**Jonah 3:1-5 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” 3So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent.* 4And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.**

We’re back with Jonah tonight. In chapter 1, we saw him run from God, get into a ship, have the ship nearly sink while he slept peacefully, and then the men threw him into the sea. Chapter 2 the great fish swallowed him up, he sat in the belly for three days undigested praying the scriptures and repenting, and then he was vomited up on dry land. Let’s revisit how this whole thing started – Jonah 1:1-2 *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.”* Nothing has changed except that Jonah went through a lot for his rebellion. Listen to Jonah 3:1-2 *Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.”* Our God is a God of second chances, but those second chances are almost always identical to the first chance we were given. When we avoid God, run from God, ignore God, He doesn’t give up on us or the plan He has for us. His plan isn’t changing, His perfect timing isn’t changing, the lesson we are to learn isn’t changing. God repeats His direction to Jonah – same instruction.

 So many times, Christians live life just like Jonah. They cry out to be used by God or to do something special for God. Then they don’t understand why they’re not hearing from God. It’s not hard to understand. God tells us to pray, study, and obey. Are we praying, studying, and obeying? Are we in fellowship? Are we witnessing to those God places in our path? Listen to Luke 16:10 *He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.*If we cannot be faithful and focused on the small things that God asks of us, we won’t be faithful in the large.

 Verse 3 - *So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.*Unlike the first time that God spoke and Jonah rebelled, we see that Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, as God instructed. We don’t know how long it took Jonah to get to Nineveh. We know he went to Joppa to flee Tarshish (3000 miles away) instead of going northeast 725 miles to Nineveh. Where he was vomited up? We don’t know. But, theoretically, he could have been really close because Nineveh is not far off the Mediterranean Sea.

Nineveh is the capitol city of Assyria. Israel has been threatened and threatened by this city to the East. We know that it was a great city – ancient writers described it as having about 120,000 people and being 60 miles wide. 3 days makes sense if Jonah is walking and preaching. Jonah knew the threat and, as we talked about in the message on Chapter 1, some part of him was OK with Nineveh being destroyed. But there seems to be a change in God’s tone between Chapter 1 and Chapter 3. In Chapter 1, God speaks of the wickedness and for Jonah to go cry against it. In Chapter 3, God tells Jonah to go and *preach to it the message that I tell you.* And there is for sure a change in Jonah’s outlook. The point is that Jonah obeyed this time.

 Verse 4 - *And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”*We can be sure that God has been at work in Nineveh long before Jonah arrived. Jonah enters on the first day – remember the city is 3 days in extent. He cried out, “Yet 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” Notice what we don’t see here – This is a city worshipping Assyrian gods and goddesses. We don’t see God mentioned. In fact, the being that will do the overthrowing isn’t even mentioned.

 The sermon of Jonah is a short one – five Hebrew words, eight words when translated to English. With God, it is not the words of the preacher, but the preparation of the heart that makes the difference. Seeds can be strewn a mile wide and two inches deep, but if the heart is hard and not prepared to receive, no seed will sprout. Matthew 13:18-23 ***18****“Therefore hear the parable of the sower:****19****When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.****20****But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;****21****yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.* ***22****Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.****23****But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”* From the outside, the people appeared to be unready. Yet, God had prepared. What does this tell us? We need to invest a lot of time praying for receptive hearts! One word or 1000 words, only God prepares the heart.

 Let’s take a look at that word for overthrown in this verse. We’ve seen that word before – It’s the Hebrew word hawvak. It is the same word used in Genesis 19:24-25 *Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.* This is, of course, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. We know what God did, how He utterly destroyed them for their wickedness. But the word can mean to convert or to change. It can mean to turn over and destroy, but it can just as readily mean convert or turn back. Jonah is preaching what God told him to say.

Listen to the response in verse 5 - *So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.* The people Believed, Proclaimed, and Acted. From the greatest to the least. Notice where the change in the country, in the changing, overthrowing the wickedness and turning to God started… with the people. Not with the President, not with the Parliament, but with the people. Proverbs 14:34 says *Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.* When a nation repents, ungodly leaders change. But notice that the people of Ninevah first believed the message that Jonah voiced. The seed fell on good ground. Then, they proclaimed a fast. They stopped eating and meditated on the thing they’d heard. Then they acted – putting on sackcloth – a visual representation of repentance. They didn’t just honor God with their lips. They turned and changed their ways.

This is what God looks for in every person. Not just voiced prayer, but changed behavior. He expects us to not just talk like a Christian, but bear fruit befitting a Christian – 30 fold, 60 fold, 100 fold. This week, let’s not just pray for powerful words from preachers, but receptive hearts in life’s pathways. Let’s focus on praying for God to change, to overthrow hearts and make them ready for His word. Pray that every heart, from greatest to least, will be ready to believe and our world will turn and make ourselves ready for the return of righteousness to our land. Proverbs 21:3 *To do righteousness and justice Is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.* God wants our obedience – sacrifice will follow. When we are faithful in the least, God trusts us with much. May we speak faithfully this week and find prepared hearts ready to receive the Lord Jesus Christ.