

Mid-Course Corrections

3-27-11

Welcome back this morning to a series that is going to take us right up through Easter. We started a couple weeks ago and took a break from this series last week with Upward Sunday (**If you are back this Sunday from Upward, we welcome you**) But we are right in the middle of Mid-Course Corrections. Basically we have been taking a look at this episode in the life of Jonah and tearing it apart as we look at the anatomy of a man who actually is hearing God's voice and does not do what God says, then in mid stride is turned around and begins moving in God's direction.

The last we heard, 2 weeks ago, Jonah had been on the bottom. In the depths of the Med. sea you are a dead man, but add to that being swallowed by a fish. When that happens to you, you can pretty much kiss yourself good bye. No body is going to hear from you again.

But it is right here, what the church is trying to represent to the world. We, the church, hold the keys to a truth that really is about transformation. That people no matter how low they get, can get another chance, they can **hear God's voice once again**.

Not all of us have to experience the lowest of lows, in order to know God's love and care, but sometimes it takes the lows for us to realize just what kind of life is being offered to us.

Getting **back on course in his life was about 3 realities**: First, that God is a God of second chances.

1. Second Chances

"Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." Jonah 3:1-2

Jonah had been in the digestive tract of a great fish. You may never have experienced that kind of low but If you have ever been in:

- The hospital fighting in prayer for the life of your child
- An alley behind a dumpster , throwing up from another binge drinking episode,
- The bathroom crying because the scales can't be right and all you know to do is eat something else in order to ease the pain
- In your car beating on the steering wheel because of one more knockdown drag out with your spouse
- Your living room waiting to hear the phone ring because that child or grandchild didn't come home again
- In your bedroom, with a razor blade thinking there is really nothing left to live for

Then you begin to understand the kinds of lows that I am talking about

The belly of the fish takes on all kinds of shapes and sizes

In 1999 he was the top high school baseball prospect. Graduating from Athens Drive HS in Raleigh N.C. he received a 3.9 million signing bonus to play for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays professional baseball team. He was a 19 year old with a 96 mile an hour fastball and he could hit a ball a country mile. Josh Hamilton had the world by the tail. ([10:30 Watch this Josh Hamilton video 0 – 6:13 & 7:21 – 7:48](#))

Ist service

In 2001 a car accident sent his parent back to Ral. for rehab and left Josh a church going good boy alone for the first time in his life, in Bradenton, Fla. He began hanging with the wrong crowd and in the spring of 2001 he took his first sip of alcohol and did his first line of cocaine. He was instantly addicted. Still with the Devil Rays he was in and out of rehab 8 times. In 2002 he began bringing cocaine to the ballpark. In 2004 he was suspended and in 2005 he was suspended again.

In an article from 'Inside Baseball' by Albert Chen

When did he hit rock bottom? Hamilton thinks about this for a moment. So many low points to choose from. No, it wasn't the time the check he made out to a crack dealer bounced and he had to ask his father-in-law to go and give the dealer \$2,000 cash. No, it wasn't the time after a party when he ripped the rearview mirror off a friend's truck, punched out the windshield and was thrown in jail. No, rock bottom, he says, was the night in the late summer of 2005 when he awoke from a crack binge in a trailer with a half-dozen strangers around him; with nowhere else to go, he appeared like a ghost at his grandmother's door -- his sunken face as white as snow, his 6' 4" frame shrunk from 230 pounds to 180. "He'd be at the lowest of lows," says Chadwick, "and he'd sink lower."

Second chances for Josh Hamilton came when his grandmother confronted him about using drugs. She reminded him that he was a child of God. A bible verse that was the first that he memorized was James 4:7 "Humble yourself before God, resist the devil and he will flee." In his own words that was the turning point. He would stand on that verse everytime a craving would come. In April 2007 Josh Hamilton returned to the game of baseball for the Cincy Reds. Later then traded to the Texas Rangers and the rest is history.

Second chances are God's specialty but they do not come to just because they should. They come when a person realizes their own sinfulness. They come when a person realizes their own ability to walk far away from God. It does not have to be so drastic as a Josh Hamilton story, missing the mark in life, veering off course is veering off course. Whether a little or a lot. **If you sit here today and you know that these last years of your life are to be used doing something significant but you don't know what it is, so you just go home thinking you are off the hook, then you are just as far off course as Jonah ever was. It just doesn't feel that way.**

Receiving a second chance, leads then to the 2nd reality of getting back on course. You begin living with a new compass heading.

2. Living With a New Compass Heading

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord.” Jonah 3:3

Jonah after hearing the word of the Lord, actually got up and did something about it. He got up and headed to Nineveh. He started heading in the right direction.

For Josh Hamilton, heading in the right direction means that he meets regularly with Johnny Narron, a former baseball player and his Accountability partner, it means not going to steak houses where there is Alcohol served, it means not carrying more than \$10 anywhere he goes.

Many people have set up appointments to meet with me, and when they come in they simply say, “I feel God told me to come and talk to you.” This is a person, after hearing God’s voice, getting up and doing something about it. Actually following God’s voice **at first can feel very strange**. People have told me they feel silly, they don’t know exactly what they are doing in my office or talking to me. But the more they keep moving in that direction, the more confidence begins to build, the more the fog begins to clear. We are not required to know the end game when we start following God voice. All we are being asked to do is get up and walk.

If the story about the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda is right, as he kept waiting for someone to help him into the pool, to be healed and no one would. Christ said to him Get up, take up your mat and walk. **If you are paralyzed and not moving forward in some area of your life, that you have felt you should be moving forward in, hear then this “Get up, take up your mat and move on.”**

The more Jonah walked the stronger he got. He was a long way from Nineveh so he had time to think about it. But the more he moved toward that which God called him to, the **more he became the 3rd reality of getting back on course** which is **fearless**.

3. Fearless

“Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And the people of Nineveh believed God.” Jonah 3: 4-5a

Jonah came into Nineveh and he took care of business.

Something happens to a person when they start moving in a God direction. There is a supernatural thing that begins to course through their veins. Their step begins to be swifter, their vision is clearer. They are being propelled by a force that is greater than them. They begin to say things that they never imagined they would be able to say. They say the tough things in a way that causes others to be changed by their words, because it is no longer them saying it but something else speaking through them. Many of you have

experienced just such a thing, but it is available to everyone who desires to be obedient to God's voice over their own.

Josh Hamilton takes every opportunity to share his faith because it is no longer about playing baseball for him. It is about sharing what God has done and is doing in his life. God has put some of you in pretty prominent positions. Think about it for a moment, that place you are in. Are you using it to promote God's direction, or are you using it to forward your own agenda, your own needs and desires. If so you are simply on a boat, just like Jonah, with all the gifts and talents given to you, moving in a direction of your own choosing.

Stop – ask the Lord about why you have been given that privileged position that you have.

Listen to the answer God gives you back. Is it the same old same old answer, is it really?

Then if you are really listening, then get up and move in afresh in direction with the second that you have been given.

Let's pray