

Jonah 4

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[0:00] Good morning. We'll see how Jeff and technology get along today. It's always interesting. It keeps you on your toes. Anyways, if you have been with us, you know we're going to finish Jonah today.

If you haven't been with us, we're going to finish Jonah today. It's interesting when I say that, finish Jonah. It's like, if you were here last time, it's like we kind of already finished Jonah, right?

I mean, we had Jonah go into the city of Nineveh apprehensively, I think, I would say.

But we saw that from the greatest to the least, the city had repented, had come to the Lord.

They took God at his word. Remember, Jonah's message was quite simple. Forty days and you're all dead. And we went through all of that.

[1:17] And we saw this incredible revival, if you will. We could have finished right there.

You'd think, well, that's it, right? God sent Jonah to save the people of Nineveh. And that's true. But that's not all.

There's still one, I'll say, outstanding issue or one outstanding individual. And that would be Jonah, right?

Jonah's still a problem. God is more interested in Jonah's character than he is Jonah's comfort.

Likewise, God is more interested in your and my character than he is our comfort.

[2:20] So that's the outlying issue yet as we come to chapter 4. Again, we've been looking at this book.

We've seen incredible truths in God's relationship with Jonah that's important for us to grasp and to be reminded of. He's shown himself to be faithful, regardless of how unfaithful Jonah has been.

God's been there. He didn't desert him. God's always there with us. No matter what we go through, no matter where we find ourselves, right?

Jonah's in this fish. God's with him. He was in the depths. God's with him. He was trying to run in the opposite way.

God's with him. So, again, shows that, reminds us that regardless of what kind of circumstances we might find ourselves in, the Lord's there for us.

[3:25] He's been a good father. And not only was he willing to chasten, but he was willing to receive back.

And, again, the Lord allows, brings chastening into our lives when necessary, but he's always there with open arms waiting for us to turn and take that first step to come back to him.

So, like Jonah, we still have work to be done in our lives. Again, none of us have arrived, as much as we might at any given time like to think we have.

I think books like Jonah are here for us to realize that. And especially after what we would consider this incredible success, we've still got to deal with the man.

And his issues. So, that's where we are. Jonah is stiff-necked, hard-headed like some of me. I won't include you.

[4:34] You can do that on your own or not. But chapter 4, verse 1 says, But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became very angry.

And we're like, what? Right? Out of nowhere, Jonah's all upset. Why? We back up one verse.

Then God saw their works, that would be the people of Nineveh and their repentance, that they turned from their evil ways, and God relented from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it.

So, that's why Jonah is all upset. He's all upset because the people who repented at the message he preached, and you'd think, oh, that's what you were preaching for.

He's like, no, that's because God told me I had to, so I did. But he's upset because God has compassion on them, because they received God's word.

[5:39] They took him at his word. They demonstrate a change, and God forgives them, pours out his grace and mercy, and Jonah's all kinds of upset.

Now, it says, he was displeased exceedingly. Now, I looked. The Christian Standard Bible translation says, he was furious.

Okay? So, he's not just, you know, irritated and upset. He is steaming. He is boiling. So, we get that picture of what we're talking about here.

Verse 2 goes on, and he says, So, he prayed to the Lord and said, Ah, Lord, was this not 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 and loving kindness, one who relents from doing harm. Therefore, now, O Lord, please, take my life from me.

[6:55] For it's better for me to die than to live. It's like, you've got to be kidding me, right? Because what's he saying? I knew it. I knew it. I knew it. I knew it. That's why I went the other way.

I knew who you are. I know what you would do. And you remember, we talked about, he so hated the Ninevites that he defied God and went in the other direction.

Right? He says, I knew, if I went and shared your word, that there was a possibility that they would turn. And then you wouldn't smoke them.

Right? He wants to see the hammer fall. And now he's all kinds of upset. And why he tried to run from God and his call?

Because he didn't want to see the people of Nineveh saved, spared. And again, he clearly knows God's love.

[8:08] But he don't want to see him come to faith. And I think again, how sad is that? That you would despise someone so much that you don't want to see them come to the Lord.

Now we sit here and we kind of nod our heads and think, this is bad. Right? Jonah, how could you do this?

Then I'd say we got to stop and turn the camera around and look at ourselves. Right? Do we have people, be them categories, failings, areas that we disagree with that we don't want to share with? We want to see the hammer fall. People we don't want to have anything to do with. They don't measure up for whatever that case may be.

Right? I think, okay, what have they done? What are they in prison for? Okay, we'll just start there. Are they a mass murderer?

[9:33] Are they a sex offender? A rapist? Or stole all of my investment that I worked my whole life for and now I'm broke?

Or are they sitting in a gutter? When's the last time they bathed? Right?

We can, we can do the same kinds of things, have that same kind of mentality that Jonah has. these, again, remember, the Ninevites were a horrendously vicious people. On a human level, I can understand not wanting to see them saved.

I want to see them get what they got coming to them. for you and I, we, we have a quote unquote place for that.

[10:41] It's called a penitentiary. But that doesn't mean someone's not worthy of salvation. And that God doesn't send someone to share the truth that they can be saved.

There's consequences to our sin. But that doesn't change God's heart for them. And, and, and that's what he's trying to bring to Jonah's understanding.

And I think to you, to you and I as well. Again, because Jonah's theology is right on. Right?

He's, he's like, I know who you are. You're a gracious, loving, forgiving, redeeming father.

But his heart is way out of line. And what's God concerned about? Jonah's heart. Not that he's got the right theology.

[11:50] Though he would have us to have the right theology. but he's more concerned that our heart is right and in alignment with him. And so that's why he's trying to get Jonah to realize.

Right? Jonah knows that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But that the wicked would turn from their wicked way and live.

Jonah knows that. He knows that God's long-suffering toward us, not willing that any, that any should perish, that all should come to repentance.

Any and all. Very inclusive. Not who I get along with, not who thinks the same way I do.

Anyone. everyone. Everyone. That's God's heart. Is that mine? That's, again, what he's trying to get through to us.

[13:05] Right? And the scripture tells us, we know, that his desire is to conform us, to transform us, conform us into the image or the likeness of his son.

That we would have his heart. Who did Jesus die for? The whole world. Any and all.

Okay? God's desire is to make you and I conform into the likeness of his son. That our heart would be for any and all.

Have I arrived? No. I look forward to the day I arrive. I'll stand in his presence.

Until then, the Lord's faithful to do the work. Right? Verse four. Then the Lord said, is it right for you to be angry?

[14:25] It's like Jonah. Seriously. Is it right that you should be upset that I saved the Ninevites? Jonah expresses his anger toward the Lord.

God's good. And to a point, like I said, I understand from that human standpoint, I get it. But God's saying what?

your perspective doesn't line up with mine. Who's wrong? Me.

That goes without saying, right? But expressing our anger and our frustration, our disappointment, it's one thing. then we need to repent.

Because of the ways, the ways of the Lord are right. I may not agree. I may not understand. He's correct.

[15:35] I'm wrong. And that's what the Lord is expressing to Jonah. He's like, Jonah, what are you upset about?

Again, to express that is fine, in a sense. Because God knows what's in my heart.

It's not whether I express it to him or not. He already knows. But he asks the question to make me think about it.

Right? we don't know how it is that the Lord will work all things together for good.

I'm in the midst of the struggle. I'm in the midst of the difficulty. I'm in the midst of the pain. God I don't understand how he's going to do this.

[16:42] His word says he is going to. Maybe not in the way I think it ought to be. Maybe not in what I think is best or it's the outcome that I want.

He says he'll do it. His ways are true. His ways are right. I need to conform my thinking to his ways. Right? So again he asked that question to show me where I'm out of line with his thinking. God asks questions. He gives us instruction.

he makes promises to us but he asks questions. Adam where are you? Did God know where Adam was at?

Most certainly. Who told you you were naked? Cain where's your brother Abel?

[17:58] Right? God already knew. In the Gospels who do you think I am?

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Jonah, why are you angry?

Questions? God knows the answers to everything.

The question is not for him. The question is for me, for you. Again, to make us realize where we're at.

Are you angry, Jonah, because I'm gracious and merciful?

[19:04] Are you angry because I'm slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness? Is that why you're angry? Do you have a problem, Jonah, with me doing good?

What's the problem? So again, God asks Jonah if he's angry. And what's Jonah do? So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city, made himself a shelter, sat under it in the shade till he might see what would become of the city.

He walks away. Doesn't answer. ignores God. Walks away.

You know what that's like, right? Gentlemen, selective listening. I remember as early teen, probably, my dad and I sitting downstairs watching TV and my mom yelling down at us for something.

We turn and look at one another, look right back at the TV, never heard a thing. There's my Jonah, right?

[20:37] Selective listening. God asks Jonah a question. Jonah just walks away. No response whatsoever. Then the amazing part, God doesn't blast him.

Right? If it was me, you'd see that Looney Tune hammer come out. Boom! Not at all.
 Right? And I think, yeah, it's a good thing I'm not God. But then again, like I said, I'm more like Jonah and in need of learning, in need of understanding.
 So, we will see, again, as we continue, that God, in his grace and his mercy, is slow to anger, abundant in loving kindness, and willing to minister to Jonah.
 So, Jonah goes out and he builds this shelter, this tabernacle, this hut, very reminiscent of the Exodus.
 [22 : 06] But what's he doing? He's going out there to sit and wait and see if maybe God's going to smoke them. Still got better part of 40 days left.
 That was God's message. 40 days and you're toast. Three days of preaching. They repent. Lots of time.
 They can blow it. You can still blast them. I'm going to sit here and wait. That's Jonah. There's still hope.
 come on God. You can do it. Verse six. And the Lord prepared a plant and made it to come up over Jonah that it might shade his head to deliver him from his misery.
 So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. Right? You get this picture. He's made a temporary shelter out of sticks. He's in the desert.
 [23 : 07] God makes this plant come up and it grows up over the top and it covers the shelter with foliage and it creates more shade and Jonah is elated.
 Oh, my beautiful plant. Do you realize this is the first time in the book Jonah that Jonah has been happy? The first time.
 But we see God showing kindness even though Jonah's attitude is horrible.
 But God shows kindness because the goodness, the kindness of God leads us to repentance.
 God showering his grace down on Jonah loving him, cooling him.
 [24 : 17] And Jonah is so very grateful for his plant. That just cracks me up. Now, I like plants. animals better.
 I understand. But he's happy. And why? He's like, thank you, Lord. You finally have blessed me. That's the attitude.
 It's me. I'm comfortable now. I'm happy now. I finally get what I want. Sound familiar?
 I like to get what I want. I like to be comfortable. I like to be happy. But at what expense? Jonah's been miserable and self-centered all the way through the book until now.
 he's felt justified in his anger. And again, from the human standpoint, I understand that. But the only time he's happy is when he gets what he wants.
 [25 : 43] Self. Spend self-centered perspective on his anger. Now he's self-centered on his perspective of comfort. self-centered world. The problem is Jonah.
 The problem is self. But verse 7 says, 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. You know, God's got a sense of humor.
 I envision just a little itty-bitty worm. Not a great big one. That'd be too freaky. He'd freak out about a big worm. Probably didn't see the little one.
 [26 : 49] But he sends this worm that kills the plant. Now, did it, you know, is it like a tomato worm and just like devoured?
 Or just a little one that gets in and does enough damage that it affects the hole and you hardly notice? I don't know. But the plant dies.
 God sends a wind. A wind. He turns up the thermostat a little. Brings the heat, if you will. He does that for us sometimes, doesn't he?
 Brings the heat. And Jonah's all kinds of upset. My plant, my plant that I loved is gone.
 I wish I was dead. Seriously. The only thing I had in life is gone.
 [27 : 59] My favorite, whatever you have, broke, got in an accident, burned. can relate to some of that kind of stuff, right?
 I've invested my life in this and it's gone. What do I have to live for? Again, we can relate.
 But again, sometimes, as Job would express, the Lord gives and the Lord takes away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Because it's about the Lord, not about what he gives, not about what we lose.

It's about him. And again, sometimes he allows difficulties or bad things or he brings them to teach us a lesson, to show us where our heart is, to grow us, to mature us.

[29:21] Verse 1 said that Jonah was angry because God brought the people of Nineveh to repentance. He was fuming.

And now it's like God saying, Jonah, you want to be angry? You want to burn? You want to feel the heat? Feel it.

Your shelter's gone? My blessing is removed? gift? If that's your attitude, try it out.

Right? What's important? What's our priorities? Do they line up with God? or am I comfortable?

Now, again, there's not anything wrong with being comfortable. Not anything wrong about having nice things. things. But am I in alignment with the heart of God?

[30:40] That's the question. And if not, to what extent and to what expense? Right? More concerned about shade and comfort than the needs or the soul of people.

That's a big difference. That's Jonah. That's potentially you and I. Right? Jesus tells us, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things will be added unto you.

Right? We, I, tend to focus on what's going to be added. The focus is seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness.

What's God's will? What's his heart? What's his desire? Where am I in line with what he wants?

Basically, it's saying, don't worry about all of the other stuff.

I'll take care of all of that. You focus on what I want you to focus on and don't worry about the other stuff. the other stuff will take care of itself. The shade will come.

[32:02] The shelter will be there. You focus on what I want you to focus on. Am I focused on the kingdom of God or am I focused on all the other things?

That's the question. Jonah was all kinds of happy and praising the Lord for the plant. He should have been ecstatic about the salvation of the citizens of Nineveh.

He's focused on a plant. God's trying to show Jonah you're way off base.

You've missed it by miles buddy. Verse nine and God said to Jonah is it right for you to be angry about the plant?

So yes again right back to the question. Jonah said it is right for me to be angry even to death.

[33:21] right? When God asked him why are you angry about the salvation of the people?

He walks away and won't answer. Now God asks him why are you so angry about the plant? Well let me tell you that was my plant. I loved that plant.

It kept me cool. It affected me. You'd think I would start to get a clue by this time. Right?

But what did Jonah do? He separated from other people. He quit going to church. I don't like the way that is done.

Whatever that might be. They don't do things the way I like or how I think so I'm out. Or maybe I come in you know just stand over here by myself.

[34:25] Just wait for the wheels to fall off so I can jump up. Say see I told you. If you had done things my way it would all be great and wonderful. That's the kind of attitude that Jonah is expressing.

Right? Cuts himself off becomes a spectator sitting outside just waiting for something bad to happen. Pointing fingers not getting involved complaining but not volunteering never part of the solution just pointing out the problems.

Sound familiar? So again God asked Jonah is it right for you to be angry about the plant?

And he says yeah it's right for me to be angry even to death. But the Lord said you've had pity on a plant for which you've not labored nor made it grow which came up in a night perished in a night and I should not have pity on 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.

God's like Jonah are you serious? You're upset over the plant and you could care less about people. For us are we more concerned about our comfort and our nice facility that I like the music and the style and I enjoy the teaching and all of these opportunities but I could care less about the people right down the road.

[36:37] again I like to be comfortable I enjoy good music and especially a style that I might prefer over some other styles again but to what extent or at what expense is that our focus or again are we

concerned about other people personally is it more about what my house is like that I have nice toys or that I'd walk across the street and get to know my neighbor right God's asking do you have an eternal perspective or are you just hung up on yourself in the here and now

Jonah you would show compassion to a plant that you didn't even plant that you never watered and you invested nothing in it gave you comfort me on the other hand the people of Nineveh are created in my image and my likeness and you could care less he wants Jonah to see just how distorted his perspectives are that you could care more for a plant than you can for human beings that I would prefer my pets over people that would come to visit me you're like what are you talking about well again

I may well step on toes whatever we have in my opinion two very beautiful German shepherds when people come to our house the dogs are in the garage now if people ask and sometimes we ask them but if they would ask about the dogs it's like well okay we can let them in but they can get kind of assaultive one especially she wants to love you we have a way that we go about that okay and generally speaking that's not the case we'll have the house full of kids and grandkids the dogs are not in there okay now if some of them come over and the kids are comfortable or the grandkids are comfortable then the dogs will come in but they're always out because we don't prefer our dogs over people okay that's my illustration for that again

I understand loving animals and even more so than plants but but that's God's expression to Jonah again you're you're freaking out over a plant that you did nothing to invest in I blessed you with it he didn't even acknowledge God has blessed him with the plant he's just praising the plant because it's so so wonderful but he's neglecting people and God says you know there's 120 thousand who cannot discern their right hand from their left who are those yes they're Ninevites but most of you and I know our right from our left right but how long are we trying to teach our children to know their right hand from their left okay so what's he saying there's there's 120 thousand potentially children and you don't even care about them okay how large was the population

I don't know how many kids did they have just one probably not so how big are the families how many adults okay multiple hundreds of thousands of people and you could care less about them you only concerned about a stupid plant Jonah wake up right it's like man but I'm more concerned that we have heat and air conditioning which are good things but what about the people of our community and let me tell you

[42:46] I'm right out there with you okay I have not arrived because I'm much more happy to stay home with all my friends some of you can come over too then go out and talk to people I don't know I'm there okay so I'm preaching to me believe me but do we get more concerned about our comfort do we get more concerned about our traditions how we like things than we are about going and making disciples what's our focus again

I believe God is asking the question because that's what he does he asks questions he doesn't hammer us I would hammer me like I said two by four therapy it's what I need he doesn't do that sometimes the questions are the hammer right ton of bricks you're reading and you go oh no that's me but if we don't read we don't know we don't hear and then we're like Jonah walking outside the city up on the hill speak to the hand I'm not listening I don't want to hear because if I hear then I'm responsible so I ignore do we do that that's the end of the book of

Jonah like really it's the end of the book of Jonah what happened to Jonah I can speculate to the Lord our God belongs mercy and forgiveness I think Jonah got it why do I say that we got the book now he doesn't write down here again I finally got it all together finally I think he did because we have this he doesn't sugarcoat a thing he says it like it is he says yep that's me

I was that stiff neck hard hearted big dummy of a guy that was me right again my thoughts not thus saith the Lord but we got the book and again the whole point is God's heart is for people all people not who I would prefer all people and his hearts for you and I that we would see things from his perspectives and with his heart and again as Jonah expressed from the belly of the fish salvation is of the

Lord for all so Jonah great I love Jonah the book but God's all about preparation right prepared the great fish he prepared a plant he prepared a worm he prepared a wind he prepared a man he's all about preparing us transforming us right so we've probably all heard the expression God does not call the qualified he qualifies the called he doesn't excuse us for lack preparation because we have the instruction to be prepared to do our best to grow to learn again we have responsibility but our service to the

[48:15] Lord is not about our preparation as much as it is about his working and transforming us and the outpouring of his spirit to enable us to do the things that he calls us to because it's for his glory not for ours he's growing and maturing his man his man's about serving and doing the things reluctantly that God called him to do and God has a purpose in that but he's mostly concerned about the heart of the man he's mostly concerned about your heart about my heart and him making us into the individuals that could be a much more useful instrument for his service that's what it's about it's not about a fish it's not about

Nineveh it's about Jonah because God is an individual personal God right he we we see his grace and his mercy all over he ministered to the sailors he saves the city but he corrects Jonah so the book of Jonah let's pray father we thank you again that you know us our shortcomings! we're so grateful that you are long suffering with the likes of us that you love us that you haven't given up on us help us to take what you've spoken today listen to your questions set under the examination of your spirit that we would allow you to bring the correction to make the changes that we would be transformed from glory to glory more and more into the likeness of your son it can be a painful process we look forward to the day when we'll stand in your presence and be complete but we're thankful that you don't give up on us thank you again for your love and your over abundant grace that we so desperately need in Jesus name amen