

Reluctant: Friendled by God

Jonah 1:1-6

Small Group Discussion

Opening question (this question is designed to get everyone involved in discussion)

- What is the most difficult “place” you have ever had to live or spend some time? What made it so challenging?

Read Jonah 1:1-2, then discuss the following

- What do you know about Nineveh? (*Possible answers: it was far away from Israel, a leading city in the powerful Assyrian empire, which was also the cruelest empire in ancient history, and Israel's chief oppressor during Jonah's lifetime.*)
- Why do you think that God calls Nineveh, “the great city...”?
- What does God mean when he says, “because its wickedness has come up before me?”
- On Sunday, we learned that the Hebrew word translated, “wickedness,” is often translated as “trouble, calamity, misery, disaster, or harm.” What is the relationship between the Ninevites’ sin and their present calamity?
- Pastor Josh observed that **God notices and God is moved by human pain**, even when those very humans are the cause of their own pain.
 - Is it surprising to you that God would offer his compassion to people who have caused their own pain through sinful choices?
 - Have you ever been in some difficulty of your own making? How easy or difficult was it to believe and receive God’s compassion?
- We also observed, on Sunday, that God **invites us to be messengers of his compassion to hurting people**.
 - Are there any examples of people in your life or community, who seem to have brought about their own misery (or yours!), and to whom you would have a hard time extending God’s compassion? Why do you find that challenging?
 - Some possibilities: a family member, a neighbor, a co-worker or classmate, a boss, a certain type of person in the community, or someone with whom you disagree about politics.
 - What would be some of the risks or costs of extending God’s compassion in these relationships?
 - Is there any other “Nineveh” to which God might be calling you?
 - What is so shocking about the fact that God asks Jonah to be a messenger of compassion to the people of Nineveh?
 - What is the relationship between holding people accountable for their choices and consequences, and extending God’s mercy?

Read Jonah 1:3-6, then discuss the following

- Where was Tarshish, relative to Israel and Nineveh? To what lengths was Jonah going by trying to flee to Tarshish?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where you spent more effort trying to get away from God than you would have by listening to him? Is there any situation currently in your life, where that could be happening? If so, what is leading you to run from God?
- What is the relationship between the storm at sea (v. 4) and Jonah's decision to flee from God and Nineveh?
- Do you agree with Tim Keller's claim (in *The Prodigal Prophet*), that "Every act of disobedience to God has a storm attached to it?" How have you experienced this to be true?
- What does Keller mean when he concludes, "There's mercy deep inside our storms?"
- In what way does Jonah find himself doing the very thing that he was trying to get away from doing? (v. 6)
- Is it right to conclude that **when God wants to show his compassion, he will get his way?** Why or why not?
- Pastor Josh said that based on Jonah's story, we see that God is **RELUCTANT to leave people in misery of their own making**. Do you agree or disagree? How have you seen this truth in life?
- In Matthew 12:38-41, Jesus calls himself, "Something greater than Jonah." In what way is Jesus a more complete fulfillment of what we see in Jonah in today's passage?
- Jesus went to far greater lengths as a messenger of God's compassion to us, in fact, becoming the substitute for God's justice against our sin. How can this realization give us the spiritual and emotional resources to be messengers of God's compassion to people who we want nothing to do with?

Share and pray

- Invite people to share honestly about areas of reluctance which might be uncovered by Jonah's story.
- Share with one another other concerns for prayer.
- Pray for one another.