

Intro series: 4 weeks on Jonah (most well-known and least studied or understood). Last week – the rebel, how Jonah couldn't accept extent of God's mercy and refused to go and preach to people of Nineveh.

Today 'the rescued': Jonah chapter 2 is a response to God's rescue

RECAP STORY

PROBLEM OF WHALE – dominates story, but really a big prop not main point. Let's not be distracted by debates as to whether someone can live inside a whale for 3 days – might be a story of resurrection.

Beautiful prayer ch2 - two responses woven into thread of Jonah's prayer:

- gratitude – theme woven into our language and music e.g. 'redeemer' & 'saviour' = rescuer – knowing we're rescued leads us to worship
- confession – acknowledgement of where he'd gone wrong.... sometimes we need rescuing because we've done something daft or wrong, and we need to say that and take it to heart

Let's apply to us – we may have examples of rescue in our lives, probably not as dramatic as Jonah, but certainly we can resonate with these themes. But I want to broaden out today to thinking about crises in our lives more generally. READ vv8-9 – highlights that in times of crisis people tend to turn *towards* God or *away* from him.

What makes the difference?

Same two themes as we see in Jonah's prayer:

Sense of humility before God – awareness of his goodness and therefore also of our need for him, of the ways we haven't loved him or lived his way. It's different from the idea that God is punishing us –

it's not that – but in a funny way we become more aware of his goodness and our need for him. As someone said to me the other day coming out of a crisis in their lives: 'I just need him.' A crisis strips away our sense of self-sufficiency and throws us back to God.

Gratitude – when things go bad we sometimes become acutely aware of how many blessings we've had and how much we've taken them for granted. One of the pieces of advice I give people towards a more contented life is to get up and say thank you for 10 things every morning. Amazing how quickly you can name things. A crisis doesn't change our view of life's blessings, it makes us more aware of everything we've had that we didn't really say thank you for.

Life is complicated but my experience is that people who feel those 2 things tend to find in crisis that they turn towards God, people who don't will tend to blame God and turn away. *May God grant us grace to carry that sense of God's goodness and our gratitude for that in all circumstances.*

One other outcome – that sense of humility and gratitude leads to obedience. Jonah's prayer leads him to look again at what God asked him to do. His answer this time: 'What I have vowed I will make good.'

Coming out of a crisis gives Jonah new perspective and new courage. That's true for many others I've met – those who turn to God come out the other side with new perspective on life and new courage. The crisis doesn't beat them but it shapes them into stronger people, shaped by gratitude and humility.

Perhaps some of us sense God's prompting towards certain things – may God in his grace empower us to do those things with gratitude and humility. Amen.