

A LITERARY EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF BOOK OF JONAH 3:1-10

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Abstract

This article examines the Biblical theme of God's Call in the book of Jonah. Although there are many studies about the life of Jonah and the song of Jonah, this Biblical exegesis focuses on the Call of Jonah for the Universal love of God. In other words, this study explores God's mercy on a Gentile Community with the motif of salvation for everyone. The contextual, formal, and detailed analysis and the theological reflections and interpretations evoke the reader's ability to see the passage from another perspective. The author's work also helps readers to understand how a community's or an individual's true repentance might stop the transient disasters that the Supreme Author has already prepared.

Keywords: Jonah, Eco-friendly, God's Mercy, Immediate Transformation, Real Repentance, Cry out, Perishable Calamities.

Introduction

The Book of Jonah is a gifted book in the Old Testament. Compared to other prophets, Jonah speaks very little to people, but he speaks God's words to the community outside the Israelites very powerfully. The result of the speech was the repentance of a great city. The general reading of the book of Jonah gives the idea that this book is a great symbol of the mercy of God towards humanity. Apart from the mercy

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of God, we can find ecological or natural aspects in the book of Jonah. There are representations of great storms, great fish, animals of Nineveh, the worm, trees and plants. All these Natural aspects in the Book of Jonah show the fact that the Book of Jonah is an eco-friendly narration by the author.

There are 4 chapters in the book of Jonah. The first chapter is about the disobedience of Jonah and his flight to Tarshish. Later, he realizes that there is no escape from the eyes of God. The second chapter is the prayer of Jonah in the belly of a big fish. In the third chapter, we find the completion of Jonah's duty given by God. Actually, it is the core content of the Book of Jonah. Finally, the fourth chapter shows the selfish nature of Jonah and the response of God to Jonah. Among these 4 chapters, I preferred the 3rd chapter for my paper work. I think it is the core content of the Book of Jonah. In this chapter, Jonah represents a positive, obedient, responsive prophet of God compared to other chapters. Chapter 3rd of Book of Jonah also mentions the merciful nature of God. From the Old Testament perspective, God shows mercy to the Gentile community in the 3rd chapter. It shows the universal love of God. In my personal view, Jonah's vocation in Chapter 3 is a model for every Christian. Positive response to God's call and positive result to God's call are visible in the Book of Jonah, chapter 3. Another important observation of chapter three is the immediate response of the people of Nineveh to repentance. As a Catholic Priest, I got a beautiful message from this chapter! 'God sends His selected person for a purpose. The purpose is for the glory of God, not for the glory of man.

Contextual Analysis

Contextual analysis is the best way to know the text. We can find immediate context and larger context in the text in the Book of Jonah, chapter 3. The immediate context of chapter 3 is after the repentant song of Jonah in chapter 2. Because he refuses to go to Nineveh and go away from the sight of YHWH. When we come to the 4th chapter, Jonah becomes angry at God and he becomes more selfish in nature. It was because of God's mercy towards the Ninevites. In other words, his prophecy does not make any sense. In a larger sense, it has some other understandings. As per the data from Ferguson, before the coming of Jonah, it was the time of Jeroboam II (786-746). During that time, King Jeroboam II restored the boundaries of Israel. Jeroboam II was the king of the Samaritans. After the book of Jonah, it was the time of Prophet

Nahum. During that time, Nineveh became more wicked, so God was against the People of Nineveh.

The third chapter of the Book of Jonah has some historical references. According to Jack M. Sasson, "Jonah's historical niche is from the period of the last third of the fourth century to the third century BC" (Sasson, 1990)¹. According to Paul Ferguson, it has some strong references. "Governors of Nineveh held this office in 789 and 761 BC. Their names were Ninurta- Mukin- Ahi and Nabu- Mukin-Ahi respectively. This would be the general period in which Jonah would have performed his ministry." (Ferguson, 1996)². Ferguson is also giving another important idea about the 'King of Nineveh'. Tiglath Pileser III (745-727) was the first one to restore the Assyrian empire. Nineveh was under the protection of Assyria. It has no king as such but a large province; Nineveh, has a governor. As per the understanding of a North-West Semitic word, governor is also called King. "It should also be kept in mind that during this period, governors of provinces ruled as kings." (Ferguson, 1996)³. It may be another possibility of historical evidence. Both of these historical data strengthen the authenticity of the data. Another important piece of historical evidence in Chapter 3 is the official decree by the king and his nobles (3:7). According to Ferguson's findings, there were 3 noble officials during the time of Jonah. "Interestingly these officials are sometimes called *sakin temi*, which means 'administrator of the decree'." (Ferguson, 1996)⁴. Ferguson mentions in his writings that he could find one of the monuments from present-day Turkey in the 1960s. It has given much authenticity to the historical fact of Jonah chapter 3.

As per 20th century literature, the Book of Jonah has some literary importance. "The Biblical Book of Jonah has been the subject of multiple literary retellings, ranging from individual poems to whole novels and theatrical dramas" (Tiemeyer, 2022)⁵. When we consider the third chapter, we can consider it as an episode of a novel with some elements of fiction. The coming of the Word of God and the immediate

¹ Sasson, Jonah, *A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation*. The Anchor Bible: Doubleday, New York, 1990, 27.

² Ferguson, Paul, *Who was the King of Nineveh in Jonah 3:6*. Vol. 47, Issue 2. *Tyndale Bulletin: AtlaSerials*, 1996, 305.

³ Ferguson, *Who was the King of Nineveh in Jonah 3:6*, 305.

⁴ Ferguson, *Who was the King of Nineveh in Jonah 3:6*, 310.

⁵ Tiemeyer, Lena Sofia, *Jonah in 20th Century Literature*, Vol. 13, Issue 7. *Religions*: Basel, 2022, 1.

transformation of the people of Nineveh have some sort of fiction content. It is also considered as a drama with a good climax. All the aspects in the 3rd chapter are filled with the aspects of drama. Even the dialogue of God, Jonah and the King makes it more beautiful. The unexpected climax of the third chapter makes the scene more interesting. The third chapter also includes some sort of philosophical and theological aspects in literary form. Philosophically, the cry of the people of Nineveh becomes the happiness of their life. The principle of universality is also applied in verse 3:5. Because the proclamation of the King is for every creature, including men and animals.

There are also some canonical analyses in the book of Jonah chapter 3 and it gives more stress on the teachings of the church. They are:

1. Proclamation of 'Word of God' (3:2): Reminds us the primordial role as Christians.
2. Belief in One God (3:5): Reminds us of the first commandment
3. Repentance (3:5-7): Reminds us of Matthew 4:17
4. Fasting and Abstinence (3:7): Reminds us to follow the precepts of the Church.
5. Forgiving the Sins (3:10): Reminds us of the sacred sacrament of confession.

Formal Analysis

Formal analysis is the best method to determine the structure of the passage. When we go through the third chapter of the Book of Jonah, it is structured in narrative and fictional forms. The narration of the book of Jonah does not have any historical frame. As per the study of Annette Schellenberg from the University of Vienna, the book of Jonah has got 'didactic narration' (Schellenberg, 2015)⁶. According to didactic narration, the author of the book needs us to teach a lesson through narration. Of course, the book of Jonah teaches us the lesson of the need for repentance. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ used these methods or the Evangelist used this method to teach some lessons to its readers. We can see that Jesus' parable has the same form of usage so, we can say that the Book of Jonah has got a didactic narrative literary genre. The first and second chapters of the Book of Jonah have a fictional aspect of a fish event. When we come to the third chapter, we can find

⁶ Schellenberg, Annette, *An Anti-Prophet among the Prophets? On the Relationship of Jonah to prophecy*, Vol. 39, Issue 3. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*: 2015, 366.

a fictional literary genre on the Repentance of animals (v. 3:7). The author uses this narrative work to show the importance of repentance in the story. When we look at the structure and movement of the text, it is clear that the Book of Jonah Chapter 3 has a chiasm structure. In a Chiastic structure, there will be similar beginnings and endings. The Chiastic structure also has a central theme. Let me take a model from the Book of Jonah C. 3.

Chiastic Structure in Chapter 3

A - The Word of the Lord (v.1)

B - Go to Nineveh (v.2a)

C - Proclaim to it the Message that I Tell You (v.2b)

B' - Went to Nineveh (v.3a)

A' - According to the Word of the Lord (v.3)

Another important method used in Chapter 3 is the Parallelism method. The speciality of Parallelism is the repetition of words in different chapters. Let me show an example of parallelism in Chapter 3.

V. 3:1- The word of the Lord came to Jonah

V. 1:1- Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah

V. 3:2- Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city

V. 1:2- Go at once to Nineveh, that great city

V. 3:3- So, Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord.

V. 1:3- But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish, in the presence of the Lord.

The genre of the Book of Jonah contains some kind of artistic composition. According to Jonathan Kaplan from the University of Texas, the Book of Jonah contains three generic categories such as midrash, parable and satire' (Kaplan, 2019)⁷. Midrash is a rabbinic interpretation of the scripture from ancient times. "Midrash derived from the Hebrew verb דרש (*daras*), meaning 'to seek' or 'to inquire'. The noun midrash designates a type of literature, oral or written, that explicates a biblical passage. A midrash is a commentary that endeavours to make a particular text meaningful and relevant" (Trible,

⁷ Kaplan, Jonathan, *Jonah and Moral Agency*, Vol. 43, Issue 2. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*: The University of Texas, Austin, 2019, 146.

2015)⁸. According to the Oxford Dictionary, satire is a genre in which we can find the use of humour, irony and exaggeration. When we closely look at the third chapter of Jonah, we can find the use of satire in V. 3:5-10. Here, animals like human beings, clothe themselves in sackcloth. It may be a kind of humorous representation. 'In V. 3:4, Jonah uses the ambiguous verb 'overturn' הפך (*hapak*). It belies his intention, for Nineveh overturns through repentance, not destruction' (Trible, 2015)⁹.

Detailed Analysis of the Text

When we read through the third chapter of the book of Jonah, we could get a beautiful presentation of God's intervention in humanity. The story also mentions the 'chosen' people of God other than Israel. I think it specifies the universal love of God as we see in the New Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ came to this world for the salvation of entire humanity. "We have seen and do testify that the father has sent his son as the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). Just like that, God the Father is concerned about the people of Nineveh. The specification of the third chapter is the wonderful positive flow of the narration. There we can see a beautiful flow in 1 to 10 verses. Let me divide the third chapter into 4 different titles for the detailed analysis.

- a) Coming of the Word of God (3:1-3)
- b) Preaching of Jonah 3:4
- c) Conversion of Nineveh 3:5-8
- d) Change of Mind of God 3:9-10

The first word of the third chapter begins with the second coming of the 'Word of God'. Of course, the 21st century reader may interpret the word like the second coming of Jesus. It may be a kind of interpretation because there are some similarities between the book of Jonah chapter 3 and the core content of the New Testament. I have already mentioned it in the synthesis part. When we re-read the whole text, the book of Jonah starts with the same word. "The word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai " (1:1 and 3:1) is a kind of parallelism in the Bible. According to the teachings of Donald W. Parry from one of the scholarly universities, Brigham Young University, 'it is a classification of Hebrew writing forms. They are repetitions and

⁸ *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 639.

⁹ *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 638.

parallelisms (*Seely, 2011*)¹⁰. It should emphasize the importance of the word and its content. The second and third words are also a kind of similar way of presentation. We can see the repetitive words in the first and third chapters. In the first chapter, it was a negative response from Jonah but in the third chapter, it was a positive response. Jonathan Kaplan, from the University of Texas at Austin, says that Jonas was under two circumstances. Which means that in the ‘first chapter of the Book of Jonah, he was guided by self-control but in the third chapter, his self was under the control of God (Kaplan, 2019)¹¹.

After receiving the word of God, he went to Nineveh. Before entering into discussion, let me draw our attention to Prophet Nahum. Nahum is the one, who gives much elaborative discussion on the great city, Nineveh. Nahum 3:1-19 clearly mentions the sinful nature of the city of Nineveh. Nineveh was dirtied with many sins like lies, assault, sorcery, murder, harlotry and witchcraft. There is a reference to three days of walking to cross the city. Materially it may be the width and length of the city but spiritually, it may be a kind of punishment period. Chapter 1:17 speaks about the *sheol* experience of Jonah in the belly of a fish. Here, he prayed from *sheol*. “It can also be understood that this was the limit of the punishment he could endure before it became too much” (Schader, 2020)¹². It was also a kind of preparation before his preaching.

Now let us see the second stage of our discussion i.e., preaching of Jonah (3:4). After one day of walking, he began to speak. Actually, it was not a speech but a cry. According to Mera J Flaumenhaft, ‘The story of Jonah, a memorable exception, is the only one in which an Israelite is sent to “cry out” to non-Israelites’ (Flaumenhaft, 2014)¹³. When we closely look at that word, we may find a question. Why did he cry out? It may be because of his inner affirmation that he is from another place, he may not be known by others, and his father is Amittai (2 Kings 14:25, Jonah 1:1). It may be because of pre-assumptions of something like Deuteronomy 18:22. “If a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the Lord has not spoken.” We can take it as the reason for the

¹⁰ <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu>

¹¹ Kaplan, *Jonah and Moral Agency*, 152.

¹² Schader, Jo Mari, *The symbolic Meaning of the Number of Days Mentioned in the Book of Jonah*, Vol. 76, Issue 4. African Online Scientific Information System: *HTS Theologiese Studies*, 2020, 4.

¹³ Flaumenhaft, Mera J, *The Story of Jonah*, Vol. 76, The Review of Politics: University of Notre Dame, 2014, 1.

readers' choice. When we come to his cry, it is something more interesting. 'Forty days more, Nineveh shall be overthrown!'. It is indicated by the five words when we translate it into the original Hebrew text. '(עוד ארבעים יום ויגונה נהפכת):' (Goswell, 2016)¹⁴. (*o-vd ar-ba-'im yo-vm, ve-ni-ne-veh neh-pa-chet*)' (biblehub.com)¹⁵. If it is only five words, it is from God. Let me clarify the importance of forty days and the word of warning. It is considered a period of coming back to God. In other words, it may be a kind of groundwork to come back from the sinful activities of the Ninevites. Genesis 7:4, represents the forty days of rain to wipe out the earth. Exodus 24:18, represents Moses' preparation for receiving the commandments on the mountain for forty days. The first Book of Samuel 17:16, represents forty days of preparation by the people of Israel to get over Philistine. In the New Testament, Matthew 4: 1-11 represents the preparation of Jesus before his ministry. All these quotations show the preparation aspect, and it may be a preparation time for the people of Nineveh.

Now let me discuss the third part of our analysis i.e., the Conversion of Nineveh (3:5-8). We can see a kind of similarity with the first chapter here. They are the conversion of Ninevites in the third chapter and the conversion of sailors on the ship in the first chapter. In both situations, their cry led them to the repentance of their hearts. We can find another important aspect here i.e., the pious response of the children of YHWH. 'The sailors and the Ninevites, that is, the non-Yahwist characters of the story, are described in terms of the pious response of the Israelites', and as a result, they proclaimed fasting (Kelsey, 2020)¹⁶. It reminds of the experiences of King David (2 Samuel 3:31), King Ahab (1 King 21:27), King Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:1). All of these kings take the sackcloth. According to Flaunenhaft, being covered with a sackcloth means purification.

'Everything in Nineveh must be purified; the fast, sackcloth and ashes allude to a symbolic death, from which it will be possible to return to rise' (Flaunenhaft, 2014)¹⁷. It reminds me of something from the words of St Paul so, 'you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus' (Romans 6:11). One of the specialities

¹⁴ Goswell, Gregory, *Jonah among the Twelve Prophets*, Vol.135, Issue 2. Journal of Biblical Literature: Christ College, Burwood, 2016, 296.

¹⁵ <https://biblehub.com/lexicon/jonah/3-4.htm>

¹⁶ Kelsey, Marian, *The Book of Jonah and the Theme of Exile*, Vol. 45, Issue 1. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: 2020, 136.

¹⁷ Flaunenhaft, *The Story of Jonah*, 13.

of Jonas' preaching here is notable. Even the animal kingdom also participated in the penance process of the Ninevites.

The final part of the detailed analysis is the change which happened in the mind of God 3:9-10. There are occasions in the Old Testament where God changes His mind and shows His graciousness. Exodus 32:14, 2 Samuel 12:22, Jeremiah 18:7-8 and Amos 7:3 & 6 are some of the examples of God's Kindness, especially change of mind from the said punishments. It is very clear that God does not want His children in peril. God always protects His children from possible dangers. It is our will that decides good or wrong. "Who cares for the city? The story of Jonah makes the answer to this question clear: God Does" (Limburg, 1988)¹⁸.

Synthesis

The Book of Jonah chapter 3 is a foretaste of the coming of Gospels. All four Gospels speak about the birth, public life, change of hearts of people and change of mind of God. As we discussed earlier, the third chapter of the Book of Jonah comes across with four major themes. Let us see the major concerns in a better way, so that may enlighten our minds.

a) Coming of the Word of God (3:1-3)

Jonah chapter 3, verse 1 says that 'the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time'. Here, we can see the power of God. If anyone receives the Word of God, he/she gets sudden changes. Jeremiah 2:1, Ezekiel 1:3, Hosea 1:2, Zephaniah 1: 1 from the Old Testament and in New Testament Luke 3:2 say about the same thing i.e., 'the Word of God came'. All these occasions, those people act on the Word of God. In other words, those people fulfilled the will of God in their life. Those who are selected by God and carry His Word, must fulfil a divine purpose. God selects Moses to be His Word (Exodus 3:1-8). God selects His 12 disciples to preach the Word of God (Mark 3:13-14). Paul was chosen by God for the same reason (Galatians 1:15-16). "Each person who preaches God's message must know that he has been sovereignly called by Christ to represent Him in this solemn duty" (Lawson,

¹⁸ Limburg, James, *Hosea- Micah: Interpretation; A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, John Knox Press: Atlanta, 1988, 152.

2001)¹⁹. The Announcement of the Word of God is the highest and greatest call.

b) Preaching of Jonah 3:4

The powerful Word of God is discussed in verse 4 of the Book of Jonah "He cried out, forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!". Even if it is a small sentence, the words are from God. Of course, it is not the merit of Jonah but God. That is why his preaching got great success. "The reaction of people is amazing. They believe in God, call for a fast, and dress in the clothes of mourning" (Limburg, 1988)²⁰. Every Christian has the same responsibility to preach the Words of God to the ends of the earth.

c) Conversion of Nineveh 3:5-8

Metanoia is a Greek word that means 'repentance or change of mind' (Zille, 2020)²¹. We can find the change of mind of a whole city including humans and animals. In my childhood days, I used to read books about St. Antony. I find some similarities here. St. Antony had been preaching to humans and animals. He might have received inspiration from the prophet Jonah. That demonstrates God's power. The entire city undergoes atonement as a result of the Word of God being spoken. According to Biblical interpretations, it is the divine act of God. "The divine action here shows that God's mercy is as far removed from men as the heavens are above the earth...Yet here is God forgiving the Assyrians (Capital City of Nineveh occupied) completely" (Stuhlmüller, 1961)²².

d) Change of Mind of God 3:9-10

The final theme of chapter 3 is the Change of mind of God. Throughout the history of the people of Israel, we have found this clause many times. Whenever people of Israel come back to God, God changes His plan. Exodus 32: 12-14, 'And the Lord changed His mind about the disaster that He planned to bring on his people'. This word has a great lesson to learn. "God is free to change. God is free to

¹⁹ Lawson, Steven J, *The Power of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of Jonah 3:1-10*, Vol. 158. *Bibliotheca Sacra*: 2001, 333.

²⁰ Limburg, Interpretation, 150.

²¹ Zille, Tom, *A Change of Mind: The Reception of Treadwell Walden's The Great Meaning of Metanoia*. Vol. 5, Issue 1. The University of Chicago Press Journals: 2020, , 97.

²² Stuhlmüller, Carroll, *The Books of Aggai Zacharia Malachia Jona Joel Abadia*, Paulist Press: New York, Vol. 33. 1961, 50.

respond and react to humanity as it changes; God is free to show a mercy unbound by our own narrow limitations” (Turner, 1998)²³. This is the top most sign of God’s mercy. The change of mind of God shows the merciful nature of God.

As I mentioned earlier, the 3rd chapter of the book of Jonah, is the foretaste of Jesus’ coming. Jesus came to this world and He preached in many places. All of those people accept Jesus as their Saviour and He saved the world from the bondage of sin through His suffering and crucifixion. Similarly, Word came to Prophet Jonah. He preached to the Ninavites and they believed what he said. Finally, God changed His mind to save everyone in Nineveh so, let us call the 3rd chapter of the book of Jonah as the gospel of Jonah or in other words, good news in the Old Testament. Without doubt we can say that Jesus Christ is the most successful person in the New Testament. Similarly, Jonah was also a successful prophet in Old Testament times. He accomplishes the will of God in chapter 3. He succeeds in his mission even after a one-day journey. He succeeds in his mission even in the preaching of five words of God. He succeeds in his mission even in the Animal Kingdom. He succeeds in the mission even in his cry for Gentiles. All these success stories happened in Chapter 3 of the Book of Jonah. Therefore, in spite of Jonah’s reluctance, the story ends with success.

Theological Reflection and Interpretation

For those of us who are responding to God’s call, the Book of Jonah serves as a beautiful model. A man is chosen by God and sent for a great purpose. God has chosen someone for a reason throughout history. God’s will continue to be carried out through a variety of individuals and channels. When we read Jonah, particularly chapter 3, we might wonder why God sent someone there. God says five words because it has such an impact. After just one conversation, everyone in the city believed in God. ‘With a mere five words, he convinces all of Nineveh to repent. From the king all the way down to the animals, everyone is sorry to a God they don’t even know about’ (Walsh, 2015)²⁴. How can he get that powerful word? Of course, it is because of the grace of God. Today as a reader, we are receiving the same grace through the Holy Eucharist. What change does our mind receive from it? Are we really grace filled persons? I think it should be our chance

²³ Turner, Mary Donovan, *Jonah 3:10-4:11*. Vol.52, Issue 4. Sage Publication Ltd. UK: 1998, 2.

²⁴ Walsh, Carey, *Between Text and Sermon*. Vol. 69, Issue 3. *A Journal of Bible and Theology*: Villanova University, Villanova, 2015, 338.

to welcome the Word of God to our life. For me it is a strong word. Whenever the powerful word comes to a person, he/she can act like a powerful source of God. All the prophets, all the chosen ones of God, especially the disciples speak to the world by the power of the Word of God. "May God raise up such proclaimers of His Divine Truth who will preach with growing confidence in the power of His Word to perform its sacred work" (Lawson, 2001)²⁵. As Christians it is our duty and responsibility to accept the Word of God with a full heart.

Hearing the Word of God makes changes in the audience. The Book of Jonah Chapter 3 is the best example of it. In light of the proclamation of Jonah, there happened an unexpected change in the Ninevites. The people of Nineveh immediately repented after receiving the Word of God through Prophet Jonah. Lawson named the city as 'Bloody City'. "In response to the preaching of God's message, this Bloody city, known for its violence, turned to God, entrusting themselves to Him" (Lawson, 2001)²⁶. The result of the repentance of the city of Nineveh was amazing. They believed in God (Jonah 3:5). "The word believes (אָמַן) means 'to be firm, to stand firm, to trust'" (Lawson, 2001)²⁷.

When we understand it more theologically, the people of Nineveh are a representation of the sinful people of the present generation. There are people living in this world who engage in different sinful activities without repentance. Even if we are in the depth of sin, there is hope, and that is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the real word of God, came to this world to save those sinners. 'Jesus Christ came to this world not for righteousness but for sinners. (Matthew 9:13). Jesus Christ is continuing his duty as a Saviour through His different selected disciples in this present time. It may be a priest, a teacher, an ardent devotee, another religious man, or even a stranger. Pope Francis, in his Angelus prayer, mentions the mercy of God for sinners. 'Jesus came to fulfil divine justice by saving sinners, showing us that the true justice of God is the mercy that saves. As Jesus' disciples, we are also called to share each other's burdens and be compassionate' (Vatican News, January 8, 2023)²⁸. Nineveh is only a symbolic representation for us. Today, there are many cities like Nineveh in our world. God still wants to save them and is prepared to alter His decision regarding them. The only condition is that they need to

²⁵ Lawson, *The Power of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of Jonah 3: 1-10*, 346.

²⁶ Lawson, *The Power of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of Jonah 3: 1-10*, 341

²⁷ Lawson, *The Power of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of Jonah 3: 1-10*, 341

²⁸ Vatican News, January 8, 2023.

receive the Word of God in their heart. As Jonah 3: 9 says, 'God may relent and change his mind; He may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish'. We need to turn from our sinfulness. "The King calls on the Ninevites to 'turn' (וּיִשְׁבוּ) from their evil and violent behaviour (3:8)" (Goswell, 2016)²⁹. Here, the word 'turns' means 'repentance'. Real repentance will save us from the danger of perishable calamities.

²⁹ Goswell, *Jonah among the Twelve Prophets*, 291.