



## Mt. Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church

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*"The men greatly feared the LORD,  
and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him."  
- Jonah 1:16*

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

When I first moved to the mountains of North Carolina to serve in Hendersonville, my very southern congregation would ask me, "Who are your people?" There was an element of mistrust since I didn't have much of an accent and had traveled the world. When I told them my mom grew up in Virginia on the Blue Ridge Parkway, they relaxed. The same Parkway came within ten miles of the NC church, and it told them I knew who they were. I might not sound like it, but I had strong roots in the mountains – almost as strong as my opinions about North Carolina barbecue!

As we continue to follow the story of Jonah, we see the sailors in a panic about the storm. They know it is supernatural, and they want to do anything they can to stop it. None of their own gods have helped, so they cast lots to see whose god is responsible. The lot falls to Jonah, and the first thing they ask him is, "Who are your people?" Jonah proudly responds, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." They are dumbfounded that this man who worships this God he claims made heaven and earth would think he could run from Him.

Jonah should be the one begging and crying out to God, but he wants nothing to do with Him. The author highlights the irony that in the midst of his unfaithfulness, the pagan sailors cry out to his God instead. Jonah could save them all with a prayer, but he won't do it. The sailors try everything they can to save Jonah and themselves. They don't want to do the one thing Jonah tells them will stop the storm—throw him overboard. They try to row to shore with all their might but can't make it. They finally resort to praying to Jonah's God and ask for forgiveness for throwing him overboard. The seas calm. The sailors believe and worship Yahweh.

Jonah is running because he does not want the Lord to be merciful to the pagans in Nineveh. But even while he runs away from God, God shows mercy to the pagan sailors. God will always accomplish His desires, no matter how far we run.

We will talk more on Sunday about all the reasons Jonah does this—selfishness, false identity, trust in his own version of God instead of the real God of heaven and earth. For now, as you prepare your hearts for worship this week, use Jonah as a mirror to look into your own heart. Where do you put your hope? Jonah puts his identity first in his ethnic background and only second in God. Are there things you put first before your identity in Christ? Your education, your career, your family, your bank account? Ask God to show you anything you might be holding onto that prevents you from obeying God's call on your life. May God help you place all your trust in Him, because He cares for you.

Blessings,  
Pastor Carolyn