

## **Jonah Pt 6 When God's Grace Makes You Angry**

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Jonah / Jonah 4

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# **Introduction: The Mask Comes Off**

We've watched Jonah run. We've watched him sleep through a storm. We've watched him get swallowed by a fish and spit out onto dry land. We've watched him reluctantly walk into Nineveh and preach five words.

And it worked. The whole city repented. The king took off his robe and sat in ashes. Even the cows wore sackcloth. It was one of the most dramatic moments of revival in the entire Bible.

So how does Jonah respond?

He is furious.

Chapter 4 is where the mask finally comes off. Everything Jonah has been hiding beneath the surface now spills out into the open. And what we find is not pretty. But it is honest. And it is uncomfortably familiar.

# Part 1: Jonah's Real Problem (4:1-3)

## The Anger of a Prophet

*"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry." (Jonah 4:1, ESV)*

The word "displeased" in Hebrew comes from the same root as the word for "evil." Jonah sees God's mercy as a great evil. He is not mildly irritated. He is burning.

And now, for the first time, he tells us why he ran.

## The Real Confession

*"And he prayed to the LORD and said, 'O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.'" (Jonah 4:2, ESV)*

This is the most important verse in the book.

Back in Lesson 1, we raised the question: why did Jonah

run? It wasn't fear. He wasn't afraid of the Ninevites. He was afraid of God's kindness toward them.

Now he says it out loud.

But look at what he does with those words. The phrase "gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" is a direct quote from Exodus 34:6. That is God's own self-description. It is one of the most beloved texts in all of Scripture. The Hebrew people treasured those words. They sang them. They prayed them.

And Jonah throws them back at God as an insult.

You can almost hear the disgust in his voice. "I knew you were going to do this. I knew you were too kind to let them burn. That's why I ran."

He is quoting God's glory and treating it like a character flaw.

## **The Death Wish**

*"Therefore now, O LORD, please take away my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah 4:3, ESV)*

Jonah would rather die than live in a world where God forgives his enemies.

That is not a small statement. That is a man whose hatred has consumed everything. He has lost all perspective. He is so locked into his own worldview, his own tribal identity, his own small vision of who deserves grace, that he cannot see straight.

He cuts off the conversation and asks God to kill him.

## **Part 2: God Doesn't Comply (4:4)**

*"And the LORD said, 'Do you do well to be angry?'" (Jonah 4:4, ESV)*

God doesn't argue. He doesn't lecture. He doesn't strike Jonah down.

He asks a question.

That's worth noticing. God meets Jonah's worst moment with patience. He doesn't match Jonah's heat with heat. He asks one simple, searching question.

"Do you do well to be angry?"

Jonah doesn't answer. He gets up and walks away.

## **Part 3: The Waiting Game (4:5)**

*"Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city." (Jonah 4:5, ESV)*

Jonah builds a little shelter and camps outside the city. He is still watching. Still waiting. Maybe God will change His mind and destroy them after all.

This is a picture of a man who cannot let go. He sits in his self-made shelter, alone on a hill, clinging to the hope that destruction is still coming.

Meanwhile, the city he just preached to is celebrating. And Jonah sits outside.

## **Part 4: The Plant, the Worm, and the Wind (4:6-8)**

### **God Appoints a Plant**

*"Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save*

*him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant." (Jonah 4:6, ESV)*

God sends a plant to give Jonah shade. And for the first time in the whole story, Jonah is happy.

Not when the sailors turned to God. Not when the fish spat him out alive. Not when an entire city repented. A shade plant makes him happy.

That detail alone tells you everything about where Jonah's heart is.

## **God Appoints a Worm**

*"But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered." (Jonah 4:7, ESV)*

The worm destroys the plant. The shade is gone.

## **God Appoints a Scorching Wind**

*"When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'" (Jonah 4:8, ESV)*

Jonah is back where he started. Angry. Miserable. Asking to die.

Notice the word "appointed" again. God appointed the fish. God appointed the plant. God appointed the worm. God appointed the wind. Nothing in this story is random. Every detail is a tool in God's hands.

God is setting up a lesson.

## God Asks Again

*"But God said to Jonah, 'Do you do well to be angry for the plant?' And he said, 'Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.'" (Jonah 4:9, ESV)*

God asks the same question a second time. And this time, Jonah answers.

"Yes. I do well to be angry. Let me die."

Those are the last words Jonah speaks in the book. Not a prayer of repentance. Not a moment of clarity. Just bitter, defiant anger.

## Part 5: God's Final Word

## (4:10-11)

*"And the LORD said, 'You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?'" (Jonah 4:10-11, ESV)*

God speaks last. And what He says is devastating in the best way.

He walks Jonah through a simple comparison:

- You feel deep emotion over a plant. You didn't make it. You didn't tend it. You only enjoyed it for a day.
- And you think that's justified?
- Should I not feel at least that much for an entire city full of people?

The phrase "who do not know their right hand from their left" is a picture of lostness. These are people who are spiritually confused. They don't know which way is up. They haven't rejected the truth. They've never really seen it.

And God cares about them. Deeply.

Then there's the final detail: "and also much cattle."

Only in Jonah. Only in this book does God mention the cows. But it's not a joke. It's the point. God's compassion extends to every living thing in that city. He loves what He made. All of it.

## **The Book Ends with a Question**

That's it. No resolution. No response from Jonah. God asks His question and the story stops.

That is intentional.

The author leaves the question hanging in the air because the question is not really for Jonah. It's for you.

"Should I not pity Nineveh?"

God is asking you for permission to love your enemy. And the story waits for your answer.

## **Part 6: The Mirror**

The book of Jonah holds up a mirror. When we look at Jonah, we see ourselves.

We laugh at Jonah sulking on his hill, waiting for his enemies to burn. And then we remember the person we've written off. The family member we won't forgive. The group of people we quietly hope God deals with harshly.

We quote God's grace as praise on Sunday mornings. And then we treat it like an insult when it lands on someone we don't like.

Jonah is not a villain from a distant world. He is us.

And that is exactly what this book is designed to make us feel. Because when we see the Jonah in ourselves, one of two things happens. We either dig in harder and stay on the hill. Or we are humbled.

And if we are humbled, something changes. We stop demanding that grace be limited to people who look and think and live like us. We start asking God to widen our hearts to match His.

## **Part 7: Jesus, the Better Jonah**

Jonah fails at every point where Jesus succeeds. That contrast is worth sitting with.

### **The Mission**

Jonah is sent to his enemies and runs the other way.

Jesus leaves heaven and comes toward His enemies willingly. In Romans 5:10, Paul says we were "enemies" of God, and Christ died for us anyway. Jesus didn't need to be pushed toward us. He came.

## **The Heart**

Jonah resents mercy for Nineveh.

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, the city that will reject and crucify Him. In Luke 19:41, as He approaches the city, He looks at it and weeps. Not anger. Grief. He is heartbroken over the people who are about to kill Him.

## **The Death Wish**

Jonah asks to die because he can't stand a world where his enemies are forgiven.

Jesus chooses to die so that His enemies can be forgiven. That is the same situation, completely reversed.

Jonah says, "Let me die rather than see them pardoned."

Jesus says, in effect, "Let me die so that they can be

pardoned."

## **The Three Days**

Jonah spends three days and nights in the belly of the fish.

Jesus spends three days in the grave.

Jesus Himself makes this connection in Matthew 12:40:

*"For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (ESV)*

Jonah's rescue from the fish points forward to the resurrection. And the resurrection is the proof that "salvation belongs to the LORD." Not to our merit. Not to our moral record. To the LORD alone.

## **The Response of the Nations**

The men of Nineveh repented at Jonah's bare, reluctant, five-word sermon.

Jesus says in Matthew 12:41:

*"The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the*

*preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here." (ESV)*

If a city of pagans turned to God at Jonah's weakest effort, what does it mean when we ignore Jesus? His life, His teaching, His death, His resurrection are the full and final word of God. The contrast is enormous.

## **The Good News**

Jonah's story is ultimately good news. Not because Jonah gets it right, but because God never stops pursuing. God pursues Jonah. God pursues the sailors. God pursues Nineveh. God pursues us.

And Jesus is the fullest expression of that pursuit. He is God coming all the way to the bottom to find us. He is the prophet who didn't run. He is the one whose heart broke for His enemies instead of hardening against them.

Where Jonah sat on a hill waiting for Nineveh to burn, Jesus climbed a hill called Golgotha and died so that the world could live.

That is the better Jonah. And that is the gospel.

## **Part 8: Application**

# The Question God Is Asking You

God ends the book of Jonah with a question. He still asks it today.

"Should I not pity that great city?"

Fill in your own version:

- "Should I not care about that person who hurt you?"
- "Should I not pursue that group of people you've written off?"
- "Should I not love your enemy the same way I love you?"

How you answer that question reveals the condition of your heart.

## Where Are You in This Story?

Some of us are Jonah on the hill, bitter and waiting. We know God is calling us to extend grace, and we are refusing.

Some of us are in the fish right now. We ran, and life has hit hard.

Some of us are the sailors, just beginning to see who God is

and responding with genuine awe.

Wherever you are, the message is the same. God is pursuing. God is patient. God's mercy is wider than you think. And He is asking you to let that mercy change the way you see the people around you.

## **The Jonah in All of Us**

Here's the grace in this story: God never gives up on Jonah. Even at the end, when Jonah is sitting in the heat, bitter and defiant, God is still talking to him. Still asking questions. Still trying to get through.

That means God doesn't give up on the Jonah in us either.