

The Adventures of Jonah
“Should I Not Be Concerned?” (Jonah 4)
November 29, 2009 by Kevin Haah



I. Introduction

Welcome to New City Church!

We have been studying the Book of Jonah and we are going to finish the Book today.

If you are here today and you're not a regular church-goer or a Christian:

- Today might not have been the best Sunday to come to church because we are going to talk about something really embarrassing to us as Christians.
- It's something that you probably already know about us who are Christians. Maybe one of the reasons that you didn't get involved in church was because you thought the church is full of hypocrites. If you thought that before today, you are going to be convinced that the church is full of hypocrites after today. In fact, this would be the favorite sermon you ever heard.
- Today passage is convicting to Christians, including pastors. This passage exposes something that I like to think that is not there. It exposes something in my heart that I spend a great deal of time covering up. It exposes something in my heart that God keeps on bringing me back to because he wants my heart to be more like his heart.
- So, please don't judge us too harshly, and if you're a believer, buckle your seatbelt because this gets wild.

Let's go to chapter 4 of Jonah.

This is one of the strangest chapters in the Bible. God calls Jonah, a prophet of Israel to go to Nineveh, which is the capital of Assyria, our modern day Iraq. It's like God calling a Jewish rabbi from Israel to go to Iraq and preach. It's even more radical because Nineveh was a world power at the time and it was extremely dangerous and violent. Jonah says no way Jose and runs away from God. God pursues him and Jonah gets swallowed up by a big fish. He repents, and the fish vomits. God calls him the second time. He obeys God and goes to Nineveh and preaches God's justice and doom. And to his surprise, the people of Nineveh repent. They turn away from their sins. And, God shows mercy on the people of Nineveh. That was the end of chapter 3. That would be a great ending to the story. What an amazing God! What's an amazing servant of God!

What happens next is so penetratingly convicting.

- It exposes something in our heart that is embarrassing, especially around those who are not Christians.
- Jonah's response shows us something inside of our hearts.

Verse 10: “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. But, Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish.”

- We learn something about Jonah and see why he didn't want to go there in the first place.
- I told you what was going to happen and I'm ticked off. He is mad that mission was accomplished. That is why he ran.
- Jonah didn't run because he was afraid of the Ninevites; Jonah ran because he was afraid of what God would do on behalf of the Ninevites.
- He was angry at these people. They were enemies.
- He wanted them to get what they deserved.
- Don't we feel like that sometimes? We want people who hurt us to get it. If somehow they end up repenting and accepting Jesus in their hearts, a part of us is displeased!

Jonah had an incredible insight into God's character. Let's continue in verse 2b: “I knew you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

- He was so angry. He wanted to die.
- He was so angry at them, he harbored so much resentment against them, he hated them so much, that he would rather die than to see them be forgiven.
- Jonah had a lot of bitterness inside.
- Can you identify with Jonah?
- Do you have anger, bitterness, and resentment against someone?
 - Maybe it's someone who abused you or your family member.

- Maybe it's someone who hurt you.
- Maybe it's someone who was racist against you.
- Maybe it's someone who abandoned you.

Verse 4: **“But the Lord replied, ‘Have you any right to be angry?’”**

- You are a recipient of my mercy. You of all people, have no right to be angry. You ran away and I pursued you and brought you back with grace and mercy, instead of punishment.
- We are a recipient of God's grace and mercy. We didn't get what we deserved. We messed up as well. We hurt other people as well. Do we have the right to demand justice upon those God wants to show mercy when we have received nothing but God's grace and mercy?

Verse 5: **“Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God, provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, ‘It would be better for me to die than to live.’”**

- This scorching wind is called “Schrako.” It still exists in this region. I think you might have seen it on TV. The troops in Iraq face it from time to time.
- The temperature went way up became very uncomfortable. He says “I want to die.”

Verse 9: **“But God said to Jonah, ‘Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?’ ‘I do,’ he said. ‘I am angry enough to die.’”**

Then here where this whole thing get really practical.

Verse 10: “But the Lord said: “You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. [In other words, here’s this temporary thing that you didn’t have anything to do with and you are so concerned] But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left [they are like children], and many cattle as well. [Here’s how it ends] Should I not be concerned about that great city?” [It ends with a question: just to let us know that this is a question not just to Jonah but to us as well: SHOULD I NOT BE CONCERNED ABOUT THAT GREAT CITY OF LOS ANGELES?]

- Jonah, you were concerned about all the wrong thing.
- You’re concerned that they get what they deserve, and you get what you deserve. You have a “justice” view of the world. He said I have the “right” to be angry! That view means you see the world in terms of what you deserve. If you work hard, you get what you deserve. If you flake, you get what you deserve. I know those people deserve punishment from you and I know I deserve comfort. Isn’t that pretty much how we view the world and ourselves?
- How much of our anger and bitterness in our lives rest in this fundamental assumption?
 - I can’t believe how unfair you are. Those people who don’t deserve your blessings are getting your blessings. How can you let them get away with it? They deserve to be condemned by you!
 - I am working so hard. Why am not getting what I deserve? Why am not getting my fair share of money and comfort. Why not a spouse for ME? Why not even a girlfriend or boyfriend for ME? Why not a job? Why do I have to go through this?
 - Why did I have to have the kind of parents I had? Why do I have to grow up with all these issues?
 - Why can’t I be a little more comfortable?
 - Why did my marriage have to break-up?
 - **Why didn’t they get what they deserve and why don’t I get what I deserve??**
- We’re mad at God because He’s not giving it like we want it.
- Jonah, you know what I am concerned about? *I am concerned that no one gets what they really deserve.*

- And I invited you to be a partner in the process. But, you are so concerned about the wrong stuff.

This really gets to me.

- I understand general way, I am concerned people and about sharing the gospel, but in the details of the moment, as we live day-to-day, there is a Jonah in me.
- I can be far more concerned about how such and such a person thinks of me than that such and such a person, who will live forever, somewhere.
- Isn't it amazing that we can be so concerned about stuff that comes and goes, than the people who will live forever somewhere.
 - You didn't get that right.
 - You didn't treat me right.
 - You didn't look at me right.
- **God, says, Jonah, Kevin, I know you have a general concern for people. But, do things that concern me concern you?**
- Here's a measure of spiritual maturity. When we become concerned about the things that concern God—that's the measure. Jonah was concerned about all the wrong stuff.
- In general, I believe in the right stuff. Jonah's theology was perfect.
- But, in the moment, my concerns for my own comfort outweighs what concerns God.
- My prayer: I really don't want to live my life wasting energy on the little things that don't matter in the long run (my food is this or that, you didn't get that right, I am not as comfortable, etc . . .) at neglect of what God is concerned about.

[Flower Q] What is that you are so concerned about that it gets in the way of what God is most concerned about in this world?

- Some of you: your pride and respect. When someone steps on your pride or shows you disrespect, you don't care about the fact that God died for that person.
- Some of you: what other people think of you—you are so concerned about this, that you don't have the space to be concerned for other people. I think I do this a lot. This is why I sometimes become a hypocrite.

- Some of you: it's your busyness. You are so busy that you don't have time to show concern for people.
- Some of you: You anger towards people who hurt you, abandoned you, and abused you. This gets in the way of embracing what God is most concerned about here.
- For all of us: these are our IDOLS. Things we put ahead of God—things we sometimes use God to get. Money, job, family, fun, etc. Good things that we make into ultimate things. Often times, they are blessings and gift from God, but we focus on the gift rather than the giver.
- God has blessed us with a new house. Grace's aunt wanted to invest in a house, and we needed a place to live; so, we bought a house together, except she lives in New Jersey. So, we get to live there at an incredibly low price. The house needed remodeling. So, Grace and I spent the last few weeks remodeling the house. I think in many ways, I have been concerned about the house, and my concerned for the people of Los Angeles was often not in the forefront of my mind. This house will come and go. It is like the vine. It is comfortable place for us to live. But, if I put my heart in this house, rather in the things of God, I would be like Jonah. Each and every soul is more important this house. Each and every person is more important than this house. This house is a tool for the church to use to bring people to himself.

God is concerned about people in the great city of Los Angeles. What are we concerned about?

God is concerned about people in Downtown, who are lonely and confused. What are we concerned about?

God is concerned about people in skid row. What are we concerned about?

God is concerned about those who are mentally ill and don't know left from right and reality from illusion. What are we concerned about?

God is concerned about homeless children who are growing up without hope in the world. What are we concerned about?

God is concerned about those who have been abused or abandoned and feel their pain alongside them. What are we concerned about?

God is concerned about people who are living without the foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and dying without knowing his forgiveness. What are we concerned about?