



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

Aug. 12, 2012

JUMP START # 402

Jonah 1:2,3- “Arise, go to Ninevah the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship that was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”

The story of Jonah and the whale—most of us have heard this since we were little. It’s one of the kids favorite lessons in Bible classes. This is a true story. The Lord affirmed it in the N.T. and placed his resurrection along side what happened to Jonah.

The Lord wanted Jonah to preach to the Assyrians, that evil and corrupt nation that in a few years would be used by God to punish Israel. God said “go” and Jonah said “no.” It is interesting to see the extent that Jonah went to get away from obeying God. Three times the text refers to “Tarshish.”

There was a process that Jonah went through. First, when he heard what the Lord said, he thought, I can’t do that. I won’t do that. Then the thought, where can I go? Tarshish came to his mind. It’s about as far the opposite direction. He must have thought if I can just get there, God will say, you’re too far away, so I’ll have to find someone else.

Not only did he think this, but he then had to plan his trip. He had to get his money together. He had to go to the dock and inquire about the destination of the different ships. When he found one heading to Tarshish, he had to see if they had room and how much this was going to cost him.

There was a lot of effort that Jonah went through to disobey God. Had he just done what God said, how much easier things would be.

We look at Jonah and must wonder if we do the same things ourselves? Do we have a boat heading to Tarshish? God wants us to live a certain way, do we find excuses, reasons and ways to get around that? Do we find ways to wiggle out of our obligations in marriage?

Tarshish seemed like a safe haven for Jonah---it was just further disobedience. In the end, it was a wasted journey, so is a life without Christ.

Instead of fighting God, Jonah should have trusted God. God knew what he was doing. God is good. God’s ways are much greater than ours and we must understand that he knows more, loves deeper, and extends his grace much greater than we ever could.

Could it be that you are on a boat heading away from God? Could it be that you know what you ought to do, but you don’t want to. Maybe it’s come back home as a prodigal? Maybe it’s forgiving someone who has hurt you. Maybe it’s helping someone who really needs you. Maybe it’s stepping up for the

Lord. You know you should, but instead you are at the docks with coins in your hand, looking for a boat going the other way.

It's time to stop. You can't outrun God. He wants you and is counting on you. Take your gear back home and start heading toward Ninevah. It's not easy, but it's what God wants.

Roger Shouse