

Text: Jonah 1:4-10

Title: How can you sleep? / translated by Wi Chungil

1.

Let's briefly recall last week's content. What was Jonah's father's name? Amittai. What does Amittai mean? It means truth. Jonah's identity is the son of one who follows the truth. Then what does the name Jonah mean? It's a dove. In the Old Testament, a dove is one of the expressions that symbolize the people of Israel. So Jonah represents the people of Israel, who follow the truth. In other words, the image of Jonah is the image of the people of Israel. Which city did Jonah receive the command from God to go to and prophesy? Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. However, Jonah did not go to Nineveh, but fled in the opposite direction to avoid God's presence. What city did Jonah try to escape to by boat? It was a city called Tarshish, in the opposite direction of Nineveh, and he had to take a boat to get there. Jonah paid his fare and boarded a ship departing from Joppa. The prophet who was supposed to deliver God's command was not following God's command. Why did Jonah make that choice?

Last Thursday, a tornado warning sounded in Rochester. Everyone was warned to evacuate to the basement. I came home and took refuge on the lowest floor with my children, and they were watching a tornado movie called "Twister." The power of the wind in the movie was incredible. You don't know how powerful the wind can be until you experience it, blowing cars away and swallowing everything up. Today's text also tells us that a storm was brewing on the ship Jonah was on. Verse 4 says, "the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up." The sailors began to call out to their gods for help. But their gods did not respond. The wind that blew on Jonah's ship was more serious than expected, so the sailors threw their cargo into the sea. Normally, if you make a ship heavy, the center of gravity will be lowered, reducing the risk of the ship capsizing in the wind. However, the fact that the sailors threw their cargo into the sea shows that the situation was really serious. The ship must have been a trading ship. The cargo on the trading ship must have been the sailors' livelihood. However, since there was nothing more precious to them than their lives, they boldly decided to throw their cargo into the sea.

2.

But where was Jonah and what was he doing in this serious situation? Jonah was sleeping in the lower compartment of the ship. Why was Jonah sleeping? He may have been tired, but he must have wanted to escape reality. He must have thought that God would tell him something if he kept his eyes open. He must have also wanted to somehow forget the reality that he had run away from God's face. It's no different from children playing hide-and-seek, thinking that if they just hide their heads, they won't be seen. Sleeping doesn't change reality. It just turns away from it. We must realize that ignoring reality only wastes time and causes suffering to those around us. It is better to face it than to ignore it. The captain finds Jonah sleeping in the lower compartment and wakes him up to help him face reality. "What are you doing? Sleeping! (Are you crazy?) Cry to your god, who may have mercy on us and save us. (Kneel down and pray right now!)"

The sailors decide to cast lots to find out who is causing them such suffering. The lot falls on Jonah. The sailors now begin to wonder who Jonah is. Verse 8 shows that the sailors are asking questions here and there. "What kind of man are you? What port did you come from? Show me your passport so I can see what country you are from." Instead of his passport, Jonah reveals his faith to the sailors. "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Then he explains in detail why he got on this ship and why he is running away. The sailors' reaction is surprising. "What have you done?" They cannot understand Jonah's actions. How dare you turn your back on God and run away from Him? Their common sense does not allow them to understand Jonah's actions. "Don't you know where you should be? You are in God's presence, but you are running away from Him?" This must be the underlying meaning of their words to Jonah, "Why did you do this?"

3.

Do you understand Jonah? It's not that we don't understand Jonah. How much did he hate to go to Nineveh? Even if he is a prophet, there are places he does not want to go even if he dies, and we could emphasize he does not want to shout out even if he dies in some places. On the other hand, do you understand God who persistently follows a prophet to the end? Verse 4 says, "The Lord sent a great wind on the sea." It is a polite translation. The correct Hebrew is "threw a great wind into the sea." It is the same verb used in verse 5 when the sailors threw their cargo into the sea. God was determined to pursue Jonah. Is it okay for so many people to suffer because of one Jonah? When God's will and the prophet's will clashed, the shrimp's backs were broken in a fight between whales. Only the sailors were in danger of dying.

The British poet Francis Thompson described God as "The Hound of Heaven." He compared God's grace and love, which does not give up on sinners but persistently pursues them, to a hunting dog. It seems especially intense toward prophets. When I look back on the process of establishing me as a pastor, I think God was really persistent. I was a person who had no intention of becoming a pastor. It was only in the last semester of my three-year theological seminary course that I thought I should become a pastor. I had the desire to become a missionary as early as when I was twenty. I later realized that it was God's bait. I was afraid that if I was told to be a pastor, I would run away, so He called me as a missionary first. I didn't want to be a pastor, but I found missionary work fun. I started to embrace China after going on a medical mission to Gansu Province, China with several doctors from my church. But when I got married, my wife said she would go to all the other mission fields, but she didn't want to go to China. I told my church I would go to Jordan as a missionary if China didn't work out, so they said they would actively support me. But, as tensions rose between Jordan and ISIS, the church suddenly said they couldn't send me to Jordan and told me to choose a different mission field. Only then did my wife say she would go to China. After many twists and turns, I finally went to China to serve the Han Chinese, but after three years, God made me take charge of a Korean church. Then, after one year of serving the Korean church, God expelled me from China. I couldn't shake the feeling that He was persistently pushing me to become a pastor and serve the church. There is no such thing as giving up in God's dictionary. Don't turn away from God and run away, but simply choose the path of obedience to God's will. That will be good for your

mental health. God, who has decided on his will for you, will pursue you to the ends of the earth to accomplish his will. Don't turn away or avoid him, but choose the path of obedience.

4.

God is persistent like a hunting dog, but Jonah is also tough. Last week, I told you that Jonah's appearance is exactly like ours. If you can read our appearance from Jonah's attitude, you are blessed. What do you think Jonah's biggest problem is in today's text? Jonah's faith is not coming down from his head to his heart. What does that mean? In verse 9, Jonah knows exactly who God is. He says that God is in heaven, a transcendent being who created the sea and the land. He confesses that he is the Creator God. And he says that he is a person who serves Him. If you look at the footnote of the word "serve", it explains that it means "to fear." In Hebrew, it is "Yarah," which means fear, afraid. A person who fears and reveres God is making a decision that seems to not fear God at all. Even to outsiders, he should not have done that before God. He did not live according to what he knew and did not act according to what he believed. "The longest journey a man must take is eighteen inches from his head to his heart." The 18-inch journey from the head to the heart is the longest journey in life. Biblical knowledge does not make us people of God. However, this does not mean that we should stay away from the Bible. It is very important to keep the Bible close to know God. However, knowledge of God does not make us people of God. We must constantly practice what we know and obey what we believe in order to become people of God. Faith can be said to be a long journey of knowing God with our heads, feeling Him with our hearts, and putting it into practice with our hands and feet.

5.

Only the people of Ammon are suffering because of Jonah's wrong decision. The sailors are having a hard time just because Jonah got on the ship, even though it was not their choice. It would be ok if my wrong choice only affected me, but it can affect my family and neighbors, so we must always be careful when making choices. Jonah's neighbors are actually waking him up. The command "Kum," which means "get up" in Hebrew, is given to Jonah from God in verse 2, and from the captain in verse 6. Everyone, the one who gets up is acting like a person. Isn't this one of the things you fight about with your children every morning? I have three sons, but some of them have a hard time getting up. You have to get up to be a human being. Since last year, my father has been unable to move his back and legs, so he can't get up. My mother has also suffered from back pain while taking care of my father who can't get up. Seeing my father lying down makes me realize how important it is in human life to get up. I hope you all take good care of your health from now on so that you can walk even when you get older.

The people who woke up Jonah from his wrong choice while he was sleeping were none other than Jonah's neighbors. The people who woke him up, saying that he was not here as a man of God, were the sailors who were Jonah's neighbors. What we can learn from this is that sometimes God speaks to us through our neighbors. Sometimes He speaks to me through my unbelieving neighbors, and sometimes through people I hate. Those who are awake can hear the voice of God speaking to me through their neighbors.

6.

There are times when God sends suffering to those who are not awake and are insensitive. Sometimes, suffering is a warning from God to wake up and think about the fundamentals. Suffering is a sign from God telling us to wake up through a sudden crisis in our lives. If there is anyone who is going through suffering or in the midst of a crisis in life, there are two things to think about through today's message. First, this suffering may have come because of my wrong choice. Second, God is calling us to return to the fundamentals through suffering. Suffering and life's crisis help us think about the important things in our lives. It is not a good idea to ignore or complain suffering and crisis. When we do not realize it even when such a crisis comes, God sometimes speaks to us through our neighbors. "Sleeper, what are you doing?" We need to humbly accept the words of God telling us to wake up through our neighbors. I hope that all of you will become children of truth who follow God not only with your head but also with your heart and feet. Stand proudly where you should be. I pray in the name of the Lord that the joy of obeying God's will will fill your life there.