**Jonah 3:5-10 5So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6Then 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. 7And 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. 8But 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. 9Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? 10Then 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.**

We’re back in Jonah 3 tonight. Last week, we saw Jonah utter 5 Hebrew words as he entered the edge of the city on the first day. This city, worshippers of Ishtar a fertility goddess, has been wicked to the point that God sends Jonah to preach His word – yet forty days and this city will be overthrown! The people hear. Why? Jonah’s great sermon? No. Jonah wore them down? No. Jonah working signs and wonders? No. It was because God prepared the hearts of the people long before Jonah uttered a word.

 Often, we spend so much time planting seed that we never think about preparing the soil. Yet, anyone who has ever planted knows that the soil matters. The temperature of the soil matters, the depth of the soil matters, the pH of the soil matters, the moisture of the soil matters. Are we spending as much time beseeching God to prepare hearts to receive the seed as we are scattering the seed about? Only God can prepare the heart, convict the spirit, and save the soul.

 Verse 5 *So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.* We looked at this last week. The people believed God, proclaimed a fast, and repented. The people acted first. From the greatest to the least. This Great Awakening started with the people. And guess where it will start in our nation… with the people.

 Verse 6 *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.* One theologian I studied points out that the term, King of Nineveh doesn’t occur anywhere else in the Bible. It suggests that this was a king of the city – a noble who held power. He makes a decree. He has seen what is happening, how the people are changing, how they are repenting, and he rises from his throne and took off his royal garments and donned sackcloth and sat in ashes. But did he join in their repentance?

 When we as a nation repent, our leaders will follow. They’re puppets addicted to power. When the people speak, the politicians change. They speak to keep their power and position. What the people tolerate, the politicians proliferate. What the people allow, the politicians amplify. It was true then… it’s true now. Let’s pray for God to change the hearts.

 Verse 7-9, we see the king’s decree. *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.*Notice that his proclamation reflects perfectly what the people are already doing. He has seen and he is amplifying. Verse 7 He proclaims and causes it to be published all over the city. We notice it doesn’t say all of Assyria, so this may add weight to the fact that this was a local king. Notice he proclaims a fast.

 When people turn back to God and refuse to allow government to close churches, the government closing churches will disappear. When people turn back to God and refuse to accept unbiblical laws, unbiblical laws will disappear. The problem is not with what the government amplifies, but with what the people allow.

 Verse 8 - *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.* In verse 5, we saw the people repent and put on sackcloth. Here, the king, like every politician, is proliferating what the people are tolerating. The people changed and the politician followed suit.

 So it is with our nation, someone like Nancy Pelosi would have never risen to power in the 50’s. Chuck Schumer would have never been allowed to be in power. They would have been carrying Bibles and preaching from church steps, proclaiming Jesus… Now, the people have turned away. The politicians have followed. Pray that God will heat up the soil of the hearts of this nation. Prepare our souls O God!

 Verse 9 *Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?* This verse spoke volumes to me. This king is proclaiming. He could have, in bold faith, stated that the God of the Universe will turn and have mercy on Nineveh. He could have stated how turning from evil is the right thing to do and the city had long been wicked and needed revival. Instead, we hear – Who can tell if God will turn and relent? Jonah knows that God will relent. Jonah knows that God can turn certain death into an impactful life. This politician, this king, is playing all sides.

 And so it is with our nation today. I once had a man tell me that he prayed in Jesus name. He explained that he prayed in Jesus name “Just in case Jesus really is the only way to heaven. Better safe than sorry.” He laughed. I didn’t laugh. Matthew 7:22 says *Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’* And we know what Jesus answers - *And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’* Jesus is not a life vest just in case, but He’s the only lifeboat that will reach heaven. There is no better safe than sorry! There’s only Safe or Sorry. Good fish or bad fish. Sheep or goats. No lukewarm… only hot or cold. The politicians who have practiced lawlessness and followed the people to the wickedness we see in our nation today are headed for hell unless they repent and believe.

 Let’s finish – verse 10 *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.* God saw their action – the word for works means action. He saw that they didn’t just talk about it or pray about it or wish after pink unicorns about it, but that they took concrete action to turn from their evil ways. When He saw that they changed, Our Always Merciful God relented and spared the city.

 We’re going to see that this displeased Jonah in our next meeting. Jonah wanted Nineveh destroyed. He wanted them to “get what they deserved”. If we beg God, and our nation turns and politicians change, will we rejoice in God’s Mercy or be angry at the absence of God’s wrath? How we feel when someone who wronged us turns and does right says a lot about where we are with Jesus. If Kamala Harris repented tomorrow, how would she be received?

 This week, let’s pray that the stones will be removed, the thorns will be torn out, and that Satan’s demons will not be allowed to snatch the seed away. Let’s pray that God will prepare the soil so the seed will take. Let’s have faith that God has fruit on the way – a harvest 30, 60, 100 fold. When the people change, the politicians follow. When the soil is right, the seed will take. Pray for the soil so the seed will take.