**Jonah 1:1-9 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.” 3But 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. 4But 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. 5Then 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. 6So 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.” 7And 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. 8Then 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?” 9So 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.*”**

Tonight, we’re with Jonah. The book of Jonah was written sometime in the 785-760 BC timeframe. It’s important for us to understand the context of this book. God is telling Jonah to go and prophesy, save Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria. Now all of us know the Assyrians. We’ve studied them quite a lot. They were enemies of Israel, a cruel enemy, known as the Lords of Massacre. When they conquered a people, they massacred the soldiers, the deported the population and repopulated the lands with people from other nations. In fact, at this time in history, the Assyrians were threatening Israel in 721 BC and would eventually overrun Jerusalem around 689 BC. They were known as the most violent and bloodthirsty people in ancient times, skinning enemies alive, and, Nahum 2 tells us that they were like lions feeding on the nations.

But, Jonah didn’t want to see them repent. Let’s face it – God had promised to destroy this nation of cruel and violent people who were threatening Jonah’s home and Jonah, in all honesty, was OK with that. He loved his country. The problem is that he put the love of country before obedience to God. If they repented, they’d threaten Jonah’s country. If they were destroyed, no more threat.

This is the context that we find ourselves in tonight. God is calling Jonah to help a bloodthirsty, unrepentant, pagan nation. He is calling Jonah to help save a nation Jonah didn’t want to be saved. Sometimes God calls us to speak to those we disagree with, don’t like, or don’t like us. God doesn’t ask, He tells. I used to have a boss who would say when I argued, “I’m sorry – you’ve mistaken my directive for a request.” God expected Jonah to follow through. Verses 1 & 2 *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.”* Jonah, the son of Amittai, Amittai was from the tribe of Zebulon. Jewish tradition says that Amittai was the husband of the widow that cared for Elijah in 1 Kings 17. Amittai means truthfulness and honesty. Jonah was the son of Truth. And to this son. God says – Arise, go, cry out. No request here. Directive. Cry out means to preach and exhort repentance. When we belong to Jesus, He doesn’t owe us a request, a choice, an explanation. We become His bondservants and, when He says go, we go. To go may cost us much. To refuse will cost us more.

Verse 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.* Jonah decides he’ll flee God rather than follow God. Tarshish is a city know for it’s port, a place where ships come in from all over. It was under Persian control. Mankind has always been foolish enough to think we can pay a fare to escape the presence of God. That fare is called disobedience, sin, eventually called death. But King David said these words that reveal our foolishness – Psalm 139:7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? The answer in 900 BC was – we can’t flee God. The answer for Jonah was – we can’t flee God. The answer tonight is – we can’t flee God.

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.* God knows right where Jonah is. God knows right where we are. The verse says God sent a mighty tempest. The Hebrew word used here means hurricane or cyclone. The ship was in danger of breaking up. Ships of wood broke apart in storms like this.

Verse 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.*The sailors begin to pray to their gods, throw cargo overboard (which was a very desperate move in those days). It says that they cried out – but this is not the same Hebrew word for cry. This one means to shriek in fear – so they are literally shrieking in terror to these fake gods. But where do we find Jonah, servant of the One True God – asleep. The word for asleep means fast asleep, deeply sleeping, resting very peacefully. Jonah slept peacefully because he knew Who held the storm. When the storm raged and the disciples were afraid for their lives, it says Mark 4:38 *But He (Jesus) 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?”* Jonah slept peacefully. Jesus slept peacefully because He knew Who held the storm. We too can sleep peacefully when we know the One that holds the storm.

Verse 6 & 7 - *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.” 7And 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.*The captain find Jonah. The sailors cast lots and the lot fell to Jonah. Jonah is revealed. The very one sleeping peacefully in the belly of the ship is the one that God is pursuing. He didn’t sleep peacefully because there were no storms. He slept peacefully because he knew God and feared no storm. We too can have that peace today. No matter what rages around us, remember Who lives within us.

Verses 8 & 9 *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?” 9So 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.”* Based on this miracle of casting a lot and it revealing Jonah, the sailors ask questions. Notice in verse 9, Jonah gives a very simple and telling answer. He knows what is happening. I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord. Not enough to obey Him apparently though…. The God who made the sea and dry land. Jonah gives an account of His faith. The word for fear means reverence, serve, revere, respect God.

Tonight, we can take away three lessons from this part of the book of Jonah 1) God is the God of miracles and unlimited power and is supreme over all creation – we’ve nothing to fear as long as we reverence God. 2) If we are God’s servants, we must obey – not just the things we agree with – but what He tells us to do. He desires obedience over sacrifice. 3) In spite of our weakness, God can and will use us. Jonah is a great example of God being supreme, demanding obedience, and using the weak to accomplish His purpose. We’ll study Jonah for the next few evening services, but let’s remember that God called him to witness to those not like him and the very ones who were threatening his country and very life. In Matthew 21, we read of two sons – one that said he would go and didn’t and one that said he wouldn’t but did. The one that went to the vineyard did the will of the Father. We too must be obedient, no matter the place God says we must go.