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**Transcribed Message  
May 24, 2026  
Jonah 4**

**Message: Do You See What I See?**

This morning, we are going to take a look at the book of Jonah. This is every kid's ministry pastor's dream, right? Because we talk about this book, and the kids understand, but we usually just focus on that high level, right? Jonah is the embodiment of most children. He was told to do something, and he said, no, I'm not going to do that. It was insisted that he needed to do that, and instead he ran away from the task. God put him right where he needed to have him, and he did it with a grumpy heart. I mean, that is the epitome of almost every child I've interacted with as they've grown up. I think it definitely can relate to me, and I'm hoping that as we kind of peel that back a little bit, there's a depth underneath that of which it's speaking more to the people of Israel during Jonah's day. So, we'll dive into that as we get going.

Today's scripture is going to be Jonah chapter 4, and it's all 11 verses. I'm going to read them for us, and then we'll pray, and we'll get started. Chapter 4. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 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.

Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. And the Lord said, do you do well to be angry? And Jonah went out of the city, and he sat to the east of the city, and he made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.

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. But when dawn came up on the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered.

And 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. 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.

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 I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons, who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?

Lord, we come before you this morning seeking to dive deep into your word, because there's a lot of context here on the surface, but there's also a layer underneath. And that's what we seek to understand better, and to take from it, or to learn, to go deeper in our relationship as a body, as individuals, with our responsibilities, and all the things that you lay our hands to.

And so I ask, Father, that you give me the ability to speak clearly, to simply be the mouthpiece of the word that you want to share, to get out of the way, and let your message go forth, and to touch the hearts of your people, as we study this morning. Be with us now, in the name of your Son, Jesus, Amen.

So being that we're kind of jumping into the tail end of the book, I thought I'd give a little bit of context. It's hard to pick up, and maybe you haven't looked at the book of Jonah in a while. This morning's theme, because I saw it on the slides, and I totally forgot to say it, is, Do You See What I See? And it's really the question of do you see things the way that God sees them? And we'll get a little bit of that through Jonah, but also the greater image of what's going on in and around Jonah. See, there's a layer underneath this of the people of Israel in Jonah's day, and they needed this message as well.

Let's start first with our prophet. We have Jonah himself. He was from Gath-Hefer, which is a little town about three miles away from Nazareth. It's a little funny when people say, during Jesus' day, could anything good come from Nazareth? He was a prophet of that same region. And sometimes the Jewish nation looks down upon prophets that speak to the Gentiles. Kind of like, yeah, he's a lesser prophet. It's not that important. He didn't

speak to the Jews. He was, I mean, honestly, he stirred up our enemies against us, and he gave them mercy and grace. That's not normal. We kind of put that on the side and say, you know, he was a prophet, but just barely.

We see that Jonah was given a mission. A call was put upon his heart. He was to be sent out. He fought against that. God had to take him from where he was and send him to where he needed to be. He gave that message, that eight-word message, and it was the largest revival in history. Yet his heart was not revived in that. He watched what was happening with disgust. If we look maybe a step back, where was Jonah? Where was Israel in this time?

If we look at the northern kingdom, we have the reign of Jeroboam II. It's from 793 to 753 BC, and there's three separate prophets during this period, in this reign of the king. That should be a key to say, things really weren't going too well. If God sends three different prophets to speak to this nation (Amos, Hosea, and Jonah) within this time period, there's obviously something brewing up under the surface.

But let's just look at some of the stats about Israel during this day. It was a wonderful period of great expansion. They had prosperity. They were taking back land that they had lost, not to the scope of the promised land, but they had definitely taken back a lot of that land that they had lost to the Assyrians and other nations that were oppressing them harshly. There was relative peace amongst the peoples of the neighboring countries. They weren't constantly at war and trying to defeat them and trying to hold their land. They even had gained power and influence in the region. They were considered the superpower of the day, which is, you know, ironic as you see the split of the nations and you think, man, the northern kingdom just keeps messing up and messing up. But then we get this king, and we see all this prosperity, and we're wondering, like, is everything actually going better? Have they turned a corner? Are things getting to the state where they should be? Well, that's the surface level when you look exterior from what the world sees.

But if you look internally, we see that the reign of Jeroboam II was this paradox of outward success but inward rot. They were about as far from God as they could be. They had erected idols. They had raised up other things to put them in front of God and lessen

the priority. They had walked away from their faith and focused solely on living for the day and being prosperous themselves. And we see that through that, God is going to speak through Hosea and through Amos and even through Jonah to speak to Gentile nations to say, Israel, if you don't wake up and walk away from your sinful ways, there is a judgment coming for you.

Now, let's zoom out a little bit more and look at the nation of Assyria, its greatest enemy, the one that would always come after Israel. There were always hostilities around this. And for generations, they had constantly been trying to destroy Israel, take land from them, oppress them. But all of a sudden, during this period, we see the great expansion of Israel's territory because Assyria started to have internal struggles. There was civil unrest springing up. There were rebellions and different subgroups trying to take over authority and power. And so, the nation had to turn inward to protect itself. They couldn't mount a standing army. They couldn't aggressively seek after other nations. They kind of had to shore up their own borders and make sure things were okay. As a result of their decline, we see the prosperity that happens in Israel.

What else we know about the Assyrians is they were absolutely vile people. The way that they lived their life and the things that they would do as they conquered other nations. They would chain people together with hooks through the nose or ears or mouth. And as people would be marched off as prisoners, if they died, they would just simply cut them free and leave the bodies on the side of the road. No respect for anybody. Specifically, at the very most hostile battles, they would take those towns and they would decapitate the people and put them in a pillar in front of the town to say, this is what happens when you oppose Assyria. They would skin people and hang the skins from the walls of the city. Absolutely atrocious things.

When we look at the book of Jonah, I too could probably have the heart of Jonah and say, why would you save these people? Look at how horrible they are. Surely there's a different way to accomplish your will. And we'll dive into that a little bit.

But we've seen now the people, the place, and what God was doing. So let's break down our scripture this morning. Jonah chapter 4 has three sections that we could look at

it. First is that God hears him. He's going to listen to Jonah in his complaints. Second, he comforts him in his misery. He seeks to help give him a little bit of reprieve through his own struggles. And finally, he's going to teach him in the very end in 9 through 11. And that's where we get to our theme and our title for today is, Do You See What I See? After he allows him to walk through that journey, he's going to finally challenge him to open up his eyes. So, without further ado, let's get started.

Go back to verse 1. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. The words here in the Hebrew, the anger is a seething anger. Jonah was furious with God. Jonah was so disgusted with what he was seeing before his eyes as he sits in this region, as he sees what's happening with this people. It's almost as if he's accusing God of looking the other way and saying, you're just letting them get away with murder, literally. It's like a disappointed father looking at their child, their teenage daughter when she brings home her first boyfriend. And like, oh man, look at this goober. Like, I can't believe and what am I, you know, I'm just going to lay into this guy, get out of here. It's that level of disgust, absolute misery as he sees what's going on before him.

We also see that through Jonah, the nation of Israel had kind of become accustomed to the fact that God would destroy their enemies. And so, he's kind of expecting the same thing, right? How many times in the book of Judges is there persecution and struggle and God raises up a judge and then destroys those enemies and then there's a relative peace. The angel comes and then 185,000 are killed in a night and Israel's spared. All these different instances where there just is this expectation that God's always with us. God's going to protect us. God's going to find a way to make it all work out. But not offer our enemies salvation, not these horrible people. God, you don't do that, right? It's us, we're your chosen people.

That strong sense of national pride was misguided because the Israelites thought that it was because of them that they were God's elect and chosen people. But there was nothing special about them except for God choosing them. The Lord can choose who he wants to raise up and put down. It is a hundred percent his responsibility. And they're just

to be the model, the example that we all should seek to live like and to honor and cherish that relationship with him.

Yet how many times did they fall away from that into the temptation to sin with the world around them? If we look at Jeremiah 18, it talks a little bit about this. ...declares the Lord. ...not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I am intended to do. See, the Lord has a perfect plan and we don't know to the depth of what he's planning to do, how he desires to use people who we may look at and say, there's no way. Or those that have a stirred up heart change and to say, I don't believe it. He's in charge of all that. We are just called to faithfully follow after the plan he lays before us. Get your eyes away from looking to your right and to left but just look up and focus on the next right step for you.

So, let's continue on with our anti-hero Jonah here as he prays in verse 2. He prays to the Lord and says, O Lord, is not this what I said to you when I was yet in my country? This 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. What a pretty poor prayer that is, right? He is complaining to the Lord and saying, you are so gracious and kind and wonderful. Oh, it's disgusting.

Have you ever been so right but so horribly wrong? You can see things, you can say the right words, but your heart is just rotten, or you're misinterpreting what God's trying to do. You're seeing it from the lens of your own eyes and the way that you want to manipulate the situation instead of what God desires to do. I'll share an example as this happened in our house, not to me, thankfully, but my little guy Gabe. He's five years old. He is a linguist in that he loves learning new words, okay? And some of his favorite words that he's picked up at pre-K and from his sisters are the naughty words of which he's not supposed to use, but they elicit such a great reaction. He's excited to share those words, one of which is shut up. That is an absolute favorite. He comes up with songs, Mary had a little shut up. He sings it to himself. Sometimes when he's in trouble and he's in his room, we have a camera so we can keep an eye on him so he doesn't try to escape. And in the middle of the night, he'll sit up. It's like he's pumping himself up, shut up, shut up. And you can see his little raccoon. It's terrifying to see and I pray for him daily and you should as well.

But we were outside one day doing some yard work and we had taken a break and I like to say that Gabe bebops around because he can't just walk. He's hopping around everywhere and he's constantly on the move. He can't sit still. So, we take a break, we're sitting outside and we're resting, getting some water, getting ready for the next round of some yard work. And he's jumping around as usual and he jumps up on something that he's not supposed to. He knows he's not supposed to. Gets in trouble every time he does. I see him and say, Gabe, hop down. He does. About 30 seconds later, hopping around again, jumps back up there. Gabe, seriously man, get off, you're going to get hurt. If you jump up there again, consequences and you need to go in the house. Okay, you know, finally, maybe he's getting it. Walk away, here comes mom. He hops right up there again. Mom says, hey, consequence, you're going in the house now. And as he turns away from us, he says, shut. And mom just snaps. What were you going say? And all of a sudden, he turns around and there's look of panic in his eyes. You know, that deer in the headlight. Fight or flight. What do I do? And this is what he comes out with. No, mom, what I was saying is Jesus in the boat with the disciples and the storm and he said, shh, shh, shh, peace, be still. Now, as a father, I wrestle here, right? Because I'm very upset with my son. But I'm very proud that he recalled the word. I mean, he misapplied that in this situation, but special thanks to Mrs. Fairchild and those in room nine for pouring into my son and being patient with him because he is learning. We've got to work on where he applies it, but he's definitely learning.

And so, Jonah here, that same situation, he knows the word. He knows what it means, but he is just disgusted with what God is doing. Now, there could be three reasons why this happened. One is that national pride, right? He's got the expectation that the people of God would be destroyed and that God's people would be saved. That had become kind of a family tradition. We see that in Jesus's day, right? We see the fact that Jesus shows up, he's preaching a new gospel, something that should be revolutionary and connecting with our hearts, but the religious leaders are just like, nope, get that out of here. We don't want to hear that. You're going to disturb this gentle peace, this very delicate peace that we have with Rome. None of that.

He also believed that Nineveh's idolatry and horrible behaviors and all the things that they did, that was unworthy of God's grace and mercy. There is no way that these guys would get a pass. They deserved to be destroyed. We also see that maybe he was aware of what Amos and Hosea were saying in the same time. Maybe he was aware of what was going on back home, right? He knew things weren't great. Maybe there was some fear about the fact that, if Nineveh is saved, then what's going to happen at home? How's this going to work?

You know, what he really should have been thinking is, wow, I can't believe this entire place came to the Lord and then started pouring into them, like, hey, let me teach you about who God is and who he can be in your life. Their hearts were tender to receive that and instead he just walked away. And then he should have gone back home and said, God worked in Nineveh in ways in which I could not explain. If God would do this for our enemies, surely he's with us. We need to get our hearts right. He should have caused a revival back home. We don't get any record of that.

We see in what he's stating in verse two, he is almost verbatim quoting Exodus 34:6. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. This could have been a great heart change for Jonah. This could have been a great time to wake up and realize, wow, I am way off base. But instead he digs in, like the elder brother in the story of the prodigal son. Now his older son was in the field and he came and he drew near to the house. He heard music and dancing, and he called one of the servants and asked, what has this thing meant? And he said to him, your brother has come and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has received him back safe and sound. But he was angry and he refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, look at these many years that I have served you. I have never disobeyed your command. Yet you never gave me a young goat that I may celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who had devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him.

What a hostile heart. He should be able to rejoice in seeing his lost brother come home, seeing his father restore him. And that's a picture of our relationship with the Lord. We should never look around and see people that come to the Lord and look down upon them. I'm guilty of this too. Sometimes seeing somebody come to the Lord and just wondering, ah, it's not going to last. It's just for show. It's not going to stick. They don't mean it. It's not genuine. We need to have a heart to rejoice every time somebody comes to the Lord and to help encourage them and strengthen them. Because they're going to come to the hostilities of Satan's attack.

I remember when I first came to my faith, there was a lot of stuff that it was like, do I understand the word? Can I speak on God's behalf? A lot of challenges rose up early on. Those baby believers need to have like-minded Christians building them up as they're growing.

And so, as we continue on, let's take a look at verse three. This is kind of the crescendo of Jonah's pity party. This is, I would rather die than see my own will get played out. I can't believe you're doing this. I can't see. I don't understand. I would rather die than see you act this way, Lord. This is disgraceful. Or even, what about my reputation as a prophet? How am I going to go home and say, hey, I gave God's hard word to Nineveh. The whole place kind of accepted it. And they're all saved. I mean, shouldn't we rejoice? Aren't they going to look at him like, are you kidding me? These are our enemies. You did what? I mean, he's going to walk back with his tail between his legs. He's going to be terrified. The false prophet who saved a nation that didn't deserve it.

It's another clue of how far God's people had fallen in this time period. Jonah exemplifies that. Because we see through him a heart of wickedness, a heart of deceit, of putting their own priorities ahead of what God wanted to do. So, for me, that was a great reminder to always check myself and say, what am I doing? And is it for the Lord from the Lord? Or is it something that I want to do for my own benefit? Am I taking away something from this? Or is God being honored in this? I try to always think through that when I'm talking to people, or when I'm sharing the gospel, or even talking to the kids in the back. Is this going to encourage them to press into a relationship with God? Or is this going to

encourage them to look at me? Because I'm doing such a great job. I constantly tell them, I don't deserve to be up here. It was only because of God's grace that I get any opportunity to share the word.

Now we look at the Lord's response. What does he say? He says, and the Lord said, do you do well to be angry? What he's really asking is, is this anger for me? Is it righteous? Is it justified? Should you feel this way because of me? Or is this because of you? Is this rising up in you? And where is it coming from? I kind of view this as a parent. It's kind of that sarcastic sadness. You see a response that's really not in tone with what it should be. Like an over the top, dramatic outburst or an unbelievable hostility towards something and not understanding why.

My little guy Gabe, sometimes he gets into these cycles where he's just so pent up with anger or irritation or overtired and it just lashes out in his physical body. And sometimes we have to kind of restrain him because he can hurt himself and hurt other people. And it's that same kind of thing. He's just beyond the capacity of his own emotions and he just needs to calm down. Jonah is just so inwardly focused on himself and just so rotten of what he's feeling and thinking and can't rationalize what the Lord is trying to accomplish.

Warren Wiersbe has a great statement here in his commentary. When reputation is more important than character, and pleasing ourself and our friends is more important than pleasing God, we are in danger of becoming like Jonah and living to defend our prejudices instead of fulfilling our spiritual responsibilities. Each and every person is given an opportunity and a ministry to talk and to share with other people. But when we put our own thoughts ahead of God's, our own desires ahead of what he wants to do, it hurts the kingdom. And it hurts our ability to continue in that.

Often the Lord will allow you to walk down those paths and deal with the consequences and then he's still going to be there to help pick you up. Dust you off and say, hey, that was a stumble. It's okay, we'll turn this around. Come back to me. Refresh your mind on my word. Press into your relationship with those believers around you and let's get back out there.

Let's transition now to verse 5. We see here two things. That after the encounter with God, his heart remains unchanged. There's a city desperately in need of encouragement as they grow. He should be there to see this great revival and to help encourage those as they're stepping into their faith. This city was massive. It took him three days' journey to walk from one end to the other. And all we see him do is walk through, say his eight words. We don't even know if he spoke to the leadership or if he just said it in a city square and it spread like wildfire and then the leaders heard, threw on ash and sackcloth and there was a massive, massive change of hearts. Jonah could have just done his small task, checked the box because he said, well, I did what you told me to do, Lord.

And then off he goes. He leaves the city and he goes up a safe distance away. He gets his lawn chair. He sits it down and he's going to watch. Because maybe, just maybe, they didn't mean it. Or maybe, maybe God's really going to do it anyway, right? I mean, they deserve it. He backs off and he wants to see what's going to happen.

I think sometimes in our faith, we can struggle with that too. We want to observe what's going on and see how it's all going to turn out. I've seen a lot of times as people go and ministries get larger and then they become more public, there's always this temptation that the leaders may fall. And it's tragic to see that. We wonder like, oh, when's the next scandal going to pop up for this church? Or oh, this church is doing a lot of great things. I wonder when the leader is going to have struggles with finances or other things. And so, we become kind of looking negatively on all the things that God's doing because we're wondering, is this real? Is this going to last? And that's the same kind of thing Jonah's struggling with. Is this genuine? Is this really going to happen? Why? Still struggling with the "why".

Jonah's kind of this emotional mixed-up bag. We've got distress and misery and discomfort. I mean, he had just been spit out of a giant fish. Probably bleached from the internal stomach acids. Struggling with those physical issues and trying to cope with all that as he sits out in the sun getting sunburnt. Mixed up about all this and what God is trying to do. He's got misfortune and injury from this journey of fighting against what God is trying to accomplish. The calamity and the disaster of getting thrown off the boat, in the

fish, here at Tarshish, here at Nineveh, sharing the message, seeing the outcome, being disgusted with it. He's got this moral evil inside of him because he wants to see other humans destroyed. Doesn't care who they are. Doesn't care what God wants to do. And worst of all, he's got an ill-disposed evil attitude because he grabs his lawn chair and he wants to be front row center to see it happen. A genocide of an entire people group. He was not in a good way, for sure.

But then we see all of a sudden, this plant pops up, and in that, we see he is overjoyed. He is absolutely over the moon with this small bit of comfort, and I think the reason is because his own personal comfort was prioritized in that one small moment. His selfishness takes root. He says, oh, finally some relief after all this stuff I've had to go through. And he is woefully far away from the heart of Job. If we look at Job 1:20 and 21, then Job arose, and he tore his robe, and he shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said, naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return. The Lord gave, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

This plant that sprung up is likely a castor bean or a castor oil plant, which for the region were fairly common, and one of the distinguishing characteristics is they could quickly spring up due to the high heat. They grew very rapidly. They could almost get to 12 feet tall usually, and had very broad leaves, so great for shade. But one of the unfortunate characteristics of this plant is that the stem was very delicate, and any sort of damage to it could easily make it wither, which Jonah, unfortunately, will see here soon.

We also see that God never walked away from him. He still had a concern for his poor, poor Jonah, and all his internal angst, and everything he was wrestling with. God never abandoned him in that struggle. He stayed with him and kept counseling him through. We see a true heart like we hear from Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5. See that no one repays evil for evil but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything and hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every evil thought.

Now, if we look at what happens to this plant in verse 7. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant so that it withered. You know, I was looking at this, and Heather made fun of me because I'm a biologist by education, but if you look at a worm, this is just your everyday earthworm, okay? Maybe an inch long, or maybe 12 inches long, roughly. You know, that's about the average. No thicker than a pencil. Earthworms have no teeth. They have just a circular mouth of which they kind of suck things in, and that's how they eat. This worm was unnamed, called by God. The word said he was appointed by God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, with a special mission and purpose to ruin someone's day.

The word "attack" here is smoked. Like David and Goliath, like the angel that wiped out 185,000, this worm was given a task, and he went at it vigorously because that plant fell. And the next day when Jonah woke up, that sun beat down upon his head as God had intended, hopefully to wake him up from his stupor. It is amazing to me to see all of this happening and Jonah to be completely oblivious. Even the worms obey God! So, this hot scorching wind rises up, and it's an attempt to capture Jonah's heart. Now, it's an atypical wind because usually in this region, the winds that would come off the mountains and would bring cool air, would bring rain and nourish the land. But this one was different. This had a purpose. This was sent by God specifically to challenge Jonah.

Again, we see him rise up in his discomfort, and what does he proclaim? Not, Lord, forgive me, but, Lord, kill me now. So, let's dive into our last section and take a look at verses 9 through 11. I'll read them for you. 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. And the Lord said, You pity the plant for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came up into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left?

God's challenging him, just like he did earlier in verse 4. Do you do right to be angry? Are you so thoroughly consumed by your anger? Does it burn righteously inside you? Now, we see that Jonah's response, again, is just wrapped up in his feelings and his emotions.

He just lashes out. And he's saying, it's so bad that I would rather die than have to endure this.

And maybe think of the story of Samson and Delilah in Judges 16. And she said to him, How can you say I love you when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, all the while she's trying to get him and lead him unto death. And you have not told me where your great strength lies. And when she pressed him hard and her words day after day and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. He was just absolutely destroyed because she wouldn't stop, she wouldn't let it go. And that's the same thing here with Jonah. He just couldn't come to terms with what was happening. He couldn't realize what God was trying to do. He refused to see how God was working, and he just wanted to perish. Just end the pain, Lord.

A great quote that I had from another commentator: Unrighteous anger feeds the ego and produces the poison of selfishness in the heart. We see truly and genuinely that Jonah refused to surrender his heart to God, and he was exemplifying the people of God in this time frame. They refused to come back to the Lord. God sent prophet after prophet saying, Repent. I know your wicked ways. I know what you're doing. I'm telling you what it's going to lead you to. But it came in the ear, and it didn't penetrate the heart. It went right back out, and they continued down that same path of prosperity. They said, Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die, because there is nothing better than right here, right now. It is so wonderful. Completely oblivious to the peril that would come in the future.

God was saying that your eminent destruction is coming, and I am trying to warn you to save you, but you refuse to hear. So, this kind of reinforces for us that great, that missionary expectation. Look around. See who is in need of the word. God will put you in the place that he needs you to be, and he'll give you the words to share. There have been many times in my life where God simply moved me into something that I was not prepared for.

We live next to a man who was older, and he was going through dialysis and decided to discontinue. So, he made a decision, in essence, to let it go the direction it's going to go. And one day his daughter called him and came over the house and said, hey, can you come

help me? I need to get my dad out of his chair. And through that, we started having a relationship with this family. I got to know them. I got to be with him at his last breath. I got to be with him as this family wrestled, losing the patriarch. I wasn't ready for that. I was early in the ministry. I didn't know the right words to say. Sitting at the deathbed of somebody, what do you say? How do you comfort him? How do you comfort the people around him? I got to do his funeral, and all those things. And through that, we've had an enduring relationship with his family. But it was only because I said yes to what the Lord wanted to do, and because I took that next step, and I made myself available. And that's the call for each and every one of us. Your call may look different. It may be very small. It may be in your home, or in your community, or at your church, or at your school, or your place of business. But take that opportunity to be the mouthpiece for God. And then, like Jonah, don't leave it there, but follow on. If there's an open door for continued fellowship, keep pressing into that.

And so, we see the ending of the chapter, and we're thinking, all right, this surely has to turn out better, right? This surely has to have a happy ending. We're always looking for that happy ending. We don't see that. In verse 11, it just ends. There's no "to be continued", or see 1 Kings, or see 2Chronicles. That's it. That's the end of the story. So, what's the purpose of that?

Oh, let me back up. Sorry, I missed one point here. So, the ending statement, as he's making about the plant, and connecting it to Jonah, and then trying to explain Nineveh, this is called a fortiori argument. And it's, if the accepted premise is true, a second, the latest premise must be even more certainly true. So, he's relating the fact that this plant is something you cared about deeply, but I care so much more about the 120,000 or more people in this city that would have perished, had they continued down that path. He's trying to draw that correlation for Jonah, but again, he's not seeing it.

We know that this story had an impact, even on our Lord Jesus, in the New Testament. Matthew 12, he references Jonah in this great work. For just as Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of a great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment of the

generation to condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And behold, something greater than Jonah is here. He acknowledges the fact that these people changed their hearts. They will be with us in paradise.

How crazy is that? That people who are antagonistic towards the Word, and had been oppressing God's people, will be able to celebrate us with us in heaven. Now you would think that that should encourage Jonah, but it does not. Some say, what's the point, right? Because we know, ultimately, Assyria does go back to their wicked ways. In about 50 years or so, all those people maybe have died off, maybe have walked away. We're not quite sure.

So, what was the point? Why? Well, he kind of ends with that. There are people who don't know their left hand from the right hand. There are young ones, young in their faith, but also young children, which that message could touch their hearts. Think of the people of this generation, those nations which are hostile to us: Iran, North Korea. Think of situations where there's just wickedness in the world. God hasn't turned his back on those people. There's always an opportunity to turn it around. That's the statement he's making here. You may see with your human eyes and say, they're lost forever, but I'm telling you they're not. I haven't given up on them, and you shouldn't either.

In any situation we walk through, and anytime we see an opportunity, or even when we see somebody come to the Lord and then struggle in their faith and walk away, it doesn't mean they're lost forever. It means that it's an opportunity, maybe for us, to rise up and fill that gap to say, hey, I see you struggling. Or hey, I know you're working through something. Or even, hey, I haven't seen your church in a while. Or hey, maybe you want to learn something about the Lord, I'd love to share with you. Capture those opportunities.

Ultimately, in the end of it all, it's really that we want to see God's mission transpire in our life. We want to see what He wills to do come to fruition, not what we want God to do. That was Jonah's struggle. He put his opinion above the Lord's mission, and he said, not your will, Lord, my will be done. I know better. Never find yourself in that position.

So, with that, what can we take away from what we've studied this morning? And the worship team can make their way back up. So just a couple points that I had noted.

One, be attentive to the leading of the Spirit. Don't be hard-hearted. Proceed forward with open hands as an opportunity just to be used in any way that you can and be overjoyed in it. I love the fact that I get to share with you guys. I love the fact that I get to pour into the kids and sports camp and all these opportunities. It's just a way for me to say thank you, Lord, for sparing me for all the horrible things I've done. I don't deserve this, but you did it anyway because you loved me.

Realize that God's plan is far greater and bigger and mightier than anything you could lay before. So be willing to flex when it doesn't seem right or doesn't make sense. And it would also seem that the harder we try to run from the plan of God, the more difficult things can become. If you sense the walls pressing in, if you sense the doors closing, you might be out of alignment with God, and in that you might be on a ship to Joppa, and you might just end up in the belly of a fish.

I had thought through this in a couple different ways and just thinking about it. So here at Covenant we've talked a lot about know, love, live. We've talked as a staff how to make that relatable, and so as I was thinking through this, it was kind of a checklist. If we look at the life of Jonah, does Jonah know God? I'm going to say yes. He knew what the word meant. He knew who God was, and he knew in his heart what God wanted to accomplish. So, I'm going to say yes. Check the box there.

Did he love others? Well, if you're a Jew, yes, he did. But if you're anybody else, no, he did not. And we see that in the way that he acts, thinks, and speaks. Did he live out the gospel? I would say no. He fulfilled the obligation. He laid down those eight words in the text. He told the people, Nineveh will be destroyed. Check. Job well done. But he didn't have the heart of the gospel to truly pour into them, to encourage them, to strengthen them on that journey. That's what I leave you with. Make sure you find those opportunities for yourself.

Let's pray. Lord, we come this morning just excited about what your word says to us and how it speaks to our hearts. I pray for your people as we depart here, Lord, to celebrate this long holiday weekend that we focus on pouring into our families, strengthening those bonds of relationship, and praying for our country and all the craziness of things going on.

Give us a heart to serve you. Forgive us for our prejudices and the things that we hold against people. Let us lay those at the cross because you are big enough to carry them. Let us press in to how you lived, about what you said, and to live out that mission every day that we possibly can to be used in whatever capacity you desire to use us. And so, we leave now, only by faith, in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.