**Jonah 1** Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, **2**“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” **3**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.**4**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.

**5**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. **6**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.” **7**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. **8**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?” **9**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.*” **10**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. **11**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. **12**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.” **13**Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. **14**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.” **15**So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. **16**Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows. **17**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.

How many remember Randy Travis? He had a beautiful voice and wrote some great songs. Back in 1986, he released an album called “The Storms of Life”. So many great songs, but the title song was a pure country gem – he sang “I left my soul out in the rain, Lord what a price I’ve had to pay, the storms of life are washing me away”. Life can be like that sometimes. The storms come up on us quickly, like a tornado… no warning… violent and sudden… sometimes, they roll in slowly, like a hurricane, bearing down on us… sometimes, they’re like a slow rain that never seems to let up, but pelts us day after day. We all face storms in life. Sickness, death, unexpected occurrences, betrayals… If we’re not careful and prayerful, the storms of life will wash us away.

We find ourselves with Jonah tonight. The book of Jonah takes place in the reign of Jeroboam II, sometime between 786 and 746 BC. We all know the story of Jonah and the great fish, how he tried to run from God. He arose to flee from the presence of the Lord. Notice that it doesn’t say that he refused God or that he even acknowledged God’s request. Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, **2**“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” **3**But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord…” Jonah knew what he was called to do, but he refused.

As human beings, many times we know what God has asked. Yet, we refuse. We know the sin we must give up, the habit we need to break, the ministry we need to take up, or the relationship we must mend; yet, we refuse. We take side trips, while our purpose sleeps… God is not interested in side trips. The more direct our answer is, the more God can use us.

Let’s pick up verse 4 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. **5**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. We’re on the Mediterranean Sea in the midst of a tempest, a great storm… Notice where we find Jonah - But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep. The ship was tossing, the sailors running about and throwing things off the ship to lighten the load, terror was upon them… and Jonah was fast asleep.

In Mark 4:37-40, we see Jesus calm the sea. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. **38**But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” **39**Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. **40**But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How *is it* that you have no faith?” Jesus asks, “How is it that you have no faith?” Jonah was asleep in the belly of the ship, not because he couldn’t feel the storm… Jonah had a relationship with God almighty… a relationship that could not and would not be rocked by worldly storms. He knew God and he knew that God knew him and He had confidence that God would care for him no matter the storm.

When we rest our faith in God, we rest. It doesn’t mean that no storms will appear in our lives, be they hurricanes or tornadoes or soaking rainstorms that never seem to let up, be they hail storms that beat everything around us to the ground… storms WILL appear in our lives. We rest, not in the absence of the storm, but in the presence of almighty God… He is our rest, He is our peace, He is our understanding, He is our refuge.

Let’s pick up verse 6 - 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.” What is the captain saying here? He is saying – why are you not panicked like we are… running with hands in the air… upset at all that is happening around you? How is it that you haven’t joined into the chaos that is our world? Mark 4:38, the disciples are asking the same thing of Jesus - And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

The world doesn’t want Christian’s to have peace. Satan doesn’t want a faithful focus on Jesus Christ. He wants storms to terrorize us and faith to fail. If he can rattle our peace, if he can draw the energy that we would otherwise use for focus on the Kingdom of God to be used for other purposes, he is making the impact he desires. He knows he can’t snatch us from the hand of God… he cannot gain our souls, so he’ll seek to damage our witness, delay our purpose, and distract us with all kinds of worldly cares.

Faith in God is the only source of peace. It allows us to sleep peacefully in the midst of the storm. It allows us to believe when others cast us into the churning sea. It brings confidence that the same Christ who rebuked the storm will bring a calm to the storms I encounter.

Verse 11 - 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. **12**And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you.” Jonah is offering himself as sacrifice for the men on the ship. Throw me in, and the sea will calm. In John 11:49, we read And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, **50**nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” It was expedient that Jonah be thrown into the sea and be in the belly of the fish for 3 days and nights to save the sailors… to calm the sea. It was expedient that Christ be sacrificed, cast into the waters of humanity, to save us all – Revelation 17:15 says Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.”

There will be storms… Christ is our peace. We are the Sea, the Waters… only Christ can calm our storms, but we must turn from the distractions and rest in Him. Jonah was cast into the literal sea and the sea was calmed. Christ was cast into the spiritual sea and, when we accept Him as Lord and Savior as we are called to do, He calms the spiritual sea around our soul.