

DAY 29

MONDAY,
FEBRUARY 27

"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations." —Jesus

"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." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. 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. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it." Jonah 3:1-10

TODAY'S DEVOTIONAL:

Jonah didn't want to hold out any hope of a different outcome to the Assyrians. He hated them, and not for no reason. They made a practice of piling the heads of the defeated foe into pyramids on top of and outside the walls of their cities (Shalmaneser II). They flayed their victims and stitched their skins together, quilting walls with human flesh (Ashurbanipal). God saw their wickedness, and He hated it. There would be Hell to pay. So in what may be the worst sermon ever preached (5 words in the Hebrew, with no hope offered), Jonah delivered God's word of just judgment into Nineveh, the ancient equivalent of Nazi occupied Berlin. "Believed" is the first word of verse 5 in the Hebrew, the first word following Jonah's threat. The Ninevites believed God. Doug Stuart writes, "Repentance broke out on the first day" (New Bible Commentary, 1994). Instantly, shockingly, from king to slave, with fasting and desperate prayer, the people turned from their wickedness to God. Such is the power of God's word. Let us take hold of God's warm compassion, on full display in the word made flesh who paid the Hell we owed, and beg him to bring repentance and revival – to our too-cool hearts, to our wicked, wonderful city. Houston, too, is "a great city to God" (the Hebrew of Jonah 3:3). "Who knows? [He] may turn and relent."

TODAY'S PRAYER FOR GOD'S PEOPLE:

The first of Luther's 95 theses nailed to the chapel door in Wittenberg reads, "The Christian life ought to be one of continual repentance." Lord, make us a people whose lives are characterized by repentance. Impress deeply into our hearts the truth that repentance is not only the doorway into life with you (Matthew 5:3); it is also the highway. Thank you for your implacable love, gladly given, wholly purchased by Jesus' blood.

TODAY'S PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE ON YOUR LIST:

Father so many of my neighbors are far from you, even those who think they are close. Humble them, turn them, open their blind eyes and deaf ears. Make them care. Wake them up. Give them soft hearts like the hard Ninevites who turned to you. Help me pray like prayer matters, like it makes a difference, because it does. All people around me at home, at work, and in shops I pop in and out of, are "a car ride away from a graveyard", and most of those will head to Hell for eternity if nothing changes (Ortlund, Is Hell For Real?). impress this deeply on my mind and heart. Give me boldness and love to hold out the hope of Jesus to them, for them. Save Jay Lord, and Andrew, and Brent, and Carter, and Copeland, and Stefan, and Nick, and Louis, and so many, many more. Bring revival. Make us a people of desperate and perpetual prayer.

REPENT



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