

A Wake-Up Call

Jonah 1:4-12

Pastor Richard Yu

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When I worked as a night auditor at a hotel, one of my extra duties was to perform wake-up calls to guests who wanted something more personal than an alarm. Some guests already had awoken by the time I made the call, others were glad for the call, but still others I could tell were grumpy because they were not quite ready to get up. Are we in need of a wake-up call to the reality of God's calling?

God's call to Jonah was clear, but he ran in the opposite direction. He rejected God's calling and tried to hide from God. He thought he had escaped God's reach and was at peace, but God sent a violent storm to wake him up. Even during the storm, however, while there was chaos and fear on deck, Jonah was still fast asleep below deck. Jonah had a remarkable insensitivity to the turmoil around him, just as he had for the impending destruction of Nineveh. Today, with turmoil all around us, have we as a church woken up to the reality of God's calling for us to be a light in this dark world?

Why did God even bother trying to wake Jonah up? He could have easily found a more obedient servant. However, God is committed to finish what He started. His calling remained relevant even after Jonah fled. He didn't give up on Jonah, just as He didn't give up on the Ninevites. He wanted to wake Jonah up so he could participate in His work of salvation. Even after the storm failed to wake him up, the cumulative effect of the barrage of questions from the sailors in vv. 6-8 finally made Jonah acknowledge that he could not escape God's plan. What will it take for us to acknowledge our calling and identity in Christ? Alarms are never pleasing because we like being comfortably asleep, but they alert us of the dangers we are blind to and the desperate need that is out there. It's easy to pursue material comfort, but when we let go of our own will and accept God's purpose for us, we will experience the deep joy of a life centered in God's will.

Eventually in v. 9 Jonah spoke up and acknowledged his connection with *Yahweh*, the one true Creator God. He tells of God's name, nature, and work. When we witness for God, we must also speak of His nature as Creator, the source of all life. The entire message of the Bible has its foundation in Genesis 1-2. How can we convince people that God will bring about the

redemption and renewal of all creation if we don't first tell them that He created all things in the beginning?

The story of Jonah is more than the miracle of his survival in the belly of the fish. It's about God's grace in dealing with His people and the lost souls. It's about the mercy that finds its full manifestation in Jesus Christ. God has a passion to reach the lost through His people. It is not just missionaries, but all of us who are called to live a Christ-centered life to those around us. Are you awake to how desperately the world needs Jesus? To those who are awake, those who are sleeping may look silly. Likewise, if the church is asleep, those on the outside will see us as insensitive, apathetic, or out of touch with reality. What will these lost souls, looking for love and community, find when they enter this church? Will they find faithful witnesses who reflect God's love and have a heart for the lost like He does?

Who are the people in your life that are waiting for you to make yourself available to God? God calls His people all the time. He's waiting for you to accept His mission if you have not already done so. We can all be a part of God's work in changing the world. There are endless opportunities to serve Him. If you are truly willing, there are always opportunities. Therefore, it is impossible for a Christian who truly wants to know God's will not to know it. God has work for you to do, and He knows what work is suited to you, so just make yourself available and accept the call. Satan tried to tempt Jesus away from His calling by offering Him His future glory without the cross, but Jesus resisted Satan with the truth of God and faithfully obeyed God's will unto death. Likewise, in order to see and fulfill God's calling for us, we must not be tossed by the pressures and whims of this world but must hold fast to the truth of God's word. Know who God is and know that you belong to Him. These are foundational to being able to see His calling for you.