the Lord. He prays a prayer that ends with the acknowledgement that Salvation belongs to the Lord after which, the fish vomits him up on the beach.

Jonah 3 follows all of this. It comes after failure, after discipline, after rescue, and after prayer. Chapter 3 doesn't start out talking about Jonah's courage, it talks about God's mercy.

So many people carry a version of Jonah's story. They come knowing what it is to say no when God invites them to say yes. They know what it's like to carry around unfinished obedience. They know what it means to be grateful for grace, but they are hesitant about where grace may lead them next. Hear this good news! Jonah 3 meets us there with a word of hope: the Lord who corrects us is also the Lord who restores us.

"The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time." These words are mercy. God doesn't discard Jonah after his disobedience. God doesn't say, "You failed once, so I am finished with you." Nope, God recommissions him. The mission remains the same: "Arise, go to Nineveh." Jonah's failure does not cancel God's purpose.

That is good news for every person who has stumbled. Hear me when I say, God's grace is not a license to disobey, but it is hope after disobedience. For us as United Methodists we see grace as God's undeserved love at work before we even become aware of it. This is a grace that continually draws us toward repentance and faith. It is God who restores, redirects, and sends us again. Don't you find power in a testimony where God meets someone in failure and calls them forward anyway?

It is this grace that shows us God's love at work in every season of salvation. Prevenient grace goes before us, even when we are running away. Justifying grace welcomes us when we turn home. Sanctifying grace keeps shaping us so that our lives become more like Christ. Jonah's second call is a living picture of that grace. God doesn't just forgive Jonah privately; God restores him to faithful service.

God's call is not reserved for people with spotless records. If that were true, think about how short the Bible would be? Moses had excuses. David had failure. Peter had denial. Paul had a past. Jonah had the runs. Every story of failure finds God calling people back into their works

of mercy. Our failures are real, but they are not stronger than God's grace. My failures are real, but they are not strong than God's Grace. Say that with me.

Jonah goes to Nineveh with a short, direct message: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." This isn't polished, flattering, or complicated, but it's still a warning. God's word confronts Nineveh's evil and violence. This warning is an act of mercy. Judgment is announced ahead of time, while delivering an invitation to turn before it's too late.

Like Jonah, we don't have to deliver a polished, flattering, or complicated message, it's much simpler than that. Deliver the message that God gives. If we are to, as our mission says, make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, the message God gives is the best way. This means faithful preaching that names sin honestly and points people toward mercy. Love does not hide the truth; love tells the truth so that people, communities, institutions, and even systems may be healed.

Jonah's message was only eight words in English. It lacked charm, eloquence, and enthusiasm. Yes, Jonah was obeying, but not with a joyful spirit. But God used Jonah's short, lack-luster message. Because the power of his message was in the living word of God. A faithful witness doesn't have to be impressive to be useful. God can use the simplest words spoken in obedience.

We are a people called to scriptural holiness. We don't proclaim truth to win arguments or shame people. We proclaim truth because God's truth heals. We tell the truth about sin because sin destroys beloved people and beloved communities. We tell the truth about mercy because God has not given up on the world.

Look at the direction of Jonah's mission. God sends him to a people he does not love. Nineveh represents everything foreign, threatening, and morally corrupt to him. Yet God sends Jonah there because God's mercy is bigger than Jonah's comfort zone. That brings up some questions

for us: Who are the Ninevites we would rather avoid? Who are the people we think are beyond hope?

The people of Nineveh hear the words of Jonah...and they believe God. Their response moves quickly from inward conviction to outward action: fasting, sackcloth, prayer, humility, and turning from evil. The king steps down from his throne, removes his royal robe, clothes himself in sackcloth, and sits in ashes. Repentance reached from the least, all the way to the greatest.

But wait there's more. Listen to the king's decree: "All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands." Repentance isn't just feeling sorry. It's turning. It's a change of direction, allegiance, behavior, and hope. Repentance opens us to grace. Grace doesn't just forgive, it transforms. Nineveh does not presume upon mercy; they humble themselves and cry out, "Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish."

Nineveh's repentance is public, practical, and communal. Their outward signs point to an inward turning. The king doesn't say, "Quick, everyone look religious." He says, "Let everyone turn from evil and from violence." Repentance reaches across hands, habits, and relationships.

Grace is not opposed to transformation; grace makes transformation possible. John Wesley spoke of salvation as more than being saved from the penalty of sin, it also meant being saved from the power of sin. Today in Jonah 3, repentance means violent people renounce violence. Proud people become humble. Careless people become attentive to God.

What would visible repentance look like in you? Would it look like making amends where you've caused harm. Would it look like telling the truth after hiding behind excuses. Would it look like, how you use your words, spend your money, treat less powerful people, or respond to those you disagree with. Would your repentance look like turning towards God and not just a mood?

Did repentance work for the Ninevites? Look at Vs 10, “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.”

Why did God relent? Did God make a mistake? Here’s what I think. God is a Holy God but God is also a merciful God, a God of second chances. So with Ninevah, God saw more than religious gestures. Our divine one saw turning. He saw humility becoming obedience, and violence being renounced. God saw a people who heard His warning and responded.

This is the wonder and the hope of this passage: God who is holy enough to judge sin is also merciful enough to forgive repentant sinners. This is not weakness. This is God’s merciful and gracious decision to spare those who turn from evil and seek Him. It is God who has the power to make us holy in heart and life.

When we repent and change to a faithful course, God sees. God sees beyond appearances. God knows when worship is connected to justice, when our prayers are connected to obedience, and when our sorrow is connected to change. God sees a turning heart.

This good news is for everyone and anyone. Churches can repent. Families can repent. Cities can repent. Each turning from violence, pride, neglect, and indifference. Because church family our gospel, our good news is not just private comfort; it’s public hope. Our good news is public hope. (say with me)

Now what are we to do with this passage? **Receive God’s second chances.** If you fail, don’t confuse conviction for condemnation. Grace can call you back to obedience. **Respond to prevenient grace.** Believe that God is already at work before a lost lamb knows how to name it. Before it awakens us to sin, mercy, and a second chance. **Repentance should be visible.** Don’t just ask, “Do I feel sorry?” but also ask, “What must change in my habits, relationships, speech, and treatment of my neighbors?” **Practice holiness of heart and life.** God’s mercy does not leave us where it finds us; sanctifying grace forms us into people who love God and neighbor

more fully. **Join God's transforming mission.** Like Jonah, the church is sent beyond comfort zones so all communities may discover mercy, justice, and new life. **Extend mercy beyond preference.** Jonah's struggle reminds us that we can receive grace gratefully and still resist offering grace generously. The Spirit invites us to love even those we would rather avoid. Where is God calling you again? What truth have you avoided? What needs to change in your life? Who has God placed beyond your comfort zone?

In today's Fish Tale, the good news is not simply that Jonah got another chance, or that he finally warns Nineveh so they could escape destruction. The good news is that God's mercy is active, searching, correcting, forgiving, and transforming. Yes, even today! God's grace still reaches reluctant churches and repentant hearts. God's grace reaches all of us. Let us pray

God of mercy and second chances, let us receive grace. Let us turn from what harms. Let us go where God sends. And let us trust that the mercy of God is wider than our reluctance, deeper than our failure, and strong enough to make all things new.