

Remnant Life Church
August 11, 2024
Well, That Was Unexpected
Jonah 1:1-17

How do you handle the unexpected?

- When something occurs that you had no prior warning
- When you thought it was going to be this and instead it became that
- You were looking left, but it came from the right
 - And “It” can be absolutely anything
 - The only thing that must be true of “it” is that you never saw it coming
- The thing that makes the unexpected so difficult is that you cannot prepare for it
 - Well, thanks for that, Captain Obvious!
 - Yes, that was an obvious statement but true none-the-less

There are really only 2 ways you can respond:

1. You can come unglued, freeze up, not respond at all, or start making all kinds of decisions without any thought, which usually makes whatever happened worse or...
2. Work through the situation knowing that God is in control of all things

The Bible is filled with stories of the unexpected and the solutions or responses were different in each one

- a. Let's start with Jacob and Esau – **Gen 25-33**
 - i. With his mother's help, Jacob steals Esau's birthright; runs away to avoid his brother's wrath; many years later he is headed back home and the two will see each other for the first time
 - ii. On the way, Jacob gets word that his brother is headed out to meet him with 400 men
 - iii. Jacob sets up a bribe buffet; sending out large numbers of gifts in staggered time periods to soften Esau up
 - iv. When they meet; Esau has no interest in the past only what is happening within their family in that moment
 - v. Unexpected possible confrontation; unexpected ending
- b. Consider the account of Joshua and the army of the Israelites in **Exodus 7**
 - i. Joshua has just led the army in a great victory against the great walled city of Jericho
 - ii. They then spy out the town of Ai, a small town located about 15 miles northeast of Jericho
 - iii. The spies came back and said, we don't need to send our first team to take care of this
 - iv. Send a few thousand of the backups
 - v. Ai routed the Israelites and handed them their first defeat under Joshua's leadership
 - vi. Unexpected
- c. Certainly, Job qualifies as one who was sent unforeseen, unexpected circumstances

- i. How would like for God to turn you over to satan?
- ii. That is what happened to Job
- iii. God said do what you want to him but don't kill him
- iv. In a very short amount of time, he lost his wealth, all of his possessions, and his children were all killed
- v. Then he developed a skin condition over the entirety of his body, likely a form of elephantiasis called Black Leprosy
 - 1. Look that up sometime
 - 2. But not directly before or after a meal!
- vi. Job went through a wide range of emotions as did his wife and friends who came to comfort him.
- d. In **Acts 27-28** the Apostle Paul is on a ship headed for Rome
 - i. He has a schedule, people to see, places to be, and people counting on him
 - ii. But a typhoon – or great storm – overtakes his ship and they end up on the island of Malta some 60 miles south of Sicily
 - 1. He is still 450 miles from his destination
 - 2. It delayed his arrival by 3 months (**Acts 28:11**)
 - iii. What would something like that have done to you?
- e. There are others, but none so unexpected a turn than in the life of the prophet Jonah

READ – **Jonah 1:1-17**

Jonah's story is a full presentation of the unexpected

- God told him to go to Nineveh
 - Jonah is in Joppa and Nineveh is 550 miles northeast of his location
 - This would have been a long, arduous journey that would have taken him several weeks to complete
 - And it wasn't like he would have been excited to get there
 - Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrians
 - They were a warring nation and Israel's fiercest enemy at that time
 - They were known for their brutality and wiping out a city's entire populations rather than take prisoners
 - It was also an enormous city for its day
 - It was the warrior descendent of Noah, Nimrod, who built Nineveh
 - And by Jonah's time, the walled city had a circumference of nearly 8 miles and took half a day to walk around
 - **Jonah 4:11** tells us that there were more than 120,000 people living within its walls
 - Jonah had not been asked to go and lead an underground Bible study in this pagan stronghold
 - Neither was Jonah thought to be a powerful preacher but God surprised him with a task that surely caught him off-guard
- Of course we know that Jonah did not embrace this call but instead ran in the other direction and grabbed a boat going to Tarshish on the coast of Spain
 - 2500 miles northwest

- In the exact opposite direction as far as he could go on 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; thrown overboard; Into the belly of a fish for 3 days; Thrown up on to the shore; finally makes his way to Nineveh
- Preached a revival that transformed the entire nation from top to bottom
- Went outside the city to watch the fireworks of God's wrath
 - We see the evidence here that actions do not always reflect the true nature of the heart
- Got mad when God spared the city
- A tree grew overnight to give him shade; it died overnight and Jonah got mad about that too
- The story of Jonah is a to-be-continued story that never is – we are left to determine the importance and additional meanings of his account

Every bit of that was unexpected, but one thing in particular stands out that was the most unexpected event of the entire ordeal

- Jonah's three-day time of reflection
- What were Jonah's options in response to where he found himself after being thrown overboard into the depths of the Mediterranean?
1. He could have just given up and waited to die
 2. He could use that time to examine himself and cry out to God

And that is exactly what he did

- His prayer is the second chapter of the book
- He asked to be delivered, and thanks God before it even happened
- Can we pray with the same level of expectation?

Through it all God never gave up on Jonah

- **3:1** – *Then the Word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time*
- But it took Jonah having some things about himself revealed and dealt with

When the unexpected comes, how do you react?

- Do you see it as the hand of God moving in your life?
 - Or do you get angry at how your plans have been upended?
 - Is there resentment that it has happened to you?
- Do you watch expectantly for God to protect and provide?
 - Or do you lash out like a wounded animal
 - Not only making poor choices in your aggravated state
 - But likely hurting the people around you as well

We are the only ones who struggle with the unexpected

- That is not a word in God's vocabulary (if you will)
- Only we must decide how to respond
- God knows the beginning from the end

- He is never caught off-guard
- He is waiting for us, like He did with Jonah, to realize that God orchestrates it all

Fear, anxiety, and stress are how satan wants you to respond, but the love and power of God transcends every circumstance in your life and will bring with it a peace that passes all understanding.

Phil 4:6-7 - *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

John 14:27 - *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

John 16:33 - *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*

Our peace, even in uncertain or unexpected times, comes from our knowledge of God's love for us, His almighty hand and power in all things, and the presence of Jesus Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

One more thing to keep in mind – if we respond to those times in the peace and trust in God, He will very often transform those times of the unexpected and uncertainty into times of blessing.