

# What Right Do We Have?

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[ 0 : 00 ] And everyone, we are finishing up the book of Jonah this morning and I appreciate, brother, that song to realize that just like Jonah, we can't run, we can't hide from God.

No matter if we go the opposite direction, get on a ship, go down into the, go down to Tarshish, go down into the ship. He ended up going down into the sea.

He ended up going down into the belly of the whale. And know this, when we try to run or try to hide from God, everything will point down instead of up.

And when we turn back to him and accept his will for our life, that's when we are most at peace.

That's when we get to see God do great and mighty things in our life.

As we unpack the last few verses in the book of Jonah this morning, we examine the character of God and how he shows grace and mercy upon whom he chooses.

[ 1 : 06 ] The book of Jonah is a very short but very powerful story that teaches us valuable lessons about the nature of God. And his mercy and his grace and the extent to which he chooses to show that toward all of us.

And the need for us to emulate that grace and that mercy even in our own lives. This morning in the book of Jonah, chapter 4 and verses 9 through 11 this morning, we'll see the prophet's response to God's mercy and God's grace that he shows upon the Ninevites, those Assyrians who were wicked people and they were brutal.

And so Jonah really did not want to see them continue. He wanted God to destroy them. But instead, God said, Jonah, I want you to go preach my message of mercy to these wicked Assyrians. And I want you to let them know that if they don't repent, I'm going to destroy them in 40 days. Because ultimately, through all of the things that happen in the book of Jonah, we find Jonah, after he prays in the belly of the fish, he gets spit out upon dry land.

He ultimately goes and he preaches what God told him to preach, going all the way from one end to the other of the city and preaching. Repent! And they did.

[ 2 : 40 ] And this morning, last week, we saw Jonah goes up on the hill and he is waiting, hoping, most likely, thinking that, well, you know, they won't stay repented.

They're going to renege on what they've done. And then I'm going to appreciate God destroying them. So he's up on the hillside, looking down on the city, away from the fire of God that he is expecting any moment to rain down from above.

But this morning, we're going to see how Jonah's attitude was such that God asks him a question.

And we saw last week where God was teaching Jonah a lesson. He gave him an object lesson in a plant that rose up, provided him some shade for a while.

Jonah was appreciative to the plant, although he wasn't compassionate toward the city of Nineveh. He was more concerned with his own comfort than he was with the souls of the people of the city of Nineveh.

[ 3 : 50 ] And so we're going to see this morning how Jonah's attitude highlights the need for us to examine our very own lives and our very own attitudes toward whom God chooses to show grace and mercy.

So in this morning's message, we are going to be asking ourselves the same thing God asked Jonah. What right do we have?

You know, sometimes we, you know, we get upset at someone and we get, we get upset or we, we, we judge them for whatever reason.

And I think God would ask us the same thing that he asked Jonah. What right do you have to judge that person? Because I could judge you right now. And guess what?

I would find you wanting as well. So we need to remember that. Anytime we judge someone else based upon what we think is right or what we think God should do, or maybe thinking that we are the ones that are the ones that are supposed to, to, to protect or to, to be the bastions of truth.

[ 5 : 02 ] Remember, God could do the same for us. And I guarantee you that we wouldn't come out on the good end of that. And so we're going to look this morning and unpack how Jonah responded, how God responded to Jonah, and see how God wants to show Jonah, Jonah, what right do you have to be angry because I struck down a plant?

You had more mercy. You had more compassion on the plant than you had on souls who had an eternal destiny. And we're going to see Jonah just kind of ends.

Have you ever wrote a book that didn't really finish or just ended? Or have you been watching a TV show and it just kind of ended? You're going, what happened?

Well, the writer and the director left it up to your imagination. Well, what did God do when he had Jonah write the book of Jonah? He just ended the book and he leaves it up to us to apply it in our very own lives.

And so we'll see that this morning. Let's look now at Jonah chapter four, verses nine through 11.

Then God said to Jonah, is it right for you to be angry about the plant?

[ 6 : 22 ] Do you remember from last week, verses five through eight? God had a plant come up, could have been a castor oil plant, could have been a bottle gourd.

The plant comes up, gives Jonah shade. Jonah goes, ah. And then God sends a worm. Worm eats the plant. Plant withers. Jonah gets hot. God sends a hot scorching wind.

And Jonah is miserable. And Jonah gets angry. And he said, is it right for me to be, it is right for me to be angry, even to death.

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 here's where God gives the lesson. He said, Jonah, you had compassion on the plant. And should I not have compassion or 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?

[ 7 : 38 ] So what we see this morning is that God's mercy is for everyone. God's mercy is for all of us.

It's available to any one of us. And God's mercy is a theme of the book of Jonah. Because he wants to show it on those who repent and those who turn back to him.

And it's crucial to understand that it's not limited to a certain group of people. God's mercy is available to all. The Bible says God so loved who?

He so loved the world. All of us, put your name in there. God's mercy extends to all people, regardless of their race, their ethnicity, their nationality.

God's mercy is for everyone. And God's grace is for everyone. And it's evident in Jonah's mission to the Ninevites, who were a notoriously wicked group of people.

[ 8 : 40 ] I mean, I could tell you some of the things that they actually did to people and how they treated people and how they brutally tortured those that they would in battle and those who they fought against.

So they were very, very wicked people. But despite their sin, God showed them mercy. He sent a prophet of his and he said, Tell them this. I want to show them mercy if they repent.

And they did. And God showed his mercy. See, Jonah's values were topsy-turvy. Jonah valued his own comfort ahead of the souls of the people who were in Nineveh.

And this is where God says, he said, You had pity. You had compassion on the plant. You didn't even plant it. You didn't water it. You didn't take care of it. But isn't it my option to do whatever I want to with the plant that I created?

He said, isn't it okay for me to have pity? Isn't it okay for me to have compassion toward these 120,000 souls who didn't know right? But we showed them what was right.

[ 9 : 58 ] And they repented. But Jonah struggled. Jonah struggled to accept God's mercy to a people he didn't like. Jonah struggled to accept that God would show compassion and that God would forgive a group of people that he loathed.

He couldn't come to grips with that. So, he was so angry that God had spared them. He goes up into the hillside, just outside the city, to sulk.

And in chapter 4, verse 9, God asked Jonah a question. Do you have a right? Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?

Now, the first time God asked that same question, Jonah didn't reply. But the second time God asked Jonah, is it right for you to be angry?

This time, God gets an answer just like that. Jonah said, you're right. It's right for me to be angry. I'm angry even to the point of death.

[ 11 : 04 ] I'd rather die than see these wicked people be spared by you, God. And he didn't say that, but that's pretty much what he was saying.

That's why his values were topsy-turvy. What if Jonah had paused for a minute and said, yeah, you're right, God. I have no right to be angry.

I think Jonah would have been well on his way to recovery. I think Jonah would have been well on his way to seeing things the way God saw them. And I think what it would have done, it would have circumvented his anger.

He'd have said, you're right, God. I don't have a right to judge. I don't have a right to be angry. I don't have a right to question what you do. And I think Jonah would have been on his way to be in tune and in line with the will of God.

And I believe Jonah would have been more at peace. I think Jonah could have found his peace if he just said, yep, God, you're right. I give up my rights. Your will be done, as Jesus prayed.

[ 12 : 13 ] Not mine, but your will be done. And so God uses the example of the plant that provided shade for Jonah to help him seek his own lack of mercy. Remember, it was an object lesson.

Jonah was more concerned about the plant and his own comfort, but he wasn't concerned about the lives and the souls and the eternity of the Ninevites. So as we reflect on God's mercy, for all people, we need to examine our own motives, our own attitudes, our own values as God shows mercy to those who may be different from us.

Now, do we believe that God's mercy is only for certain people? Let's look at Acts chapter 10, verses 34 and 35. In the book of Acts, we read, Now, do we struggle, we ask ourselves that question, Do we struggle to show mercy to those whom we perceive as unlikable or those that we don't like or those who are different from us?

The gospel message is for everyone. It's for that nosy neighbor of yours. It's for that neighbor on the other side that's always doing things that frustrate you.

It's for that person across town that is not like you. That is who the gospel is for. It's for everyone.

It's for every tribe, every nation, as the Bible says, for every country, for every group of people.

[ 13 : 54 ] It's even for you. You see, why do we sometimes elevate ourselves and think that we're special? We're just like everyone else.

We're sinners. We've fallen short of God's standards. And we need salvation just like everyone.

So the second thing we see is, the second main point, is it's our responsibility to extend mercy and grace to others. Why? Because God did it.

And God sent us to earth to be ambassadors. God saved us to be ambassadors. To say, God loves you. He wants to show you mercy. He wants to show you grace. And he wants you to come to know Jesus as your Savior.

Let's take a look. Jonah chapter 4, verse number 10. In verse 10, God challenges Jonah's anger toward his mercy that he extended to the Ninevites.

[ 14 : 54 ] But the Lord said, And the word translated pity or concern should be translated have compassion.

That's what that word pity is. Sometimes when we pity something, you know, it says, you know what, it's bad to be you. I'm glad I'm not you. But the word, the characteristic of that word really has more to do with having compassion on something or having compassion on someone.

And so what God's telling Jonah is, you had compassion on a plant. You didn't even plant it. You didn't tend it. You didn't care for it.

You had compassion on the plant, which came up in a night and perished in a night. Now, while one normally doesn't have compassion on a plant, the Lord was driving home Jonah's inappropriate response to the mercy that he wanted to show on the Ninevites.

So the Lord was trying to, God was trying to forcefully drive home the ultimate question. Who are you, Jonah, to question me? That's his point.

[16:18] That's why he asked, is it right? Is it fit? Who are you? Do you have a right to question me?

See, Jonah's anger was not only expressed in a lack of understanding, but also a lack of trust. In effect, he didn't trust what God was doing. So Jonah was really worried about this little plant, but he wasn't worried about the people in Nineveh.

Jonah had apparently grown. Think about this. Jonah had apparently grown indifferent to the fate of God's creation outside the bounds of Israel.

In effect, Jonah didn't care about anybody but his fellow Israelites. Jonah had no compassion for anyone outside of his family, if you will.

Jonah had no compassion for anyone outside of his circle, outside of his sphere. Aren't we like that sometimes? Sometimes we may not actively, but sometimes we may be apathetic toward the fate of the souls beyond our faith family.

[17:37] So the question, God's question captures really the very intent of the book of Jonah. That's the issue of grace and mercy. God wants to show grace.

God wants to show mercy. And just as Jonah's provision of the shade of the vine he didn't deserve, Jonah didn't deserve the plant that shaded him.

The Ninevites' provision was a deliverance they didn't deserve based upon a repentance they didn't understand. They knew that they were going to be destroyed. They knew it was urgent.

They declared a fast, put on sackcloth, and they repented. The king, all the way down, repents. God relents. He shows mercy, and he doesn't destroy them.

So it's our responsibility, just as God has taught us, to show grace and show mercy to others. And then thirdly, we are to show God's love to his creation.

[18:37] We need to show God's love to others. We can do that in so many ways. We can do that in service. We can do that in serving others, doing things for them.

We can also show love to God's creation when we share the gospel with them, when we let them know God loves you. And Jesus died on the cross. And God's free gift of salvation is available to you if you but just simply trust in what he did on the cross of Calvary.

Let's look at verse number 11, Jonah chapter 4. And this is what God said. And should I not pity Nineveh? Should I not have compassion on the Ninevites?

That great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left and that much livestock.

Some people have said that the end of the book kind of just ends, as we said. But actually, I think it was done that way on purpose.

[19:44] See, God wants us to see Jonah's attitude and how it contrasted with God's will and what God really wanted.

And we ask ourselves that question. The book ends really with a clear contrast between Jonah's attitude and God's mercy and God's grace and what God wanted to show.

One commentator, I think, really hit the nail on the head when he said this. It's a choice between gourds and souls.

It's a choice between building and souls. It's a choice between keeping the pews nice.

And I was in a church years ago. We started a Christian school. We had our chapel in the sanctuary in the auditorium. And it was maybe three or four weeks.

[20:56] Had one of our deacons come and said, Pastor, those kids are messing up our pews. I kid you not. That's exactly what he said.

He said, I don't know if that's a good idea. He said, if we're not careful, well, they're going to mess up all of our pews. And I said, so what you're telling me is the pews are more important than the children that were.

I didn't say that. Okay, then why don't you tell me again what you just said? He did. And I said, so what you're telling me is the pews are more important than these children.

Well, I didn't say that. So this commentator really boils it down. He said it's a choice between gourds or souls. I don't know if any of you saw the movie The Jesus Revolution.

Catherine and I went to see it this past week. And really it's a historical account of what happened in the late 60s up until 1972 where there was a great movement in California that spread really across the country.

[ 21 : 59 ] And there's this one scene and all the hippies were coming in to hear the hear the word of God preached. And one of the men, one of the men in the church came to the pastor and said, pastor, you know, they're all coming barefoot and their feet are dirty.

And they are they're messing up the carpet. Pastor didn't say anything. The following Sunday.

Same gentleman arrives at church and he sees this long line snaking around sidewalk.

It's all these people waiting to come inside the front door. And he rounds the corner. He sees the pastor on a little stool. He's got someone sitting down.

He's got a towel. He's washing their feet. And he washes the next foot. And he said, OK, now step on the towel to dry your feet and welcome to welcome to Calvary Chapel.

The next person walks through and guy looks at the at what what their pastor is doing and he just shakes his head and walks inside. What's more important? Carpet.

[ 23 : 17 ] Our souls being saved. So the Lord made his points. He's gracious to all nations toward Gentiles as well as Israelites. God makes a point that he's sovereign.

God makes the point that he punishes rebellion, which is what he did to Jonah in the belly of the fish. And he wants his people to obey him, to be rid of religious sham and to place no limits on his universal love and his universal grace.

Have any of you ever heard or read Dr. J. Vernon McGee's stuff? He was he was a preacher years ago. He was from Texas. And I loved his pithy sayings.

I mean, he he was really down to earth. I read this in Dr. McGee's commentary on Jonah chapter four, verses nine through eleven.

This is what he said. I'm just quoting Dr. McGee. He says, I'm afraid that there are a great many people in the church who are caterpillars. Church members are either pillars or caterpillars.

[ 24 : 25 ] The pillars hold up the church. The caterpillars just crawl in and out. He says there are a lot of people just crawling in and out of out of the church, waiting for some great wave of emotion, waiting for some feeling to take hold of them.

And they have never done anything yet. But God says that we are to get busy for him. So we ask ourselves, are we a pillar? Are we a caterpillar?

So as we look at the book of Jonah, in conclusion, we look at Jonah's attitude toward what God was doing. And the difference between what God wanted to do and what God wants us to understand. So we can't withhold mercy and grace from those God created, those God loved, and those for whom Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary.

We also need to be mindful in our own hearts. If we are harboring unforgiveness or maybe we're harboring a lack of mercy toward others.

[ 25 : 38 ] And as we extend mercy and grace and compassion to those around us, we really are simply reflecting the love and the essence of God as we do that.

What's the gospel? The gospel is Jesus Christ died for us. He rose again to prove that God was satisfied.

For by grace are we saved through faith and not of ourselves as the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. The Bible says that salvation is a gift of God.

All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. This morning, if you do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior, I encourage you this morning to submit to Him.

The Bible says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We've all missed the mark.

We're not perfect. God expects perfection. Well, you say, well, how can we, how can that work if God expects perfection when we're not perfect?

[ 26 : 48 ] The Bible goes on to say the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The Bible said God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

How does it work? How does it work? Jesus, sinless, spotless Lamb of God, died on the cross. Our sins, in effect, were placed upon Him. God poured out His wrath on Jesus Christ and He died in our place.

Paid the penalty. In full. Jesus, before He breathed His last breath, said, it is finished. And if we believe that Jesus Christ is God and Jesus Christ died on the cross in our place, the Bible said, you shall be saved.

Every head bowed, every eye closed this morning. This morning, as we think about and as we reflect on the ending of the book of Jonah, we ask ourselves, what really is my attitude?

What's my motives for serving? Do I have the Jonah attitude? And if we do, and simply it's a matter of repentance, just like the Ninevites had to repent, we need to repent of our attitude, wrong attitudes, and say, God, you want to show mercy and you want to show grace to everyone.

[ 28 : 28 ] Lord, help me to get on board and help me to be who you want me to be and to say, not my will, but yours be done.

Father, if there's anyone here this morning that doesn't know Jesus as their Savior, you love them. You want them to be a part of your family. You want to adopt them.

You want to forgive them. You want to redeem them and place them in the body of Christ. So, Father, this morning, if there's anyone here, and if you're here this morning and you've never yet submitted and trusted Christ, then I want you, in the quiet of your own heart and mind, to let God know that you understand that you're a sinner.

Let God know that you understand that you don't deserve His grace and mercy. Realize that Jesus died in your place.

Believe that He is the Son of God. And believe, as the Bible says, He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. And this morning, just simply place your faith and your trust completely in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation.

[ 30 : 00 ] And if you've done that this morning, and you mean it in your heart, I welcome you to the family of God. Father, we thank you for what you are going to accomplish in us, through us.

Father, I thank you for each one here this morning. I pray that your Holy Spirit would be able to encourage and uplift each one. Convict when necessary. Father, we pray that we could sense your presence.

Lord, may we pray that you would bless this offering that we are about to receive.

Lord, may what we give be used to reach even more with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Father, we thank you for what you're going to accomplish.

We thank you for our families. We thank you, Lord God, that you've blessed us. Help us to be the leaders of our families. To be who you want us to be.

[ 31 : 06 ] And to leave a legacy of faith. Legacy of righteousness. Father, help us to accomplish your holy will.

And the mission that you've left us here to accomplish. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.