



SERMON GUIDE



# We All Are

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt



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*Sermon Single | Week 29 | Jonah 1-4*

# Introduction

I'm sure you know the running joke about fishermen exaggerating the size of their catch. But in 1959, Alfred Dean didn't need to exaggerate when he caught a 2,664-pound great white shark in Australia, the largest fish ever caught in history. The Bible tells us about an even more unbelievable story, but in reverse—the story of a fish that caught a man. Jonah's encounter with the great fish would make worldwide news today, but here's what might surprise you: The fish story isn't really the point. The book of Jonah is actually the missionary book of the Old Testament, revealing that God has a missionary heart and every Christian is called to be on mission. I like how John Stott said, "We profess to believe in God? He's a missionary God. We're committed to Christ? He's a missionary Christ." The truth that applies to us today is simple: We all are called. Every Christian has a mission to perform, a message to proclaim, a ministry to promote, and a Master to praise.

## Key Points

## 1. Perform Your Mission

God gives Jonah a sure call and simple command: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me” (Jonah 1:2, NIV). Nineveh was a wicked city whose stench of sin had reached Heaven’s nostrils. God had every right to destroy it, but a missionary God has a merciful heart. Instead of responding with obedience, Jonah did three things that created disaster: He resisted God, rebelled against God, and tried to run from God. He headed to Tarshish, 2,500 miles in the opposite direction from Nineveh. These two cities actually represent your choice: Nineveh represents God’s will, while Tarshish represents your will. Here’s a pop quiz: How many times does the word “missionary” appear in the Bible? The answer is zero because we’re all missionaries. It doesn’t need to be explicitly stated; it’s implicitly

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understood all the way through. And when you resist God's mission for your life, everyone suffers, including those who miss out on the blessing of your obedience.

You can run from God, but you can't hide from Him.  
Embrace the mission He's given you rather than heading to  
your own Tarshish.

## 2. Proclaim Your Message

Because of Jonah's disobedience, everyone had to pay a price as a great storm threatened the ship. When Jonah finally told the sailors that the only way they could live was if he died, they threw him overboard and the sea grew calm. "At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him" (Jonah 1:16, NIV). This is a perfect picture of the Gospel: Jonah had to die so others might live, just as Jesus died for us so we might live. Jesus Himself connected His death and resurrection to Jonah's three days in the fish's belly. When the fish swallowed Jonah, nobody thought they'd see him again, but he came back. That whale couldn't hold Jonah, the grave couldn't hold Jesus, and our mouths shouldn't hold the Gospel. Charles Spurgeon's words are haunting and important. He said that the question isn't whether those who've never heard will be saved. "It is more a question with me whether we—who have the Gospel and fail to give it to those who have not—can be saved."

Since the grave couldn't hold Jesus, your mouth shouldn't hold the Gospel. Share the lifesaving message that someone desperately needs to hear.

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### 3. Promote Your Ministry

God is the God of second chances, and when He gave Jonah another opportunity, the prophet obeyed. “Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh... proclaiming, ‘Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown’” (Jonah 3:3–4, NIV). This was one of the most wicked cities on earth, so brutal that whole cities would sometimes commit suicide rather than fall into Ninevite hands. But Jonah preached exactly what God told him to preach, offering them 40 days of mercy before judgment. The result was astounding: The king repented, the entire city turned to God, and more than 175,000 people believed in one day. “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened” (Jonah 3:10, NIV). This is the real miracle of Jonah—not the physical miracle of the fish, but the spiritual miracle of God’s grace transforming the hardest hearts.

**You have a ministry to promote. The ministry of grace, salvation, and redemption that can transform even the most unlikely hearts.**

#### 4. Praise Your Master

Instead of being delighted with this incredible revival, Jonah became angry because God showed mercy to his enemies. He complained, "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity" (Jonah 4:2, NIV). You have to see that this description of God comes from the Old Testament. God doesn't change from mean in the Old Testament to loving in the New Testament. As Spurgeon said with a weather vane marked "God Is Love," no matter which way the wind blows, God remains loving. The same God who called Jonah to the mission field calls you to your mission field as well. Christianity without missions is no longer Christianity, because there's no one like Jesus (God in the flesh) and no one but Jesus who can

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save us from our sins. Missionary George Stott was asked why he, having only one leg, would go to China, and his answer challenges us: "I do not see those with two legs going, so I must."

Because we serve a gracious, compassionate Master who never changes, we must praise Him by sharing His love with a world that desperately needs to know Him.

## Key Takeaway

*You may not be called to cross an ocean, but you are called to cross the street, the office, or even your own living room to share the hope that's within you.*

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## Reflection Questions

1. Like Jonah, when have you run toward “Tarshish” (your will) instead of “Nineveh” (God’s will)? What mission might God be calling you to that you’ve been avoiding?

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2. Jonah’s story became a powerful Gospel message even through his disobedience. How has God used your struggles or failures to create opportunities to share His love with others?

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3. The entire city of Nineveh repented after hearing God’s message of both judgment and mercy. Who in your life needs to hear this same balance of truth and grace from you?

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