

Re-deemed
Jonah 4:1-11

After a successful career of prophetic ministry in Israel, God called him to leave the comfort of home and preach to Nineveh, Israel's #1 enemy. Many of us also end up living different a different kind of life than we expected, dreamed, hoped or intended.

But Jonah was a reluctant prophet whom God had to aggressively nudge toward his assignment. Jonah eventually repented of his disobedience and went to Nineveh to preach but he has now repented of his repentance and has become an angry prophet. He is angry because Nineveh repented, and God relented of the prophesied judgement. After God did not judge Nineveh, he walked outside of the city and found a hill where he could once again, complain against God.

First: The Tenses of Salvation

Jonah, like us, is a complex, multi-dimensional character.

Jonah 1 – Jonah rebels and God pursues him to the depths of the sea

Jonah 2:10 – Jonah repents and confessions “*Salvation is of the Lord*”

Jonah 3 - Jonah preaches God's message to Nineveh, the people repent and God relents

Jonah 4:1 – Jonah angrily accused God of evil and wanted to die

The book opens and closes with Jonah at odds with God

We have these same struggles in the various chapters of our lives –

4:5 - Jonah went out of the city 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.

Jonah adopts a hopeful, wait-and-see attitude. Perhaps Nineveh's repentance is as short-lived as his own and God will annihilate the city. Perhaps judgment is just delayed but on the way.

But it's clear that Jonah has reverted to his pre-2:10 thinking.

The reason this is true of Jonah and of us is because we are saved, we have been delivered from God's wrath but are also being saved from the effect of sin on our daily living

Romans 7:15-24 - *For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against*

the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

- a) We are saved from penalty of sin
- b) We will one day be saved from the presence of sin
- c) We are being saved from the power of sin

We often call this ‘being saved’ aspect of Christianity, sanctification.

God is daily saving us from the world and ourselves.

Ephesians 4:22-24 - put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

How is this possible?

Romans 7:25-8:2 - Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.¹ ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Second: The Differences in our Different Kind of Lives

One aspect of us that needs redeeming is the different kind of life that God has called us to and how it is different from someone else’s life. This has always been hard but now, we live in a Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook world.

Jonah prophesied after Elijah and Elisha but simultaneous to Amos and Hosea who were preaching the end of God’s patience with Israel and the use of Nineveh as his rod of judgement. But only Jonah was called to leave the safety of Israel’s borders and actually enter a Gentile world with a message that provided Assyria with the opportunity to repent – a mission Jonah did not understand

We see this illustrated in the elder prodigal.

Luke 15:29-30 - ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

It is true that God called Jonah out of Israel, but he also did some things for Jonah that he didn’t do for any other prophet

4:5-6 - Jonah went out of the city 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. ⁶ Now

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....

Gigayon = shade plant

...Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.

Jonah's new attitude: *"Well, it's about time. Finally, a break..."*

But....

4:7-8 - But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered.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.

Jonah's new attitude: *"Of course. This always happens to me."*

(I have that attitude about lines. Whether it's the grocery store or a Disney line, I have the spiritual gift of finding the longest line).

V 10 - *And the LORD said, "You pity the plant = grieve with a broken heart*

God is rebuking Jonah because Jonah cared for the plant more than he did Nineveh. But God feels the same way toward Nineveh.

Third: The Love of God for All

V 11 - *And should not I pity Nineveh,*

We find the same language of broken-heartedness in -

Genesis 6:6 - And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

God 'feels' this way about Israel.

Hosea 11:8 - How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.

IMP: We generally love things involuntarily and selfishly. We love them because of the feeling we feel when we see them, are around them, etc. But God loves his creation voluntarily and intentionally and not because of what it adds to him.

What happens to Israel affects God. What happens to Nineveh affects God. He has voluntarily and intentionally attached his affection to his creation even when it is not returned –

V 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?"*

- a) "Great" = (same word in 1:2; 3:2,3) = large in number, proud,
- b) "do not know their right hand from their left" = spiritual ignorance
- c) "also much cattle" – God cares for all of his creation

Scripture records Jesus weeping twenty times for every one time it mentions that he laughed (B.B. Warfield in *The Emotional Life of our Lord*)

Jesus was not depressed. He was connected to his fallen world.

Isaiah 53:3b - ...a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief

We often use -

Matthew 10:29-31 - Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

- to speak to our value. And it is true – Jesus says it is true – that humans are the apex of God’s creation and have a distinct place in it as well as relationship to God. We are “*of more value than many sparrows.*” But sparrows, by virtue of their being sold, are not valueless. God is concerned about all of his creation and all people, believers and unbelievers.

The fact is, God knows that sparrows are of a different value than humans, but he still knows what they cost and when they die. (He’s not like a President who doesn’t know the price of a gallon of milk or gas).

Nineveh’s blindness is no excuse for their sinfulness, but God is aware of their blindness and, in the most amazing of ways, treats them accordingly.

We are God’s co-regents, image-bearers stewarding God’s creation.

Genesis 2:15 - The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

But Jonah acted “very inhuman” (Calvin’s words) toward Nineveh.

In Genesis 33:18 – God promised to show Moses “...all my goodness...”

Exodus 34:6-7 - The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

This means that “*mercy, grace, slowness to anger, steadfast love, faithfulness, forgiving iniquity, not clearing the guilty, visiting iniquity*” are all part of God’s goodness.

We don’t think mercy and unforgiveness

We want a God of 100% love and God is.

We want a God of 100% goodness and God is.

How could God be loving or good and not judge evil?

How could God be loving or good and not discipline Jonah?

How can God be loving or good and not seek out best goodness?

God is wholly, equally and simultaneously what he is. He does not change. All of it who he is, is a part of God’s re-deeming work in our lives.

Moses saw only the back side of God and not his face (Ex 33:23).

I would suggest the Bible tells us – just as God did Jonah concerning his initial command to “*Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it*” (1:2) – everything God deems fit for us to know but that there is more to God than the Scriptures reveal or that we will ever know in this world. The Lord has revealed himself. At the same time, there is much mystery to his infinity.

Conclusion:

God is constantly tugging at our lives, redirecting us toward himself and conformity to Christ. We may often resist this spiritual formation. But God is committed to what is best for us. It may be a ‘best’ we can’t see or understand but God is still committed to it.

Community Groups:

1. When Jonah goes outside the city to wait, what does the text tell us he is waiting for?
2. How does this reflect that he is at odds with God’s compassion for Nineveh?
3. How does Romans 7:15-24 provide insight into Jonah’s feelings?
4. Explain the 3 tenses of salvation.
5. What does Ephesians 4:22-24 command us to do?
6. How do we accomplish this?
7. What is Paul’s answer in 7:25-8:2 to the Romans 7 struggle we all endure?
8. How does looking at someone else’s life make us more discontent with our own?

9. Whose life ought to be the measure of our lives? Perhaps Hebrews 12:2 will help.
10. Why was Jonah happy about the plant? Why was he sad about the plant? What was Jonah's primary motivation in both his happiness and sadness?
11. Why does God rebuke Jonah because of his sadness over the plant?
12. Why does God pity Nineveh?
13. What does God's pity of Nineveh tell us about how we ought to interact with the world that rejects God?
14. What does Matthew 10:29-31 tell us about God's concern for even the smallest creatures in his creation?
15. What does Genesis 2:15 tell us about our responsibilities to God's creation?
16. Read Exodus 34:6-7. Apply this to Jonah 4 and explain how can God both pity and judge Nineveh?
17. What areas of loving the world do you struggle with as God conforming you to align yourself with his redemptive design for his world?