

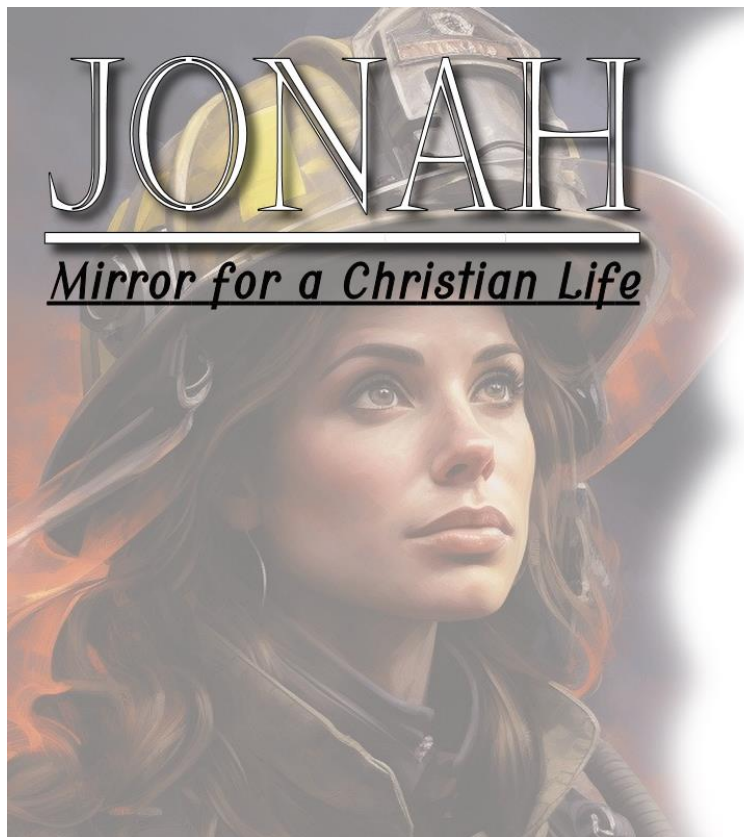
6/2 Salvation

Jonah 2:10

10 And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Special Music: "God of Salvation" Corey Voss and Madison Street Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYOyMTn01Oc>



Salvation

Jonah 2:10

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A LIFE JACKET

Judge Trudy Darling had spent weeks pondering what to do with Myron McIntosh. No question the offense was serious. No question that people had been hurt and were continuing to deal with the fallout of his irresponsibility. Daisy was short-handed at the diner and the added expense of dealing with the insurance deductible had all but wiped out her savings. Both Daisy and Mr. Sanders had been without their vehicles while the insurance was being settled and waiting for the vehicles to be repaired. Trent Willoughby had started work on both vehicles before the insurance gave the go-ahead, simply because he knew how much the work needed to be done. He had managed to get parts ordered and which he picked up in Ruskville, and was working diligently to get them installed. It was only today that the word had come in that everything was covered in the accident. Except, of course, Maggie, Mr. Sanders' dog, which had been an ongoing source of contention and frustration for everyone involved. No one seemed to know what to do about that, even though Myron and Mr. Sanders seemed to have managed to put aside their differences so that they could talk and address the matter.

Belinda Carlyle over at Belinda's Used Cars had managed to find a way to put both Daisy and Max Sanders into temporary transportation. The cars weren't much to look at, but both Daisy and Max were extremely grateful. Since Max made his living as a plumber, having a car wasn't very practical, but he did his best to make do. Everyone in town did what they could to help out, but everything was still overwhelming. Daisy would occasionally find that someone

had anonymously picked up her grocery tab over at Big Sam's Market, and people were calling Mr. Sanders for even minor plumbing problems, which kept him busy and his mind off the loss of Maggie.

Katie Callaway's Blue Heeler was in a family way, and she dropped a note to Max Sander's letting him know that he could have the pick of the litter when they arrived. There was no way Maggie could be replaced, but Max was grateful and found himself a little anxious to find a companion to keep him company. He didn't know if he would take Katie up on the offer. He felt that it may be better to choose a pet from Peter Jarvis' Best Friends Animal Rescue. Peter had let him know that if he decided on a rescue, that the adoption fee would be waved. Max was going to have to think about that as well.

In the meantime, Judge Darling was going to have to figure out what to do with Myron. She could throw the book at him and send him to county jail for twelve months, subtracting a little time off for time served in the Parable jail. But was that really in everyone's best interest? Daisy would still have to struggle at the diner, and Max would still have difficulties keeping up with his increased workload. And would Myron be a better or worse citizen if she did that? Would throwing him to the wolves in county lockup just initiate him into darker circles and relationships, when there was an opportunity to actually put him on a better path? Myron had been a model prisoner over at the Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Thom had reported to her that Myron had done everything that was asked of him and more. No, there had to be a better solution. A solution that would bring all these

people together rather than continue to push them farther apart and possibly destroy this young man's future.

Sitting in her chambers, Judge Darling went over all these things in her mind. She had made numerous notes. Deputy Forrester knocked gently on her door and then entered. "Everyone's ready for you, judge. Should I tell them to wait a little longer?"

The judge sighed, sat back in her chair, looked up at the deputy, and said, "No, Dusty, I'll be right there. Thanks for letting me know."

Dusty stepped back into the courtroom but left the door open. Judge Darling stood up and walked through the open door which the deputy shut behind her. Dusty called out in a loud voice. "ALL RISE!! The Court of General Sessions, Parable, TX is now in session. The Honorable Judge Trudy J. Darling presiding." Trudy made her way to her bench and sat in her chair as it gave out that annoying squeak that continued to drive her crazy.

Randal Dickson was still serving as prosecutor and Alice Charm sat beside Myron at the defense table. This was a simple sentencing hearing, except there really wasn't anything simple about it. Trudy knocked her gavel on the sounding block saying, "This court is now in session." Dusty motioned for everyone to be seated.

The courtroom was silent except for the gentle tap, tap, tap of the judge's pencil as she continued to seek a proper opening this session. All of the local townspeople had gathered in the gallery. With a long sigh, Judge Darling sat up

straight and looked at Myron. She nodded to Dusty who said, “Will the defendant please rise?” Myron stood up in his new brown suit and Alice Charm stood up beside him. Daisy sat behind him in the first row of the gallery.

“Mr. McIntosh, you have left me with quite a quandary. I have your plea statement, so your guilt isn’t in question. It’s what to do with you that has been driving me crazy. My superiors want me to throw the book at you and send you to the county jail for a maximum sentence of one year since this is your first offense. They want me to make an example of you for other young people. But I’m not sure that would actually help anyone. I don’t see a lot of benefit in that other than punishing you, which would also punish a lot of other people as well, including your mother. But I won’t take that option off the table. As a matter of fact, that is the sentence that I am tempted to lay on you just to get the matter settled. It would certainly get my superiors off my back.

But here’s the thing, Mr. McIntosh, what I really want to do is throw you a life jacket. But I also know that when you hear what I have to offer, you might just choose to go to county. I won’t try to change your mind if that is what you want to do, because the alternative I am going to offer you will be a far more difficult path. But consider your time served under a misdemeanor conviction, if everyone agrees to what I am about to offer you.”

Myron did not like the thought of spending time in the county jail. A whole year was a long time, even if they let him out early for good behavior and it would always be on his record. Not only that, it would also crush his mother.

“So, this is what I am prepared to offer you as an alternative, Mr. McIntosh and I want you to consider it carefully before you answer.

1. There are several people that have incurred major expenses and inconveniences due to your negligence. You will repay those expenses as I have laid out in the agreement.

A. You will repay your mother for the deductible amount not covered by the insurance company. Not only that, your mother’s insurance rates are about to go through the roof, so you will pick up all of her insurance costs until you are no longer covered under her policy.

Myron started to speak, “but, your honor, I...”

“Ms. Charm, please remind you client that he is not to speak out during this sentencing process.” Alice Charm gave Myron a menacing look and he immediately closed his mouth.

B. “While Mr. Sanders has chosen not to bring a civil suit against you and your mother, I feel that he still should be compensated for the loss of his dog and his time without his truck. I am awarding him \$5000, which again, you Mr. McIntosh, will be responsible for paying.”

Myron started to open his mouth again and Alice Charm quickly tugged at his arm reminding him that he was not to speak. Myron closed his mouth and Ms. Charm removed her hand.

C. “You are also expected to cover any expenses incurred by QuickStop for the repairs to the vehicles that are not covered by insurance

D. “You will also pay Belinda Carlyle \$100 a day for the use of the vehicles loaned to Daisy McIntosh and Max Sanders.” Ms. Carlyle has a right to be compensated.

E. “Should Max Sanders choose to accept Mr. Jarvis’ kind offer of a rescue animal at no charge, you will pay Mr. Jarvis for any and all expenses incurred, including the adoption fee.”

2. “I am also making it a condition of this agreement that Daisy McIntosh is instructed that she is not to help you in any way with any of these financial obligations. Should I hear that she has helped you with these matters, you will immediately be detained and the original sentence of one year in county jail will be reinstated.”

“Do you, Myron McIntosh, agree to these terms?”

Myron cleared his throat to speak. “Trudy... I mean your Honor, I don’t have a job. I don’t know how I will be able to do this!”

“Well, Mr. McIntosh, did you not think about that when you got behind the wheel of a car in an inebriated state? Do you believe for even one minute that I don’t know about your lack of employment? I know the burden this places on you, but I also know the burden you have placed on everyone else. Your salvation is at hand, Mr. McIntosh. These amounts do not have to be paid all at once. I would like for Mr. Max Sanders to come forward.”

Max Sanders arose from his seat in the gallery and approached Judge Darling's bench. "Mr. Sanders, have you given careful consideration to my proposal, and do you find it agreeable?"

"I do, your honor," Max stated loudly without hesitation.

"Thank you, Mr. Sanders," the judge replied and then stood and faced Myron.

"Mr. McIntosh, I would like for you to meet your new employer, Mr. Max Sanders of Sanders Plumbing and Repair. Currently, we are in the season of summer, and I see no reason you can't work 30 hours a week for Mr. Sanders. He will provide you with training and a fair wage. He needs the help, and he now has a helper. The money you earn from Mr. Sanders will go towards paying off the debt that you have incurred. When school starts in the fall, Mr. Sanders has also agreed to keep you on, working part time as long as you keep your grades up. During this time, you will also be allowed time to help your mother during her busiest hours.

Also, Mr. McIntosh, if you favorably complete all the necessary requirements, this matter will be stricken from your record and sealed. Everything will be marked as paid in full.

Now, I ask you once again, Mr. McIntosh, do you accept these terms? Everyone that has suffered by your hand is in accord to support this agreement. Both Ms. Charam and Mr. Dickson have approved this settlement. So, the only question that remains is, do you agree to abide by it? Or would you prefer the

original sentence? If you should choose to serve out your time in the county jail, Deputy Wagner is prepared to take you there as soon as this session is concluded.”

Myron stood there speechless while everyone waited for him to answer. He closed his eyes to think. Yes, this was really the best way forward. He knew that Mr. Sanders was under no obligation to help him out, but here he was, a life jacket in the storm. It wasn't going to be easy, but this was the only path to his salvation.

He looked into Mr. Sanders' eyes and saw something new, something not bordering on disappointment. More like he was cheering him on to make the right decision.

Finding his voice, he replied, “Yes, your honor. I agree.”

“Now that is a wise decision, Mr. McIntosh,” Judge Darling said. “There is the matter of court costs and fees, but instead I am commanding you to serve 120 hours of community service that I will determine at a later day. However, if you should let this court down, Mr. McIntosh, the court costs and fees will be reinstated. Do we understand each other?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“Then this matter in the case of the people versus Myron McIntosh, case # PTX-9902984, is concluded. You are free to go.”

Myron hadn't really understood the nature of salvation until he saw what Mr. Sanders was willing to do for him. Myron knew he hadn't deserved this kind of help. He hadn't earned it. When he got to thinking about it, Judge Trudy, Mr. Sanders, and his mother, Mr. Dickson, and Ms. Charm had actually worked hard together to make this all possible. Today, truly was a day of salvation for him.

Salvation. I have to ask, “What does salvation mean?” I’m not looking for some boiler-plate answer that we have all been brought up with. That wouldn’t take any personal reflection or consideration. I want us to think in a broader context than church or even Christianity. “What does the word salvation mean to you, personally?” Why in the world would I tell you this story about Myron McIntosh instead of maybe someone drowning at sea, or someone being tied to a railroad track, or some other such thing? If I had told you those kinds of stories it would have proved much easier because in those situations, there aren’t any strings attached. But Myron’s salvation came with conditions, didn’t it? “Isn’t that just the opposite of what you have been telling us, preacher? Isn’t salvation free? Unconditional?” We all struggle with that. It is difficult for most of us to understand the point of salvation is not a stopping place, a moment in time that occurs between being saved or not saved. But I prefer to think of it as the point in time between not having a relationship with our Creator and having a relationship with our Creator.

We don’t have to look far to find a message that salvation is God saving us from Hell, and once saved always saved. But that is trying to see our world in black and white and turning salvation into a ticket to heaven, which always leads us back into a discussion of the rules of salvation rather than the beauty, simplicity, mercy, grace, and the Spirit of salvation. If we view God’s grace in that perspective, then what we see is a line that we have stepped across where suddenly we are no longer subject to God’s laws because... well... we have a golden ticket. As long as we have a golden ticket, we are going to heaven and

that allows us to behave however we want here on earth. Because no matter what we do, no one can take that ticket away. We are saved from the fires of Hell. Which, in essence, is true, but totally ignores the Spirit of salvation, the real purpose of salvation, the wonder of salvation, the joy of salvation, the truth of salvation, and the benefits of salvation.

The problem is that we are all taught that the purpose of salvation is to save us from the fires of hell. But I want to challenge you to rethink that position. I want you to think beyond the initial pablum of conversion and start chewing on the meat of the truth behind the meaning of salvation.

Have we ever stopped to consider that Jesus' death on the cross, the redemption of our sins, the truth of our salvation is not about God saving us from something, but instead saving us *FOR* something? That the purpose of salvation is not self-serving (i.e. an escape plan from hell), but more about God-serving, where we turn our narrow-minded souls away from what was certain eternal death, to souls focused on serving the Creator as it was meant to be, to finding purpose beyond said 'salvation'. So many of us are so focused on the near-miss that we fail to see Jesus' outstretched arms welcoming us into the fold of our Heavenly Father. We are so busy wiping the sweat from our brow in relief, that we fail to see the opportunities that God is opening up to us for service in his kingdom.

When we consider our story of Myron today, we remember that Myron's fate was sealed. Without some kind of redemption, he was going to be spending time in a place he truly did not want to be and would never understand the

difficulties that his irresponsibility had caused in his community. But Judge Darling, Max Sanders, Ms. Charm, Mr. Dickson and his own mother came up with a plan of salvation that would keep him from the inevitable, but also allow him to understand and embrace his responsibilities to his community.

“And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”

Now I want to ask each of us to give an honest assessment of that verse. Do we honestly believe that this moment of deliverance for Jonah was a salvation moment where Jonah has found redemption and can now go back to doing whatever he was doing before? Do we somehow hear God saying here, “Well, Jonah, you have embraced accountability and repentance, so I am giving you salvation. Now you can go back to defying me and being disobedient because your salvation is free and that can never be taken from you.”

While in essence, that is true, it totally ignores the purpose and grace found in salvation. Remember, Jonah was saved from certain death before he even repented. The process of redemption was to bring Jonah into a right relationship with God so that God’s purpose could be served. It was to put him back on track.

We are the same way. The salvation that God offers us is not offered to keep us out of the fire, but to bring us to his living water and bread of life. It’s not just to provide us with a golden ticket to heaven. More importantly, it is meant to bring us back into a right relationship with our Creator, so that we are able to serve his purpose, be his hands and feet, embrace his love and grace, so that we

can properly serve our community in the name of Jesus Christ. Our salvation should not be seen as providing us with a way to run away from the ugliness of Hell, but as an opportunity to run into the open, outstretched arms of our loving and gracious Savior.

I would like for us all to think about that this week. I want us to seriously consider the question, “Are our lives based on running from the fire, or are we running towards the opportunities that God affords us as his children?” Are we looking back at the destruction behind us, like Lot’s wife, or are we looking towards the promises of a new life in the loving arms of our savior? Answering those questions will completely change our perspective on our Christian service. Are we doing things to avoid Hell, or are we doing things because they will draw us closer to our Creator? There is fear in one, and joy in the other.

Paul tells us in Second Timothy 1:7:

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

God does not chase after us with fear, but instead welcomes us with love. There is no reason to look back on what we have avoided, but there is every reason to look forward to the grace, mercy, and promises of our loving Creator. Let us sing praises to our blessed Lord who loves us so much that he opens his arms to us, showing us that the true path of salvation is meant to serve his glory.

God bless you all,

AMEN

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