

Jonah 4

“We are Jonah”

Summit BCC

MPT: Jonah’s motives/complaint vs. God’s mercy/correction. The pervading theme of Jonah is God’s gracious extension of His mercy to Gentile nations through the preaching of repentance.

MPS: God’s desire is for ALL to be saved; and it should be ours, too.

Introduction

Welcome to The Summit Church. My name is Curtis and I am extremely blessed to be called one of your pastors here. Little bit about me...**GG; Uh-oh.**

If you are a FTG or **specifically a non-believer** here this weekend, we always try to be so incredibly welcoming to you – and I hope you’ve felt that way thus far. But this weekend, I’m just gonna be honest, this is not the best weekend to be here. At all. Because **all the suspicions you’ve ever had about Christians** – all the reasons you dislike them – are about to be confirmed. And the biggest one of all, I’m just gonna tell you, is true: **All Christians are hypocrites**. And sometimes the most religious looking ones, are the biggest hypocrites.

- Turn to your neighbor and say: YOU ARE. A HYPOCRITE.

Today we’re going to look at one of the biggest hypocrites in all of scripture...so open your bibles to **JONAH**. Between **Obadiah** and **Micah**. I’m sure that helps you find it quickly. Use the table of contents – no shame.

Jonah is a story about a very religious man...but NOT one we’re supposed to emulate. I hope you know by now that **the bible is not about characters to emulate, but about a Savior to adore.**

See, the main message of Jonah is the same message of the entire bible itself: ***God is always pursuing you with a ferocious love.***

If you hear nothing else, hear this: no matter what you’ve done – even in all of our **sin** and **hypocrisy** – it doesn’t disqualify you from God’s love. **He is still relentlessly chasing after you...**and the fact that you are here today is proof of that.

~30 minutes to go through an entire book...fasten your seatbelt, tray tables in upright and locked position, cell phones off (unless it’s for Scripture, of course).

Walkthrough

JONAH 1

¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”

First, let’s get our minds around the three main characters:

1) **Nineveh** – Flourishing capital of the Assyrian empire. Nineveh’s the **non-believing bad guy who ends up receiving great mercy** from God.

- **Modern day terrorist** who had bullied Israel for decades. And they were well known for their methods of **torture** and **death**:
 - Skin people alive, bury them in sand up to their necks, nail their tongue to the ground, and leave them there to die. BAD PEOPLE.

2) **Jonah** – A prophet of God...who is actually a **super religious racist** (i.e. hypocrite) **who receives great grace from God**. He lived during a time when Israel had it all – money, power, prosperity – you name it. **Israel was a LOT like us**; and during this time Jonah had a **patriotic** and **popular** ministry; **hyper-nationalist** hero.

- If he were around today, every post he made would end with #blessed #Merica
- Here's the problem: **he had more commitment to his country than to his God . . .** he's more "Israel's Pastor" than he is "God's Prophet"

So you've got Nineveh the **bad guy**...Jonah the **worse guy**...

3) **God** – The only good guy in the story. The giver of **mercy** and **grace** toward those who don't deserve it.

So here's **Jonah** (Captain America) called by **God** to go preach the gospel of grace and mercy to **Nineveh** (modern day ISIS).

³ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

See religious "people like Jonah don't like the free mercy of God. It calls their supremacy into question."¹ They no longer have something that the "bad people" don't. And here is God calling Jonah to go preach the gospel to the terrorists (who deserve punishment) and Jonah doesn't like this, so he runs as far away as he can.

But this never ends well...

1) Fleeing God's presence always leads to problems.

It says he "*rose to flee from the presence of the Lord*" – **isn't that ridiculous?**

- **Psalm 139:7-10**, "*Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, **you are there!** If I make my bed in Sheol, **you are there!** If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the **uttermost parts of the sea**, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me...*"

¹ Piper, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-education-of-a-prophet-jonah>

- **God**, the maker of heaven and earth, who is everywhere at all times simultaneously... there's no way to get "outside" of his boundaries. It's like trying to go outside and run away from the sun. Not possible!

Three verses in and I already see myself in Jonah...see, "Jonah's runaway posture is *our* posture, *every time we sin*. It's not that we stop believing [in God]...it's just that **what we believe has shifted**. When we sin, **that something which we choose to believe in is not no God, but ourselves as God.**"²

So we find ourselves with the same problems as Jonah had in trying to run away from God...

Problem #1: Pride

You know, Jonah was always willing to obey God when it benefited him and his people...he always thought he knew best! So he pridefully devises a new plan...

He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish (*Running from God will always lead down*). **So he paid the fare** (*When you run from God you always end up paying something*) **and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.**

There will always be a ship **ready** to go to Tarshish. There will always be something or someone or somewhere to run *TO* get away *FROM* God. **The ready way is not always the right way.**

Actually if you think about it, don't we usually have to work **harder** to disobey God?

Joppa → Nineveh = 500 miles; Joppa → Tarshish = 2500 miles

- We're no different...we're *creative* sinners! We'll figure out how to go 2500 miles *out* of the way just to avoid going 500 the right way:

² Tullian, *Surprised by Grace*, 33

- You'll go 2500 miles to the ends of the earth making sure you don't forgive *that* person for how they hurt you; when you could easily be free of the bitterness by simply going the 500 miles and forgive like God has called you to.
 - *I'm gonna let that one sit...*

⁴ But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up (fleeing God always leads to problems!). ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. ⁶ So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

One thing I've always wondered is, "How could Jonah go to sleep?"

ILLUSTRATION: My wife can't fall asleep if one of our kids is blinking in their crib... much less in a giant storm. Here's what I know, though:

- **Running from God is tiring**...and you don't want to think about it... **I could never just sit alone in my thoughts – so I'd drink or sleep**

⁷ And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah³. ⁸ Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" ⁹ And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

Can't you just see the PRIDE? Puffing out his chest and saying, "I am a Hebrew! One of God's chosen people!"

³ Prov 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD."

- It's not bad to be proud of something – but 'proud' and 'pride' are two different things. **When 'proud' becomes 'pride,' it always leads to idolatry.**

Problem #2: Idolatry

Idolatry = anything in your life that you value more than God. **Jonah's idol was his identity.** "His identity wasn't anchored in God, but in being an Israelite and a prophet . . . Again, it's as if he's saying, "What would set *me* apart, if the Ninevites had what I had?"⁴

- *What is that thing in your life that makes you look at yourself as better than everyone else? What is the one thing in your life you could NOT live without?*
 - Job? Good looks? Well-behaved kids? Talent? 401k?
 - Whatever it is, **that's** your idol.

Some of you **idolize acceptance**, so you continue hanging around people who are toxic. And you are going through a storm (like the sailors) not because of *what* you're doing, but because of *who* is in your boat – you've got a Jonah in your boat! . . . Our sin makes those around us miserable.

¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. ¹¹ Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. ¹² He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea;

Even Jonah's "solution" to the storm is **idolatrous**:

- *"I know what will make me look good: I can end my life looking like the hero, AND I won't have to go to Nineveh, win-win!"*

¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

⁴ Tullian, *Surprised by Grace*, 121

¹⁷ And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

“You can run from God, but you can’t outrun God!”⁵ Just because you try to flee His presence doesn’t mean He doesn’t have a plan!

Jonah flees; God appoints a fish. Already there’s humor in this story: The fish obeys God better than Jonah did!

But God continues to provide and be patient with Jonah. What this shows us is that...

2) God is faithful, even in our disobedience.

Do you think Jonah saw the fish as **provision**? Or as **punishment**? As God’s **appointment**? Or simply as a **disappointment**?

- How often do you think God allows – or even *appoints* – something in your life that you think is **punishment**, but is really his **provision**?
- What I’ve learned is that “God’s **provision** doesn’t always come wrapped in our **preferences**.”⁶
 - When I think back on some of the hardest times in my life, it was actually *those* times where I grew the most spiritually. I didn’t realize it at the time, but looking back I see how God was ALWAYS at work, and how he NEVER left my side, and how he ALWAYS had a plan!
- See, the *God who never slumbers nor sleeps* is **always** looking after YOU! He’s **always** chasing YOU! He’s **always**, forever, never-ending, relentlessly, ferociously, viciously, eternally chasing after YOU!

Because even in our disobedience, **HE is faithful**.

⁵ Andy Stanley

⁶ Furtick, *Jonah*.

JONAH 2:1-2, 10

¹Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, ²saying, “I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me...”⁷ (God is faithful to answer when we cry out)

Jonah goes on to give a big prayer of remorse and thanks to God. What’s best is **v8**, “*Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God’s mercies.*” (NLT) The irony of the story is that Jonah didn’t appreciate his OWN WORDS about God’s grace! He was the one worshiping false gods/idols and turning his back on all God’s mercies...let’s keep reading and see what happens...

¹⁰And the Lord spoke to the fish (God is faithful to act on our behalf) and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

ILLUSTRATION: Koby and shellfish. Usually, when a man eats bad fish, he vomits...here, a fish ate a bad man, and he vomits.

JONAH 3:1-5, 10

¹Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time (Aren’t you glad we serve a God of second chances [RAISE HAND]? God is faithful to give us second chances, even in our disobedience!), saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “**Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!**” ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God (scholars say around 600k total). They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

In Hebrew, this is a short little five-word sermon...and the entire city repents.

⁷ Scholars believe chapter 2 was added later after he was out of the fish.

- Jonah is **so** bitter about having to preach to his enemy that he preaches the most **hellfire brimstone** sermon ever, with NO good news...yet the entire city repents!
 - He didn't use any of the Christian buzz words: 'God loves you' 'forgiveness' 'confess' 'repent' 'believe' 'ask Jesus into your heart' . . . all he said was '**DESTRUCTION**'; they repented; and God saved them.

3) Salvation belongs to the Lord.

Let me ask you something: *Have you ever NOT shared your faith because you're afraid you won't have all the answers?* If that's you, this story should be SO encouraging...Jonah said FIVE WORDS!

Don't be scared to talk about God and share the gospel, because **it's God who saves anyways**...not your perfect presentation. You may say FIVE WORDS and someone's eternity is changed, 'cuz Salvation is of the Lord!

- You know the words that have changed more lives in the history of the world than any other?: ***"For God so loved the world!"***

I've heard it said that evangelism is just two awkward, nervous ppl having a conversation.

- **ILLUSTRATION:** POKÉMON GO
 - Danny Franks: "A random stranger just spent 10 minutes telling me about Pokémon Go, so let's stop talking about how evangelism is hard."
 - People are walking around catching **imaginary animals** with their cell phones and rejoicing with one another and yet **we're scared to foolish for Christ**...

¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way (of torturing and killing and playing Pokémon), God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Why didn't he do it? Because God's desire is for ALL to be saved! Even the absolute "worst." **Sinful terrorist-Nineveh** needed to be saved just as bad as **sinful religious-Jonah** needed to be saved!

- Do you know what **you** and **me** and **ISIS** all have in common? **We are all SINNERS in need of a Savior.** And the good news of the gospel message is that salvation is available to **ANY** and **ALL** who would call upon the name of the Lord!

 - And if you don't like that truth, you haven't understood the point of Jonah yet. **The point is that God is graciously willing to save ANYONE who will repent and believe in him.**

You know what salvation is? It's saying "**YES**" to the gift God is offering you in Jesus Christ. **Nineveh** said yes...

- **Jonah said "no,"** directly, to God! Is there any sin greater than that? The **original sin**, the one that damned the human race, was what? **Saying no to God.** The eating of a forbidden tree. Direct rebellion. Blasphemy.
- And that's a sin that **all of you**, even religious people, have committed. You may not have lived the crazy party life; **but in some ways your sin is worse.** You're directly saying **no** to God.
 - I've heard it said: **You're never farther from God than when you're close to Him and say "no."**⁸

Honestly, Jonah, probably saw his sin and Nineveh's sin in two different categories. Jonah would look at the Ninevites and say, **"They are adulterers. They worship idols. They are murderers. They are cruel: they skin people alive. And they steal."** Jonah hadn't done **those things!** Jonah thought he was SO much better than them...but let me tell you something: **"God does everything through those who understand they are nothing, and God does nothing through those who think they are everything."**⁹

⁸ Anything in green is from J.D., because, you know, it's money!

⁹ Tullian, *Surprised by Grace*, 102

600k people repent; Jonah should be **exploding with joy** as one of God's prophets, right? Well let's see...

JONAH 4

¹But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.

Do you realize that most of the frustration in your life comes from thinking God should've done something differently?

²And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a **gracious** God and **merciful, slow to anger** and **abounding in steadfast love**, and **relenting from disaster**.

He's using God's awesome character as an **insult!** Makes me think of (and I HATE to say this as a FSU fan) **Tim Tebow** – people hate him just because he's so nice. But seriously, what has he ever done to make you hate him? Be good at football, nice to EVERYONE and serve homeless orphans in third world countries?!?

- This is how Jonah is with God –he's mad that God is so **good**.

Which is crazy, because everything that Jonah **despises** about God he has experienced himself! God has been **gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster** to Jonah! He shouldn't be **resentful**, he should be **grateful!** Isn't it funny how Jonah didn't have a problem with these same characteristics of God when he was in the belly of the fish! **There is no one in this story who has received more grace than Jonah.**

- But Jonah is **resentful** because he has ceased to think of himself as a sinner. If you see yourself as a **basically worthy person** – that **God owes you** good things – then grace is **shocking to you**. You get **resentful** when God seems to be **blessing people in ways they don't deserve**.
- Yet, even in his **resentment**, we see how God's grace is greater than **Jonah's sin...**and **God's grace is always greater than our sin.**

4) God's grace is greater than our sin.

³Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

Seriously? You'd rather *die* than see your enemies become your brothers and sisters in Christ?

- Easy for us to be like, "Jonah, chill out!"
- But think about it – What if God offered grace/mercy to Hitler, bin Laden, ISIS, your ex, the person that hurt you, and they **repented...**would you be okay with worshiping Jesus for eternity right next to them?
 - THAT'S the question this story is getting at: **Are you really okay with God being gracious to everyone the way he has been gracious to you?**

⁴And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?"

"Hey Jonah – the same grace I showed you is the same grace I'm showing them...so can you really be angry about *that*?"

- But Jonah didn't want their **repentance**; he wanted their **destruction!** He thinks God is being too soft.

⁵Jonah went out of the city (to sulk) and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.

Literally pouting. Prophet pity party.

⁶Now the LORD God **appointed** a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort (more grace!). So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.

For the **first time** Jonah's happy! The only time he was happy about God's provision was when it benefited his convenience.

- Remember what I said earlier?: We're *always* happy to receive God's **provision**, BUT only as long as it matches our **preferences**.
 - Jonah **wants** shade; God provides a plant. He loves it.
 - Jonah **needs** a heart change; God provides an opportunity to love his enemies. He hates it.

There's the question again: *Are you okay with God giving grace to those you hate?*

- Are you okay with God giving grace to your **overbearing boss**?
- ...to your **in-laws**?
- ...to your **ex-husband**?
- ...to **Muslims**?
 - ~~John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."~~
 - ~~It's impossible to love God and hate those made in his image.~~

Jonah still hasn't realized that God's provision is **not for his comfort**, but to **fulfill his calling**! *So what does God do?...*

⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God **appointed** a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered.

I've always wondered what kinda of worm this is that "ATTACKED the plant!" Ever seen **Tremors**?

All I know is this: **God has more than one way of getting our attention**. Sometimes he uses the **wind**; sometimes he uses the **whale**; and sometimes he uses the **worm**.

⁸ When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." ⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." ¹⁰ And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and

perished in a night. ¹¹ And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

And that's it. The end. No more.

ILLUSTRATION: Sopranos ending.

Just like Sopranos, we're left with a cliffhanger. "The writer didn't intend to tell us about Jonah **but to put God's question clearly before [you and me].**"¹⁰ → *Do you care more about **plants** or **people**? About **temporary things** or **eternal souls**?*

Sounds absurd, but think about it – *What do you care more about?:*

- Lost people or your pet?** Do you spend more money on your dog than you do the mission of God?
- Lost people or your paycheck?** Do you spend more time climbing the corporate ladder for your namesake or leveraging your job for God's namesake?
- Lost people or your popularity?** Do you spend more energy worrying about offending your friends instead of telling them about Jesus?
 - It's easy to knock Jonah – until you realize that **WE ARE JONAH! We are the hypocrites!** . . .
 - ~~Each year Jews gather on Yom Kippur in the synagogue and Jonah is read. And at the conclusion they all respond in unison: "We are Jonah."~~

Are lost people – even your enemies – just a concept to you? Or are they real, living, breathing, people that will spend eternity in hell unless you share the gospel of God's grace with them?

- No matter what their sin or wickedness, God's grace and compassion is greater. No matter what they've done **to you**, you are called to share what God has done **for them**; and not only that, but to love them just like God loves them.

¹⁰ Sailhamer, *NIV Compact*, 422

(VAMP)

One of the repeating words in this story is “GREAT”

[1:2] *Arise, go to Nineveh, that **great** city;*

[1:4] *But the Lord hurled a **great** wind upon the sea and there was a **great** tempest on the sea;*

[1:10] *...the men were **greatly** afraid...*

[1:16] *...Then the men feared the Lord **greatly**;*

[1:17] *And the Lord appointed a **great** fish...*

[3:2] *Go to Nineveh, that **great** city...*

[3:3] *Now Nineveh was an exceedingly **great** city...*

[3:5] *They put on sackcloth, from the **greatest** of them to the least of them.*

[4:1] *But it displeased Jonah **greatly**, and he was angry.*

[4:11] *And should not I pity Nineveh, that **great** city...*

The whole point of that is to show you the **greatness of God’s mission** and the **greatness of his grace**. Nineveh’s wickedness is great; God’s grace is greater. Jonah’s hatred of the Ninevites is great; the value of the human soul is greater.

- It is impossible to love God and hate those made in his very image. What this story shows is that those who have **received** great grace should be the first to **give** great grace.

When we flee God’s presence, it always leads to problems. But God is faithful to save, even in our disobedience, because salvation is of the Lord. Thank God that his grace is always greater than our sin.

Conclusion

It’s interesting, but if you look at the Gospel of **Mark telling stories about Jesus**, it uses language almost *identical* to that of Jonah:

- Both Jesus and Jonah were in a boat, and both boats were overtaken by a storm.
- Both Jesus and Jonah were asleep.

- In both stories the sailors woke up the sleeper and said, “We’re going to die.”
- In both cases there was a miraculous divine intervention and the sea was calmed.
- In both stories the sailors then become even more terrified than they were before the storm was calmed.
- In the **midst of the storm**, Jonah said to the sailors: “*There’s only one thing to do: If I perish, you will avoid judgment and survive.*”¹¹ ...
 - In the **midst of our sin**, Jesus says: “*I will die that you may live. BUT, you won’t just avoid judgment, you’ll receive eternal LIFE, because I am the resurrection and the life.*” **Jesus is declaring, “One greater than Jonah is here!”**¹²

MUSIC BUILDS

Jonah went from his post in Israel to Tarshish to flee *away* from the will of God . . . **Jesus** went from heaven to Earth to *accomplish* the will of God.

Jonah was thrown overboard and sacrificed to calm a raging storm . . . **Jesus** was thrown on a cross and sacrificed to cure our raging sin.

Jonah was called to preach to a people who hated him, but would eventually repent . . . **Jesus** was called to preach to a people who hated him and would eventually put nails through his hands.

Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and nights because of *his* disobedience . . . **Jesus** was laid in belly of earth because of *our* disobedience.

The fish spit **Jonah** out after three days to give him a second chance . . . The grave spit the **Son of God** out to give *you and me* a second chance.

¹¹ Jonah 1:12

¹² Matthew 12:38-41

God's ability to forgive is infinitely greater than our ability to sin.

- God doesn't come after you because *he needs you*, but because *you need him!*
- "The reason God seeks sinners, saves sinners, and sends sinners like Jonah (and like you and me) is that *God loves sinners.*"¹³
- **Romans 5:8**, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
 - Died for **us**.
 - Died for **Jonah**.
 - Died for **Nineveh**.
 - Died for **everyone who will call upon his name**.
- **If you are grateful for that would you get on your feet and give him some praise!**

COMMUNION

NEED TO THINK THROUGH THIS

¹³ Tullian, *Surprised by Grace*, 89