

The Messenger

A Ministry of Nahunta Friends Church

God's Relentless Mercy April 2026

But Jonah ran away from the Lord.... It takes only three verses into the book of Jonah to encounter these infamous words. You see, God had given a mission to this prophet and Jonah responded by showing the Lord his backside. Jonah's most defining title became *fugitive*, and his most descriptive trait became *rebellion*.

But the book of Jonah is not primarily about the disobedience of one man. It is about the tireless energy of God to pursue a runaway. Each verse of this tiny book drips with mercy; God's mercy. God pursues Jonah out of divine love. It is love for a city that needs to hear the truth, but also a stubborn love for a trembling, weak-kneed prophet.

The life of a fugitive is a miserable one. He lives relentlessly on the move. He must abandon the places and people that bring him the most comfort and joy. He is always...always looking over his shoulder. I suppose a fugitive like this would be easy to spot after being on the run. Yet it is possible to be a runaway and still look normal. It is possible to be externally "together" while being a spiritual deserter on the inside.

Why does a person run from God? We may run from the responsibilities and opportunities that God places before us. Others of us may flee from God's loving conviction of unconfessed sin. Some of us may run from intimacy with God because we doubt that He is even there. Still others of us may run from God because we think we have found something better to satisfy our needs.

It is possible to run from God and still have a comfortable place among the religious. It is even conceivable to run from God while still functioning in a church culture, to be doing all the right things outwardly, but to inwardly be taking a detour from God's call. Here is where the real message of Jonah comes in. Throughout Jonah's evasive moves and childish tantrums, he is still pursued by a relentless mercy. When someone runs from God, the Father pursues them with unyielding grace. Because of His love, God does not abandon the hunt of those who have wandered from Him.

There are several definitions for the word *tar heel* as it applies to our state. In the late 19th century, North Carolina was a large producer of tar and pitch used for sailing vessels. It was a derogatory name at first, like the word *Quaker*, but eventually became a badge of honor when the North Carolina troops held their ground in battle. They stood fast like they had tar on their heels. This month we will begin a sermon series on the book of Jonah. As we do, may we all find a new resilience to stand in obedient service to Christ. To the One who cried, *not my will but thine be done* before He faced the cross for us. He did not run from His mission, and neither should we.

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