

Sonah



About This Study

We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!

If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.

Looking for a group? Please visit www.heartofmarywf.com/groups to find a meet up near you.

Are you already in one but not listed on our website? Looking to start one? Please contact us for more information about our "HOM Ambassador" program. We have team members available specifically to help you grow a local group and lead other women through community, prayer, and devotion. Their support is available at all times. We also want to help you grow! We will advertise your group on our website & social media! And we have free resources for you as well. Please email us at heartofmarywf@aol.com

Note: All written content has been reviewed by a Catholic spiritual director to cross check that all statements are align with the teachings and tenants of the Roman Catholic Church.

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Today's Scripture

n/a

December 8, 2015 - the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception - marked the start of an Extraordinary Year of Mercy, called by Pope Francis that we might "gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives."

Here at the Heart of Mary, we found it especially fitting, then, that we had already chosen to study the book of Jonah. While Jonah runs, God pursues. And in the wake of this "reluctant prophet" we see again and again, God's mercy.

God's mercy to the Ninevites. God's mercy to Jonah. God's mercy to the sailors.

And God's mercy toward us.

Mercy is, according to Bishop Robert Barron, "what love looks like when it turns toward the sinner..To speak of mercy is to be intensely aware of sin and its peculiar form of destructiveness."

Jonah then, is certainly a story of mercy. It's God's mercy to the sinner, God's mercy to us, and also our mercy towards others. Let's take the next two weeks to look at Jonah and contemplate the mastery of mercy. For, as Pope Francis reminds us in *Misericordiae Vultus*,



Today's Scripture

Jonah 1:1-2

I'm a terrible judge of character. Awful. I spend a lot of time in my own head and when I finally remember to look out, I am often catching a glimpse of the thing that jolted me into the real world to begin with. It's often something small: a sideways glance at me; a whispered word across the room in which the whisperer [accidentally] catches my eye and I assume the whispers are about me; a harsh word that draws blood.

I carry the wound with me. I nurse it and coddle it and make sure it grows.

I can make a pretense of writing about how this isn't the right thing to do - but we already know that.

And it's not enough.

Time again the wickedness of a people - that is, my wickedness when I nurse and coddle a hurt into resentment - "rises up" before God. And yet, He doesn't nurse his wounds into resentment. He doesn't coddle a hurt into wrath.

Rather, the God of the universe turns to us in love for "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And that is perfect mercy.



Jonah

Day 3 // Are You Sleeping?

Today's Scripture

Jonah 1:4-6

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. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god; and they threw the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down in the inner part of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call upon your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we do not perish."

Last we left Jonah he was boarding the first boat that came his way and sailed in the opposite direction of where God wanted him to go. Today, we join him on that boat. It's not a good place to be, this boat, even if you aren't one prone to sea-sickness. Jonah's troubles have followed him, they rage against him, and now they rage around the other members of the ship, too.

But Jonah, he handles it really well! He decides he's going to sleep. You know if you ignore something, it's going to work out in the end. Rock. Solid. Plan, Jonah.

See, I can say this, because I've been there. That time I go to open my mouth about someone I know. I feel the little nudge inside to close my mouth before it's too late, but I don't. I plunge forward and my tongue

**"With God's
mercy comes
an excruciating
and painful
awareness of
our sin."**



Jonah

Day 4 // If He is your God,
What are you doing?

Today's Scripture

Jonah 1:7-10

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 upon Jonah. Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And from where do you come? What is your country? And of what people are you?" 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." 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 present of the Lord, because he had told them.

I walked into the kitchen to start preparing dinner. One of my children was already there, making a treat for later in the evening. Dinner required the use of a can opener, and our can opener is located in a large drawer. The drawer is large enough, but the utensils that crowd it are many. The can opener, the rolling pin, the measuring spoons, the measuring cups. You get the picture.

So there I was, walking up to the drawer to pull out the can opener when I notice that the two children whispering and crowding and the drawer suddenly part like the red sea, one on either side of me. Clearly, something was wrong. And suddenly, the quiet became very loud!

"What," I asked, "on earth are you doing?"

Turns out, the drawer was stuck closed. Something jammed inside, preventing the drawer from opening. The kids thought it was their fault and so were trying to hide it from me, afraid of the lecture about how they really need to be a little more careful when operating in the kitchen.

Jonah



Day 5 // You Can't Take
Your Sin Back to the Shore

Today's Scripture

Jonah 1:11-15

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. He said to them, "Take me up and throw 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." Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they cried to the Lord, "We beg you, 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." So they took up Jonah and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.

"If I do manage to think of any spiritual works of mercy, I think of forgiveness and bearing wrongs patiently. Like the crew of this ship."

When I think of mercy - me to my neighbor, me to my friends - I think of feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead." Of courasing, giving alms to the poor, too (CCC 2447). That is, the first thing that comes to mind are the corporal works of mercy.

If I do manage to think of any spiritual works of mercy, I think of forgiveness and bearing wrongs patiently. Like the crew of this ship.

Jonah's sin caused a huge storm! And the ship's crew has suffered be-



Today's Scripture | Jonah 1:16

This is such a quiet verse; so small and just before the really big story line begins.

It reminds me of Paul at Areopagus in Acts chapter 17, one of my favorite passages in the Bible. Or maybe, Paul's story is reminiscent of Jonah.

If you'll remember, Paul came to Athens and was then brought into the Areopagus and was asked to talk about "this new teaching." Paul begins, "I perceive that you are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship..." and he then goes onto proclaim to them the unknown God. Similarly, Jonah is brought up to the deck and then interrogated. Who are you? What do you believe?

But notice the mercy in both Paul and Jonah's response. Neither one of them condemn the men for what they are worshipping. Neither one of them tell them they are wasting their time because those gods are dead.

Rather, Paul says "I perceive that in every way you are religious..." and then he goes on from there to proclaim the Unknown God. And Jonah states simply, "I worship the God of heaven and earth." And boom he goes overboard.

We come in contact with all sorts of people during our day: coworkers, our children's friends' parents, neighbors. Many of them are panicked throwing things overboard trying to simplify their lives and getting rid of whatever they don't need to calm the raging sea.



Today's Scripture

Jonah

I think this verse pretty much sums up the entire story of Jonah - or at least the part of the story that everyone knows. I almost skipped over it. Of course Jonah got swallowed by the big fish.

But then I paused.

Did you ever have "one of those days?" You wake up in some kind of mysterious mood. You don't mean to, but you bark at the kids to brush their teeth and start snapping at them that they haven't even made their bed yet. Never mind that they are still in the process of brushing their teeth.

When I have one of those days, it often takes me quite some time before I realize what I was doing. When (hopefully not if!) I see it, I put myself in a time out. I remove myself to a bedroom or to another corner of the house so that I can make some kind of assessment and repair the situation.

For this, it's usually something simple like drinking water, making sure I actually drank my cup of coffee, or maybe making an important phone call that is weighing on my mind. Often times, I just need to make sure I get more sleep later that night.

But sometimes, I'm irritable for other reasons. Maybe I've been too tired and have let my morning prayer time go by the wayside. Or maybe it's been too long since I've visited the confessional.



Jonah

Day 8 // Vanity, Oh Vanity

Today's Scripture

Jonah 2:1-9

Today we join Jonah in the belly of the fish.

He's already praying in verse 1. In his darkest moment, when all looks lost, Jonah doesn't fail to look to God and to count on Divine Mercy.

“Indeed! I cling to vanities. I think on them and pursue them with ardor, and often times that means I turn my back - even if accidentally - on my true Love.”

I've had my share of “dark nights.” Or at least shadowy ones. Moments of loneliness, moments where I feel lost, moments of complete and utter failure. It feels natural enough to me to call out to God in these times. My heart draws near because that's where I find my refuge.

But often times, I'm not like that. It's not nearly so dramatic. Or good.

Generally, my life is more ordinary than dramatic. It's so ordinary, that I often miss the little gods I set up for myself throughout the day. There is the cell phone, of course. Everybody talks about that. But also there is the book I am reading, or the house I want to clean, or even my family. Truthfully, I elevate any number of things above their rightful place.

I have a million little vanities I cling to, as verse 8 mentions, and I forsake my true loyalty.

The Douay Rheims version of the Bible puts it little more clearly, “I for-



Today's Scripture

Jonah 2:10

I first met Jonathon Edwards and his infamous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" inside an American literature book in eleventh grade. It was startling. And I was ashamed. I was ashamed that I was a Christian and this - this God who took delight in damning his creation - was the God that I worshipped every Sunday.

Rather, I was ashamed that this is what everyone thought of the God I worshipped on Sunday. Because I knew that the Jesus I raised my hands to in that evangelical Protestant church was not the angry God depicted here; a God that "holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire."

He was not the God that "abhors you."

And yet, it's that same image of God that many run from; Mr. Edwards' sermon is far reaching. The sermon, first spoken in 1741, echoes nearly 300 years - beyond his congregation, into American Literature textbooks (yes, even today!), and reverberates still in the hearts of many.

He's the God people run from, choosing instead to not believe in a god at all. And why wouldn't they? The homosexuals, the adulterers, the liars, the alcoholics, the drug abusers: the sinners. They know - or at least many hear - only of a God who looks upon them as "worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours."

Jonah

Day 10 // Do-Over!

Today's Scripture

Jonah 3:1-3

Jonah has just been vomited up by a fish, not that the first few verses of chapter 3 would indicate that.

In the summertime heat, in the small town where I grew up, the neighborhood kids would gather to play baseball. There weren't enough of us for two teams. Probably just enough for us to have a full team. But we made do, thanks to ghost runners and other bizarre and intricate rules that we made up to aid in the playing "fair" of summertime street baseball.

Not being particularly sporty, there was an aspect of pick up ball (of any type) that I was particularly fond of. It was the absolute equalizer of kids everywhere in any type of game: sports or no.

The do-over.

A close game but you weren't ready for that last (and perfect) pitch? Miss it? Do-over. Was the street slick and you had a slow start off the base and so you're out at this one? Do-over.

Tagged "it" when you weren't suspecting? Do-over.

It's an ancient favor, the do-over.

And Jonah employees it with God here. Or rather, God's mercy grants it to Jonah in this, the third chapter.



Today's Scripture

Jonah 3:4-10

So Jonah got a do-over. And he got up and preached to Ninevah. He told them the truth. And the truth set them free. Quite literally.

So we saw yesterday how Jonah learned his lesson, and when God called him the second time he got up and went. This could not have been easy for Jonah to do, even after having gone through the ordeal he just went through.

Nineveh, after all, was the capital of the Assyrian Empire and no friend of the Israelites. Add to that a kind of nationalism that St. Jerome ascribes to Jonah - and this trek had to be a pilgrimage of the worst kind.

But he did go. And when there, he preached the truth according to what God asked him to: warning the Ninevites they'd be overthrown if they didn't repent.

This is just plain old fashioned crazy talk. Why would a large and powerful city like Ninevah listen to some crazy Hebrew wandering for a day through their town? But Jonah spoke the truth nonetheless.

As Christians, we're not unlike Jonah. That is, we're a part of his divine plan. It's not just one prophet anymore walking around Ninevah. It's a whole lot of Christians walking around the Western world. And we've got a whole lotta 'splainin to do. The truths we carry with us - especially as Catholics - aren't necessarily easy. They aren't going to win us popularity contests. And yet, part of mercy is truth telling.



Jonah

Day 12 // Can We
Rejoice in Nineveh?

Today's Scripture

Jonah 4:1-11

"When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive." (Misericordiae Vultus para 3)

**"Mercy will
always be
greater than
any sin."**

Not too long ago I had seen a comment on a popular blog: You are such a testament to a beautiful Catholic life, this poster said.

The blogger has five children, lives on a small hobby farm, and by all blog appearances, celebrates life with intention. Her blog exudes joy: joy in her family, joy in her career, joy in the day to day ordinary of her life. Add to this, it seems that everything she does is done with an intentionality underlined with a spiritual purpose.

Except, this blogger isn't Catholic.

Not only is she not Catholic - or any brand of Christian - but holds fiercely to the pagan influence recently on ascendance. She has eschewed the "Easter story" as something "some people believe" but not her family. A kind of nice story that comes with chocolate bunnies (organic locally made for her). No silly fairy tales for her family. Only yoga, and Reiki, and mother earth.

