

Jonah

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[0:00] We're going to look at the whale of a tale of perhaps the world's worst missionary.

! That's what he's been called. Jonah. The world's worst missionary.! Jonah was the only minor prophet that our Lord mentions by name. Matthew 12. First up we see Jonah given his mission from God.

His mission from God. Jonah was called. Called to be a messenger of God's mercy. To call people to repent. Firstly we see Jonah called. Verse 1. We're going to go right through the book.

Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise! Go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it.

For their wickedness has come up before me. Jonah was called. commissioned, commanded by God, sent by him to go.

[1:10] To go with the message of God. A word of warning, of judgment. To call people to repent. And really he was being sent on a mission of mercy.

Jonah received the call from God. What a privilege! Think of that. God did that for you. What an honour. A privilege. The word of the Lord came to him.

And God chose him. Jonah. Jonah. Go. To Nineveh. Preach against it. Nineveh was built originally by Nimrod. A huge city.

A pagan city. A brutal city. Some have said even with 600,000. Certainly a large population.

Assyria was one of the most wicked nations in the Bible. They were tortured, their prisoners of war. They were cruel. Torturing people to death.

[2:09] Destroying whole nations of people. Nineveh was utterly godless. A centre of evil of its time. And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah.

God was forceful in what he said. Literally you could put it. Jonah, get up and go to Nineveh. Now. That was the kind of sense of it.

And to go to Nineveh meant danger. And discomfort. It was a godless, hostile people. Sometimes God sends you and me. To places we don't want to go.

To do things we don't want to do sometimes. To take us out of our comfort zone. We read on. What was Jonah's response? Verse 3. We see Jonah's instant response.

It says. And Jonah leapt for joy. And he arose up and went to Nineveh. Is that what he did? No. He did not. He certainly did not. But it was an instant response from Jonah.

[3:11] An instant response. And Jonah's response was disobedience.

Disobedience. Jonah didn't like the mission that God gave him. Maybe he wanted Nineveh to get the judgment that they deserved.

They were an enemy of Israel. He didn't want them to get the opportunity to hear the good news. He just wanted them to stay in their sin and to be destroyed. Not get the opportunity to repent and be saved.

Jonah's message wasn't a message of God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. The message was go to Nineveh and preach against it. God told Jonah to do just one thing.

And yet he ran away from God. He resisted God's call. He ran from what God told him to do. His responsibility that he had.

He ran. He was unfaithful. He deserted his post. One of the big lessons we can learn from Jonah is obey God. Obey God.

[4:16] The sin of disobedience is dangerous and expensive. So firstly we see Jonah called. Secondly we see Jonah running.

Jonah running. Jonah was running. But his feet were taking him away from where God wanted him to go. Where God wanted him to be. Where God was sending him.

Verse 3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. And went down to Joppa. And he found a ship going to Tarshish.

So he paid the fare thereof. And went down into it to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He found a ship.

And he paid the fare thereof. Might have been a fair ship. But it was going to be a costly journey. Sin costs.

[5:12] The Bible says the wages of sin is death. There's a cost to sin. And it was going to prove a very costly cruise for Jonah.

Instead of setting out to serve God. Jonah decided to run away from God. And many are just like Jonah today. We can make that same mistake.

He went to the nearest port. And he bought his ticket. He was out of here. So he thought. Jonah fled from the Lord. And he was acting just like Adam and Eve did.

Back in the garden with their disobedience. When they first sinned. When it all began. They went and hid themselves from God. Jonah was told to go 500 miles north and east.

Yet Jonah went and paid his fare to go 2,000 miles west to Spain. On the other side of the Mediterranean. You see it pictured here. God said go east.

[6:14] Jonah said I'm going west. Jonah was planning to go 2,500 miles in the wrong direction. He found a ship. Friends if we decide to run from the Lord.

Satan will gladly furnish the means of transportation for us. And that's what happened here. He wanted to get away. And there was a ship going in the opposite direction.

So he jumped on board. But friends you cannot escape from God. You can run but you cannot hide. He knows where you live. Doesn't he? And we read on verse 12.

But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea. And there was a mighty tempest in the sea. So that the ship was like to be broken. The storm was no coincidence.

It was sent by God. It was a terrifying violent storm. The ship was being torn apart. It was coming apart at the seams. And the sailors were terrified.

[7:18] Verse 5. Then the mariners were afraid and cried every man unto his God. And cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea to lighten it of them.

Now you can picture it here. The storm. The water everywhere. The water busting the ship apart with the power of the waves.

The sailors were depending on those wares that they were transporting to get to their destination so they could get paid when they got there. If they threw out the cargo, it was throwing away their salary.

But over the side it went. Gold, perhaps silver, iron, ivory, jewels, spices, maybe animals, everything of the cargo.

They wanted to save their lives. That was more important. And so these sailors were so scared, so fearful for their very lives. And they were praying like men, praying to their gods.

[8:21] Meanwhile, where is the great prophet of the Lord, Jonah? While all this is going on, we have seen Jonah called, Jonah running.

And now we see Jonah sleeping. Oh, isn't it nice to have a sleep? But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship and he lay and was fast asleep.

It was a downward spiral for Jonah. He had gone down to Joppa, down into the hold of the ship, down. He was going to go down further, down into the sea, down into the belly of a great fish.

Where was the prophet of God? Snoring. Oh, isn't it nice to have a little sleep like that? But he was sleeping while the sailors were praying.

He was sleeping when he should have been sleeping. Jonah avoided prayer. Whereas the pagan sailors were busy praying. Jonah was neglecting his Christian duty.

[9:26] He was a deserter from his duty, from his God. And Christians, we can make that mistake too. Today, sleeping instead of praying, instead of seeking after God.

Things were getting desperate now. And the captain woke up this sleeping prophet in verse 6. Sleep is a condition of inactivity.

It means you switch off, really, doesn't it? You're unconscious to what's around about. And Jonah was unconscious of his peril. Men sleep still today. Sleep on while in danger. On the very edge of eternal ruin. They sleep on. The devil loves to sing lullabies. Sweet lullabies to men.

Rocking in their hammocks. Knowing, unconscious of their danger. That hell is just a heartbeat away. Men sleep on.

[10:43] We try as we might to shout, wake up! But many just slumber. In their carelessness. Spiritually careless. It reflects the unconcerned.

And of Jonah too here. How we must awaken to our condition. It's been said of Jonah that he should have been the one who was the reprovor. Reprovor.

And yet here's this pagan captain coming and reproving him. He should have been the teacher and yet he was being taught to pray by this heathen captain.

He should have been the teacher but he was being taught. He was the one prayerless when he should have been leading others in prayer. It's a picture of a backslider really.

In some ways what Jonah was up to here. And how he should call on God as the great deliverer. So the pagan captain comes to Jonah. He gives him some good advice.

[11:41] To arise from your slumber. To exercise faith. And so he urges Jonah. Call upon thy God. He came straight to the point. He was straight tuning.

He was a better preacher than Jonah. And this time. And God must awaken us too. We've seen Jonah called. Jonah running. Jonah sleeping.

And now Jonah in peril. In great peril. Verse 7. And they said everyone to his fellow come and let us cast lots that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.

So they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah. Everything pointed to Jonah. He's the problem. He's the culprit. He's the cause of all this trouble.

Verse 8. Then said they unto him. Tell us we pray thee. For whose cause this evil is upon us. What is thine occupation? And whence comest thou?

[12:39] What is thy country? And what people aren't thou? They started to question Jonah. They were grilling him. What was he up to? What was all this about? And all the while during these questions.

The storm was still raging. More and more violent. Verse 9. And he said unto them. I am in Hebrew. And I fear the Lord the God of heaven. Which made the sea and the dry land.

He was going to get intimately acquainted with the sea very shortly. Verse 10. Then were the men exceedingly afraid. And said unto him. Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord.

Because he had told them. It's interesting. The word presence of the Lord. This phrase appears quite a bit. And Jonah seems to. Certainly very keen to get away from the presence of the Lord. Verse 11. It goes on. Then said they unto him. What shall we do unto thee? That the sea may be calm unto us. For the sea wrought and was tempestuous.

[13:40] You know this sea was up and down. I saw some video not long ago. I know someone's been on a cruise lately. But if you go on some of these cruise ships.

And you see where the ocean just goes up and down. These huge surges in a storm. Well that was what it was like for Jonah here. That was what it was like for this ship.

Here it was tempestuous. It was wild. And verse 12. And he said unto them. Take me up and cast me forth into the sea. So shall the sea be calm unto you.

For I know that for my sake. This great tempest is upon you. Jonah knew he was the problem. And he accepted that. That was what had to happen. So Jonah was in peril here.

So we see God's chastening at work here. That can happen for us. When we're in that backslidden state. There's a chastening. God's got to get our attention. And shake us out of our complacency.

[14:38] When we are out of God's will. He will chasten us. And discipline us. As a father. We'll discipline the child that he loves. To get our attention.

This was what Jonah was about to experience. Jonah told the sailors that he was running away from God. And that the only way to calm the storm was to throw him overboard.

Verse 13. Nevertheless the men rode hard to bring it to the land. But they could not. For the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them. They were madly pulling the oars.

Trying to get this boat to clear this storm. But it was hopeless. There was just no way. They tried with their works to save Jonah. But works don't save.

And it didn't save Jonah. Here in Jonah's book we see really the first converts. You could kind of picture it. As these sailors start now to cry out to the Lord. They cry out to the living God.

[15:39] The true God. Verse 14. Wherefore they cried unto the Lord and said. We beseech thee O Lord. We beseech thee. Let us not perish for this man's life. And lay not upon us innocent blood.

For thou O Lord has done as it pleased thee. These pagan sailors found faith in the Lord. It's amazing isn't it?

They acknowledged his will. And they yielded to him. Verse 15. So they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea. And the sea ceased from her raging.

Threw him overboard. Into the sea. These pagan sailors trusted God. And he delivered them. Verse 16. And then the men feared the Lord exceedingly.

And offered a sacrifice unto the Lord. And made vows. It's interesting how this pagan boat captain. Has to tell Jonah the prophet to pray. These pagan sailors worked so hard to save Jonah's life.

[16:42] When it was he who had endangered their lives. These sailors began to worship the true God. While Jonah was running away from God. And the sailors understood the seriousness of Jonah's disobedience.

Better than he did. Jonah was miraculously now kept safe in the sea by God's providence. Verse 17. Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.

An amazing journey now for Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. It sounds amazing. Yet God can do the amazing. Can't he? And Jonah was cared for in this great fish.

So we've seen Jonah called. Jonah running. Jonah sleeping. Jonah's peril. And now Jonah praying. Here he was. In this amazing place.

[17:54] And sitting in this salty seaweed. In the stomach of a great fish. That God had prepared for him. And Jonah began to pray. Verse 1 of chapter 2.

Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God. Out of the fish's belly. You don't have to wait until you're in a fish's belly to pray.

You don't have to wait until it gets that desperate. But Jonah did. You don't see prayer mentioned by Jonah until this point. It says something about his spiritual condition, doesn't it?

And yet Jonah is restored now as he starts to pray. As he starts to seek after God. There's been a whole lot of praying going on before. But it wasn't Jonah. It was these sailors.

Now we finally hear God's prophet Jonah start to pray. Another big lesson in the book of Jonah. Is that men ought to pray.

[18:53] People ought to pray. I love how someone has described it. There's no place beyond the reach of God's grace. Isn't that true? There is no place beyond the reach of God's grace.

I know. I think it was. William Booth said. That we should reach to the gutter most. There's no one outside. There's no one outside the length of his arm.

His arm is not short of that account save. God can reach to the furthest from him. And no place is beyond the reach of God's grace.

Even in the belly of a great fish. Verse 2. And said. I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord. And he heard me out of the belly of hell. Cried I. And thou heardest my voice.

Doesn't matter what your surroundings. The Lord hears. Your voice. No matter what. Just pray. Just speak the word. Use your voice and pray. Verse 3.

[19:51] For then it's cast me into the deep. In the midst of the seas. And the floods compassed me about. All thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Interesting that it's God's billows.

It's God's waves. God was putting him through this. To test him. To chasten him. To discipline him. To refine him. To restore him. In saving faith. Jonah could see.

That it was God. It was God who was behind the storm. It was God who was behind the tempest. God behind his trials. His troubles. To lead him. To lead him.

To lead him. To deeper, deeper faith. God was in it. Then said I. I am cast out of thy sight. Yet I will look again.

Toward thy holy temple. Verse 5. The waters compassed me about. Even to the soul. The deck closed me around about. The weeds were wrapped about my head. What a picture.

[20:45] What a smelly, foul, dark, damp place. Wouldn't it? Verse 6. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. The earth with her baths was about me forever.

Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption. O Lord my God. Jonah could see God's saving grace. Jonah could give thanks to the Lord for this.

He recognised what God had done. Don't you have times like that? You think, wow. God saved me out of that. Out of that situation. Out of the pit that I was in.

Out of that miry clay. Clogging me. Dragging me. Drowning me. And set me on the rock. God is merciful and forgiving. Verse 7.

When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord. And my prayer came in unto thee. Into thy holy temple. You know, you can be in the belly of the great fish. But your prayer can go into God's holy temple.

[21:43] Into the very holiest. You've got boldness to enter in. Doesn't matter where you are. Your prayers can go and take you into his very holy presence.

Verse 8. They that observe lying fanatics forsake their own mercies. Talking about idol worship in effect. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving. Here's Jonah in this dreadful spot. Yet he found thanksgiving. He said, I will pay that I devote. Salvation is of the Lord. Here's Jonah. He cries out. Salvation is of the Lord.

He made a statement of faith that's very profound. Jonah recognised that God's hand was here in all that had happened to him. And here is grace.

Salvation is of the Lord. If it was of me, I would have no hope. Salvation is of the Lord.

[22:40] It's got to be his marvellous work. Salvation is by God's purchase, by God's provision, by God's power. And Jonah was delivered by God. He saw God's hand in everything that he'd been through.

Verse 10. I'm sure Jonah was glad that God didn't have to talk to the fish a couple of times.

The fish was very obedient. But God frequently asks us to do things that we don't really want to do. Maybe it's that ministry. You think, oh, this is a pain.

Or whatever it is. Whatever it is. This is too hard for me. Or, you know, God's putting it on your heart to go and witness to someone. You think, oh, I don't really want to do that. And you put things off. Or you procrastinate. You find some excuse not to step out in faith and do something for God. And yet, deep down, you know, yeah, God's been talking to me about that for a while.

[23:39] God's been putting that. God's been impressing that upon me.

God's been convicting me of that for a while. And that's what we see with Jonah. God took Jonah right back to step one.

Back to basics. Back to the beginning. Jonah had been through this great storm. He'd nearly drowned. He'd had this budget accommodation for three days and nights and this great fish.

And he had been through much hardship. And it could have all been avoided if only, if only, he'd obeyed God in the first place.

Now we notice the call of Jonah, take two. Now how they go, take two, the film crew. It's the call of Jonah, take two.

Jonah called. The call of Jonah happened again a second time. Verse one of Jonah three. And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time.

[24:42] Jonah had left God, but God had not left Jonah. Jonah. Someone was saying something similar to that this morning in such a conversation.

We can leave God, but God doesn't leave us. That's what happened with Jonah. Here's another big lesson from Jonah. The things that stand out to me so far, obey God.

Pray. Salvation is of the Lord. And another wonderful lesson that we can learn is that God gives second chances. Amen.

Isn't that true? He did that for me. God gives second chances. Now there was a time I made a profession of faith, and then I was in a bit of a wilderness for a time, and then I made a refreshing of my commitment, a rededication, a recommitment.

And that's what God does with us sometimes. He takes us back and helps us to get back on track. Gives us that second chance. Isn't it wonderful how God doesn't give up on us?

[25:46] Even though we deserve that sometimes, really, don't we? We feel like that. But God did this. God did this for Jonah. He did this for Moses. Moses murdered a man.

He went into the wilderness for 14 years. 14 years before God came back to him a second time. A second time. And he called him to leave the people out of Egypt.

God gave Moses a second chance. God gave Peter a second chance. He denied his Lord. At the moment when he should have been standing firm, he denied his Lord.

But God gave Peter that second chance. He came back to him. He restored him. And Jonah was unwilling to go the first time, yet God called him again.

He does that for you and me. He calls us again. God could have left Jonah to it. Give it up on him. But no, the word of the Lord came unto Jonah a second time.

[26:49] Verse 2. Verse 2 of chapter 3. Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

Go. Go. God graciously gave Jonah this second chance. This wonderful privilege again. This privilege that we know, that we can know, how God chooses human beings, frail human beings, weak human vessels.

Weak, inadequate, unworthy human vessels to be his agents on this planet to carry out his work.

And so we see Jonah started to tread the trail to Nineveh. The word preach here tells us, sounded out loudly, plainly, urgently, with earnestness and emotion.

That's the sense of preach. Go and preach unto it. The preaching that I bid thee. The preaching that I tell you to do. So verse 3.

[27:54] So Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Jonah was the first foreign missionary. Going to another land, another people, taking God's message. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey.

It was huge. It took you all this time just to get into it. It would have been like a major suburban sprawl, I suppose you could think of it. Nineveh was such an exceeding great city that it took quite a bit of time to actually get into it.

Nineveh was an exceeding great city. So it was surrounded by a wall, historians tell us, it was surrounded by a wall ten stories high. And this wall was wide enough on the top for three chariots to run side by side.

And there was fifteen hundred lofty watchtowers that were even taller, and aqueducts and gardens. It was an impressive city, an exceeding great city.

And some of you have seen so far, Jonah, cold, running, sleeping, in peril, praying. And now we see Jonah preaching.

[29:08] Jonah preaching. Verse 4. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey. And he cried and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

This exceeding great city suddenly heard this voice of warning on its streets, on its street corners and its squares. It was a plain and simple message. A five word sermon in the language of that time.

Five words. It was brief but stern. Alarming. A message of wrath. A warning cry. Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

What mattered was that it was God's word. It doesn't matter how long we, the message we give. It matters that it's what God wants us to say.

And that can be like that with witnessing too, can't it? A word to one might be just five words. Might be sitting with them for longer than that.

[30:13] But give them what God gives you to say. Give them God's word as he gives it to you to give. And so what mattered was it was God's word and what God wanted Jonah to say.

You know, Isaiah 55, it says of the word of God, So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

And so it was the Jonah's message. It was one piercing cry. It reached from street to street, ultimately even to the king's throne. And this message was one of coming judgment.

This simple sermon struck fear in hearts. And Nineveh became a repentant city. The whole city brought to its knees, verse 5. So the people of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

This corrupt city, this vile, this wicked, this cruel city, this city that worshipped Dagon and false idols. Hundreds of thousands of people starting now to believe God.

[31:27] This sudden work of God, this revival to an undeserving people from the top down, from the king's royal throne, through the streets. Verse 6.

For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes. Here's this king, you can imagine a king, roped in splendour and magnificence and pride and glory.

And the word came to this king, and something changed. Something happened. Even the king, even the king repented. He clothed himself with sackcloth. He humbled himself before God in prayer.

And verse 7. And the king, it says, he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything.

Let them not feed nor drink water. Here was this royal decree. Verse 8. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God.

[32:36] Cry mightily unto God. Yea, let them turn everyone from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

Imagine it. People clothed with sackcloth, and this public humiliation, this public praying and repenting, and seeking after God. Even the horses and the camels wore sackcloth.

Can you imagine what an amazing spectacle it was that this king decreed, and the people understood, the need to repent. And the king called the people to cry mightily unto God.

Verse 9. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? God heard their cry, and he reversed his judgment.

Verse 10. God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said, that he would do unto them, and he did not. What a mighty work of God in Nineveh.

[33:47] Nineveh, this cruel, this heartless people, saved as they believed, as they turned to God. So we've seen Jonah. Jonah called. Jonah running.

Jonah sleeping. Jonah's peril. Jonah praying. Jonah preaching. And now, Jonah fleshly. Jonah fleshly. It's one of the things about the Bible, is it paints people, wats and awl.

Now we know Jonah was a bit of a failure, and then things turned around, and then we see Jonah back in the flesh again, at the back of the book, from chapter 4.

We see, not happy Jonah. Not happy Jonah. Verse 1. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. Here was Jonah angry, offended.

He was mad. The people that were the enemy of Israel, they made him angry now, because God had spared them. And his anger burned. He got angry at God.

[34:46] It seems as if Jonah was so full of prejudice against these enemies of Israel, the Assyrians, that he complained about God's grace. Yet it was the very reason that he himself had been spared, that he himself was still alive.

Verse 2. He prayed unto the Lord and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Jonah hated the people of Nineveh. He hated them. We can be thankful that the Lord, unlike Jonah, is slow to anger. God could have wiped out Nineveh, but he gave them the opportunity to hear the

message, to hear the word of the Lord from Jonah's lips.

Verse 3. As Jonah prays still, Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said the Lord, doest thou well to be angry?

Jonah was so angry that he was on the verge of doing himself in. He was so angry that God spared Nineveh. Next up we see, God uses a plant, a worm, and a wind to teach Jonah.

[36:07] Another lesson. Verse 5. So Jonah went out of the city, and he sat on the east side of the city. There he made a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

Here was Jonah, sitting on the mountainside, looking over the city. Maybe it was getting close to the 40 days, I'm not sure. But it was like he was kind of waiting.

Okay, let's see Nineveh destroyed. But God was going to teach Jonah another lesson. First he provided shade for Jonah. Verse 6. The Lord prepared a gourd, and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief.

So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. Now here's an example of what a gourd looks like. It's a leafy plant, like a vine, a leafy, shady plant. And so Jonah had this booth, this kind of structure, and now this leafy plant grew, and gave him shade.

But verse 7. But God prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, and it smoked the gourd that it withered. So Jonah, the gourd, this leafy plant, suddenly withered.

[37:22] Verse 8. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind. And the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, and he fainted, and wished in himself to die.

He's getting these self-destructive thoughts again. It is better for me to die than to live. You can picture Jonah here, as he's sitting here, this withered plant around him, and he's getting even more steamed up.

God had rebuked Jonah for this. Verse 9. God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto Dan. Then said the Lord, Then haste pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither made haste it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night.

Jonah had cared more for this plant, than the people. He cared more for this plant, for his own self-comfort, than the people that were subject to, or threatened with, God's judgment.

He cared little for the thousands of people who faced God's judgment. Here's another great lesson, from the book of Jonah. To learn God's compassion.

[38:32] God has compassion. His compassion. Isn't that good? You know, when Jesus saw the city, he was moved with compassion. We should be moved with compassion, people.

We should be moved with compassion. Moved with compassion. To care for souls. To consider souls. And to take souls seriously. This book starts with the message of the Lord, and it ends with the mercy of the Lord.

As God is willing to show compassion. God was willing to show compassion and mercy to the Ninevites, those outside his covenant. Yet he warned, he converted, he saved them, by his mercy and grace.

And God was merciful to Jonah, not cursing him for his willful disobedience, but preserving him from peril, graciously calling him again, a second time.

In spite of his failure, God was merciful to the sailors. As they turned to him, they found deliverance. It's strange that Jonah, though himself forgiven, was offended with God for forgiving the city.

[39:44] And some have kind of pictured it like the elder brother with the prodigal son. You know, whoa, look what he's done. He doesn't deserve anything from you. And you could think, well, Nineveh, an evil, cruel city, pagan, idol worshippers, just smite them God.

You know, we can think like that sometimes. But God gives us a second chance. God extends mercy to those undeserving. And he still does today.

Tonight, right now, thank God, he still extends mercy. Because we're all like Jonah in one way or another. We're all like Nineveh in one way or another.

Jonah obeyed God, but it was kind of half-hearted that he still had this anger in him, this flesh, this selfishness, this ugly side of Jonah, that he still wanted the Ninevites to be destroyed.

And, friends, we can be like Jonah. We can have a lack of compassion. Let's pray to be more compassionate. Can we? We ought to pray, I believe.

[41:03] I need to be more compassionate, to be more considerate, to be more caring. It's easy to be heartless. And, it's wrong, isn't it?

It is wrong. Jonah was running from God. There's people running from God in this city.

Running from God. God's called them, God's reached them, and yet they turned and gone their own willful way, just like Jonah did. But God still extends his mercy to his strange people, to the sinful city, if we can find his grace.

Verse 11, it closes with this, and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much coward.

Should I not spare Nineveh? It's the last verse, sums it all up. God's grace is what counts, what matters. We've learned through Jonah.

[42:12] Obey God. Try to obey the first time, if you can. Amen? It's a lot less painful. Obey God.

Pray. Pray that we learn. Pray that we grow. Pray that we trust him. Pray that we learn, also that God gives second chances.

Maybe those people we've written off, maybe God's got a second chance for them too. Amen? Amen. Maybe the people we think, oh, they're in no hoper, they don't care about God, they're too backslidden.

No, God's the God of second chances. He still gives opportunity to reach the unreachable. And salvation is of the Lord.

It's of the Lord. Thank God for that. It is of the Lord. It's really the key message of Jonah. Someone called it the key verse of Jonah.

[43:14] Chapter 2, verse 9. That part, that section that says salvation is of the Lord. And just to close, I urge you today to find that.

Find that salvation. Not a salvation of our own, but it's a salvation of the Lord. It's of His doing. And it's encouraging to see. And I was encouraged to hear someone testify earlier of how they've seen God do a work in someone's life.

And that's what He can do. He can do it even when it seems hopeless. Like it seemed for Jonah, that lives can be turned around. And it's because of the cross. It's because of the cross that He extends mercy to us.

It's of the Lord. Our saving is all of His and none of us. It is finished. That makes it possible tonight that we can trust Him.

As you trust Him, entirely Him, entirely Him to save you. That He makes it happen. Let us pray.