

A lesson for Jonah from God

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone.

Welcome to the service this morning. Sang the song this morning, Showers of Blessings. Are we showered with blessings?

I know we are. I was just thinking about what are some of the blessings, and one that just came to mind was church family.

It is a blessing for me to see it and to be a part of the fellowship that we have within this body of believers here. Before the service in the morning, it's so good to reach out and to say good morning to each one and to fellowship, and then it spills over after the service.

We continue doing that. Such a blessing to have a family like that. There's one more announcement I'd like to bring up, and that is in regards to Sunday school teaching as well.

[1 : 21] Unless something has changed from Friday evening, there is still a need for a teacher for the young men's class as well. So if anyone feels led for that, contact either myself or Pastor Wayne during the week here or after the service.

Wayne will be back tomorrow, I believe, or later on today. So we can bug him again as well. Or maybe even Abe, Elias. Yes? Okay.

So something has changed. Okay. Very good. Very good. And no, that's all right then. I wasn't aware of that yet. Okay. I'll be looking at the final chapter of Jonah this morning.

I've been working through the book of Jonah, the last number of messages I've done. And so we're getting into the final chapter here. Before we go further, let's just again have a word of prayer.

Lord God, we come before you this morning. Lord, we thank you. We thank you for the many blessings that you shower upon us. And Lord, just this morning again for the opportunity to come before you, to worship you, to praise you, and to honor you.

[2 : 50] And so Lord, as we look into your word this morning, I just pray that you would grant me strength and anoint my lips to speak your word, to share the message that you have prepared.

Lord, just pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. All right.

So chapter four. A couple of things that I want to bring out in this chapter. First of all, the first part of chapter four, kind of a continuation of what took place in chapter three.

And so looking a little bit at what Jonah's attitude was towards the result that we saw in chapter three. And then we'll look to a lesson to Jonah from the Lord.

And then finally, the clarification of that lesson or the conviction from the Lord as well. And so I titled the message this morning, A Lesson for Jonah from God.

[4 : 01] Okay, so let's start off. We'll look at the first four verses.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord and said, Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish.

For I know that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, one who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.

Then the Lord said, Is it right for you to be angry? So we left off the last message in chapter three.

Nineveh repented. They received a warning from the Lord through Jonah, and Nineveh repented. God sucks.

[5 : 07] How they were changing their ways. And he relented from the disaster that he was going to send upon them. So we would say, Praise the Lord, right?

As a child of God, wouldn't this be the response that we would have when experiencing something like this? There's a lot of joy involved in one person surrendering their life to the Lord.

The angels rejoice over one sinner who repents. So imagine a whole city repenting. I thought about it this way.

Imagine the people of Grand Prairie as a whole. They're repenting of their sins and cleaning up their act. It would be a citywide lifestyle change.

Wherever we would go throughout the whole city, there would be a new sound. A sound of people rejoicing and praising God. How would we feel?

[6 : 12] What kind of an experience would that be? Imagine an entire city believing in the Lord.

The magnitude of joy that that would bring. And this is what was happening in chapter 3 of Nineveh. Or of Nineveh. It tells us that from the greatest to the least, all believed God and repented.

Even the king repented. And in fact, he ordered the whole city to repent, to sit in sackcloth and ashes.

And so you would think this would fill Jonah with joy. to see a city turn away from wickedness and to turn to the Lord.

But that's not what our text tells us, is it? It tells us that Jonah was displeased. He was displeased to the point of becoming angry.

[7 : 26] He said he was displeased exceedingly. So it said but it displeased Jonah.

So what is it? What is the it that displeases Jonah? You know, was he angry because Nineveh was repenting? Or was he angry at God?

If we look back to chapter 3 verses 5 through 9 we have the account of Nineveh repenting. But I don't think it displeased Jonah.

If we take verse 10 of chapter 3 and read that together with verses 1 and 2 of chapter 4 I'll just go ahead and read that.

Then God saw their works that they turned from their evil way and God relented from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them and he did not do it. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly and he became angry.

[8 : 36] So he prayed to the Lord and said Our Lord was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish for I know that you are a gracious and merciful God slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness one who relents from doing harm.

So does it make sense lining up those three verses reading them together? You know these chapter breaks and verse breaks and stuff they were not in the original scriptures the scrolls and so on this was all added later and so in its original form it would have just been one complete continuation and so here it kind of starts and stops things but if we back up and we put them together like that it makes more sense and so this is an example here of the need for context within scripture to not take one verse alone we must know the circumstances around a single verse to understand why it says what it does so we could have maybe remembered that yeah Nineveh repented there in chapter 3 and then chapter 1 we read that verse 1 of chapter 4 we read that Jonah was displeased and so we could have assumed that he was displeased and angry that Nineveh had repented you know after all

Nineveh they were Gentiles they were heathens in the eyes of the Jews they were not God's chosen people what part did they have in God's plan in his kingdom this was the mindset children of Israel and of Jonah and in fact if we would look to the New Testament the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10 it very clearly shows what Israelites thought of other peoples even half Jews like the Samaritans were they looked down on them they did not they did not have favor one toward another you know it's true God called the children of Israel out from among the other people groups he set them apart and he gave them instructions to not intermarry with the

Gentiles but yet all of this did not mean that the Gentiles were outside of God's plan the reason that Israel was to keep itself apart was so as to not allow the evil influences of this wicked mankind to creep into their lives you know the worship of idols the false gods that the nations bowed down to and sacrificed to have no part with that and so they were called apart to be to be to be separated they were to be a light to the world a people who worshipped the true God and followed him other nations were to see God's favor resting on the Jewish people and to fear the God of Israel Israel was to be like a city on a hill a beacon of light that cannot be hidden drawing a dark world toward the light toward

God but instead what did Israel do Israel turned away from God and did follow the gods of the people around them they rejected the Savior and they crucified him and so today the church has been given the purpose that was previously Israel's the church is to be set apart to be ambassadors for Christ on a hill drawing a world that is still in darkness toward the light toward God furthering his kingdom the Gentiles who were once in the Old Testament who were once in the outside looking in they have found favor with God churches are filled with them and they worship the true God the God of Israel and the day will come when Israel's eyes will be opened where they will see

[13 : 25] Jesus for who he is the Savior that they have been awaiting and they too will turn to him going back to our text though now Jonah isn't so much displeased about what Nineveh is doing he is displeased with what God does about it it says that he is exceedingly displeased not just a little bit irritated but he's very displeased with God's response to Nineveh Nineveh was a great city and the people were very wicked Jonah and all of Israel lost no love on Nineveh they would have rejoiced if Nineveh had been destroyed wicked evil even brutal and especially toward Israel Jonah had brought them the message that they would be destroyed in 40 days and I think a message like this pleased

Jonah here was an enemy of Israel who was about to get what it had coming no longer would they war against Israel taking captives and treating them cruelly God was about to deliver punishment on them for their wickedness this was great news to an Israelite except God did not bring about that punishment God waited to see what Nineveh would do with the message that he sent through his servant Jonah and when God saw Nineveh believe the message believe in him and come before him repenting in sackcloth and ashes he relented he stopped the disaster that he was about to bring down on them and so if we look at

Jonah's prayer in verse 2 we know that he was angry with God not Nineveh God not Nineveh so in his prayer he says Lord I knew this would happen I knew you would not destroy them didn't I tell you this while I was still at home and so we can tell that there must have been more to the conversation than chapter 1 tells us when Jonah is originally sent to go to Nineveh it doesn't make any mention of Jonah saying anything when God told him to go but obviously there must have been some more and Jonah goes as far as to make an excuse for his fleeing the Lord's presence when he headed for Tarshish it was like he had a good reason to run he says

Lord I know you are a gracious and merciful God you are slow to anger and you have so much love to give and you are one who relents from doing harm but it is in anger that Jonah lays this before God Lord I know who you are I know your character why did you send me here you're making me look like a fool this is what Jonah is saying and then in verse 3 he takes it a step further he asked the Lord to take his life from him he'd rather be dead than be made to look like a fool and so I wonder as Jonah traveled from Israel to Nineveh as he went from town to town along the way did he stop and tell the people that something was going to happen to Nineveh an enemy of Israel was he maybe a bit too sure of what he thought might happen you know his message in chapter 3 to

Nineveh was one of destruction and now it wasn't happening Nineveh was left standing and Jonah would head back to Israel a fool or a false prophet if you will in his eyes his image was tarnished in his mind and he blamed God for it and so now he wished death for himself rather than to go back to Israel and to give them the news that Nineveh was not destroyed how many of us can identify with Jonah is there anyone here who doesn't mind being made to look like a fool you know that just flies against our human nature all of us have a level of pride within us and it rubs us the wrong way when we're made a fool but do we allow it to run like Jonah did would we dare point a finger at God and blame him for making us look foolish does God really make us look foolish or is it that we make fools of ourselves and not wanting to take responsibility for our actions we blame others and even

[19 : 43] God maybe it's just that we look at things the wrong way maybe we don't think them through and therefore we stumble look at the message that Jonah could have taken home back to Israel a great city and exceedingly be brought down destroyed has been spared when faced with the reality of their ways their eyes were opened and they realized the disaster coming their way and they repented Nineveh has believed the God of Israel and has repented of her wicked ways Nineveh has turned to the Lord we need fear Nineveh no more for she has changed it's hard to go back that far in time to the culture of the day and so on it's hard to understand what Israel was like in those days but wouldn't this have been a joyous message to proclaim that an enemy's heart had been changed thought up a bit of an example to maybe something we could connect so let's say there is a group that persecutes the church non-stop you know we are very much sheltered in this aspect but there are churches out there that very likely are experiencing this you know the church is constantly being persecuted by this group nothing can stop them they are desperately wicked and destroying the church is their one and only goal they might run us down maybe making false accusations that paint us in a bad light they vandalize the property they regularly beat up church members when they encounter them in the street they disrupt services and on and on you know maybe this is even putting things lightly but I'll say a message comes to this group and this is the message that God knows what they are doing he is seeing their wickedness and if this does not come to an end their day is coming where they will pay dearly for their ways and then the news comes to the church this group is repenting they're sorry for their deeds and they are changing they have seen the light they believe

God and they want to follow him and they want to start attending our church services how would we feel about sharing a pew with someone who few days ago was bent on bringing us down how welcoming would we be could we love them or would we be like Jonah in this scenario Lord these people were so awful to us we awaited the day you would punish them for their ways and remove them from us we just wanted them gone and now instead you are bringing them to us and we are to accept them to make room for them I think it's too often that our hearts desire is to have enemies removed when we should be praying that they would be changed

Jesus gives instructions to the multitudes that are following him and they are instructions for us as well let's turn to Matthew chapter five Matthew chapter five verses 43 through the first part of verse 45 where Jesus is speaking to the multitudes that are following him Matthew five 43 through the first part of 45 you have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy but I say to you love your enemies bless those who curse you and do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you that you may be sons of your father in heaven you know we are to love our enemies to bless them to do good to them and to pray for them that is how we may be sons and daughters of our father in heaven love is key from there

I'd like to turn to first John first John chapter four John four verses seven and eight it reads beloved let us love one another for love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God he who does not love does not know God for God is love so a strong message there as well love is of God it comes from him and he is love if we do not love yes even our enemies we do not know God for he is love you know we are called to be Christ like we must love if we will be called sons and daughters of God God and so why is it so hard to love why did

Jonah find it so hard to love it angered Jonah that God would love Israel's enemy Nineveh and not destroyer and yet what is God's answer to Jonah it's not a harsh reply but a soft question spoken in love is it right for you to be angry let's read the following verses five through nine so Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city there he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade till he might see what would become of the city and the Lord God prepared a plant and made a come up over Jonah that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery so

[27 : 19] Jonah was very grateful for the plant but as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm and it so damaged the plant that it withered and it happened when the sun arose that God prepared a vehement east wind and the sun beat on Jonah's head so that he grew faint then he wished death for himself and said it is better for me to die than to live then God said to Jonah is it right for you to be angry about the plant and he said it is right for me to be angry even to death so in verse God God has a question for Jonah is it right for you to be angry Jonah doesn't answer this question instead he turns and he leaves the city but he is still displeased he finds a spot to sit outside of the city and he puts up a little bit of a shelter to shade him and there he sits and he waits to see what will happen you know he now knows that

God will not destroy the city and yet somewhere deep inside he believes that Nineveh's repentance will only be temporary you know and God will see this and he will yet destroy them and so Jonah hangs around waiting to see their fall the days go on nothing happens it's hot out there Jonah's shelter isn't a whole lot of comfort to him his anger and his frustration builds and so the Lord has opportunity to give Jonah a lesson the Lord prepares a plant and makes it to grow up over Jonah to give him shade from the hot sun to deliver him from his misery and Jonah is grateful for this plant it is a comfort to him but God's lesson is not done he prepared the plant and now he prepares a worm a worm and it damages the plant so that it withers

Jonah's shade is gone and as the sun rises the next day and the plant is withered and gone God prepares more yet it says it says that God prepared a vehement intense east wind how much worse could it get for Jonah shade was gone now the sun's coming up and a hot intense windstorm picks up the heat becomes so unbearable that Jonah begins to grow faint he becomes weak and again Jonah wishes death for himself it is better for me to die than to live he says how soon

Jonah has forgotten his experience with the fish he was as good as dead then and he prayed to the Lord and now in the next circumstance again for death what kind of lessons has the Lord prepared for us in the past is he giving us a lesson today how are we reacting to these lessons are we learning from them or do they displease us and are we growing angry toward God let's look at Proverbs chapter three Proverbs 3 verses 11 and 12 my son do not despise the chastening of the

Lord nor detest his correction for whom the Lord loves he corrects just as a father the son in whom he delights you know we all receive lessons from time to time all of us have our weaknesses areas where we fail where the Lord must give correction and he does this because he loves us let us not despise the chastening of the Lord it is for our good going back to our text twice now in chapter 4 Jonah has wished for death and as he did it the first time God answers Jonah with a question this time is it right for you to be angry about the plant

[33 : 49] God wants Jonah to think about what he is saying he's wanting Jonah to be a little more slow to speak think first before you speak Jonah allows his anger to boil over this time he snaps back at God in anger it is right for me to be angry even to death Jonah is trying to justify his anger to the point of wanting to die first that Nineveh was spared and not destroyed that God relented and now that this plant withered and died was no longer providing him shade something as little as that nothing was going according to Jonah to Jonah's plan to Jonah's plan to be angry with God are we right to be angry with

God when he does things differently than we expected we must remember that God is our creator he does not need our approval to do anything the created has no power or right to question the creator we've had that in a previous work through the book of Romans I believe it was Romans chapter 8 that talks about that as well what we should do what we must do is to be thankful that God is who Jonah says he is in verse 2 we ought to be thankful that he is gracious and merciful slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness one who relents from doing harm things to be thankful for let's read the final two verses in chapter 4 but the

Lord said you have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored nor made it grow which came up in a night and perished in a night and should I not pity Nineveh that great city in which are more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left and much livestock after after Jonah's outburst the Lord explains to Jonah the lesson that he had given him about the plant God says to Jonah you have had pity for a plant that you did not plant you did not nurture it you didn't water it you did absolutely nothing to make it grow it came up one night and it perished the next as I mentioned before we must remember who

God is that he is the creator we must know our place in creation as a created being under the control of the creator it was God who created the plant and made it grow for Jonah's comfort and he also took it away to deliver Jonah from his misery God created Jonah and he had a purpose in sending him to Nineveh to warn them God has created each one of us and given each one a purpose in life that we are to fulfill Jonah was miserable and angry by giving Jonah the lesson of the plant the Lord helped Jonah to understand his place and

God continues to teach in verse 11 and should I not pity Nineveh here we have the same word that God used in verse 10 Jonah you pitied the plant should I not pity Nineveh but here's the difference Jonah you did not labor for the plant I the Lord have labored for Nineveh Jonah you have plant to grow I the Lord have caused Nineveh to grow you know and further here is a great city filled with many people more than 120 thousand who were about to be destroyed should I not pity them Jonah I believe that

[39 : 43] Jonah began to see the picture says here that there were more than 120 thousand persons who cannot discern or tell between their right hand and their left I looked into this a bit and I still haven't come to a clear understanding the meaning behind it some believe that it means that this number was in reference to small children to young children in the city because of the fact where it says that they couldn't discern between their right hand meaning they were young and innocent they didn't know between right and wrong others say that the maximum population of Nineveh in those days couldn't have been more than 170,000 or 175,000 and therefore this was a representation of the entire population whatever the case is what we can gather is that the

Lord was long suffering toward them and his desire was for them to repent of their wicked ways you know and lastly here the Lord mentions that there was much livestock why would he mention this was he that concerned about the animals in Nineveh I wonder does this possibly tie in with Genesis 2 26 where God says let us make man in our image according to our likeness them have dominion over the fish of the sea over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and so on Jonah pitied a plant that grew up in the wild it did not need man to care for it and yet here was a city full of people and much livestock besides that were under the dominion of man depending on man for their survival you know

Jonah should have had much more pity on the people and the animals in that city than he did on that one plant man and yet scripture calls

Jonah a servant of the Lord and so I believe that he did repent and he did make things right though it doesn't tell us here in the book of Jonah and so as we conclude the book of Jonah I again just want to bring out the overarching theme of the book you know the main focus of the whole book of Jonah is God's mercy toward mankind toward us the Lord showed mercy to the mariners when they turned from their false gods and feared him and he saved them from the raging tempest the Lord showed mercy to the great city Nineveh when they believed him and repented of their wickedness and he relented from the disaster that he would have brought upon them and throughout the whole book the

Lord shows mercy to his servant the prophet Jonah who though he believed in the Lord he stumbled again and again Jonah fled the Lord's presence he showed mercy and he pursued Jonah when Jonah was cast into the stormy sea he showed mercy in preparing the fish to swallow Jonah when Jonah came to himself and realized his condition and prayed to the Lord he showed mercy in commanding the fish to spit him out on dry land when Jonah became angry with the Lord for relenting from the destruction that he had intended toward Nineveh he showed mercy in the soft answer that he gave Jonah when Jonah's anger grew because the Lord removed the plant and brought the intense east wind he showed mercy again in the patient soft answer he gave

[45 : 40] Jonah do we begin to see the mercy of our God the mercy that he has toward all of mankind not only the saved but the lost as well should the Lord not pity the perishing what we need to remember is that we too were once perishing praise be to God that he is long suffering and not willing that any should perish or we might have perished long ago let's seek out the perishing let's go to them and tell them about the one who created them and loves them desires a relationship with them let's pray Lord God we come before you again Lord we thank you that you are merciful and gracious we thank you for your loving kindness and that you are long suffering not desiring that any should perish

Lord we thank you that you are patient with us and that you relent from the destruction that is coming toward us Lord you wait for us you are patient with us and when we see the fault in our ways when we repent and we turn to you Lord you relent from disaster you bring us back to yourself Lord thank you for your mercy Lord I just thank you for each one here this morning may you go with them may your mercy and grace rest upon them may you lead and guide each one throughout the week help all of us to take the message out there into the world of your grace and your mercy let us seek out those who are perishing and throw out a lifeline just pray these things in the name of

Jesus Amen