

NEIGHBOURS AND STORMS

Jonah 1:4-16 (ESV)

4 But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. 6 So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" 9 And 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." 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." 13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. 14 Therefore they called out to the Lord, "O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you." 15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

INTRODUCTION:

This Lent, we are reminded that storms - whether personal, communal, or global - strip away illusions of independence and reveal that our lives are bound together. Jonah's storm shows us that disobedience affects others, neighbours must act together, and peace comes through confession and sacrifice. In Christ, the ultimate storm has been calmed, and He has given us eternal peace.

DISCUSS:

1. Storms Reveal Our Shared Fate (Jonah 1:4–5)

When Jonah fled from God, the storm did not fall only on him, it engulfed the entire ship. The sailors, though innocent, suddenly found themselves in danger because of Jonah's disobedience. This passage reminds us that sin is never private; our choices ripple outward and affect those around us. Storms reveal that our lives are bound together, whether in families, communities, or global.

How does Jonah's storm challenge the way we think about the impact of our personal choices on others?

2. Neighbours Act Together in Crisis (Jonah 1:6–13)

The sailors did not face the storm passively. They prayed, rowed, and sought answers together, while Jonah slept below deck. Even though they did not yet know the true God, they acted with neighbourliness in the face of crisis. This passage highlights the importance of showing up for one another when storms come, rather than withdrawing or ignoring the needs around us.

In what ways does the sailors' response to the storm inspire us to act together as neighbours when crises arise in our community?

3. Confession and Sacrifice Bring Peace (Jonah 1:12, 15–16)

Jonah confessed his guilt and offered himself to be thrown into the sea. His surrender calmed the storm, and the sailors responded with awe and worship. Jonah's sacrifice brought temporary peace, but it points us to Christ, who entered the ultimate storm of sin and death to bring eternal peace. This passage teaches us that peace often comes through honesty, repentance, and sacrificial love.

How does Jonah's confession and surrender point us to Christ's ultimate sacrifice, and what does that mean for how we live for Christ?

What storms are we facing right now? If you feel comfortable, take this opportunity to share your personal storms with your cell group, so that you can pray together and support one another.

Pray:

1. **For shared fate:**

Lord, remind us that our lives are bound together. Help us to fast with compassion, identifying with those who suffer, and seeking Your mercy together.

2. **For neighbourliness in crisis:**

Father, awaken us to the storms around us. Teach us to act together in prayer and love, so that our community reflects Your care.

3. **For confession and sacrifice:**

Lord Jesus, You entered the storm of sin and death to bring us eternal peace. Strengthen us to confess honestly, repent sincerely, and live sacrificially, so that Your peace may reign in our lives and in our world.