

Our Motives for Service

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[0 : 00] Welcome to our next saga of Jonah. As we've seen Jonah hear from God, he's telling Jonah, arise, get up, go to Nineveh, and tell them that because of their wickedness, I'm going to overthrow them in 40 days. And what does Jonah do? Jonah decides to run the opposite direction. He finds a ship. He goes down to Tarshish, and God sends a mighty storm, a storm like the sailors had never seen before, and they despair, thinking they're going to lose their life. Ultimately, the lot falls upon Jonah. They say, what should we do? And Jonah says, throw me overboard. They don't want to. And so they start throwing everything off the ship to lighten the ship. Finally, they give in, and they throw Jonah overboard. God sends a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And after Jonah prays, Jonah,

God speaks to the fish, and he said, spit Jonah out on dry land. And out Jonah goes. He gets to Nineveh. First day he gets there, a city so big it took days to walk from one end to the other. Jonah cries out that in 40 days, God is going to overthrow them because of their wickedness, and they need to repent. Nineveh repents. They proclaim a fast. They put on sackcloth, and they sit in ashes. The king proclaims a fast and says, the whole country, we need to turn to God and repent of our wicked ways.

And in verse number 10 of chapter number 3, God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way.

God relented from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it. So the question this morning is, why do we do what we do? Why did Jonah choose to disobey God? Why did Jonah take so long before he decides to do what God wants him to do? What motivates us to serve God? What is our inner attitude? What are the things that cause us to act? What causes us to serve the Lord? Now there are some that know the Lord, but still serve him out of the wrong motives.

[2 : 44] What are some of the motives out of which we might serve God? We might teach a Sunday school class. We might tell someone else about God. What are some of those motives?

What are things that motivate us to serve God? Obligation. Yes. You know what? I need to do this, and I'm going to just get out there and do it. What else? What's another motivation?

Hmm? To go to heaven? Okay, yeah. Some mistakenly think that serving God is going to bring them to heaven or get them to heaven. A lot of people do that. A lot of people.

Now those that know God know better, but what are some other motives for serving God? Okay, well that's a good motive. That's a good motive.

Love. Some people serve God out of love. Some people, what else? Appearance. Yes, they want to make it appear that they're holier than others.

[4 : 02] I mean, there are a lot of reasons why we might serve, but as we get into chapter number four, we're going to look at Jonah, hear what he says back to God, and we're going to get a little bit of understanding about why that is. Now the apostle Paul tells us that Jesus Christ, if we follow his motive for service, Jesus Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but him who died for them and rose again. So Jonah, in chapter four, declares his motives. He lets God know that's why he didn't serve him in the first place, and he got angry, we're going to find in just a moment, because God was merciful, and God forgave Nineveh. Imagine that. He preaches, salvation, and he gets upset when God does what God does, and God acts mercifully, and God lets them know what he is going to do. Now we can learn a lot this morning from Jonah and his motives for service.

Jonah was angry because God showed mercy and forgiveness to Nineveh. Now our service for the Lord ought to be done from a grateful heart, from a heart of love, and a heart of realization that God,

we owe that at least to God. Romans chapter 12 verse 1 says, as we give our bodies a living sacrifice to him, it's our, it's only reasonable, it's only reasonable that we do. So the question this morning that we ask ourselves is, am I serving God for the right reason? Am I doing what I'm doing for God with the right motive? Now this passage this morning, verses one through four of Jonah, chapter number four, I think is going to give us some insights into some motives for service. First of all, we see that our motive can reveal our hearts. The motives and why we do what we do can reveal what is inside of our hearts. Let's look this morning at chapter four, verses one and two. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly. What got Jonah mad? God saw their works and he turned from, that they turned from their evil way and God relented. God chose not to bring disaster upon Nineveh.

And because of that, Jonah got angry. It displeased Jonah and he became exceedingly angry. Now Jonah's anger and desire for punishment reveal what?

[7 : 19] His heart towards Nineveh and I believe his heart toward God, his true heart toward them. Jonah was mad because the pagan Gentiles received the same forgiveness that God showed to Israel.

And I think partly because of Jonah's national pride and because Jonah thought of himself and the Jewish people as God's people and as if they deserved God's mercy and God's forgiveness. But these pagan, these wicked people didn't deserve that. He didn't think it was right and he didn't think it was warranted. Jonah, here's the thing about Jonah. Jonah obeyed God on the outside. But he wasn't obeying God on the inside. It's like the story of the child that was standing up while the parent was driving.

This is an old illustration before car seats, right? So he's telling his little girl to sit down and finally she sits down and she's thinking to herself, I'm sitting down on the outside but I'm still standing up on the inside.

[8 : 36] And we do that with God sometimes. We might grudgingly obey but on the inside we're still defiantly saying, I still think that my way is right.

And so get this, Jonah was angry because the people of Nineveh were saved. He was angry because God relented and he didn't do what he said, because he did what he said he was going to do if they repented.

Now this word angry, Jonah wasn't just a little bit upset. This word anger in the original means burning anger.

It was something that was deep. It was something that was real. It was something that was red hot anger. Jonah got exceedingly angry at God and he gives the reason, interestingly enough, he gives the reason in verse number two.

So he prayed to the Lord and said, Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? God, I told you so.

[9 : 53] I knew it. I knew that if I preached what you wanted me to preach and they repented, that you would forgive them and that you would show mercy. He says, Therefore, I fled previously to Tarshish, for I know that you are.

There are some who said, You know what? Jonah didn't really know God. But Jonah here reveals that he knew God. Because he says what? I know that you are a gracious and a merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, one who relents from doing harm.

If we repent, God relents. God forgives. If we come to him, God forgives. And so Jonah knew that. So we know that there are some common motives for serving God.

Love, sometimes duty. Sometimes we serve God out of guilt. We can serve God out of pride for the appearance that it might seem to others.

Warren Rearsby wrote this. He said, The heart of every problem is in the heart. And that's where Jonah's problems were to be found.

[11 : 09] The heart of every problem is in the heart. Now what should our heart motives be? We know that our actions, we know that all of these things that we do, we do for God, it shows truly just what is in our hearts.

And Colossians chapter 3, verses 23 and 24, what should our motive be? And whatever you do, do it how?

Heartily. Do it with your whole heart as to the... You ever have difficulty on the job sometime? You've got maybe a new policy that comes down?

And it's really not a policy that you like. It's something that maybe you're thinking, what fool did something that this new policy was put into effect?

You know what? It didn't affect... It was not me. I was doing what I was supposed to do. But now this new policy is cramping my style. And sometimes people grow bitter. And sometimes people say, well, you know what?

[12 : 25] I'll show them. But instead, what about you young people? Does mom and dad ever say, go take out the trash? Does mom and dad ever go say, clean your room?

Does mom and dad ever say something that you say, well, I really don't want to do it. I'm going to do it. And you do it, maybe sometimes under your breath and you're grumbling.

How would, what the apostle Paul tells us in Colossians, our motive and our attitude that everything that we do, if we do it with all of our heart, as if we're doing it for Jesus.

Knowing and not to men. You know, I'm doing this to please you, Lord. I'm not doing this to please anyone else. That's my motive. Knowing that from the Lord, you will receive your reward, the reward of the inheritance for you serve the Lord Christ.

Our service for God ought to be prompted by the love of God, motivated by the spirit of God and done for the glory of God.

[13 : 42] Let me say that again. Everything that we do for God ought to be prompted by the love of God, the love that we have for God. It ought to be motivated by God's spirit working within us and it needs to be done for the glory of God.

Now that brings us to the question, what pleases God more? Our busyness are doing God's business.

You know, very often we get caught up in the church being busy doing things. Busy with programs. Busy with doing things and maybe having program after program after program and we're busy. We are programmed every night of the week.

Some churches are. And we think, oh, look at us. We are doing so much for God. Is God more pleased with our busyness than simply what we're doing if it's on the mission that's doing His business?

[14 : 58] So we have to ask ourselves the question, am I just busy or am I literally prompted by my love for God? Am I motivated by God's spirit to do what I'm doing?

And am I doing it only for the glory of God? Not out of pride, not out of duty, not out of guilt. Which brings us to point number two. God desires mercy over sacrifice.

God desires mercy. God desires us showing grace. And He desires this more than He desires our activity.

God desires mercy over sacrifice. Jonah wanted what? Jonah wanted justice. Jonah wanted God's fire to come down from heaven and He wanted it to consume the Ninevites.

Jonah felt it was his duty to champion God's righteousness and woe to anyone who wasn't living for God. So Jonah said, they're going to get what they deserve.

[16 : 01] And they ought to get what they deserve. And Jonah felt like he was God's champion. Well, sometimes we're that way too. You know, He would let them have it with both barrels.

Kind of like many today. Preaching hellfire and brimstone upon the world for its sinful living. You know, we hear those kind of messages all the time. And sometimes we find ourselves doing this. Or we put someone down who doesn't know Jesus for doing something that is in their nature. And we might tell someone, you know, you shouldn't do that.

You shouldn't do that. You shouldn't do that. Well, the problem with that is it's kind of like yelling at a dead man and telling him to get up and look alive.

What does it serve? What good does it do? You are maybe approaching the casket and saying, come on, get up, look alive. They're not going to hear you.

[17 : 02] Why? Because they're dead. And so when it comes to the world, preaching hellfire and brimstone and what their problems are is not going to do anything because they're only doing what comes naturally.

What was Jesus's approach? How did Jesus communicate with a lost and a broken world? He came with love and compassion.

And instead of putting them down, he showed them a better way. He presented himself. He says, you follow me. You accept me as the Messiah and I am going to give you life.

I'm not going to put more burden upon you. I'm not going to ask you to change your life. I'm not going to ask you anything but turn yourself over to me completely. Follow me.

Die to yourself. And he showed them love and compassion. And that's what God wanted to show to Nineveh. He said, let them know that what they're doing is wrong, but I want to forgive them.

[18:09] And so they repent. They proclaim a fast. They put on sackcloth. They're throwing ashes on them to show that they are repenting.

God relents. And that life that Jesus offers is a life that is real. And so God desires mercy over sacrifice.

Hosea chapter 6 verse 6 says, for I, and he comes on and says it, for I desire mercy and not sacrifice. And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

What was he telling Israel? He says, I want you to bring sacrifices, but I want your heart to be in it. I want you to understand why you're doing it. I want you to know me and I want you to show mercy more than sacrifice.

Throughout the Bible, we see that God values mercy and he values compassion over religious rituals and sacrifices. And some people say, well, God, look at what I'm doing for you.

[19:14] Look at all I'm doing. Look at how much I've sacrificed for you. And God says, I don't need your sacrifice. I really don't. He says, I want you to know me.

I want you to know mercy. It's not simply, it's not enough to simply go through the motions and do good deeds out of obligation. We must have a heart of love and compassion toward others.

And the crazy thing was, Jonah knew that's how God operated. He knew God was a God of compassion. He knew that God was a God of loving kindness and he was slow to anger.

Look at Jonah 4, verse 2. He says, I know that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant loving kindness, one who relents from doing harms.

Jonah's motives were not fueled by mercy and compassion. To Jonah, his mission was a failure. Think about it. To Jonah, he failed.

[20:21] But to God, the mission was a success. Jonah said what God told him to say. Nineveh repented. God relented.

But to Jonah, it was a total failure. Now many people go through life never getting what they want or wishing they didn't have what they got.

Let me give you a great spiritual principle and it's this. When we serve out of the wrong motives, we will be frustrated in the ministry.

When we say, God, or when we think to ourselves, or when we serve God, and God, I'm doing this for you, or it didn't work out the way I wanted and nobody else is doing what they ought to be doing and on and on and on.

If these are our motives for service, we'll always stay frustrated. But if we put God first and say, God, your will be done.

[21:26] I'm just going to do what you've called me to do because I love you and because you deserve this and I'm simply serving you as the Holy Spirit leads and guides and then let God take care of the results.

All Jonah needed to do was say what God said and let God do the rest. Jonah's problem was it didn't work out the way he wanted it to work out.

We're that way sometimes. Things don't work out the way we want them to work out. You know, some Sunday mornings when, you know, the place is not filled and people aren't here or people that said they would be here or not here and, you know, and on and on and on and it's easy to get discouraged.

Well, you know what? We talked to someone this week that said, you know, we'll be here and we talked to them by the Lord for about an hour, hour and a half and they're not here. Well, that's up to God. That's up to God to do that in their heart and their mind.

It's not up to me. And so, we have to be careful that we do what God requires, do what God asks and leave the rest up to Him.

[22:38] So, what do we need? We need a change of perspective. Our perspectives can change our motives. We're going to end on this this morning. Our perspectives, how we see things, how we view things, can change our motives.

Look at verse 3 in Jonah, chapter number 4. Therefore, now, O Lord, please, what was Jonah wanting? He says, just take my life from me.

That's how serious it was to him. Please, take my life from me for it is better for me to die than to live.

Jonah's perspective was limited by his own biases and his own prejudices against Nineveh. Jonah's perspective was dictated by his own bias rather than his viewing the people of Nineveh the way God viewed Nineveh.

Jonah viewed Nineveh through his own perspective. See, Jonah wasn't quite to the place where he might have taken his own life.

[23 : 54] I believe he was the place where he might have been on the verge of suicide. He was exhausted. He was frustrated. And things didn't work out the way he wanted them to work out.

Now, he may not have wanted to die. And that, by the way, is one of the signs of suicide is just not wanting to go on living. But here is where we find Jonah.

We're going to see next week as he goes out. God is going to, excuse me, to deal with him. But suffice it to say that here, Jonah gets to the point where he's seeing things in the wrong way.

Jonah needed to get out of his own head and see things the way God saw them. God said, this is great. Things worked out exactly the way that I wanted them.

You finally obeyed me. You finally told them what I wanted you to tell them. And this worked out well. See, our own perspectives can limit our ability to serve with love and compassion.

[25 : 01] Sometimes we'll have judgmental attitudes toward others, towards those that we don't like, towards those that we don't agree with, towards those who may not, who may make us uncomfortable.

And because of that, we may have the wrong perspective, the wrong thinking concerning or what constitutes what God wants to do.

So we have to be careful. We need to ask God to help us see others the way he sees them. Think about this.

How would Jonah's ministry have been different if he had seen the Ninevites the way God saw them? An entire wicked city were simply people, souls created by God.

God wanted to have a relationship with them. And if they would just turn from their wicked ways, not just that, but turn to him, God would relent and God would not judge them for that.

[26 : 16] If Jonah had seen these Ninevites, if he had seen these people, the way God saw them, his entire perspective would have been changed.

And we wouldn't probably not have the book of Jonah with Jonah as a bad example of obeying God or following God. So we need to learn to have the same attitude towards those that apart from Jesus, the way he has.

Then, the Lord said, what? Is it right for you to be angry? Another way we might look at this, what God might have been saying is, Jonah is doing right displeasing you?

Do you really have a reason to be angry? Is doing what I ask you to do a reason to be angry? Of course not.

It's a rhetorical question. The answer should have been no. It's not right to be angry just because I did what God wanted me to do and God did what I knew God was going to do.

[27 : 26] So it was no reason to be angry. So what is the attitude that Jesus has? Philippians chapter 2, we see the attitude of Jesus when it came to God sending him to the earth to come become a man and die in our place.

Paul says, let this mind or another way of saying that is let this attitude the same way of thinking that Jesus was thinking let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus while he was with God in heaven who being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God or in other words that equality with God was not a thing to be held on to.

But instead, verse 7, he made himself of no reputation taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death even the death of the cross.

Had Jonah seen these people through the eyes of God his perspective would have been changed and by so doing his motive would have been different.

His motive would have been I want to go tell these people so that I can give them a chance to save them. That I can give them a chance to be saved from God's punishment.

[29 : 10] And he would have joyfully gone to tell these Ninevites but instead he served God out of the wrong motives because he was looking at them with the wrong perspective.

We see Jesus here in Philippians we see his selfless sacrifice as the ultimate example of love and action. He gave himself he humbled himself being up here with God is not something that I've got to hold on to but I'm willing to empty myself come down to earth live like a human being for 33 years go through all the hardships go through everything that they experience ultimately experience the pain not only a physical death but the pain of being separated from the Heavenly Father for the first time in his entire existence.

So how can we imitate Christ in our service to others this week? We understand number one that our motives can reveal our hearts number two our desire God desires mercy over sacrifice and number three our perspectives can change our motives so let's examine let's do some introspection ask ourselves why am I serving?

Why am I doing what I do? Why am I even here today? And ask God to give us hearts full of love and hearts full of compassion that we serve him with the right motive let's pray Lord God this morning we're so thankful for what you are doing what you're going to do and Lord I pray that in everything that we do we would do it out of love and compassion for others and that we would simply allow your Holy Spirit to guide us to empower us we do it for your honor for your glory and realizing that the results are up to you not up to us Father may we get our head in the right place and may we be serving through a heart of love and compassion for you we pray this in Jesus name
Amen