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The Lenten season this year began on Wednesday, February 14th.

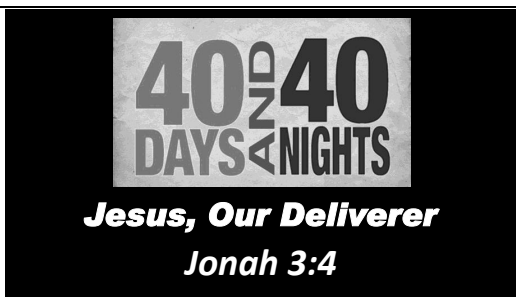
Roman Catholics call this day Ash Wednesday. I remember going to

church as a young boy on Ash Wednesday. We would go forward and the priest would make the sign of the cross on our foreheads.

The ashen cross reminded me that a 40-day countdown had begun, a period of time that ended on the night that Jesus was betrayed.

Easter did not end the Lenten season; it ended on the day that Jesus went to the cross. The cross changed everything. Tonight, we are on the other end of these 40 days of repentance and anticipation of Jesus' suffering and victory.

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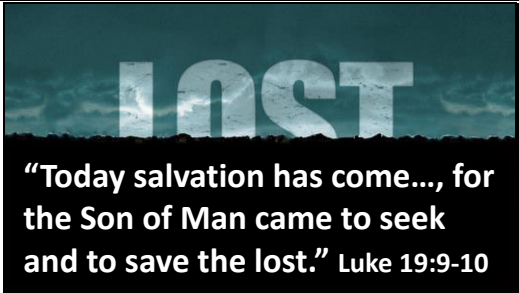
This Good Friday, we are going to look at another 40-day and 40-night event, Jonah's prophetic

pronouncement in Jonah 3:4:

S l i d e 3	<p>40^o40 DAYS < NIGHTS</p> <p>Jonah 3:4</p> <p>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"</p>	<p>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"</p> <p>It is by no means a stretch to assert that Jonah's journey through Nineveh paints a portrait of Jesus. In fact, we know this for certain because Jesus Himself makes the comparison between he and Jonah.</p>
S l i d e 4	<p>40^o40 DAYS < NIGHTS</p> <p>First Point</p> <p>Jesus, Our Deliverer has called us to go to the <u>lost</u>.</p>	<p>The First thought that I would like to share is that:</p> <p>Jesus, Our Deliverer has called us to go to the <u>lost</u>.</p> <p>There is no more central truth to the gospel. But it is important that we understand that the God who never changes did not suddenly develop a care and concern for the destiny of lost people in the days of Jesus. He has always been passionate about seeing lost people delivered from sin and spiritual death. This lesson is powerfully evident in the book of Jonah, although not always strongly evident in the life of Jonah himself.</p>

S l i d e 5	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 1</p> <p>¹ Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”</p>	<p>Turn with me to Jonah 1, and we will read the first few verses:</p> <p>¹ Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”</p>
S l i d e 6	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 1</p> <p>³ 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.</p>	<p>³ 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.</p> <p>The repetition in verse 3 is not merely poetic. It is emphatic. Jonah wants us to know this about him... that he was determined to flee from God. He will not reveal his reasons until the last chapter of this book, but this fact is central to the book. God called Jonah to go east, to Nineveh in Assyria, and he went as far as he could in the opposite direction.</p> <p>Why did God call Jonah eastward? And why, of all people, did God call Jonah to go to Nineveh? Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. The</p>

	<p>Assyrians were not only lost pagans, they were the vilest, cruelest “lostest” of lost people. They were the cream of the crud. And God called Jonah to go to them. I will summarize the most entertaining part of the book. Jonah gets on a ship heading to Tarshish in Spain. It seems that he outed himself. He told the other sailors that he was trying to escape his God. They knew this, so when a great storm hit and threatened the boat, they cast lots. The lots confirmed what they already suspected – that Jonah was to blame. They are still reluctant to throw Jonah overboard, but at his prodding they do so and a great fish swallows Jonah alive. Why the storm? Why the great fish? Because Jonah refused to go to the lost people of Nineveh.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">S l i d e 7</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 10 (NIV)</p> <p>⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.</p> <p>In Matthew 10, Jesus sends out his 12 disciples with these instructions:</p> <p>⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.</p>

		<p>From our perspective, Jesus seems to send them out prematurely. They still didn't have a strong grasp of who he was. But Jesus knew that learning to share their faith was a lesson that needed to come early for them. Throughout their lives they had been taught to hate the Gentiles in much the same way that Jonah grew up hating the Assyrians. They needed to fully grasp Jesus' purpose as he stated it following the conversion of the hated Zacchaeus:</p>
S l i d e 8		<p>"Today salvation has come..., for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Luke 19:9-10</p> <p>When it comes to lost people, who are you most like, Jonah or Jesus? Do you avoid sinners out of a fear of being compromised by them? Do you withdraw from them because you feel you can't find anything in common with them? Would you be so honest as to admit that you feel better than them? Jesus engaged lost people. He partied with sinners without joining them in their sin. And he saw them as worth his time. Jonah did not. But there is another reason why we may be more like Jonah, which leads to my second thought:</p>



Second Point

The lost are not a lost cause!

Second Point

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This is not a lesson we will learn from Jonah’s example in this book, but it is a lesson we can learn from the book itself.

Jonah 2 is a lengthy prayer. It is a partial turning point in Jonah’s life. He has been consumed by this great fish and over the course of these three days, he begins to turn his heart back towards God. But like us, his turn-around happens in stages. The Jonah who will be vomited on the shores of Nineveh is no longer running with his feet, but his heart is still not fully beating with God’s heart.

Jonah 3

¹ Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.”


Turn with me to Jonah 3

¹ Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.”

S l i d e 1 1	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 3</p> <p>³ 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.</p>	<p>³ 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.</p>
S l i d e 1 2	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 3</p> <p>⁴ Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"</p>	<p>⁴ Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"</p> <p>Here is our forty days and 40 nights moment. Like the Lenten season, the people of Nineveh are given 40 days to repent. However, this is not a religious discipline. There's a lot more on the line. Jonah has delivered a message of doom. And as we learn more of this prophet, we begin to realize that Jonah is the first prophet who truly hoped to fail. I think that part of the reason is that he thought that these people were beyond redemption. They were a lost cause, and Jonah seemed to take comfort in this thought. But let's continue in verse 5 of chapter 3:</p>

S l i d e 1 3	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 3</p> <p>5 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.</p>	<p>5 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.</p>
S l i d e 1 4	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 3</p> <p>6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.</p>	<p>6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.</p>
S l i d e 1 5	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 3</p> <p>7 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,</p>	<p>7 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,</p>
S l i d e 1 6	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 3</p> <p>8 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.</p>	<p>8 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.</p>
S l i d e 1 7	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 3</p> <p>9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."</p>	<p>9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."</p> <p>Not so long ago, when I preached on this book, I pointed out that this king is not likely the head of the Assyrian Empire. He is an important</p>

		<p>king of a city-state within that Empire, the king of the capital city of Nineveh. And he and his people do something entirely unexpected. They receive Jonah’s message, they believe it and they do something about it... they repent. Sackcloth and ashes were a humble display of their sincerity and humility. They believe that Jonah’s God has the power to destroy them, and they hope that maybe he will spare them despite their evil track record. In the next verse we see God’s heart. Once again, we will see that there is no difference between the character of the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. God is compassionate in every era. Look at verse 10:</p>
S l i d e 1 8	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 3</p> <p>10 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.</p>	<p>10 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.</p> <p>Some theologians struggle with this moment. How can God change His mind? It’s the wrong question. God never changes His mind or His heart. It has always been in His mind to reward repentance. And it has always been His heart to desire</p>

		<p>it. God is not gleeful in the death of the unredeemed. He desires that all will be saved. In God’s estimation, no one, save the devil, the demons and perhaps Judas Iscariot is a truly lost cause.</p>
S l i d e 1 9	 <p>Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. (John 4:35 NIV)</p>	<p>In John 4:35, Jesus reveals His heart:</p> <p>Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. (John 4:35 NIV)</p> <p>When it comes to lost people, we see obstacles, but God sees opportunities. The most lost person you know isn't half as lost as Saul of Tarsus was, and not a tenth as lost as most of these Assyrians. They delighted in torturing their enemies. That's why Jonah hated them so much. But an entire city of them was reached by a prophet who preached doom without an ounce of love.</p>
S l i d e 2 0	<p>40^o40 DAYS<NIGHTS</p> <p>Third Point</p> <p>Jesus, Our Deliverer, expressed His Father's <u>compassion</u> for the lost on Calvary's cross.</p>	<p>Let's explore one more thought together.</p> <p>Jesus, Our Deliverer, expressed His Father's</p>


		<p>compassion for the lost on Calvary's cross.</p> <p>I think that one of the greatest of theological errors is that we easily see the compassion of Jesus, but fail to see that he was a true reflection of his Father's heart.</p>
S l i d e 2 1	<p>40²40 DAYS < NIGHTS</p> <p>The Father's Compassion for the Repentant</p>	<p>So, let's begin by exploring</p> <p>The Father's Compassion for the Repentant</p> <p>Turn with me to Jonah 4, verse 1:</p>
S l i d e 2 2	<p>Jonah 4 ¹ But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. ² 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.</p>	<p>¹ But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. ² 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.</p>
S l i d e 2 3	<p>Jonah 4 ³ Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴ And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?"</p>	<p>³ Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴ And the Lord said, "Do you do well to be angry?"</p>


		<p>It is now, in the final chapter, that we learn Jonah's motivation for running from God. He knew that his God has an unfortunate compassionate streak. He knew that God was patient... that He was kind... and that he was merciful in the extreme. The very traits that we depend upon offended Jonah because he hated these people. God asks Jonah if he has a right to be angry over God's compassion. Jonah will answer this question, but not yet. Let's pick it up in verse 5:</p>
<p>S l i d e 2 4</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 4</p> <p>5 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.</p>	<p>5 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.</p> <p>This is a remarkable moment... a real low point in Jonah's life. Why is he sitting at a scenic overlook east of the city? Clearly, there is only one reason. He hopes that he has talked God out of His mercy. He hopes that he has tamped down God's compassionate streak. And he is wishing with all his heart that God will do the right thing and wipe out Nineveh. Jonah is almost unteachable. So God teaches him through an object lesson. He causes</p>

		<p>a gourd to grow up and provide Jonah with much needed shade. Jonah loves this. Then God causes a worm to eat into the gourd and kill it, depriving him of the shade. Jonah hates this, which leads to this moment in verse 9:</p>
S l i d e 2 5	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 4</p> <p>9 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.”</p>	<p>9 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.”</p>
S l i d e 2 6	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 4</p> <p>10 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.</p>	<p>10 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.</p>
S l i d e 2 7	<p style="text-align: right;">Jonah 4</p> <p>11 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?”</p>	<p>11 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?”</p> <p>The lesson is straight forward. Jonah, you are deeply concerned about your own comfort, but unmoved by the plight of a great city – a city with 120,000 children in it. God is schooling Jonah in</p>

		<p>compassion. But let me ask an odd question.</p>
S I D E 2 8	<p>40⁴⁰ DAYS < NIGHTS</p> <p>The Son's Lack of Compassion for the Unrepentant?</p>	<p>Is Jesus more like Jonah than his Father? Does he lack compassion of the unrepentant? Before we tackle this odd question, let's jump back to near the beginning of Jonah:</p>
S I D E 2 9	<p>Jonah 1:17</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>In Jonah 1:17 we read:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Not only does the Book of Jonah contain a reference to the repeating and significant number 40. There is also a reference to three days and three nights, another key biblical number. Jesus refers to this verse as is recorded in Matthew's gospel.</p>
S I D E 3 0	<p>Matthew 12</p> <p>³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." ³⁹ But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.</p>	<p>Look at Matthew 12:38-41:</p> <p>³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." ³⁹ But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.</p>

S l i d e 3 1	<p style="text-align: right;">Matthew 12</p> <p>40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.</p>	<p>40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.</p>
S l i d e 3 2	<p style="text-align: right;">Matthew 12</p> <p>41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.</p>	<p>41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.</p> <p>Honestly, who does Jesus sound more like in this passage, His Father or Jonah? It's a stern word. No sign, other than the sign of Jonah. However, this sign comes with an offer.</p>
S l i d e 3 3	<p>40/40 DAYS < NIGHTS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Son's Compassionate Offer for the Unrepentant.</p>	<p>In fact, there is no more compassionate offer ever extended to sinful lost people. Turn with me to Luke 23:</p>

S i d e 3 4	<p style="text-align: right;">Luke 23</p> <p>³² Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.</p>	<p>Luke 23</p> <p>³² Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.</p>
S i d e 3 5	<p>Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!</p> <p>Luke 23:34</p> 	<p>³⁴ And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”</p> <p>The sign of Jonah was the sign pointing towards Jesus’ death and resurrection. There is no more compassionate act than that of Jesus, tortured and nearing death speaking words of forgiveness from Calvary’s cross. The cross is not a guarantee. Jesus’ words of forgiveness are not carte blanche to live life any way you choose and count on heaven. They are words of invitation. To those who callously rejected him, he have a stern warning to turn away from their unbelief. But to those who nailed him to a cross he let them know that it was not to late for them to choose another path. They were</p>

		not lost causes. They simply needed a deliverer.
S l i d e 3 6		Let's Pray.