

Friends,

I recently saw an incredible news story: last week a fisherman in Massachusetts was swallowed by a whale near Cape Cod! After being swallowed, the man spent approximately a minute inside the whale, before the whale spit him back out onto dry land. Emergency crews first thought the call they received about it was a joke, until they realized that it was a real incident that was being reported, and not a prank. Apparently, the man is a commercial lobster diver who accidentally jumped too close to a whale that happened to be in the area, leading to a very painful and harrowing experience for the man. Thankfully, he survived the ordeal.

For those of us who read the Bible, this obviously takes us back to the book of Jonah, who was likewise swallowed by a whale (or some kind of large fish) after refusing to heed God's call to go to Nineveh, before being spit back out. I'm not sure about you, but thinking about a person today really getting swallowed by a whale brings the story of Jonah to life in a brand new way.

This reminds me that the Bible stories we read actually feature real-life people. They are not simply one-dimensional figures we read about on the pages of a book, or stoic men and women that had no lives outside of the stories we read. Rather, they were people just like you and me, flesh and blood.

Whenever we read the Bible, we can put ourselves into the shoes of those men and women that once existed. We can imagine their backstory, their emotions, their thoughts and feelings. We can imagine what it must have been like to be there with them, or to experience what they experienced. As we read the Bible, we can remember that we are reading a living text, which is always full of new insights and new ways of understanding the stories we find in it.

As I said in our recent sermon series, *Epic Tales from the Bible*, one of the greatest things about the Bible is its stories. So may we continue to always read the Bible's stories, and encounter its characters, with new eyes, hearing and seeing them anew each time we open the Bible's pages.

On the journey with you,
Pastor Jordan