



**“#1 - Yom Kippur”**

**Jonah**

**October 16, 2016**

**Courage Church, Detroit, MI**

We are starting a new series today! And I am extremely excited about it, it is a series about the book of Jonah!

And next week, our founding pastor, Pastor Chilly Chilton will be with us. He will be teaching part two of the series, and I am just so excited about that. When I was looking at the text that we asked him to teach on... and when we do series like this, we go section by section so he could have landed on any passage really... but the set of scriptures that he got, I feel like there is nobody who can do a better job than him. I am just thrilled that he is going to be with us next week!

This last week, those who practice Jewish culture celebrated Yom Kippur. This year it was Tuesday, October 11th at sundown, and ended Wednesday October 12th at the same time.

And there is a Jewish tradition... that in their afternoon services on Yom Kippur every year, they read, in its entirety, the book on Jonah.

And its a tradition that dates back thousands of years... where families would all gather around together on Yom Kippur, and they would read it together.

Which for someone who is not Jewish, the first question that I have, is why?

Because to most people, the book of Jonah is the story of a guy who got eaten by a whale. Who was in his belly for three days, and then he got spit out.

Thats the gist of what most of us know about the book.

So, today we are going to start our series on the book of Jonah, exploring some of those questions...

questions like: Why is this book so significant?

Why is it considered to be one of the books known as “the prophets” when Jonah doesn't give a single prophecy the entire time...

Why do the Jews, on their holiest day of the year, take the time to sit down and read the book in its entirety?

So we are going to start today, by doing just that. We are going to read the entire book of Jonah together. So if you have your bibles, please open them, to the book of Jonah.

It is in the section of the old testament known as the “minor prophets”. It is the book after Obadiah and right before Micah. and you seriously should open up to it because we have a lot to read. So here we go:

The entire book of Jonah:

**Jonah Flees the Presence of the Lord**

<sup>1</sup> Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,  
<sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” <sup>3</sup> But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

<sup>4</sup> But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. <sup>6</sup> So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

### **Jonah Is Thrown into the Sea**

<sup>7</sup> And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup> Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” <sup>9</sup> And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” <sup>10</sup> Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

<sup>11</sup> Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. <sup>12</sup> He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. <sup>14</sup> Therefore they called out to the Lord, “O Lord, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.” <sup>15</sup> So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

### **A Great Fish Swallows Jonah**

<sup>17</sup> And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

### **Jonah's Prayer**

2 Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, <sup>2</sup> saying,

“I called out to the Lord, out of my distress,  
and he answered me;  
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,  
and you heard my voice.

3 For you cast me into the deep,  
into the heart of the seas,  
and the flood surrounded me;  
all your waves and your billows  
passed over me.

4 Then I said, ‘I am driven away  
from your sight;  
yet I shall again look  
upon your holy temple.’

5 The waters closed in over me to take my life;  
the deep surrounded me;  
weeds were wrapped about my head

6 at the roots of the mountains.  
I went down to the land  
whose bars closed upon me forever;  
yet you brought up my life from the pit,  
O Lord my God.

7 When my life was fainting away,  
I remembered the Lord,  
and my prayer came to you,  
into your holy temple.

8 Those who pay regard to vain idols  
forsake their hope of steadfast love.

9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving  
will sacrifice to you;  
what I have vowed I will pay.  
Salvation belongs to the Lord!”

<sup>10</sup> And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

### **Jonah Goes to Nineveh**

<sup>3</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

### **The People of Nineveh Repent**

<sup>6</sup> The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, <sup>8</sup> but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

### **Jonah’s Anger and the Lord’s Compassion**

<sup>4</sup> But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. <sup>2</sup> And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. <sup>3</sup> Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>4</sup> And the Lord said, “Do you do well to be angry?”

<sup>5</sup> Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup> Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made

it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.  
<sup>7</sup> But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." <sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die."  
<sup>10</sup> And the Lord said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night.  
<sup>11</sup> And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Why?

Why that?

Why, on the holiest day of your calendar year, do you get everyone together, and read that?

and that is a question that we will seek to answer throughout this entire series, and hopefully today you leave with a bit more understanding of it.

Now, first of all, it is crucial that you understand that in Jewish culture Jonah is viewed as an allegory.

An allegory is: a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.

Now, that does NOT mean that they don't think that it literally happened.

It is possible for someone to read a story, and the story be true... but the story be bigger than what seems to be happening.

I personally believe that the story of Jonah literally happened. I believe Jonah spent 3 days in the belly of a whale... I think that God is big enough to capture a runaway prophet's attention by sending a massive storm,

having him be eaten by a fish, and then spit up three days later. But I also believe that we get so caught up on the details, such as the fish, that we miss the real details... the bigger point.

and anyone who has studied the life of Jesus knows, there definitely is a story beyond the story of Jonah... because (in Matthew 12:38) when the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign that proved to them that he was the Messiah... he said "The only sign you will be given is THE SIGN OF JONAH."

Now, this is critical to understanding Jonah and we will spend A TON more time on this in a couple of weeks... but remember, Jonah is a prophet, the book is considered to be prophetic... but there is not a single prophecy in the entire book! No "thus sayeth the Lord" or anything that remotely resembles a prophecy. Just a guy who the bible says is a prophet, who is told to by God to do something, and instead he does the opposite.

But years later Jesus comes along and says to an unbelieving crowd... The only sign you get is Jonah.

and then he mentions the whale. But not just the whale. He also mentions the way Nineveh repented at Jonah's teachings.

So Jesus tells these religious leaders, "the entire book of Jonah POINTS TO ME."

But even people who are Jewish... people who don't believe in Jesus, still believe that this story points to something bigger than a fish.

And they believe that there is so much value in these four chapters that once a year they gather, and do exactly what we just did. They read it all.

A bit of background...

Jonah was a racist.

That is clear as day. The guy hated the Ninevites.

Why?

Just about everyone from Israel hated the Ninevites.

Which, by the way, when I was writing this, my computer kept auto correcting “Ninevites” to “nineties” - so it almost accidentally said “everyone from Israel hated the nineties.” -

How could anyone hate the 90's?

Ok.

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. In what we today know as Iraq.

And this was during a time in history, when the Assyrians were constantly attacking Israel. The book of Isaiah, Chronicles, and 2 Kings (15 & 18) records multiple accounts of the Assyrians coming in, attacking, taking over, deporting people, taking what they want from whoever they wanted.

So for this prophet from Israel, writing this story to other Israelites... the readers would have instantly agreed with Jonah “of course you should go the other direction. Those people are evil. We are at war with them. They have destroyed us, and walked over us and we don't WANT anything good to happen to them!”

Has that ever happened to you? **Has anybody ever hurt you so bad, that as far as you are concerned, you don't even want them to change. You just want them to pay.**

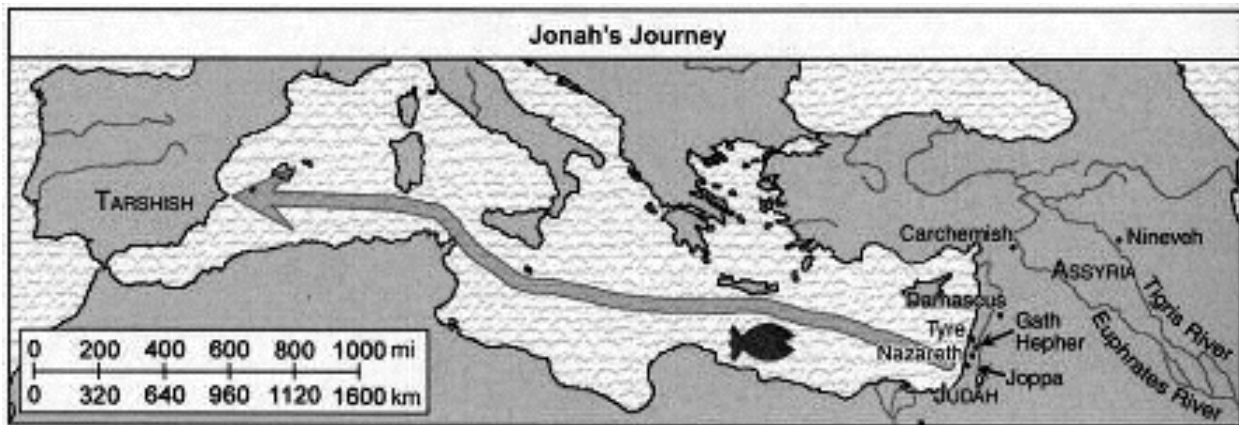
to be punished?

God was literally telling Jonah to go into the heart of the city of his biggest enemies.

So God called Jonah to Nineveh.

and instead, Jonah gets on a boat, heading toward Tarshish.  
Now...





Nothing about this was an accident. As you will read in the extreme amount of details that we get in the first three verses of the book... Jonah started off in Joppa. So again, Jonah was from Israel.

God calls him to this great city, Nineveh. A city Northeast of Joppa about 500 miles. A city that he did not need to get on a boat to get to.

and instead, he goes to the port, and he jumps on a ship, heading for the place that is the farthest in the other direction that he could possibly go.

Tarshish. 2000 miles away at the bottom part of what we now know to be Spain.

It was a paradise.

It would be like God calling me to Detroit, and instead I go to Maui.

I have been there... and trust me, I wondered... God, are you sure you aren't call me *here*?

Jonah knew, God was calling him to the city.

Instead of going where he was called, he set sail not only to the place that was the farthest possible place he knew of from Nineveh, but it also was a place where he could be lazy and passive and enjoy the beauty of God's

creation rather than be active in reconciling God's GREATEST creation, people, back to God.

And so this is the basic cliff notes of the story of Jonah:

God calls Jonah. But Jonah is a racist.

Jonah runs from God, not only to a place far from God but to a place where he can be comfortable away from the people that he hates. He can live the good life... and as far as he is concerned, the city can burn. In fact, he wants the city to burn.

God sends a storm while Jonah is on a boat.

The sailors on the boat, who before that day served other gods, now feared God, essentially gave their lives to God, and begged God to have mercy on them for throwing Jonah overboard but they knew it was the only way.

Jonah gets thrown overboard.

Jonah gets swallowed by a giant fish.

He sits in the belly of this fish for 3 days, and there he writes this poem about how salvation belongs to the Lord.

The Fish spits out Jonah.

Jonah goes and preaches to Nineveh.

Nineveh repents.

STOP. right. there.

It would seem that the ultimate goal has been achieved. Jonah, the prophet of God, was used in an amazing and mighty way, and people came to know their creator by his eventual faithfulness to the call. That would be a great way to end a story. But that is not how the story ends. Because then what happens, is a total curveball:

Jonah gets mad that Nineveh repented, because even though he finally agreed to go preach to Nineveh, he is still a racist.

Jonah leaves the city, goes into the suburbs, and sits under the shade of a plant.

God appoints a worm to come that kills the plant.

Jonah gets mad at God about killing the plant. The same Jonah who was mad at God about NOT KILLING the Ninevites.

God asks Jonah why on earth he would not have pity on the greatest city in the world, filled with 120,000 people and much livestock.

and thats it!

That is how it ends.

There is no conclusion.

There is no answer. No final word.

No definite answer as to if Jonah changed his mind... if he repented... no word about anything.

and that is the book that practicing Jews read on Yom Kippur.

Why?

This is the answer:

They believe that Jonah's story, is the story of them.

It is the story of Israel. It is the story of their family.

It is your story. and it is my story.

It is another case for how God's love is so great, that it stretches to the farthest places, and reaches even the most unreachable people... Whether it be a sinful, destructive city that was not beyond God's love and forgiveness... or a disobedient prophet who ran from God because he preferred judgment to fall on his enemies, rather than grace.

It is a story of sin, and of being pursued by grace.

Of running from God, and of God finding you.

We all run from God. We run from our call. He calls us to Detroit and we go to Hawaii. He calls us to do something big and instead we stay in our comfortable air conditioned houses and wait for someone else to do it.

and not only that... but God spared Nineveh. The book of Jonah is about a pagan, evil, sinful city that to Jonah and other Israelites, it was the worst of the worst, and even beyond saving. So much so that a guy who was supposed to be God's prophet there, didn't even want them to be saved.

But God still saved them.

Because his grace knows no limitations. It knows no boundaries. It is not limited by Jew or Gentile, by slave or free.

It is not limited by the wicked and stubborn hearts of the people that he works through.

God ALWAYS finds us.

So what is YOM KIPPUR?

The Hebrew word Yom Kippur literally means "day of atonement."

Yom is day, and kippor or kipporium means "atonement"

It is the Holiest day of the year. Leviticus 23 describes when it is, and what you can and can't do on that day...

and Leviticus 16 describes what it is. The acts that take place.

and I have always considered this to be the absolute greatest image that we get for redemption. I think that this is just the greatest foreshadowing of what Jesus would later accomplish on the cross, that we get in the entire bible.

and what would happen was the high priest would be brought two goats. and **there would be an inspection.**

Because They had to be absolutely perfect goats, inspected thoroughly... and without spot of blemish. Because only a perfect sacrifice was acceptable.

it couldn't be a dying, nasty goat, or a goat that didn't function. It had to be perfect.

and the high priest would cast lots for these two goats... which was kind of like the equivalent today of flipping a coin... they would toss these sticks, or sometimes stones, and how they landed they would interpret to be the will of God in that moment. It was how they decided things that they couldn't agree on... it was just a simple way of settling it.

So they cast lots for these goats. But BOTH of the goats were perfect.

and one would be for the Lord, and the other, Leviticus describes, as being "for Azazel." which is another word for "a scapegoat," most translations will translate it as "scape goat" but the ESV leaves the Hebrew word there, which is "Azazel"

and it literally means "**taken away**"

as in, your sins are taken away.

and the goat that fell "for the Lord" they had bring to the high priest, and the priest would sacrifice the goat, as the payment for all of the sins of all of the people. But it wasn't just for the sins that they had committed... it was for every sin that they would commit, for the entire next year.

Then the high priest, who in Leviticus was Aaron, would take the second goat... and he would lay both of his hands on the goat, he would confess all of the sins of all of the people that had been committed...

He would put the sins on the goat.

And instead of killing the second goat, they set him free, to carry the sins away.

and so Leviticus describes this second goat, this scape goat, as carrying away all of the iniquities of all of the people with it to a remote place where they will never be seen again.

and at that point, you never brought them up again.

It truly was finished.

So once a year, everyone gets a totally clean slate. It doesn't matter what you did yesterday, it doesn't matter what you did 250 days ago...

on Yom Kippur, you started over.

Everyone.

But it wasn't just about atonement for sins, it was also about forgiveness within their community. Basically, it was a way of saying "nothing gets brought into the new year"

It was not just a call to accept forgiveness it was a call to forgive. Because in this life, even friends will wrong each other sometimes. And God has laid out a specific plan and he has a specific community of people that he has put you in, and only together will you achieve that plan...

and you won't stay together if you don't work out your differences, and if you never forgive each other.

So it applied within their communities, and it applied beyond their communities.

see, sometimes in life, as hard as it may seem to reconcile in your heart... God has called you to reach people who are different from you. Who position themselves in ways that are opposite from you, and sometimes even people that have hurt you. And for you to think for even a moment that it would be acceptable for you to receive grace, and someone who you think is evil to receive judgment...

then you are just like Jonah.

Jonah's story, is your story.

You will never reach the broken city if you were burned by it... unless you can learn to forgive. And I have lived in a lot of cities and I know from a lot of experience that cities are hard places. They carry so many different sets of challenges and obstacles and when things don't go exactly the way you think that they will go, it can be easy to get bitter.

But God has called you to get past all of that, and to reach the city.

So...

You can't hold grudges for things that happened before YOM KIPPUR. It was all washed away.

And here is what is so amazing about all of that...

all of the people come together, and they all have all of these awful sins that they are guilty of... and their lives are so filled with blemishes and pains and betrayals and iniquities and transgressions... and even unforgiveness going in...

and **none of it matters.**

Because on Yom Kippur, the only thing that has to be perfect, are the goats. They didn't inspect the people, they inspected the goats.

Everyone brought something less than perfect in that day. Some worse than others.

Someone could come in having the worst year of their life... filled with mistakes, and bad choices... violence and sexual immorality and everything awful that we can possibly think of...

but as long as the goat being sacrificed was perfect, so was the payment.

It didn't matter what you came in with that day. It was lifted. It was atoned for and it was carried away.

Leviticus 16:22 says "The goat shall bear **all** their iniquities on itself to a remote area."

and that should be life to some of you today. Because you came in through those doors today knowing the heaviness of your sins. Knowing what toll is has taken on your life to carry them around all the time.

The weight of what happened yesterday, and last week.

Some of you are still carrying the weight of something that happened a whole year ago, or a whole decade ago.

But please hear me... even in the oldest of days... thousands of years before Jesus... grace abounded to people who didn't even know what grace was yet. And even then, your sins from the last year wouldn't carry into the next. **EVEN THEN**, you didn't need to let your past dictate your future.

and **EVEN THEN**, you couldn't hold someone else's past against them, after Yom Kippur.

and of course, we know that Yom Kippur is one of the many prophetic foreshadowings of what Jesus would accomplish on the cross.

Jesus is Yom Kippur. He is our atonement. One of the main purposes of the New Testament book of Hebrews is to show us that Jesus once and for all is our atonement... a simple comparison of Jesus' final days in contrast to the rituals laid out in Leviticus make it so incredibly clear...

He is Yom Kippur.

He is both goats... He died for our sins, and he carried the weight of what *we did* on him while he was dying. He lived a perfect life, and truly was a pure and spotless lamb without blemish.



And because of Jesus, we don't have to sacrifice goats anymore. Because of Jesus, we don't have to wait until Yom Kippur every year to be forgiven, we can be forgiven the moment that we call upon his name.

See, On Yom Kippur, you knew that everything was finished, when the priest sat down. That was it... That was the big moment that signified:

There is nothing left to do.

It has all been done, and you can never look back.

and that is what is so amazing about Jesus, and the entire message of the new testament... "There is nothing left to do!"

Just look at Hebrews 10:8-14 -

<sup>8</sup> When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), <sup>9</sup> then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second.

**<sup>10</sup> And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

<sup>11</sup> And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Jesus, who in another place Hebrews refers to as "our great high priest" not only was the goats... but he was the priest. And after he laid his life down in our place being a living, breathing, Yom Kippur once and for all...

This priest sat down.

That signified:

Everything has been done.

In your life... every mistake... gone. Even sin, washed away. Every regret. Gone.

Jesus doesn't carry it and you shouldn't either. Because God wants to do something HUGE in your life, but he can't work through you until he breaks you of yourself.

Seriously! What are you going to do when you get to Nineveh, if you hate the Ninevites?

See here is the deal with Jonah.

and this seems to be why this story hits so close to home for Israel.

Jonah wanted grace to fall on him while judgment fell on his enemies.

He wanted "Yom Kippur" for himself, but he wanted "Sodom and Gomorrah" for them.

And Jonah was an absolute reflection of the heart of his entire nation.

Israel wanted judgment to fall on the Assyrians.

Israel wanted their own judgment to be based on the inspection of the lamb.

While they wanted the Assyrians judgment to be based on the inspection of the Assyrians.

and what the book of Jonah should do for the Israelites is it should cause them to ask themselves this question:

**Can you forgive even the people who have caused you destruction?**

and in Jonah's case, we never get the answer to that question.

In fact when we get to the end of the book we don't have a conclusion, we have another question:

Should I not pity Nineveh?

I had pity on you.

I had pity on Israel.

I had pity on everyone and all the awful things they did all year, that I let two perfect goats be the replacement of...

Should I not pity them?

Jonah came before Jesus. And even before Jesus, he understood that the God that He serves is good. The God that he serves is merciful, and compassionate, and is willing to clear people of their sins.

The God that he serves accepts the sacrifice of two goats, on behalf of all the sins of all the people.

but Jonah didn't want that for the people in Nineveh.

So he ran.

Not because he was afraid of the dangers of Nineveh.

But because he knew that if Nineveh heard him, they would repent.

And if they repented, God would meet them... right where they are.

In their armies and hostile takeovers. In their violence and corruption.

it is no secret...

Jonah had a call that was way bigger than himself. He was called to Love a city that he hated... it was something that he was not capable of doing, and even when he finally obeyed, the whole book ends with us still not knowing if Jonah ever came to love the city.

But we know that he served the city. We know that he reluctantly was faithful to go and preach the city.

And we know that *that* city changed.

and so will our city.

Because when God is chasing you, there is no place that you can hide that is hidden from his love. He can use people that hate you, to change you, if he has to.

But I have found that it is 100 times easier, if you just embrace the call.

Our city needs the grace that we have.

They need to know that Yom Kippur is now. And its tomorrow. and its forever.

and his name is Jesus.