We are at the end of it. Today and next Sunday it will be our sad and hopeful task to watch a nation die.

After years of warnings from the prophets of the dangerous drift from Jehovah God, Israel, the 10 tribes that broke away from the 12, finally does collapse under the pressure of an enemy army of the Syrians. The suffering will be immense. We will not talk about that. What we want to do is observe this morning and then next week three men and the part that they played. Their inner attitude of heart that represented what was happening in the larger scale. See, a nation's strength is never any larger than its nations -- the hearts of the people of its nation. And so these three men represent the kind of spiritual illness that had begun to set into this nation that ensured its demise. I'm going to invite you in a minute to stand, we'll read God's word, but there's hope here. Hope that somebody this morning might be so warned and that your life and my life would take a different direction than these three men took.

Would you stand together and let's read God's word.

Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died, Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. "My father! My father!" he cried. "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!"

Elisha said, "Get a bow and some arrows," and he did so. "Take the bow in your hands," he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands.

"Open the east window," he said, and he opened it. "Shoot!" Elisha said, and he shot. The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!" Elisha declared. "You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek."

Then he said, "Take the arrows," and the king took them. Elisha told him, "Strike the ground." He struck it three times and stopped. The man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times."

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did
not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to
commit. He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the
Arabah, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant
Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher.

Please be seated.

His name was Jeroboam, not the Jeroboam who started this whole mess. You can read about him
in 1st Kings Chapter 12. Not the Jeroboam who broke from Rehoboam in Solomon's kingdom,
took 10 tribes, not the Jeroboam who put up a golden calf at Dan and Beersheba. Scholars call him
Jeroboam 1. This is Jeroboam 2 and he comes a hundred and fifty years later. But their lives are
linked in that in verse 24 God says what he holds against Jeroboam 2 is that he did not break from
any of the sins of Jeroboam 1. He did not go back to the past of his own nation or of his own life
and break the bonds of sin that were holding him. I hear people say all the time, you can't fix the
past. What's done is done, they say. Let bygones be bygones. Do you realize that is not true with
an eternal God, a God who sees past, present, and future all at once? Jeroboam 2 had 41 years to be
the king. Long enough to study the history and know where that nation had lost its path. But even
over 41 years he never had the political will or the religious conviction to go back and fix what was
broken. He just took what it was and let it continue to be so.

I don't think that most of us realize the power the past has over us. The power of past expresses
itself in our habits, in our memories, in the things that we avoid because they were so painful. Our
past is with us all the time. I don't think most of us realize that you cannot cover sin just by pouring
years over it. You can't cover a sin just because you've gone now four or five or ten or fifteen or
twenty years away from it and think that somehow that covers it with an eternal God because the
truth is, the past continues to have a hold on you until you deal with it.

What if you grew up in a family that had a low value on worship of God? What if you had a
grandmother that wanted you at her house on Sunday at noon or you had a dad that liked to fish and
so they passed on to you this very low value of what it meant to worship God? Part of your growth
will have to be someday you will finally have to say my grandmother was wrong, my dad was
wrong, and I am going to fix that pattern.

What if the sin was not something that somebody else did to you, but something that you did?
Some betrayal, some moral failure so awful that even now it holds its weight over you with the
power of guilt? The scripture says you've got to go back to that moment, back to that place, and
face it to get free.

I've had some experiences like this in my own life where I've had to go back to the place where I
made the mistake. Sometimes other people contributed to it, but it was me, too, and I was reacting
wrong. And as best I could get back there and say to God, I did this wrong. I did not trust you.
And even though I cannot recover those years, I can go back and fix what is in the past. I can call it
what it is. I can claim the power of the forgiveness of the cross of Jesus Christ. I can confess to
him all and feel his liberty break me free.
I know why Jeroboam didn't do it. He didn't want to do it because it's hard work. It's very hard work. But 1st Timothy 3:9 says that we are to hold the faith with a clear conscience and sometimes the thing that keeps revival from happening in a nation like ours or a church like ours are just huge instances, huge instances of things in the past that have never been brought and put before the Lord at the foot of the cross so that it might be cleansed and broken.

It's what Alcoholics Anonymous calls a rigorous moral inventory. It is a confession that you make to God. It is a restitution that you make, if possible. As fully as you can, you go back to the place where the mistake was made and you get your life back on the path where it was intended to be.

Before I met Holly I was a person of many broken relationships. Many broken relationships. It wasn't that I wasn't trying; I just was doing it wrong. I was just doing it wrong. It was a good day in my life when by the grace of God he began to convince me that my past did not have to be my future. That what had always bound me did not have to continue to dictate how I was going to be in the years ahead. Many of you have heard this testimony. I was reading at that time The Friendship Factor by McGinnis. And it hit me by the grace of God that I could go back to those decisions I'd made, sometimes even as a small child, and I could hold them before the healing grace of God and I could ask him, now set me on a brand new path. It's no coincidence that not long after that Holly came into my life. She should be glad and I'm very glad. I'm very glad because right up against Jeroboam's name, right up against Jeroboam's name, he would not go back. He would not go back to where life broke and make any apologies, find any forgiveness, start anything new. He would not go back. That's mistake number one.

And did you notice that Jeroboam the prophet was -- Jeroboam had a prophet named Jonah? Did you notice that in the reading? Look back on the first page where you were reading. Down at the very bottom. 25, he was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel, all of that was spoken through Jonah, son of Amittai. At this point in his career there's a second man, his name is Jonah, he's a prophet to Israel. He was probably very satisfied to be so. What unsatisfied him was when God called him later to go preach to the Ninovites. They were the enemies of Israel to the north. Watch me here, I don't have a map. Here's Israel, here's Judah. Assyria is up here to the north. All during this period the growing power of Assyria has filled Israel with terror; and where there's terror, there's usually hate. And Jonah is an example of that, of a person who had grown up hating those Ninovites.

So it surprised him, it shocked him; it disgusted him when God called him to go preach repentance to the Ninovites, and rather than do that, you know the story so I won't tell it, he ran. He ran.

It is a hard assignment for any of us to become someone new. Someone we haven't been before. It is a hard assignment when God calls us to love Ninovites or homeless people or Korean refugees, or Muslims. It is easy; it is easy for us to keep a narrow set of values and friends and our old biases, to ignore the fact that it is God who loves the world. God who loves the world. And if we are going to be His people, we have to go with Him.

I wonder how this story would have changed had Jonah really stayed with the task of preaching repentance to Nineveh.
Remember, they responded almost immediately. The book of Jonah says so. They were so compelled by this story of their destruction that they began to repent. But Jonah quickly gave up the task and he didn't want any more of it. I wonder how this all would have worked if he had continued to preach. And we'll never know because Jonah was not a person who could go forward into a new life. He could not go forward to become the witness or the lover of people that God was calling him to be. He refused to.

I wonder how our story would change if every church in this nation that's in so desperate need of revival, if every church and every Christian got involved in building a fair society? That we were the ones who mentored the kids who were in danger of child abuse, that we were the ones who prayed for their parents and prayed for revival, that we were the ones that rather like avoidance because of Jonah because it was inconvenient for us, that we became the servants and the witnesses to the Muslims who are our neighbors, to the secular people who work with us. What would this story be if in a nation so desperately in need of revival we became those people like Jonah? I'm convinced that a day is ahead when the church needs to be more missional and less attractional. Means that we will still attract people to come together, but until a church remembers its original call, go into all the world. Go. Go where you work and form a circle of six. Go where you live and gather people together. You would form those groups not because they are convenient to you but because this nation desperately needs these groups formed. What would happen if we became those people? Let's see, right up against Jonah's name he would not go forward. He wouldn't. He liked who he was or he was unwilling to become somebody new.

Teenagers, what would it take to shake your world for you to become a missional Christian? Scott Lane is just doing such good things with you guys on Wednesday nights, I'm just thrilled. I hope your heart breaks till every one of your friends knows about Christ. I hope you stand toe-to-toe with every intelligent conversation about whether Jesus Christ is true. I hope you get yourself ready to do that work. Because we need it so desperately.

Then turn to 2nd Kings 13, which is our first passage, everybody. His name was Jehoash, one of the last eight kings of Israel. One of the last eight kings. Before Israel fell apart, the kings in sort of a spasm or a seizure kind of thing began to just grapple to hold power and see if they couldn't find some unity to hold this nation together, but to no avail. Jehoash was one of those. He's really only important, I mean, he's only important because he was the king when Elisha died. It's a remarkable, remarkable story. Old prophet, young king; young king comes to the old prophet and he weeps, which is really paradoxical because the kings have not had great relationships with these prophets. They have not loved these men. But now that Elisha's about to die, the king realizes his value. He says, "My father! My father!" The chariots and the horsemen of Israel, which means I see that you are worth more than military might. Your spirituality, your prayer power, your truthfulness has been an anchor for this nation that we need so badly and now he's desperate because this prophet is about to die and Elisha has no time for those kinds of eulogies.

It's ironic, the old man here has all the vigor and the young man has none. The old man just brushes aside all that and he says get a bow. The king takes a bow and then Elisha says take it in your hand. He's saying to this young man. You're going to have to fight. You're going to have to want this. You are going to have to summon up courage and stand for what is right. And so he's
got his hand around this bow. And then he says open up the east window and he says draw and he draws back that bow and the prophet gets up out of his bed and he puts his hands over the hands of this young king. He is as if to say now the power of God will flow through you, son. You live nobly, the power of God will flow through you. And he says draw back and shoot. So that young man shoots. But there's still something really missing here. Something the prophet just can't get quite right. Something about this young man's heart is not responding to those promises with confidence. He's not responding to it with enthusiasm and faith. He's sort of lackluster. So the prophet says: Joash, take those arrows, strike the floor with them. And so this young guy takes these arrows and he strikes the floor about three times and maybe he feels silly, maybe he just feels completely out of his element. The old prophet is angry with him because he cannot get angry anymore. He is angry with that young man because he cannot summon up enough enthusiasm for this noble cause. He has become so lukewarm, so passive, so spectator-ish, so observer-ish that nothing can stir that young man's heart to do anything but just be passive in the onslaught of this coming danger. The old prophet says without that kind of enthusiasm, my young friend, you will never, ever be able to be what God wants you to be.

The deepest disease of the human heart takes hold when you become cautious, self-protective, unavailable to take a risk, absent from enthusiasm for any noble cause. When you cannot step up to do something that is noble and good because you just cannot get it in your heart anymore to do it, that is the -- one of the deepest diseases.

I wonder whether anybody in this congregation knows the illness of a weary heart. It's not that you don't believe anymore. You just don't have any fire. There's no passion. There's no emotion. You don't feel like you want to cry. You don't feel like you want to shout. You don't feel like you want to do anything. It's just gone lukewarm. That's what Jesus called it. Lukewarm. I got a letter this week from Milton Cunningham. I love Milton and he's written ten things that he's finally learned. I think that's remarkable.

He wrote them all to me but number one, he said prosperity provides but it also takes away, I've learned that. Number three, familiarity diminishes wonder. I've learned that. Number eight, passion and patience are the qualities most to be desired. I've learned that. And number ten, when you lose your wonder, you lose your passion.

I got another letter from a member of this congregation who was so challenged by the Islam study, so revived on her privileges that she has in Jesus Christ she wrote this beautiful letter and at the end of it she bursts into this praise. She said I am blessed with the gospel. I know that I am loved. I interact with the God who created me. I enjoy release from the burden of my guilt. I have assurance for the future. I can live without fear, without panic, manipulation, bitterness, anger, defense, or despair. And with every one of those words I could hear her pounding the ground with those arrows saying I am not going to live without passion anymore for this gospel that's been given to me in my heart. I'm not going to do it anymore. Because the nation needs it too badly and the people around us are lost and a lukewarm gospel never converts anybody to anything.

I rejoice at this story and I wanted to point out to you, the third mistake is anybody who lives without enthusiasm.
Question, do you see that the destiny of this nation and this church hangs on individual moments of grace? The power of a nation is the power of the hearts of its people. And if each of us individually gets spiritually ill and spiritually passive, then that will be the aggregate of our nation.

The destiny of this nation hangs on some young person, some teenage boy who decides he is not going to be Jehoash. I'm not going to be so cool and do this with sort of a half-passive heart. Forget what my friends say, I'm going to do this with my whole heart and at the end of my race I'm going to have given myself completely to God. Some teenage girl who decides I'm not going to be Jonah and I'm not going to learn to hate people who are different from me, I am going to learn to be a witness and reach them with the beautiful truth of the gospel. Some church that decides not to be Jeroboam, to say I'll just let the past go, we can't get back there and fix that. There are no apologies to be made for the past. In what universe are there no apologies to be made? In what world are there no apologies to be made where we take responsibility and say to the best of my ability, I'm going to live with a clear conscience and I'm going to serve God with that heart?

It is one of the great stories of the gospel, a blind man's calling to Jesus. He's making a ruckus, as we would say in Amarillo. He's crying and everybody's telling him to be quiet and he's crying out and finally he gets the Lord's attention and Jesus begins to call for him. Jesus says bring him here. Bring him here. And one of the greatest lines in the gospel, somebody comes to him and says take courage. He's calling you. Don't you see, everybody, it is a great thing if a sermon like this or somebody else's sermon, it doesn't matter, can still stir your heart. It is a terrible thing if you cannot be called to something nobler and higher and better and cleaner, if you cannot be called. That is a terrible thing. If he is still using messages to call you to noble work, to stand when a nation needs you to stand, to raise up a new generation of witnesses and Christians. If he can call you, you have great reason to hope. I love this, it says take courage, he's calling you.

Let's pray together.

What does it look like, our Lord, to watch nation after nation fall even though you have warned them? What does that look like? How does your heart read that your people could not hear your word who could not respond with active faith? I pray only this morning that you would call us, that this church would be a revival church, that we would be a part of you recalling our nation to a new chapter of righteousness where we did not measure our worth with our money, to a new chapter of brotherhood where we did not value people by their net worth, to a time of unity and clarity. Call us, Lord, make our church part of that, and each of us part of that church. In Jesus' name, amen.

Would you stand with me? The song we'll sing this morning is one of my favorites. It's a happy song. It's "The Master has Called Us." It means that in the deepest part of my heart, I hear what Paul called the upward call. Something is still missing. Something still that must be done to serve this great Savior. You're invited to come and join this church. You're invited to come and confess faith in Christ. You're invited to come and dedicate your life to the task that he's called you. I'll meet you here, we'll sing. It will be a time of worship. Come now. Come now.