

## **Introduction**

- Image: Recent Seattle Times Article
  - "A clear majority of adults in the Seattle area — around 64% — never attend church or religious services, or go less than once a year. That pencils out to about 1.98 million people out of the total 3.1 million population aged 18 and older in our metro area, which includes King, Pierce and Snohomish counties."
  - How does this compare? They surveyed all 50 states as well as the largest metro areas. Seattle ranked the least religious city in America. Even more than San Francisco. That was the title of the article. "Seattle is the least-religious large metro area in the U.S."
  - How do we respond to a reality like that as a church in the greater Seattle area?
    - We isolate from the city (indifferent)
    - We become like the city (we have to compromise God's word, we walk away all together)
    - We join God in his mission to reach the city (this is how we want to respond - everyday mission value)
- Need: For God's Heart To Become Our Heart
- Subject
  - And so the first obvious question is to ask, "What is God's heart for runaways?"
  - We want God's heart to become our heart, but what is his heart for the 1.98 million people in our city? What's God's heart for that friend or family member in your life that maybe even used to move towards God, but is now sprinting the other direction?
  - Text: Jonah 1:1-17

## **Body**

- **Jonah Runs From God**
  - The "Confusing" Words of God
    - Jonah was a popular prophet of the Lord
      - In 2 Kings 14:25, God appoints Jonah to prophesy the expansion of the northern kingdom's borders under the wicked king Jeroboam II.
      - Jonah was a nationalistic hero whose past prophecies from the Lord made him a nationalistic hero. It was a word from the Lord he happily to embrace because his main concern was the security and prosperity of this people.
    - Background on Nineveh
      - Capital of Assyria
      - One of the most ruthless nations of the time (Cutting off the limbs of their captives except one arm so they could

mockingly shake their hands, skinning them alive, impaling captives)

- The arch enemy of Israel. The number one threat to their national interests
- Jonah Runs Away From God
  - We learn later in the book that he runs because he is terrified that the Lord would show mercy to his nations enemies.
  - He embraced God's word in the past when it made sense to him, but now, when the words of God are repulsive to him, he runs away from God (Show Map)
- We Are All Runaways
  - The Non-Religious Way to Run
    - Some are running away from God entirely (don't believe / rejected faith of your youth)
    - The full out spring often begins with one or two words from God that you can't swallow
    - There's almost no word from God that confuses everyone
  - The Religious Way to Run
    - A more religious version of running from God is to embrace some of his words, but to completely reject some of his words
    - In some sense, this is a more dangerous place to be because you trick yourself into thinking you're not that bad off (Jonah says he's a God-fearer even though he's further from God than the pagans)
    - For Jonah, he embraced part of God's character (his justice) but he did not have room for his mercy against wicked sinners
- When we decide to run away, there is always a boat
- **God Runs After Jonah**
  - When Jonah runs, God runs after him. This is his heart. God is a God who runs after runaways. How does he run after us?
  - He hurls a storm
    - When we run from God's word, storms always follow
      - When we reject God's word, we reject the way he designed us as humans
      - Hair dryer illustration
      - Caveat: Just because you're in a storm, it doesn't necessarily mean it's because of your sin (sailors are in the storm because of Jonah's sin)
    - However, there is mercy in this storms
      - If God wanted only to judge Jonah, he would have taken him out immediately
      - Or, he would have let him sail off into the sunset

- But there's mercy in this storm. No one wakes up out of the blue. It often takes a storm to wake us up
    - He appoints a fish
      - How Jonah ends up in the sea (assisted suicide)
      - Many people see the fish as a sign of God's judgment, but it's actually a picture of his mysterious mercy
        - The fish saves Jonah at his lowest point (down, down, down)
        - It's mysterious because a fish was a symbol of chaos and death that ends up saving him
      - This is always how God saves his people. At their most helpless moment, he comes and saves them in the most unexpected of ways.
      - (Gospel Connection)
    - Gospel Connection
  - **How A Life of Mission Begins**
    - Mission starts when we see God's heart for runaways and we realize we ourselves are runaways
    - See, the reason Jonah ran from his assignment is because he had not yet come to see just how desperately he needed God's grace.
    - Application
      - If you're running from God, come back to him. What if the storm in your life is God's severe mercy.
      - If you're running from God's call to go into the world, think on where you'd be if God had not run after you?