

9/11 Sermon

Where did the firemen find hope? ... They found it in the cross. The CROSS reminded them that God was still there ... that God was still relevant. That God knew what pain was ... and that God could overcome their pain.

Intro: "Where were you when ... ?"

-That question is only asked when something BIG has happened ... over the years in the United States these are some of the times when this question was asked ...

- a. Pearl Harbor (this is the memorial in Hawaii: With the outline of the Arizona underneath.) [December 7, 1941]
- b. The D-Day Invasion of Normandy in World War 2 (June 6, 1944)
- c. The John F. Kennedy Assassination (November 22, 1963)
- d. The Martin Luther King Assassination (April 4, 1968)
- e. First walk on the moon (Neil Armstrong, July 20, 1969)
- f. Elvis Presley death (August 16, 1977)
- g. Assassination of John Lennon (December 8, 1980)
- h. Assassination attempt of President Ronald Reagan (March 30, 1981)
- i. Space Shuttle Challenger explosion (January 28, 1986)
- j. O.J. Simpson murder trial verdict (October 3, 1995)

-No doubt this question has been asked, and will be asked about September 11, 2001 for quite some time. Where were you when the planes hit the World Trade Center?

*That moment is frozen in time:

- Some were sitting in classrooms ready to start morning lessons...
- Some were ready to begin a day of work...
- Some were at home watching with shocked faces...
- Some were listening on the radio while dealing with traffic...
- Some were trapped in upper floors desperately trying to get out...
- Some were receiving one last phone call from a spouse...
- Some were risking their lives to save others in the Pennsylvania air...

*It was one of the ugliest days in US history & it changed us forever:

- It changed families who still feel the pain of lost loved ones
- It changed the way we travel
- It changed people spiritually...at least in the short term

*Now, a decade later, we are faced with a question, "Where do we go from here?"

*There are many right answers to this question:

- We should remember those who lost their lives
- We should pray for families who are still hurting & for whom this day brings more pain
- We should pray for the security of our nation
- We should for our leaders, we should pray for our country

Max Lucado Prayer:

Dear Lord,

We're still hoping we'll wake up. We're still hoping we'll open a sleepy eye and think, What a horrible dream.

But we won't, will we, Father? What we saw was not a dream. Planes did gouge towers. Flames did consume our fortress. People did perish. It was no dream and, dear Father, we are sad.

There is a ballet dancer who will no longer dance and a doctor who will no longer heal. A church has lost her priest, a classroom is minus a teacher. Cora ran a food pantry. Paige was a counselor and Dana, dearest Father, Dana was only three years old. (Who held her in those final moments?)

We are sad, Father. For as the innocent are buried, our innocence is buried as well. We thought we were safe. Perhaps we should have known better. But we didn't.

And so we come to you. We don't ask you for help; we beg you for it. We don't request it; we implore it. We know what you can do. We've read the accounts. We've pondered the stories and now we plead, Do it again, Lord. Do it again.

Remember Joseph? You rescued him from the pit. You can do the same for us. Do it again, Lord.

Remember the Hebrews in Egypt? You protected their children from the angel of death. We have children, too, Lord. Do it again.

And Sarah? Remember her prayers? You heard them. Joshua? Remember his fears? You inspired him. The women at the tomb? You resurrected their hope. The doubts of Thomas? You took them away. Do it again, Lord. Do it again.

You changed Daniel from a captive into a king's counselor. You took Peter the fisherman and made him Peter an apostle. Because of you, David went from leading sheep to leading armies. Do it again, Lord, for we need counselors today, Lord. We need apostles. We need leaders. Do it again, dear Lord.

Most of all, do again what you did at Calvary. What we saw here on that Tuesday, you saw there on that Friday. Innocence slaughtered. Goodness murdered. Mothers weeping. Evil dancing. Just as the ash fell on our children, the darkness fell on your Son. Just as our towers were shattered, the very Tower of Eternity was pierced.

And by dusk, heaven's sweetest song was silent, buried behind a rock.

But you did not waver, O Lord. You did not waver. After three days in a dark hole, you rolled the rock and rumbled the earth and turned the darkest Friday into the brightest Sunday. Do it again, Lord. Grant us a September Easter.

We thank you, dear Father, for these hours of unity. Disaster has done what discussion could not. Doctrinal fences have fallen. Republicans are standing with Democrats. Skin colors have been covered by the ash of burning buildings. We thank you for these hours of unity.

And we thank you for these hours of prayer. The Enemy sought to bring us to our knees and succeeded. He had no idea, however, that we would kneel before YOU. And he has no idea what YOU can do.

Let your mercy be upon our President, Vice President, and their families. Grant to those who lead us wisdom beyond their years and experience.

Have mercy upon the souls who have departed and the wounded who remain. Give us grace that we might forgive and faith that we might believe.

And look kindly upon your church. For two thousand years you've used her to heal a hurting world.

Do it again, Lord. Do it again. Through Chris we pray, Amen.

So ... the question that needs to be asked **today** is this, "Where does the church in America go from here?"

- There is much to talk about 10 years later
- There are many things we should examine

*BUT, I want to focus on one specific question for the church, "Where does the American church go from here when it comes to Islam?"

*As we look out over a changing Arab world and increasing Muslim populations, my hope is that our response will be different in the next 10 years than it was in the previous 10...

- We have viewed Muslims as our enemies not people for whom Christ died
- We look at Muslims with fear, or anger, instead of a biblical love
- Instead we see them as public enemy #1...our biggest threat!
- What was in the news last year at this time? ... a CHURCH considering burning a copy of the Quran on the 9th anniversary.

God's people have always been tempted to respond this way ... Turn in your Bibles to the book of Jonah > READ Jonah 1:1-17

The LORD gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: ² "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."

³ But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the LORD. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the LORD by sailing to Tarshish.

⁴ But the LORD hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart. ⁵ Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship.

But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold. ⁶ So the captain went down after him. "How can you sleep at a time like this?" he shouted. "Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will pay attention to us and spare our lives."

⁷ Then the crew cast lots to see which of them had offended the gods and caused the terrible storm. When they did this, the lots identified Jonah as the culprit. ⁸ "Why has this awful storm come down on us?" they demanded. "Who are you? What is your line of work? What country are you from? What is your nationality?"

⁹ Jonah answered, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land."

¹⁰ The sailors were terrified when they heard this, for he had already told them he was running away from the LORD. "Oh, why did you do it?" they groaned. ¹¹ And since the storm was getting worse all the time, they asked him, "What should we do to you to stop this storm?"

¹² "Throw me into the sea," Jonah said, "and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault."

¹³ Instead, the sailors rowed even harder to get the ship to the land. But the stormy sea was too violent for them, and they couldn't make it. ¹⁴ Then they cried out to the LORD, Jonah's God. "O LORD," they pleaded, "don't make us die for this man's sin. And don't hold us responsible for his death. O LORD, you have sent this storm upon him for your own good reasons."

¹⁵ Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! ¹⁶ The sailors were awestruck by the LORD's great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him.

¹⁷ [\[a\]](#) Now the LORD had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

As we reflect on 9/11 10 years later there are 3 questions I think the church needs to answer:

1. Will we continue to fail to reach out to our “enemies”?

*The Lord comes to Jonah and tells him to go preach “against” Nineveh

- Nineveh was a major city in the Assyrian empire
- Assyria was Israel’s enemy (and would eventually destroy the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC)
- The Assyrians were exceedingly wicked and savage people
 - Pulled arms off prisoners
 - Flayed skin off of live prisoners
 - Make pyramids of skulls at the gates of cities they conquered
- They were easily the ancient equivalent to Al Qaeda

*Jonah refuses to go & preach “against” them NOT because he is against preaching a Doomsday type of message against Israel’s enemies; BUT because he knows that the Lord will be merciful to Nineveh (Jonah 4:2)

Application: We may never say that we don’t want God to save Muslims but our inactivity; our silence pretty much says it all...Like Jonah & Israel, we often fail to be a light to the peoples of the earth that are different than us, especially if we classify them as our “enemies”!

Application: Like Israel, we can get into danger when we think we are better than others because of our nationality. God’s plan and purpose has **always** been to gather His People from all the peoples of the earth (Genesis - Revelation).

If we reject this and say as a church “Let’s just focus on ourselves or our ‘homeland,’” then we reject the heart of God!

2. Will we share what we have experienced?

*God’s judgment falls on Jonah because of his rebellion, and it comes in the form of a storm on the sea

- Jonah is thrown into the sea ... he thinks he is going to drown ... The Fish is part of God’s judgment
 - Not talking about Pinocchio with a kerosene lamp

- God's prophet is being disfigured by gastric acids...
- BUT ... The Fish also becomes part of God's salvation!
- Jonah cries out to God for salvation from the belly of the fish and is heard ... he is safe!
- Jonah is FINALLY awake from his sleep and carries out his mission

*The story of Jonah points us to the Gospel of Jesus. The Gospel is about salvation through punishment, through judgment

*Jesus was asked for a sign and he said the sign would be the "sign of Jonah" (Matt. 12:38-41)

- Jesus will be drowned under God's wrath at Calvary for our sins
- Jesus will spend 3 days in the darkness of death
- Jesus will walk away from death bearing the scars of judgment
- Jesus will carry out his mission to the nations through His Spirit & Church (Acts 1:1-8)

*The mercy He's shown to Jonah, God now intends to show to Nineveh/to all Nations

*If we are believers in Jesus, then we were crucified with Jesus, already went through the judgment, and have mercifully been rescued from eternal death to carry out our mission to the Nations...

Application: Do we selfishly deny others what God has graciously given us? We have all sinned against a Holy God (we are very much like the Ninevites!)

Like the Ninevites, or any vicious terrorist in our day, we deserve God's judgment.

But God has shown us mercy by judging His Son instead of judging us

Finally, Jonah preaches against Nineveh & the people repent & are rescued from the Judgment (3:1-10)

Application: the proclamation of the gospel to our "enemies" is essential because it is the means God uses to rescue people from judgment ... So, our mission is to pray for, to teach, share, & proclaim the gospel to all people, including Muslims!

Wicked **Nineveh** was saved! ... No one is outside of God's reach!
 God's heart is to SAVE evil people/nations through the sharing of the gospel.

Application: Do we fail to share with others what we've experienced because we believe there are some people who are somehow outside of God's reach? Or because we hate them?

- Do we classify people? "This group is more likely to respond to God's mercy, and this other group over here is less likely..." Do we classify based on race? Religious background? Nationality?
- When we classify is it usually people who look and act like us that we classify as more likely to respond to God and those who look and act different than us as those less likely to respond?
- Do we think that we are more deserving of God's mercy, less sinful than others, etc...?

Application: The only thing that will save Muslims (both the violent and the non-violent types ... is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray that God will rise up missionaries both foreign and domestic ... to take the good news to the Muslim world ... and pray that he will soften their hearts to its message.

3. **Will we have God's heart for the nations?**

*In the last chapter of the story Jonah gets mad at God for rescuing Nineveh.

*He says that he knew God's character was to be merciful...and he's angry about it...

*Then, he's more concerned about a plant than he is about people!

*God asks the question, "Is it right to be upset over a plant?!"

*God explains: You are upset over a plant you didn't create or work for, should I not show pity to a city of over 120,000 people who are spiritually blind & enslaved?

*The question is left unanswered...probably in hopes that Jonah, and the reader, will come to share in God's merciful/graceful heart to all of the spiritually blind peoples of the world!

Conclusion- 10 years after 9/11 how do we see the Muslims in & around the world?

-Are we angry at them as "enemies" who should be wiped out?

*OR, do we see them like Jesus sees them? Spiritually blind "sheep without a shepherd" that need to be set free?

*Our God DELIGHTS in setting people / nations free

*AND He uses His people to get the job done

*As we look over an ever-changing Islamic world the temptation is to think that the death of Bin Laden and the calls for democracy in the Muslim world will bring lasting hope and change to the world and peace in our day...

*BUT, democracy is not the great hope for the world, the gospel of Jesus is...

-The gospel can change violent men from the inside-out

-The gospel can free those enslaved to spiritual ideologies

-The gospel can bring peace & unity to groups formerly at odds

*So, here's how you can practically respond 10 years later?

- Pray for Muslims; pray for their salvation
- Share your testimony with them

*We probably need to repent for not viewing Muslims thru gospel lenses and see them as Jesus sees them!

Let's pray this together, "Do it again God, do it again!"