

Jonah 4

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[0 : 00] Jonah chapter 4 is where we are. We are closing up, finishing up the series on Jonah today.! In an interview with lead singer of U2 Bono, Bono said,!

I love it.

I'm not talking about people being graceful in their actions, but just covering over the cracks. Our topic this morning is grace. As we close out this sermon series, grace is clearly evident in this chapter, in the story of Jonah.

And I'm not talking about, like Bono said, the people being graceful in their actions, but the act of God showing the undeserving, those who have no right to or desire for grace.

God's grace has been evident in this story. God being merciful and showing grace to the sailors by ending the storm and not destroying them.

[1 : 29] God being merciful and showing Jonah grace by providing a big ship and not allowing him to die. God being merciful and showing grace to the people of Nineveh by not destroying them for their evil that had, in chapter 1, come up against God.

Grace is a radical idea. The definition that is thrown out a lot is unmerited favor. If grace is unmerited, as A.W. Pink said, if grace is unmerited, then none can claim it as their right.

If grace is unearned and undeserved, then none are entitled to it. If grace is a gift, then none can demand it. Can't claim it.

Can't deserve it. Aren't entitled to it. Can't demand it. Grace is a radical idea. In his book, Sovereignty of God, he quotes an author, doesn't give us the name, and this definition is, this statement is great in regards to grace.

To feed a tramp who calls on me is unmerited favor. But it is scarcely grace. But suppose that after robbing me, I should feed that starving tramp.

[2 : 50] That would be grace. Grace then is favor shown where there is positive demerit in the one receiving. What a radical idea.

Our definition fails to truly define all the weight of grace and that grace carries with it. Every moment of every day, God shows you grace.

The air that you breathe right now. The car that you drove in to get here. The clothes that you have on. The fact that driving down the road, you're within four feet of oncoming traffic and you didn't have an accident, is grace.

Saving grace is what we find in chapter 3. God's mercy and grace shown to Nineveh. Not destroying them, but them repenting and God showing them grace.

Chapter 4, we have sanctifying grace. We have God perfecting Jonah, teaching Jonah a lesson, and God being graceful and gracious to Jonah.

[3 : 56] Saving grace is what causes us to be born again. Sanctifying grace is what God uses to perfect His children. And in this case, Jonah.

So let's read chapter 4 all the way through and then we'll dive in. Chapter 4, But it displeased Jonah exceedingly.

What displeased him? Verse 10 of chapter 3, When God saw what they did, how they named, 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.

So this is what 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 were a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and relenting from disaster.

[4 : 56] Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life, for it is better for me to die than to live. And the Lord said, Do you do well to be angry? Do you have any right 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 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 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.

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 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.

[6 : 22] In the first chapter of Jonah, God gives Jonah a mission. Go to Nineveh, preach to them because their evil has come up against me. So we have God's mission.

We have God's plan for Jonah. God desires Jonah to go this direction. And then we're shown that Jonah immediately gets up and runs the opposite direction. So we have man's heart, man's foolishness, God's mission and man's heart.

Well, we've come full circle after God has shown mercy to Jonah, after He's shown mercy to the sailors, after He's shown mercy to Nineveh and been gracious to them.

Chapter 4, we see it again. God's mission, God's desire, and man's foolishness. We're full circle. He's once again, Jonah has once again shown his true colors.

In this case, after God has been gracious and merciful to him. There are four points out of our text this morning about grace. I'll read them off and then we'll go through them.

[7 : 27] Grace is not justice. Grace is not found in temporal, physical things. Grace does not fit in our box or definition.

And grace is a gift from the sovereign God. So, first point. Grace, God's grace, is not justice. Verses 1-3.

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, 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.

Grace is not justice. In fact, the antithesis of justice is grace. The opposite of justice is grace. See, justice tells us that each person should receive what is due him or her.

[8 : 29] my kids, at the earliest, maybe three, were all about justice. So and so did this, now you should punish them.

Or so and so did this to me, you should punish them. Or they got three and I only got two and a half. That's not fair. People this weekend are asking questions like, how could an earthquake of such a huge magnitude hit Japan like this?

They don't deserve it. Where is the justice? Our world is framed in justice. You get what you deserve. Even our capitalist economy in the United States is built on the idea of if you work hard, you work long hours, you climb the ladder, then you're given a reward.

Justice. But justice can only go so far. We are sinful creatures with self-preservation as one of our life values.

Dennis Holia, a television host for PBS and other channels like that, said, expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are a good person is a little like expecting a bull not to attack because you are a vegetarian.

[9 : 42] That's pretty good. Let me put that on my Facebook wall. Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are a good person is a little like expecting a bull not to attack because you are a vegetarian.

He's right. Though justice is what we try to live by, it isn't always right. In fact, it fails more than we care to admit. In chapter 4, Jonah's complaints to God, Jonah being displeased and being angry, are rooted in justice.

God, how evil have they been to Israel? How harsh and cruel have they been? They deserve destruction. But God shows grace when Jonah felt justice needed to be delivered.

Jonah becomes angry about this grace that God showed Nineveh. In fact, Jonah literally hated what God had done.

He hated it. His cause for anger and hatred is chapter 3. I hate that you've not shown them mercy. And Jonah believed because of their past actions, because of how cruel they've been, they deserved destruction.

[11:03] But see, grace is not based on what we think. Grace is not based on justice. Grace is based completely on God. And praise God for it.

Praise God for His grace and that He is the author and the creator of that grace. Now, the funny thing is, is Jonah's angry.

He's displeased. Exceedingly displeased. He hates what God did. And then he tries to blame God for his sinful choices. He tries to blame God.

I ran because I knew you were going to do this. I knew you were going to be merciful, so I split because I know better than you. I knew you were going to pardon Him.

We kind of laugh at that and say, what an idiot. But don't we do that though? When sin is in our lives and either people confront us or ask us about it, we try to defend our actions, we sound irrational.

[12:07] We sound like babbling idiots. sin. See, sin casts blame on everyone but ourselves. And it even casts blame on God sometimes.

And Jonah put blame on God for the choices he made because God was going to be merciful. And Jonah knew it. Jonah is crazy. He even says, I cannot live anymore.

I can't bear to see what you're doing to those people. people. I can't bear, it's not like saying, watching a horror flick and you can't stand to look at something scary happen.

Or God telling Lot not to look back because I'm about to destroy Sodom. It's not like that. God is doing something great and Jonah cannot look. Jonah wants to die.

I cannot look at his grace towards this people. I can't handle it. See, Jonah not only let his view of justice through, but he also let his racism show.

[13:11] God, you cannot be gracious towards that people. They're not even Jewish. If you were Jewish and you have been taught from your birth that you are going to be, you're a chosen people that through Abraham you're going to be blessed, blessed, you would probably think the same thing as Jonah.

God, how can you be graceful to that people? Here was God showing grace. Israel's grace. Israel's grace towards Nineveh.

At least that's what Jonah thought. How dare you, God? Like when you're a kid, are you sharing my candy with my brother? Mom, come on! That's my candy! For us though, who believe that God's chosen people are now the church or now His church, we can easily fall into this same practice.

That person over there is undeserving of God's grace. Or, I'm certain that God is not asking me to go talk to that person. Cannot possibly be the case.

God wouldn't show them grace. That is Jonah. That is us. God. And that is God. There's the picture. Praise God that His grace is not founded in justice.

[14:37] Jonah was foolish. Jonah was a fool. But he was not dumb. He was not dumb. He knew that based on justice alone, Nineveh deserved destruction.

Like Nineveh, you and I deserve destruction based on justice. Praise God though. Grace is radical. Praise the Lord that grace exists and that God gives us grace and mercy. So if grace is not justice, then a Christian will not look to justice as their measuring stick.

So, okay, you did this. Let me see. Yeah, okay. Even it out. Let's even it out. See, what we want to do is look at everything and measure it with justice in mind.

But what we should be doing as Christians, as disciples, look through the lens of grace and see what God is doing. And God will be glorified in that.

[15:47] So, not only is grace not justice, but God's grace is not found in temporal or physical things. This is verse 5 through 10. 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. Then the Lord 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.

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. See, Jonah goes up to the east of the city on a hill to have a little pity party.

[17:04] He pouts for what God has done. He goes to watch and maybe a little hope that that destruction might still come down, just inkling, gosh, I hope that God just rains down fire.

I'm going to sit and watch just in case. And while he's there, he makes the seat for himself out of leaves and tree branches and sits under the shade. And while he's up there, God appoints a plant for him.

As verse six says, to save him from his discomfort. God certainly showed Jonah grace by providing the plant. But as we read, God also showed Jonah grace by having it destroyed.

Jonah took comfort and joy, not in God, but from the plant. Not in the mighty work of grace that God showed Nineveh, but he took comfort and joy in the plant.

And when it was destroyed, he was angry again and wanted to die. Between chapter four and chapter two, we have like this bipolar Jonah guy.

[18:14] on one hand, he's repenting and he's like, God, I'll do whatever you want in chapter two while he's in the belly of the big fish. And then chapter four comes and he's like throwing stuff against the wall and having these tantrums.

And God, God, you're horrible. And then he gets this plant that shades him. He's like, oh, this is so great. This plant is wonderful. I love this plant.

This plant just makes me so happy. Because grace is based on God, because God is the author and creator of grace.

It's based on him and his doing and not on ours. We must not look to things as God's saving grace. Now, they're acts of grace. God gives him a plant.

But is that saving grace? Is his comfort and his joy in the plant or is it in God? And in our sinful nature, we're always looking for opportunities to make us better, to make us look great, you know, and make us comfortable.

[19:25] And whether that's the clothes we wear or the things we drive or the degrees that we get or the people we marry, all these things are not bad. None of these things are bad.

The plant was given by God, was appointed by God. But Jonah made it bad by finding his joy and his comfort in it.

He made an idol out of something that disappears in a short time. And God used it to teach Jonah a lesson. Jonah took more concern and joy for the plant than he did for the people of Nineveh that he just went through and preached to.

He took more concern for the comfort of the shade in the hot sun than he did for what mighty work God is doing to Nineveh.

The second we look to things or people for joy and comfort, we say to God that you are not good enough for my praise. This plant or this degree or this house or this is better than you or this children, this quiver is better than you.

[20:42] Jonah said to God with his actions that this plant is better than you. Forget about the ship and the fish God and the opportunity to join you. Forget about all that stuff because you did not do what I thought was best and because this plant is so great, this plant is so great, I worship it.

See, we do this though with more evidence of grace shown to us than what we see in Jonah's life. See, God through Jesus Christ has taken your sin and my sin so that we can be counted righteous. He died so that we would not have to die. And yet we covet things that are temporary. We worship things that don't last.

See, grace, saving grace is not found in temporal or physical things. It is found in Jesus Christ who is eternal and never changing. So, if grace is not found in temporary things, then a Christian will look to Christ for their security and identity, not in their stuff, achievements, or circumstances. Jesus Christ the stuff, the plant, is so tangible. We can see it. We can touch it. We enjoy the shade of that tree. We enjoy the pleasures of that car or that lifestyle or whatever it is.

[22 : 14] But we find our comfort and joy in it. We find our identity and security in it. We've made a good thing a bad thing and turn it into a God thing.

And that's what Jonah does with the plant. A plant that God even appointed for him. Even said, hey, I'm going to take care of you, even though you're throwing a hissy fit. I'm going to put this over your head and I'm going to shade you.

So, God's grace is not found in temporal or physical things. God's grace does not fit in our box or definition. Verses 7 and 8.

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 and he asked that he might die and said, it is better for me to die than to live.

God appointed a worm and a scorching east wind to make Jonah uncomfortable. Now, I know what you're thinking. These two acts don't really fit very well in our view of grace.

[23 : 28] How can something negative happen and we call it grace? But this chapter is the summation is God's lesson, the conclusion of God's lesson for Jonah.

It started in chapter 1 when he told him to go to Nineveh and it ends in verse 11 chapter 4. He destroys the thing that Jonah felt good about that he took comfort in.

Just because it doesn't agree with us logically, just because we don't understand it or doesn't make us feel a certain way, doesn't mean that it's not God showing grace to you.

See, God showed grace to Jonah by teaching him a lesson, by teaching him more of who God is, how merciful he is, how his mission isn't just to the people of Israel, how it's to more than that.

God's grace is not based on me or on you, as I've said, but it's based completely on him. For us to say, surely this isn't God because it's negative and I don't like it, is naive and arrogant of us.

[24 : 42] We're quick to throw out Romans 8 28, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Do we really believe this?

Or is it just full of words that mean nothing to us? See, that's why a story like Jonah is in here. Not to say, look what God can do with a big fish, but to say, look what God can do even in taking away a plant, or even in showing mercy to an evil, cruel nation, city, or, look, God can control the wind, and can control a big fish, and can control a plant.

Verses 10 and 11, do we really believe 828? Because verse 10 and 11 is God's final lesson, God's conclusion of this lesson.

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?

Do you really have any reason to be sad or angry, Jonah, about the plant that does not last? And that has very little value? And how should I feel about the people that I created in my own image?

[26 : 10] Should I just ignore them because that's what you want me to do? His basic point is look at the people of the world as I see them.

Look at the people of the world through grace as I see them, not as you see them. Have a kingdom view. God will use what he deems appropriate to perfect you, to sanctify you for your good and his glory.

glory. He's working in your life now. Bad things happen, but he's using those bad things to make you more like him, to make you more like Christ. So if grace does not fit in our box, then a Christian will have faith to trust God completely in good times and in what we see as bad.

Trust God completely. fourth point, grace is a gift from the sovereign God. In chapter four, God shows his sovereignty over creation again.

Chapter one, he did. Chapter two, he did. Chapter four, he did. Over a worm, over a plant, over an eastern wind.

[27 : 49] God has flexed his sovereignty muscles. And not to show, look how strong I am, or look how powerful I am, but to show us that he is sovereign, that he is in control.

God who hurled a wind at Jonah in chapter one, who made the sea, a storm like the sailors had never seen before, who provided a fish for Jonah, a big fish for him to live in three days. That's crazy. For him to say, fish, I want you to spit them out right there. And for the fish to do that. And in chapter four, to provide a plant, to provide a worm to eat that plant, and then provide a scorching east wind to make Jonah uncomfortable.

Grace is an act from the sovereign God. The one thing that we see clearly about Jonah in this story, and how we really do relate, is that Jonah doesn't deserve the grace that God shows him. He doesn't deserve any of it. Even in the middle of receiving it, he throws this tantrum. Even in the middle of being defiant, God provides a fish for him.

[29 : 22] As we know from other scriptures, like Ephesians 2, grace, and like that definition, is favor shown where there is positive demerit in the one receiving it.

So grace is given to those who don't deserve it. God. And the only one who can show this type of grace is sovereign God. One who is never surprised, who rules over all and has everything in his control.

That God is the God who can give grace. And God makes this point again in verse 10 and 11. And I just read it. 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.

As we read verse 10, we see that God is God is on one hand saying, Joni, you didn't do any of these things and communicating to him, but I did. I'm the one who made the plant grow. I'm the one who labored in creating it. And then verse 11, of course, follows verse 10. I did these things and I created the people of Nineveh in my image and I will show them grace, whether you want me to or not.

[30 : 38] God's grace, His sovereignty and His mercy are all on display in this book. It is no longer a good story. It is no longer a flannel board Sunday school happy story.

God's mercy is displayed. God's grace is given. And God's sovereignty is throughout the book. book is a lesson for you and for me about the God who has shown us mercy.

On Yom Kippur, the day of atonement, the highest holy day of the year in the Jewish religion. At the last moments of the day, a Jewish leader will read the book of Jonah out loud for everyone to hear. They listen to how the sea is moved by a mighty wind hurled by God. They listen to God saving Jonah from death by appointing a big fish.

They listen to God showing mercy and grace to the people of Nineveh. They listen to Jonah not wanting a pagan people to be the beneficiary of God's grace.

[31 : 49] They listen to the prophet throw a pity party for himself and they listen to God give his final words to Jonah by saying, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

When the reading is over, everyone listening to the story, everyone all together will say, and we are Jonah. No one can outrun God.

No one can outthink God. And no one can decide where his mercy and grace will be given for he is God. We are Jonah.

Jonah, deserving of death, punishment for our sinful nature, and at the mercy of the Lord. We are Jonah, fools who way too often look to our own needs and desires and forget the needs of those around us.

We are Jonah, and when things don't go as planned, throw a pity party over things that we don't even control or have control in their appearance.

[32 : 56] and of which last but a day and disappear. We are Jonah, we are Nineveh, and we are the sailors, and we are at the mercy of a merciful God who is, as Jonah tells us in verse 2, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

If we are Jonah, then let's learn from the original Jonah, and join God in what He is doing. Let's love those around us no matter the differences we have.

And let's be gracious as God has been gracious towards us. Pray with me. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.