



Sermon Notes

Sermon Prayers From the Gut

Scripture Jonah 1:17 - 2:10 NRSVue

Preaching Pastor John Tittle

Date September 14, 2025

Discussion Questions

1. The whale is "God's special rescue operation" rather than punishment. Can you think of an experience you've had that initially seemed utterly disappointing but turned out to be a blessing in disguise for you?
2. Robert Downey Jr. spoke about "hugging the cactus" by embracing the ugly parts of ourselves to find humility and new meaning. What does it mean to you to "hug the cactus" in your own life?
3. With God we can pray wherever we find ourselves - in cancer wards, cars, or even "in the belly of a whale." Where are some unexpected or uncomfortable places you've found yourself praying? How did those prayers differ from your usual prayer life?
4. When we insist on doing things our way, God sometimes says "OK, have it your way - YOUR WILL BE DONE." How do you recognize when you're pushing your own agenda versus seeking God's will? What helps you move from "my will be done" to "Thy will be done"?
5. Jonah's prayer was composed of memorized psalms, and many believers over the centuries have used the psalms as a "school for prayer." Have you ever used written prayers, psalms, or liturgy when you didn't know how to pray? How might incorporating ancient prayers enrich your personal prayer life?
6. The great fish was Jonah's deliverance, not his destruction. How might we learn to trust God's mysterious ways in deeper ways when we're in the middle of difficult circumstances?
7. The Scripture presents two options when facing trials: turn to God with thanksgiving or turn away to "worthless idols" (literally translated "breaths of emptiness"). What are some modern "worthless idols" or "breaths of emptiness" people turn to instead of God during difficult times? What helps you choose gratitude over bitterness when facing challenges?
8. Jonah's experience is described as both resurrection from death and rebirth in a womb. How does the image of the whale's belly as both tomb and womb speak to your understanding of spiritual transformation?
9. Even after this profound experience, Jonah still had to choose whether to go to Nineveh. Deliverance doesn't automatically equal obedience. Think about times when God has rescued or redirected you - how did you respond afterward? What makes the difference between temporary gratitude and lasting life change?

For further listening: [Pray Where You Are](#) by The Lost Dogs