

SECOND CHANCE MINISTRY

Have you ever benefited from a second chance? Have you yourself ever given someone a second chance? If there is anything that we as human beings need it is a second chance! Why? Because we are not perfect and if we are all honest we have all made multiple mistakes and mis-step in our lives! In fact, I don't know about you but I could use not only a second chance, but a third, and a fourth and maybe even a fifth chance! And that is just in regard to my marriage (smiley face emoji here). If there is anyone who should understand the value and benefit of a second chance, it should be the follower of Jesus! After all, the Bible tells us that God has offered us a second chance at life through God's amazing grace demonstrated by Jesus Christ on the cross where He died so that through the shedding of His blood we may have forgiveness for all of our sin and be given an opportunity to be born again. But unfortunately, we are living in a day and time where people are canceled for their mistakes. They are written off and given no opportunity for redemption. And I am afraid this mindset has begun to permeate the church as well. Just in my 20 years of ministry experience I have witnessed so-called Christians being some of the most rigid and merciless people I have ever met. I have seen Christians who should be the most forgiving of all people write someone off after just one mistake or hold a grudge against someone because of something they did to them personally never again to consider extending grace to them.

Welcome to **Week 5**, the final week of **Kings and Kingdoms** as we continue our journey through the Bible and as we follow God's people during a very spiritually challenging time in the history of Israel as a nation. Last week we looked at the showdown between the prophet Elijah and King Ahab. The confrontation was a challenge to the people of Israel to stop wavering between two opinions. Either God is Lord of all and therefore they need to submit to Him or He isn't and they should give themselves over to the pagan gods of their enemies. But whatever they decide they need to make a choice and stop trying to straddle the fence between the two opinions. Today, we are going to shift gears a little and take a look at what should be our proper attitude towards those who treat us as their enemy. And this is fitting because if we are not careful we can harden our hearts toward those who treat us as their enemies especially when we try to live a life that kicks against the culture that those who see us as their enemies long to embrace.

In order to do this we are going to look at another popular and powerful story found in God's word, that outside of Jesus and the cross, demonstrates for us the right attitude we should have toward those who may believe differently from the way that we do. So if you will find the **Book of Jonah Chapter 1** I will **PRAY** for us and we will dive into what God has for us today. ***(Btw, if you are having a hard time locating Jonah in the Bible. Find Psalms in the middle of your Bible and go right 13 books and you will find Jonah. If you get to Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk you have gone too far. Or do what I do. Get a Bible App and search "Jonah" or if using a physical Bible turn to the Table of Contents and find the page number for the Book of Jonah. In my Bible it is page 1294 - smiley face emoji again)***

Before we jump into our passage for this morning, let's set the historical context for what was taking place in Israel up to this point from when we left off last week. As Jonah Chapter 1 begins it has been a little over 60 years since the showdown between Elijah and Ahab took place. Jonah is a prophet of God serving the 10 northern tribes of Israel and the King ruling over Israel at this point is Jeroboam II. He is the 14th king to have led the northern kingdom and it has been a little over 120 years since Israel split into two distinct kingdoms. It is during this time that Israel has been enjoying a little peace and prosperity as both Syria and Assyria (enemies of Israel) have been relatively weak allowing Jeroboam II an opportunity to expand the northern borders to the place where it was during the time of David and Solomon.

While things might have been good from a military perspective. Spiritually, it was a time of poverty, religious ritualism which was becoming more and more idolatrous and a time of great injustice. As peacetime has a tendency to do for a nation. Israel became spiritually, morally and ethically bankrupt. (Sound familiar? Kind of sounds like our nation today does it not?) It is during this time that God is going to call Jonah to go to Nineveh (the capital city of Assyria their #1 enemy) and preach a message of repentance to them.

As we take a look at the events surrounding God's activity in this story I first want us to see THREE actions concerning GRACE being displayed by God and then I want us to be encouraged to act the same way towards those in our life who may be our enemies or who may just need a second chance.

The first ACTION of God's GRACE I want us to see is this, **God's GRACE is greater than ALL our SIN.**

Even though the people of Nineveh did not worship or acknowledge God it did not mean that God was not going to hold them accountable for their actions. In fact, the book of Romans tells us that no one is without excuse when it comes to God holding people accountable for their sin. They will not be able to claim that they didn't know God existed.

Romans 1:18-20 (NIV) 18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, **19** since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. **20** For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Part of God's grace being extended to Nineveh is that God is sending a messenger to warn them of what is coming by encouraging them to change course. God didn't have to send a messenger. He would have been perfectly just to destroy them without warning. But Jonah 1 tells us that Jonah disliked them so much that he didn't think they were deserving of such grace. In other words, as far as he was concerned they didn't deserve a second chance.

Jonah 1:1-5 (NIV) **1** The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: **2** “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” **3** But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. **4** Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. **5** All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep.

Here God is commanding Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn them that if they do not repent of their sin God is going to overthrow their city and ultimately their nation. Their sin was great and God was about to bring judgment upon them, but because they were an enemy of Israel, Jonah felt they didn't deserve God's grace. Jonah had seen their wickedness first hand and he wanted them to face the wrath of God. Jonah knew that God was merciful and that if the people were to repent God would not bring judgment on them. This is why he fled to Tarshish as he reveals in **Jonah 4** after the people of Nineveh repent and God relents on His judgment. **Jonah 4:1-2 (NIV)** But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. **2** He prayed to the Lord, “Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.

In Jonah's eyes he did not see the sin of Nineveh as deserving of God's grace. If it were up to him God's grace would not cover their sin! But do you know what? The same grace that was given Nineveh was also the same grace that Jonah would experience when God spared his life from the deep and when He released him from the belly of the fish after he had sinned against God by not going to Nineveh when God asked him to.

Jonah 2:1-10 (NIV) **1** From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. **2** He said: “In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. **3** You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. **4** I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.’ **5** The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. **6** To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit. **7** “When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. **8** “Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. **9** But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the Lord.’” **10** And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

When it comes to God's grace there is not a sin that HE can't cover! Even though we may rank sin to varying degrees God sees all sin the same and His grace is sufficient to cover them all.

Ephesians 1:7 (NIV) **7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Romans 5:20-21 (NIV) 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, **21** so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." -

Romans 6:9-10 (NIV) 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. **10** The death he died, he died to sin **ONCE FOR ALL** but the life he lives, he lives to God.

If we have experienced the grace of God ourselves why are we so reluctant to extend that same grace to others? Maybe it's because some of us do not see our sin as that bad. Or maybe it is because we don't think they are worthy of grace! **May we dare not become people who benefit greatly from God's grace but then fail to extend that same grace to others! Sin is sin in God's eyes and the good news is God's GRACE is greater than ALL our SIN!**

A second ACTION of God's GRACE I want us to see is this, **God's GRACE does not distinguish between DIFFERENT TYPES of PEOPLE**

Where we might distinguish between people based on their merit or value to us personally, the nationality or the color of their skin, God sees ALL people as precious and as beings who bear the image of God. There are no throw-aways when it comes to God! God's desire is that ALL would be saved and come to repentance.

1 Timothy 2:1-7 (NIV) 1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for ALL people— **2** for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. **3** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, **4** who wants ALL people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. **5** For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave himself as a ransom for ALL people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. **7** And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

The Jewish Messiah was not only for the Jews alone. He was for ALL mankind! The covenant promise made to Abraham was that "ALL the nations of the earth would be blessed". Jonah didn't see it that way. He was mad that God would extend His grace to Israel's enemies. We see this with the woman at the well in John 4. The woman was taken aback by the fact that Jesus was willing to engage her at the well even though she was a Samaritan woman and he was a Jew because Jews and Samaritans were intense rivals. We see this with Peter and the Roman Centurion where God led him to go to the Romans house in order to share the Gospel with his entire family even though Jews would not so much as enter into the house of a Roman for fear of becoming unclean.

Jonah 4:4-11(NIV) But the Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?" **5** Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and

waited to see what would happen to the city. **6** Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant[a] and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. **7** But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. **8** When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." **9** But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead." **10** But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. **11** And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

God rebukes Jonah for his lack of compassion for life and his lack of GRACE towards people. What are you concerned about this morning that really makes no difference in the kingdom of God, but it's hindering your obedience? God's grace doesn't distinguish between different types of people and neither should we! God's love and concern is for ALL people. No matter where people are spiritually there is always the potential and opportunity for them to change course and GRACE allows for this opportunity. **God's GRACE is greater than ALL our SIN! God's GRACE does not distinguish between DIFFERENT TYPES of PEOPLE**

And that leads us to the final ACTION concerning God's GRACE, **God's GRACE must be encountered first before a HEART can experience CHANGE**

We see this with Jonah and we see this with the people of Nineveh. It wasn't until Jonah's life was spared by the fish in the storm did Jonah change course regarding what God had asked him to do. And it wasn't until Nineveh heard the grace warning concerning God's pending judgment from Jonah that the people repented and changed their hearts and attitudes toward God.

Jonah 3:1-10 (NIV) **1** Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: (God grants Jonah a second chance to do what He had asked him to do originally) **2** "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." **3** Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. **4** Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." **5** The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. **6** When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. **7** This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. **8** But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. **9** Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." **10** When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

Notice the actions of the people:

- 1) They believed God meant business
- 2) They declared a time of fasting and prayer to ask God for His mercy and grace upon this declaration of judgment
- 3) The King urged the people to give up their evil ways and their violence.

Worship Team Comes Back Up

They received a taste of God's grace and it altered their behavior. How many of us want people to change before we extend them GRACE? God is the exact opposite! Grace by definition is undeserved favor! You and I receiving what we do not deserve. He first extends to us His GRACE. He offers a second chance before we show that they are worthy of a second chance. **Let's PRAY!!**

Invitation:

Who do you need to extend GRACE to? Is there someone who has wronged you or hurt you? Would you extend to them GRACE and give them a second chance?

Are you one who needs a second chance? Maybe you feel you have blown it? God wants to give you another chance just as He gave Jonah and just as He gave Nineveh

Do we care more about our stuff (personal possessions and ourselves more than we do about the souls of those who do not know Him? (If you were Jonah how would you respond?)

Simple obedience is better than great intentions. Surrendering to God's plan is better than being stubborn to it. Make the most of second chances.