

"When It Is The Darkest, Expect Revival!"
(Bethany Baptist Sunday Message 8-16-2020, Bob Jarrard)

Readings by Mac Jaynes:

Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: *"I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, **To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.**"*

Ezra 9:8 *"And now for a little while **grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and **give us a measure of revival** in our bondage."***

Introduction and Welcome

Opening Prayer

Opening Thoughts

- >> These are dark times for entire world, our nation in particular, the Church as a whole, individual congregations, and each of us, be we Born Again or not.
- >> Yet there is nothing new, novel, or unique in the history of mankind!
We should recall the fall from grace, the Garden of Eden account – snake and all
Then the first recorded murder, that of innocent Abel by his brother Cain
The rise of wickedness that brought about the Great Flood of Noah's time
The confusion of language in the story of the tower of Babel
Poor Moses watching his people dance around a molded golden calf
The cycle of the Nation Israel going in and out of apostasy over and over
The rejection of Jesus as Lord and Messiah, and then His crucifixion
- >> What then of so called Modern History?
The rise of Roman Catholicism and the denial of Scriptural Authority
The excesses of both sides in the struggles between Protestants and Catholics
The constant warring of all nations continuing to this very day and moment
Environmental crisis after crisis with predictions of doom given us daily
Extreme political and massive social unrest in our own great Country
Obvious erosion of our fundamental values and rights won at tremendous cost
Pestilence, poverty, persecution of innocents, perversity of all kinds
Rejection of the concepts of obedience to the law, personal rights, and equality
- >> And on and on and on till we get to the lowest blows of all:
Defeatism, denial, and paralysis in the Church or worse, better not spoken here
Platitudes from the pulpit and man-pleasers in Christian leadership at all levels
Biblical apathy and lack of spiritual growth in the general congregation
Rise of legalism and focus on divisions over seeking unity in the Body of Christ
Steady decline in the acceptance of salvation by non-believers
Falling church membership, stale fellowship, and dying churches
- >> What then Chicken Little? Is the sky falling? Is this the end of the world?
Should we bow to Satan's false plans for the Church and for God's Children?
Must we raise the white flag of surrender to Sin and lock the church doors?
Is the answer to all this in and of ourselves, should we soldier onto victory?
What is God up to if He is still or ever was in control of all things?

- >> Skip asking the mirror, or the witch, or Google "Who is the fairest one of all?"
 God never needed our help nor does He depend on man to accomplish His Will
 God Is Sovereign, all Powerful, all Knowing, all Places and inhabits all Time
 If there is a mess, He has allowed it to be for His own reasons
 If it is time to clean up the mess, to sweep clean the store, He will do that
 If you do not like His timing or His current actions, learn to wait in faith
- >> Let's re-phrase what President John F. Kennedy said at his inauguration in 1961:
 -- "My fellow Christians, ask not what you can do for God, but ask what blessings
 God has for you and trust that He intends to prosper, protect, deliver His promise
 of rest and peace." We read in Scripture:
Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you," says the LORD,
 "thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."
 -- Wow, forget my opening introduction, it's only an observation, not a prediction
 -- I am not the *Prophet of Doom* or the *Harbinger of Disasters To Come*
 -- God is in control; His will cannot be thwarted nor defeated nor stopped
- >> But I can predict one thing, if I don't get to the message we will go long and late!
- >> So here it is folks: "**When It Is The Darkest, Expect Revival!**"
- >> Please turn in your Bibles to the Book of Jonah – "The Reluctant Prophet"
 Eight books back from the end of the Old Testament
 Between Obadiah and Micah – about ¼" back from Matthew
 Four chapters long – and so we are in the Book of Jonah at Chapter 1 Verse 1
 Now the tricky part, hold your place right there at Jonah Chapter 1 Verse 1
 And turn in your Bibles to Luke Chapter 11 for a congregational reading
 Luke Chapter 11 reading only Verse 30
- >> On the count of three, may God's people fill God's House with God's Word:
 Luke Chapter 11 Verse 30 – One, Two, Three!
*"For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites,
 so also the Son of Man will be to this generation."*
- >> Before you hand twitches and you lose your place at Jonah 1 Verse 1, back you go
- >> So we have a sign, we are "this generation" as are all generations, past & future
 We have a sign of not just our salvation but also a **promise of revival**
 The Ninevites, a wicked people, were loved by God. He would that all be saved!
 We read in **1st Timothy 2:3-4**
*"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires
 all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth!"*

- >> Please follow along in your Bibles as I read Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of Jonah:
 -- **(Jonah 1:1 - 3:10 from the NKJV)**

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." But Jonah arose 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 from the presence of the LORD.

But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid; and every **man cried out to his god**, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish." And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

So he said to them, "**I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.**" Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?" - for the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. **Therefore they cried out to the LORD** and said, "We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You." So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and **offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.**

Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; **Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.** "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple. "Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. **Salvation is of the LORD."**

So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and **preach to it the message that I tell you.**" So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk.

Then he cried out and said, "**Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!**" **So the people of Nineveh believed God**, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. **Then word came to the king of Nineveh;** and he arose from his throne and laid aside his **robe**, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, **let everyone turn**

from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

>> Let's go fetch us some Scriptural context to these key thoughts that:

- God meets our every need – first and foremost, He offers us Salvation in Jesus
- No one confesses their sins unless they are first convicted of their sins
- We confess onto God our sins but He often uses preaching to prod repentance
- Revival comes in many forms and manners:
 - Often first of a single person or of a very small number of people
 - Then often of a larger group related to that first person or group
 - Should the fire of revival be fanned by faith, then whole nations can be saved

>> **Jonah 3:1-4** Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "*Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and **preach to it the message that I tell you.***" So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "**Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!**"

>> And:

Isaiah 40:3-8 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "*Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*" The voice said, "**Cry out!**" And he said, "*What shall I cry?*" "*All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, **But the word of our God stands forever.***"

>> And:

Matthew 3:1-3 "In those days **John the Baptist** came **preaching** in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!**" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'*"

>> And:

Matthew 4:12-17 Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "*The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and the shadow of death, Light has dawned.*" From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"

>> So what happened in this Bible story about Jonah, what are the lessons?

- God often uses unlikely witnesses in an improbable way – even the real bad cases Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Jonah, Peter, Paul, Mary and us!
 - Perhaps you or me or Pastor or the mailman or a convicted killer in prison

-- Second guessing God or refusing to do His will is not a great idea!

Abraham takes a second wife, Moses strikes the rock, David takes Bathsheba in adultery, Peter denies the Christ, and Paul watches while Steven is stoned.

-- Trust God, do as you are told and as the Spirit leads

Noah builds a boat that saves his family, Joseph allows God to bless him as a slave in Egypt and saves his people, Mary believes in the promised Virgin Birth of Jesus and we are all offered salvation by belief in the Name of her Son.

-- Don't question the "Message" God gives you to proclaim!

Moses claimed he was not a good speaker, Jonah did not want Israel's enemies to be saved but He knew God was faithful and would deliver them, Peter had a hard time eating with Gentiles even after God gives him the vision of the unclean things in Joppa to proclaim to his Jewish brethren, and we who should know better often run our churches like they are country clubs and not the House of God.

>> Time for some "round house punches" as the ring announcer used to say!!

-- If the best you can do is to be a "Reluctant Prophet", a "Hang Back Evangelist"

Trust God, He will use the improbable, the unwilling to accomplish His Will

Just deliver the message or accomplish the ministry you are given, it is enough

Don't grade God on His Work, we have enough to answer for on our own

-- The darker the times, the more evil the days, the closer we are to His coming

It does not get better here on earth before He comes for His Bride, the Church

It gets worse after we are raptured and the Holy Spirit no longer restrains Satan

Pray for those left behind, their lot is not a good one, their choices are:

Accept Jesus and be martyred or deny Him and live in eternal darkness

Be grateful that you are not forced to make such a decision

-- Trust that the answer to "What ails Ya?" is always the same:

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Him crucified & Him risen from the grave! No other name!

>> Before we close in prayer, perhaps you have been a Jonah.

-- Unwilling to answer the call of God to simple faith in Jesus as your Savior

-- Trusting on your own might, not being willing to lean on God's power

-- Letting the cares of the world overwhelm you, bring you to worry and despair

-- By your lack of faith, not entering into the rest of God and His peace for you

>> Today is your day, the day of your salvation, the day of your revival

>> As we pray in closing:

-- If you are not a believer in Jesus as your personal Savior,

Admit you are a sinner and need a Savior

Believe in the Name of Jesus and ask Him into your heart

-- A believer but having some issues in your walk of faith?

Turn off your doubts and turn to the Bible, let the Word work in you

Trust in God, He is the answer to all our needs and cares

>> Closing prayer

>> Benediction from **Numbers 6:24-26** and then we end

"The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace." Amen!!!