

Jonah's Regret

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[0:00] Jonah, it's a short one. I'll give you a few moments to get there. Flip past it a few times. We've spent the last two weeks in this book, and today will be the final Sunday of it.

The books of the Bible were not given titles, so we call this the book of Jonah because it's about a prophet named Jonah. I sometimes want to add subtitles to these books.

It's Jonah, God's whiny prophet, or Jonah, how not to be a prophet of God.

I've always really liked the name Jonah, and I don't think there's anyone in our congregation with a child named Jonah. This morning anyway. If you know somebody with a child named Jonah, please don't be offended by this.

I couldn't name a child Jonah after studying this book. What a mess he was. This morning our text will be Jonah chapter 4, so verses 1 through 11 of chapter 4.

[1:09] But before we get into that, I want to kind of give some summary of where we've been, and then I'm going to read the entirety of the book to you. It's such a short story and such a wonderful story. I think you need to hear it in its entirety, especially if you haven't been here with us over the last two weeks.

The way we've kind of structured across the book in these three weeks began with a sermon whose theme was rebellion, where we looked at the rebellion of the mariners, those who piloted the ship that Jonah got onto as he fled from the presence of God.

And we saw that they cried out to their various gods. They weren't worshipers of the one true God. Certainly see the rebellion of the Ninevites.

God called it a great city and said that their evil has come up before him. And the message that's given to Jonah to take to the Ninevites is that in 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed for their wickedness.

And we saw the rebellion of Jonah as he worked at fleeing from the presence of God, although was entirely incapable of doing so.

[2:17] And as we think about these various forms and various accounts of rebellion, the lesson for us to learn in all of that, I think, goes one of two ways.

And that is either that you find yourself this morning very self-righteous, that you think you're a pretty good person and that you've done well in the sight of God, that you're not like the Ninevites and you're not like Jonah and you're not like the mariners.

But what you need to know is that you are. Even the smallest offense against the holy God, an infinite God, demands infinite punishment. It's weighted the same before him.

By God's grace, you may not be in human terms quite as evil as the Ninevites. However, you are found before God condemned because of your sin.

The other side of that is you might be very self-abasing. You might find that you're never in your own mind worthy of the mercy of God to you. That you don't think he could possibly forgive the sins that you've committed.

[3:25] And there's this great measure of mercy in this book that God abounds on all of these various characters. And I want you to be comforted by that today.

As we looked at the rebellion, particularly in chapter 1, we talked a bit about God's purpose. That when the gospel of Jesus Christ came to Paul, and he was given the commission to go and preach it to the Gentiles, this was not a new revelation.

This was an amazing thing, an astounding thing for Paul in his day to be told to take the Word of God beyond the borders of Jerusalem. But God has always had a global purpose for His glory. He has always wanted His name to be proclaimed amongst the nations. There's many Old Testament texts that say this. My favorite is Isaiah 43, 6 and 7.

God says, And God has always had this intention.

[4:45] And Jonah is aware of this intention, which is the very reason that he flees from the presence of God. This is the reason he takes off and goes in the opposite direction of the city of Nineveh, because he knows that God has a purpose.

And we ask the question, do we live in light of God's purpose to the world? We talk about God's presence and about how living in God's will is to live in God's presence.

And we talk about God's power and the way in which He sovereignly works His will. To observe that Jonah did not have the power to thwart God's intention for the people of Nineveh.

And God brings about these extraordinary circumstances to reorient Jonah's life for the preaching of the destruction and therefore good news. Ultimately, as we consider all the rebellion that's found in this book, particularly the rebellion of Jonah as the centerpiece of it, we need to remember that this is primarily, in a very high way, this is a story of God's great mercy.

You see all of this rebellion, but you see God's mercy in the proper and right thing for God to do for all of these people is just to go ahead and destroy them.

[6:06] Just go ahead and wipe them off the face of the earth. But yet He brings these great mercies in the form of a great wind that He hurls upon the mariners.

Consider that Jonah being on the ship and God punishing his disobedience was what turned the mariners to God. You see in chapter 1, verse 16, And the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and they made vows.

They repented. They turned from their ways, and they turned to the one true God. God sent great mercy in the form of a great fish that came along and swallowed Jonah whole.

Jonah certainly would have died in the midst of the sea had it not been for this fish. And it's this fish that is used in His time in its belly to bring Him to repentance.

And God brings great mercy to the city of Nineveh with the promise of a great destruction. The call to repent. Forty days and I will destroy.

[7:11] And there's this call to repent. And in chapter 3, you see even the king himself gets involved in the fasting and the mourning over their offense to God and calls them to righteousness.

So all of these great mercies leading to proper and right repentance. Repentance. Today, I want to talk about Jonah's regret as the theme for this morning.

Let me read to you the story of Jonah. Follow along with me, if you will. I'm reading from the ESV version of the Scripture if you manage to have a technological piece that you can flip between translations.

Chapter 1, verse 1. Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the Lord.

[8:22] But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his God.

And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had laid down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, What do you mean, you sleeper?

Arise, call out to your God. God, perhaps the God will give you a thought to us that we may not perish. And they said to one another, Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.

So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation, and where do you come from?

What is your country, and of what people are you? And he said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

[9:26] Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, What is this that you have done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

Then they said to him, What shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, Pick me up and hurl me into the sea, then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.

Nevertheless, the men rode hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.

So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days. And three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the Lord as God from the belly of the fish, saying, I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me.

[10:43] Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me. All your waves and your billows passed over me.

Then I said, I am driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look upon your holy temple. The waters closed in over me to take my life.

The deep surrounded me. Weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.

When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

But I, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord. And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

[11:50] Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord.

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey, and he called out, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

And he issued a proclamation, and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything.

Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands.

[12:56] Who knows? God may turn and relent, and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish. When God saw what they 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.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry, and he prayed to the Lord and said, O Lord, is this not 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 were 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 for me, for it is better for me to die than to live. And the Lord said, Do you do well to be angry?

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 could 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 the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant so that it withered. 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.

[14:20] 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 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle.

And so we see in the story this wonderful display of God's mercy. And let me draw your attention or your mind's attention just momentarily to the great deal of mercy that He showed Nineveh, this massive city that takes three days to cross, which likely included the suburbs around it.

But this huge populace of wickedly evil people, the Ninevites were Assyrians and were historically horrid, horrid people, and they turn from their ways, and God relents from the disaster.

[15:38] This wonderful revival, possibly the largest revival ever in history. And Jonah regrets it all. I want to structure this morning, this sermon, in just two quick and easy ways.

First, the sin of Jonah's regret. Regret. The sin of Jonah's regret. Sometimes I just move right past the mistakes because it's not worth stopping and sometimes it's worth stopping.

And secondly, God's merciful response. God's merciful response. So, the sin of Jonah's regret. It's really interesting that there's this little glimpse of obedience.

We see this repentance on his part in chapter 2, this wonderful prayer of repentance. The beginning of chapter 3, he's recommissioned to go. He's obedient now. He's now following God.

He goes and he preaches this message. But it's bookended by sin on both sides. The fleeing from God's will.

[16:41] The very beginning, verse 1 of chapter 4, you see that Jonah was unhappy and angry. It displeased Jonah exceedingly. And he was angry.

The fact that the Ninevites were actually listening to what he had to say, that the Ninevites were doing all that they could to flee from the wrath of God for their disobedience to him, displeased Jonah exceedingly.

And we see in this that Jonah's obedience was not rightly motivated. He's gone through this epic adventure of sailing on a ship and getting tossed overboard and swallowed up by a great fish for three days and vomited back up onto a beach and journeying across a desert.

And he does the thing that God has asked him to do in the preaching of judgment, but he does not do it rightly. He doesn't walk in to the city of Nineveh hoping for their repentance.

In fact, it would seem that what he's really hoping for is their destruction. I'm going to go and preach the destruction of God and I hope that's how it turns out. You see, the Assyrians were evil people.

[17:53] There's a prophecy, a judgment cried out to them. I've read to you the last two weeks, but I just want to highlight this once again and in a little bit of a way, I'm kind of getting in Jonah's corner on this because these people were the enemies of Israel.

They had done atrocious things in the past and they still would do atrocious things to Jewish peoples. I think the very similar cross-reference for us today would be ISIS and the way that ISIS is going after Christian populations so heavily.

So if you can imagine that as you're thinking about who these people are that he's going to preach to. Nahum 3, 1-4 says, Woe to the bloody city. Talking about Nineveh.

All full of lies and plunder. No end to the prey. The crack of the whip and the rumble of the wheel. Galloping horse and bounding chariot. Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spears. Hosts of slain. Heaps of corpses. Dead bodies without end. They stumble over the bodies. And listen to the why that they're doing this thing.

[19:07] That they're so viciously brutal. And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute. Graceful and of deadly charms.

Who betrays nations with her whorings and peoples with her charms. Right? They're violent because of sex. A wicked, wicked people.

But it would seem that Jonah has misplaced the very character of God and His mercy. It would seem that he's forgotten that God was merciful to him.

All the same, in his wickedness, being called by God to go and preach a message, he flips and goes the other direction and flees from the presence of the Lord.

And yet, God shows him this great measure of mercy. Beloved, our God is a gracious God. He is merciful. If we are in Christ, He has been abundantly, aboundingly merciful to us.

[20:09] And I think we too often forget that. In some way, we begin to believe that we deserve God's grace to us. And deserve grace ceases to be grace altogether.

We were the Ninevites. It seems that as Jonah repents and is spit out on the shore, and it makes this long journey he would have had to make to Nineveh, that the desert crossing dried up his affection for God.

Jonah obeyed God. This is of great importance. Good for Jonah. He obeyed God. The repentance of the Ninevites come as a result of God using Jonah's preaching.

His obedience was important, but God wants not only our obedience, but He wants us. He wants all of us. He doesn't want us just to immediately go through the motions of doing the things that we're supposed to do.

He wants us to do those things because we have a heart for Him. Because those things are meant to be acts of worship for Him. We are not to be concerned with the appropriateness or the inappropriateness of the outcome of our obedience.

[21:28] We are to be concerned with the obedience and our trust in God's good and merciful purpose. We are to go and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

The destruction of God being the bad news. The good news of Jesus Christ. That there's a way back to God. There's a way to avoid that destruction. There's a way to be saved from the wrath to come.

This is a command given to all believers. It's not reserved for a few. It's not reserved for the trained professional. It's for all of us to go and to do this thing and to trust God with the result.

To go where we're called to go. To preach the good news. And to do so in a desire to honor Him. To bring glory to His name. To praise Him amongst the peoples.

And then God will do what He will do with our obedience. Now in Jonah's sinful anger he did three things that we should note and we should filter our own thinking through.

[22:34] Firstly, Jonah tried to justify his previous action. Look in verse 2. He prayed to the Lord and said, Oh 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 were a gracious God, merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. He says to God, See, that's why I didn't want to come.

I was right in what I did before. Because the very thing that I feared would happen, the repentance of the Ninevites, has happened. So he starts to try to justify it. And when we walk in sin, we always think that we're right.

And we will not be convinced otherwise. Do you know people that are like this? You do if you know me. I'm so often this way, so convinced that I'm right in the way that I should walk.

I need God's intervention in my life to show me otherwise. We become the standard of what is right and true. And this is such a dangerous, dangerous thing.

[23:39] Try to justify our actions. There's such a great deal of value in self-awareness. And I will tell you that as you mature as a Christian, you will begin to trust yourself less.

You'll begin to understand just how deceptively wicked your heart can be. Praise God that I am not the standard of what is right and true.

When I talk to professing believers who don't believe in the inerrancy and the sufficiency of Scripture, it frightens me. Because if I can't believe that God's Word is completely true and that it is enough to teach me how it is that I should walk all of it in its completion, then suddenly I become the

standard.

What a scary thing. If you've not found yourself in that place yet, it's coming. Just live life a little while longer. I can remember being in my late 20s and thinking that I had a lot figured out. I thought, I kind of got this life thing sorted out. And then I had kids and I realized that I didn't know anything about anything. And that's still where I'm at today.

[24:51] I think I'm beginning to learn some of the things that I should learn. But right now I know nothing. And so I have to go to the Scripture, right, for the way to live rightly.

I've got to be here that I might walk in the way that pleases God. Jonah tried to justify his previous actions. Secondly, Jonah tried to use Scripture against God. Now this is a bit subtle, but I want to show you what I mean and I want to show you the danger of this.

Right? So in verses 2, I guess it's just 2, isn't it? Yep. Just in verse 2, he quotes loosely from Exodus 34, 6, and 7.

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed. This is when God hides Moses in the cleft of the rock and lets his glory pass, lets him see the back of God.

Passed before him and proclaimed, I am the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

[26:06] You see that loose quotation of that in 4.2 of the book of Jonah. Let me read to you the rest of verse 7 from Exodus 34.

But who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.

So God is this God abounding in steadfast love, keeping this love for thousands, for a multitude, forgiving iniquity and transgression of sin, but also storing up wrath, and visiting wrath on those who are guilty.

You see that Jonah didn't believe that the Ninevites should be recipients of the first part of Exodus 34, 6, and 7, but rather he preferred the second part of it.

He saw himself as the arbiter of God's merciful character. He goes preaching this judgment that will come, and it's as if he says, had I not preached your judgment, then you would not have had to act according to your mercy.

[27:22] If I hadn't said it, you wouldn't have had to do it. The Ninevites shouldn't receive your mercy, therefore I was right in fleeing to Tarshish. He leverages God's character against him to try to justify his activity.

Can you think of another attempt in the Scripture to do the same, to pick up the Scripture and use it in a way that it's not meant to be used? Matthew 4, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness where Satan tempts him.

And Satan uses the Word of God to tempt him. He warps it to meet his purposes. And Jesus so brilliantly responds with Scripture and a right understanding of it.

And in this way, Jonah acts as a progeny of Satan. You can see this as an offspring of Satan, using the Scripture to meet his ends, to find the justification for why he didn't want to preach to the Ninevites.

This happens all the time in Christian circles. How have you used the Scripture to justify your own position?

[28:40] The Scripture is not a neutral thing that you pick up and you make your case from it. This is God's Word. God condescending to become an author through the hands of many men across many, many years to tell us something.

And we too often stand over it in judgment of it rather than being under it. Humble. God has spoken. What has He said? Let me give you an example. Turn to Matthew 7.

Mark Jonah for me. We're going to go back into it. But turn to Matthew 7. There are many common examples of this being done.

Jeremiah 29 11. Amen? Those of you know what I'm talking about? Misused. All the time. All the time. You walk into somebody's church building in the southeast, and Jeremiah 29 11 is on the wall, and walk back out.

Okay? Because they don't understand the Bible and they don't use it properly. I'm going to use a less controversial example. Take my foot out of my mouth. All right. Matthew chapter 27.

[29:56] It's the end of the Sermon on the Mount, verses 24 through 27. Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock.

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it.

I have heard countless people use this. I have heard many sermons using this text to talk about if you found your life on Christ that your life will be really good.

There's this subversive prosperity gospel being taught in so many places. This morning being taught in so many places that says, hey, we're Americans, we've got a pretty good life.

If you add Jesus to it, it's going to get a little better. Texts like this being used for that. The beginning of verse 24 says, everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them.

[31:15] Here's this preaching of the gospel from the Sermon on the Mount which ends just before this with a number of warnings about final judgment. This is not about good happy life that Jesus is talking about here.

This is about where does your foundation sit? In this day they would have had to dig down through layers and layers and layers of sand to hit bedrock. It was a lot more work to do that.

He's saying that the Christian life is a life of sacrifice, of following Jesus Christ so that in the final day the house stands. This is not about some version of kumbaya that Jesus gives to us.

A gospel preached here, a text used here in a way that can't apply everywhere in the world is being taught improperly. So many places in the world if we did this on a Sunday morning we would be gathered up as we left this place and jailed or beaten.

This is not consistent. Right? Your earthly life could get worse by following Jesus Christ. It could become miserable in human terms.

[32:30] but we have Jesus. We have eternal joy. We're looking to the reward. So we use Scripture in this way quite often.

I tremble that I do it sometimes. I pray that I don't. Your job as the congregation to hold me accountable. If I begin to do that I begin to use the Scripture to justify some opinion that I have or some behavior that I do oh charge me with it please.

We're meant to exegete the Bible. We're meant to see what the Scripture says. What does the Bible say? What is it communicating? What does the text mean?

And how does it change the way I live? We're not meant to eisegete or read into it the things we want read into it. We are to read the Bible in order for it to read us.

Proverbs 18.2 speaks of us so often and of Jonah here says a fool takes no pleasure in understanding but only in expressing his opinion.

[33:48] I on Sunday mornings have nothing to say to you if I don't have the Scripture. I mean I gotta just pat them on the back the men that can get up and preach and just talk and talk and talk and talk and say nothing from the Bible.

How do they have so much to say? If my Scripture was to be a couple of verses that are going to get displayed on a screen when it's convenient for what I'm trying to say to you I would clam up and run off the stage every Sunday morning.

the Word of God is powerful and it speaks and it moves and it works in us if we pick it up rightly. Don't use the Word of God to justify your behavior.

And then thirdly Jonah wished he were dead. I just want to point out that he is a bit ironically he wished he was dead earlier. He was asked to be thrown overboard into the sea. He's fleeing from the presence of God.

Just throw me into the sea. I might as well die here. Here's saying verse 3 Therefore now Lord please take my life from me. God has just preserved his life and saved him in this most remarkable way for it is better for me to die than to live.

[35:01] He is so angry. He is so extremely dissatisfied with the repentance of the Ninevites that he just wants to be dead. So that's the sin of Jonah's regret.

Let's look at God's merciful response. Never fear, we're more than halfway there. God's merciful response. God asked Jonah three questions beginning in verse 4 the first question and the Lord said do you do well to be angry?

And it seems to be a rhetorical question. We don't have a vocal recorded response to this question in the text. God is saying as he asks this question we are both looking at the same situation you and I Jonah but we're looking at it in two very different ways.

Who has the correct perspective? Is the correct perspective the one of the prophet of God or of God himself? Do you do well to be angry with the purpose of God in your life?

Jonah should have had the mind of Paul in Romans 3 4 he says let God be true though everyone were a liar. We get some response to the question not vocally but in verse 5 it says he's in the city and he has this temper tantrum first few verses God asked him the question do you do well to be angry?

[36:40] And verse 5 says Jonah went out of the city I imagine that he huffed out of the city and he walked out of the city and he sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there now a booth would have just been a crude structure it wouldn't have been anything fancy maybe sticks maybe a bit of tunic or something that he was able to hang to give a bit of shade obviously the shade isn't ample because God brings him more shade but a bit of shade he gets he goes out he sits under it in the shade till he should see what will become of the city that is fascinating because it appears that he still wants God to destroy the city of Nineveh 40 days is have repented the text says that God relented of the disaster Jonah may not have known this at the time he marches out of the city and he sits up on the hill to see what's going to happen to the city and in so doing he errs in three ways first he quits sharing

God's word here are these people that have just repented! They just turned from their sin and he is peacing out right Jonah could have been the great pastor of the city of Nineveh part of the largest revival in history the first great megachurch and he marches out of the city his message seems to end with yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown and quits secondly he builds a booth or you can think of it as a private retreat a place of shelter and there was plenty of shelter to be found in this three day wide city and its surrounding suburbs Jonah kind of seems to launch a separatist movement there's a whole city of people who have said we want to follow the one true God we want to turn from evil ways look we're repenting sackcloth ashes all of that like we really want to follow this God and he goes nope

I've got other ideas a different denomination one that will destroy you for sure he builds a booth and thirdly he becomes a spectator he ceases to be involved in the things that are happening there do you do well to be angry now there's a second question before God asks the question he creates a scenario to prepare Jonah for the very question that he asks in verse six the Lord appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah so it's a very rapidly growing plant God says later that this plant was made in a day and destroyed in a day if I'm getting that right it doesn't matter it came up very quickly that it might shade over his head to save him from his discomfort and we get the first little glimpse four so

Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant miserable prophet the preacher of potentially the greatest revival in all history is really glad for the plant and it just highlights the extremity of Jonah's selfishness here's an entire city turning their hearts toward God and he is happy he's got a little shade when dawn came up the next day verse seven God appointed a worm that attacked the plant so that it withered when the sun rose God appointed a scorching east wind coming across the desert hot 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 again he's asking for death is it better 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 or do you do well to be angry that the plant was destroyed and he says yes

I do well to be angry angry enough to die! And anger we saw at the beginning of chapter four he's angry at God he's angry at the mercies that God's working amongst the Ninevites anger so often

takes this type of diminishing form it's foolishness that he would be angry over this plant he moves from angry at God to angry at the death of a plant almost as a side note if we are angry by nature the very littlest things set us off James Montgomery Boyce wrote in his commentary on this chapter first we are angry with God next we express our anger at circumstances then minor circumstances finally our shoelace breaks one morning and we find ourselves swearing the way his anger just is he's so frustrated in general that he's mad that this plant that gave him shade for a day is now withered and gone and then verse 10 and the

[42:01] Lord said you pity the plant for which you did not labor nor did you make it grow it was just there which came into being in a night and perished in a night there it is and the last question the third question and should I should not I pity Nineveh that great city in which there are more than 120 thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also much cattle and I believe what he's expressing here is this vast vast number of people and God saying shouldn't we at very least pity the cattle and not destroy all of them and not destroy all the little children the ones that can't differentiate right from left yet so he's speaking to the scope of the city but he's also simply just saying should we not have least of the offenders in all of this and he just leaves it hanging it's such an interesting story in that way you want to know you want to hope

Bob and I this morning were talking about what may have happened to Jonah did Jonah stay on Nineveh wasn't destroyed obviously did Jonah stay on and begin to help and to lead I hope so doesn't seem to be the point of the story though it seemed to see Jonah as the whiny prophet I think in so many ways it becomes distracting to the main point that it's primarily a story of a merciful God who is working his purpose through feeble people so as we relate to Jonah we can take a great deal of comfort in the fact that God works his certain promises to his church through the work of feeble people so many of us this congregation who hold a particular soteriological persuasion and if you don't know what that means that's okay I'm actually happy that you don't if you know what it means

I'm talking to you we hold a particular soteriological persuasion and I think we too often focus our thoughts on the judgment of God particularly as we seem to see so few around us really faithfully following him and for me at least I hope for you this story so readily highlights for me has really caused me to really consider the mercy of God to remember that he is abounding instead fast love let take you to another text in closing Matthew chapter 12 beginning in verse 38 18 then some of the scribes the lawyers of the day and pharisees this would have been the religious elite answered him saying teacher we wish to see a sign from you do something miraculous to show us that what you're saying is true but he answered them an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet

Jonah so hear what I'm saying to you this is Jesus speaking about this story so many of us are running around looking for a calling some kind of a sign to turn from our evil ways and turn to God whether you're outside the faith you've never placed believing faith in Christ or if you have pay attention to the story of Jonah 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 isn't that fascinating that Jonah is a type of Christ Christ being the anti type this prophet is a type of Christ Jesus himself is saying that right here 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 the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah they had not heard the preaching of Christ something greater is here the good news of Jesus Christ the person of Jesus Christ there is a hymn which says there is a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea I like that line we can't see the other side of the ocean you can't see the other side of the Atlantic you can't see the other side of it and so to think in those terms that there's a wideness in God's mercy that we can't even quite fathom but even still I think that expression falls short just a little bit it's not quite wide enough the real measure of the wideness of God's mercy is found in the outstretched arms of Jesus Christ on the cross this is the measure of the effort of the love of

[47:51] God for you and I that sacrifice made on our behalf how can we having experienced the love and mercy of God to us in Jesus Christ not be loving and merciful how can we not share the vastness of God's mercy with others why should we not with all the strength that God provides present God's love to the world this is the natural and normal thing to do in response to the truth of the gospel what is stopping you from doing that draw your attention to the front of your bulletin in closing I don't put quotations from famous old saints on the front of the bulletin to flex the fact that I read books in fact most of them you'll notice are

Spurgeon quotes because my wife bought me a book of Spurgeon quotes and I can go to the table of contents and look at it and go read a bunch of Spurgeon quotes in a matter of moments I do this because we include myself even primarily myself have lost a mastery of the English language to say things in such beautiful and impactful ways that some of the saints of old did I also do it because I want to be reminding us that the church exists as a global reality and also exists as a reality through time our brother Charles Spurgeon right and we have access to them to their minds and their writing and that's such a beautiful thing so I hope you enjoy it I try to read the quote and have it there for you so you!

so listen to words of Spurgeon ah if we did but love Christ better my brothers and sisters if we lived near the cross if we knew more of the value of his blood if we wept like him over Jerusalem if we felt more what it was for souls to perish and what it was for men to be saved if we did but rejoice with Christ in the prospect of seeing the travail and being abundantly satisfied if we did but delight more in the divine decree that the kingdoms of this world shall be given to Christ I am sure we would all of us find more ways and more means for sending forth the gospel of Christ let's pray together