

October 14, 2018
RELENTLESS - Part 3
“The Mercy of God”

Does Jonah reminds us of the older brother in Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son?

Luke 15:32 (NLT): “We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!”

Jesus tells this parable as a picture of just how loving and merciful God, our Heavenly Father, is, even when it’s *not deserved*.

Both sons sinned, in different ways, yet the father loved each of them, and that’s so much like what’s happening in Jonah.

Jonah 3:10 (ESV): “When God saw what [the Ninevites] did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.”

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

Jonah 4:2 (ESV): “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 says he fled to Tarshish in the beginning because he understood the character of God, that He would be gracious “and merciful.”

Exodus 34:6-7 (ESV): “⁶The LORD passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...’”

chesed (Hebrew) - translated “faithful love” (HCSB), “steadfast love” (ESV), “kindness” (KJV), “lovingkindness” (NASB), and “love” (NIV); best New Testament translation: *agape* (Greek), meaning “unconditional love.”

God has a relentless, unconditional love for His creations, and though this doesn’t mean He won’t also be just, it means His *desire* is to be merciful if at all possible.

We may default to the attitude of the older son, who didn't feel it was right for his father to be gracious to his brother, overlooking the thousand little ways his father had been gracious *to him* over the years.

Jonah 4:3-4 (ESV): “³Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.’ ⁴And the LORD said, ‘Do you do well to be angry?’”

NIV translation of the LORD's question: “Have you any right to be angry?”

Jonah 4:5 (ESV): “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 should see what would become of the city.”

Jonah 4:6 (ESV): “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.”

We can take that mercy and grace for granted, so that when we don't get or even lose what we had or thought we deserved, we feel like we've been cheated.

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

Jonah 4:8 (ESV): “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 discovers the hard way, perhaps without even realizing it, just how much he likes God's mercy.

Jonah 4:9-11 (ESV): “⁹But 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.’ ¹⁰And 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. ¹¹And 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's anger is because his only concern is for himself and *he didn't get what he wanted!*

We can presume on God's grace and think we've earned or deserved everything we have, when we really don't understand just how dependent we are on God and His grace every day.

1 John 4:19-21 (ESV): “¹⁹We love because [God] first loved us. ²⁰If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

God’s relentless love for us invites us to love those around us.

The Bible doesn’t tell us what happens to Jonah or the older brother - it tells us our free will and self-seeking sinful nature can still reject God’s will and love for us and never seek out the least, the last and the lost.

Who is God calling you to go to, to seek out, to befriend and walk alongside and love?

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Onscreen Notes

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