

Morning sermon series – Ultimate Value

"Changing Spiritual Direction" (Jonah 1v17-2v10)

When is it time to turn around?

Idols are distorted loves and passions: things, or people, that get in the way of us truly treasuring Christ and following him. The tragedy is that idols always turn out to be empty as sources of life (2v8). In chapter 1, we saw the effects of Jonah's idolatry. If we're sinking like Jonah, or just treading water spiritually, *how can we change spiritual direction?* Three things to recognise or do:

1) God's Grace Pursues Us (1v17)

At the point where God acts with extraordinary power to save Jonah, providing a living submarine(!), he knows that by chapter 4 Jonah will again be burning with anger against God because of God's heart of grace. God knows Jonah is a work-in-progress, and so he pursues him with grace and faithful love, even into the depths of the ocean.

2) Look Again to the Lord (2v1-7)

Jonah has been rescued despite his idolatry (2v1), but he's inside this sea creature and is far from home and dry!

With everything stripped away, facing his own mortality and the reality of his sinful heart, he looked again for the presence of God as he sank into the ocean and cried out to God (2v4, v7). He found the whole time-horizon for his life suddenly foreshortened. *How would something like that affect your own priorities and prayer?* Sinking can be the beginning of rising up spiritually.

3) Treasure Christ Himself (2v8-10)

Jonah has just seen the astonishing power of God and very obvious answered prayer. He's moving in the right direction: he recognizes only God can save (v9) and his house has been swept back into better order. But the way Jonah responds to the Lord's salvation (v6, v9) in chapter two comes up short: there's no saying sorry or sense of having grieved the loving heart of God; and there's little sense of his own unfaithfulness to God's covenant love or lack of trust in God's goodness.

But the question is, "has the love and the glory of the Lord pierced his heart?" "Has it become deeply personal between Jonah and the Lord?" "Has he, and have we, come to know that only Christ is of ultimate value?"

Christ treasures you, his grace pursues you, and he asks, "will you treasure me?"