

Remnant Life Church
August 14, 2022
Handling the Unexpected
Part 1
Jonah 1:1-12

How do you handle the unexpected?

- Do you take it all in stride and roll with the punches
- Or do you come unglued, get knocked down, and watch helplessly as your world is tossed from side to side?

Now, let me ask that same question again - How should you handle the unexpected as a child of God?

- It would seem that unexpected is becoming the standard practice now as we have endured a couple of years of the unprecedented taking place all around us
- What used to be taken for granted and counted on are no longer the same

In reality there are really only 2 ways you can respond to those things that you did not see coming:

1. Allow it to unhinge your world or...
2. Work through the situation knowing that God is in control of all things

But make no mistake, you do have a choice!

I don't know if this is true of your house here are several television programs that are playing regularly at ours, mostly as background noise. The Golden Girls, MASH, and The Andy Griffith Show. One popular episode of the Andy Griffith Show is called "Man in a Hurry" - Malcolm Tucker is a wealthy businessman from Charlotte. One Sunday he experiences car trouble a couple of miles outside of Mayberry and he walks into the town where he meets Andy coming out of Sunday morning worship.

Andy, of course, offers to assist Malcolm but warns that it is nearly impossible to get anything done on a Sunday in Mayberry. Malcolm immediately begins to lose patience when he is then told by Wally, the filling station owner, that he can't fix his car because it has always been his policy not to work on Sunday. Malcolm is further dumbfounded when he learns that he can't even use the telephone because the elderly Mindelbright sisters use the party line to visit with their neighbors on Sunday afternoons, since they're not able to get around too well anymore.

Back at the Taylor house, things don't get much better for Malcolm. He finally explodes into a tirade, screaming that the citizens of Mayberry are living in another world--that this is the twentieth century, and while the rest of the entire world is living on the cusp of the space age, the town of Mayberry shuts down every Sunday because two old ladies' feet have fallen asleep.

After a while, Malcolm begins to calm down and even relax a little as Barney and Andy sing the old spiritual "Church in the Wildwood" while sitting on the front porch. But his calm is short lived when, to his delight, Gomer informs Malcolm that his cousin Goober has offered to fix the car. Later, when Gomer returns with the car, Malcolm is shocked to hear that there is no charge

for the repair since it was just a clogged fuel line. Goober had even sent word that it was a privilege to work on such fine automobile!

As Mr. Tucker prepares to leave, he stops and contemplates the events of that afternoon as he begins to recognize the contrast of what awaits him when he returns to the activities of his own hectic life. Malcolm realizes that the very characteristics of Mayberry life that initially frustrated him so much are, in fact, the priorities he desperately needs to reestablish in his own life. He decides to put his business on hold and spend the night in Mayberry.

I think that we can all see ourselves in Malcolm Tucker in one way or another. And so, it comes down to a choice even when the unexpected has arrived. I recently read a quote that said, "Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans."

Jonah's story is a full presentation of the unexpected when God interrupted his plans

- Jonah is known to virtually everyone regardless of their beliefs
 - From those who attend church every week to those who drive by the church every Sunday on their way to the golf course, it is a familiar story
 - But it should mean more to us as we delve a little deeper into what happened

Jonah

- We don't know a great deal about Jonah, although there are a few details given
- We do read that he is the son of Amittai and was from the town of Gath Hopher located in the northern kingdom of Israel
- He lived between the 9th and 8th centuries BC
- He was a contemporary of Hosea and Amos whose accounts are also included as a part of the OT minor prophets
 - The three prophet's messages of repentance to Israel were very similar but only Jonah drew the short straw of being sent by God to deliver the repentance message to the Assyrians
 - And it is the history of these people that helps explain why Jonah did what he did and why their descendants were so hated by the people of Jesus' day
- Assyria is derived from the name Asshur, the son of Shem, Noah's oldest son
 - They originated in Babylon (modern day Iraq) eventually conquering the Babylonians in 1300 BC
 - Now during the time of David and Solomon's reign the Assyrian nation was in decline but through the next several hundred years, as their kings came and went, they began to grow in power once again.
 - As their power expanded, they began to demand tribute from the surrounding people with the nation of Israel included among those groups
 - When the King of Israel, Hoshea refused to pay in 722 BC, the Assyrians quickly attacked, destroyed, and scattered the nation of Israel and they would remain a scattered people for the next 1670 years until 1948 when the nation and people would be recognized and brought together again.
 - The Assyrians in Jonah's time were a warring, brutal people who were both famous and infamous for the barbaric ways they treated the people they conquered
 - This was where God was sending Jonah

- And not just to skirt the suburbs to talk with a few villagers - no
- He was going to the capital city of Nineveh
 - This was a huge city for its day
 - Not only in size but in population
 - God said there were 120,000 people there

READ – Jonah 1:1-12

Look at what happened through the remainder of the story:

- God told Jonah to go to Nineveh
 - At that time Jonah is in Joppa and Nineveh is 550 miles north east of his location
- Jonah decides instead to run in the complete opposite direction and books passage on a boat going to Tarshish on the southeastern coast of Spain
 - The distance from Joppa to Tarshish varies according to the source but I thought it best to use the distance Jonah would have traveled
 - That makes the distance to Tarshish approximately 5400 nautical miles
 - This isn't just away but it is the exact opposite direction as far as he could go to the other side of the strait of Gibraltar which connects the Atlantic to the Mediterranean and the south of Spain with Morocco of the African mainland
- On the way a big storm
- The sailors cast lots to see who is responsible – the lot falls to Jonah
- After much discussion he is eventually thrown overboard and the storm dissipates
- Into the belly of a fish for 3 days
- Thrown up on to the shore
- Changes his mind and goes to Nineveh
- Preaches a revival that transforms the entire nation from top to bottom
 - But he is apparently unaware of the move of God
- Goes outside the city to watch the fireworks of God's wrath
- Gets very mad when God spares the city
- God causes a tree grew overnight to give Jonah shade
 - The tree dies overnight
 - Jonah gets mad and is rebuked by God

Who turns out to be the heroes of this story?

- None other than the Assyrians
- This is not what you would expect
 - After all Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for being wicked
 - The Assyrians were every bit as villainous
 - So much so that Jonah was willing to risk his life to escape the responsibility of going to them
- This hatred carried into the time of Jesus but for a different reason
 - One of the ploys of the Assyrians when they captured a nation was to repopulate it with their own people
 - They did this so that the culture of the conquered people could never be revived or come back

- This meant that any of the Jews who did remain would begin to marry and interbreed with the Assyrians
- This created, in the minds of the Jewish people, an inferior people who were neither Jew nor Assyrian
 - These people came to be known as the Samaritans
- Now recall two accounts we read in the NT
 - The first is in **John 4** when Jesus, after a long day of travel had sent the disciples into a town to buy food He came to a well and engaged a Samaritan woman in conversation
 - When the disciples returned they were aghast that Jesus would lower and defile Himself in this way
 - Then recall from **Luke 10** the parable of the Good Samaritan
 - The priest passed by but would not help the injured man, nor would the Levite, but a Samaritan stopped and did
 - Jesus was making a powerful point that addressed not only about loving the people you encounter but also pointing out the prejudice of the people
 - The Assyrians were a despised people in both the time of Jonah and the time of Jesus with regard to the Samaritans
- Yet they are the unexpected heroes of the story of Jonah
 - They did repent
 - It did not last but the power of God's saving grace was demonstrated for all to see