

Words of Life: Compassion
Jonah

Lesson #1 - God is not mocked (1:1-16)

- Jonah did not do what God called him to do—preach to Nineveh, the great and wicked Assyrian city.
 - Nineveh was exceedingly violent and brutal.

I built a pillar over his city gate and I flayed all the chiefs who had revolted, and I covered the pillar with their skin. Some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes, and others I bound to stakes round about the pillar.... And I cut the limbs of the officers.... Many captives from among them I burned with fire, and many I took as living captives. From some I cut off their noses, their ears, their fingers, of many I put out the eyes. I made one pillar of the living and another of heads, and I bound their heads to tree trunks round the city. Their young men and maidens I burned in the fire. (Ashurnasirpal II, king of Assyria)

- Jonah was not scared of Nineveh but revolted by Nineveh.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. ² And 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. ³ Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” (Jonah 4:1-3)

- Disobedient Jonah was in a state of decline—going down to Joppa, down to the boat, down in the ship.
 - Jonah sought to flee the presence of the Lord, but God is never not present.
 - God can be disobeyed, but God cannot be frustrated, defeated, or mocked.

“Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? ²⁴ Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth?” declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 23:23-24)

- We should reckon with the Lord before He reckons with us in judgment or discipline.

Lesson #2 - God is merciful (1:17-2:10)

- There is a question regarding the depth or fullness of Jonah’s repentance.
 - Without question, Jonah says many true things in his prayer.
 - However, the end of the book shows us that Jonah’s repentance is partial or in process.
- God was not waiting on Jonah; God was working on and in Jonah.
 - Do you see all the ways that God is merciful to you and patient with you?
 - Does the mercy that marks your life also mark your lips and life?

Lesson #3 - God can save anyone (3:1-10)

- God's patience is once again displayed in Jonah's life.
 - Even though Jonah has blown it (and still doesn't get it), God's Word comes to him a second time.
 - Question: do you believe that God is so merciful that He would forgive a sinner like yourself?

Whatever you've done it's not as great as (Adam and Eve) plunging the whole human race into eternal misery. (Mark Dever)
- We also see God's saving power toward the world.
 - The highlight in the text is not the message that Jonah preached.
 - The highlight in the text is the mercy that God displayed.
- This chapter should encourage us in all our evangelism.

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (John 6:37)

If he did not pardon sin, when men turn from it with sincere repentance, he would have changed his method of dealing with the penitent; but when he does forgive, it is according to his way from the beginning, for he has ever been a tender, and compassionate, and gracious God. (Charles Spurgeon)

I have never despaired for any man since God saved me. (John Newton)

Lesson #4 - God aims to change our hearts (4:1-11)

- Jonah's hardness of heart persists beyond the miracle of Ninevite repentance.
- But the Lord's compassion also persists—even for wayward Jonah.
 - God appointed and removed a plant to make a point.
 - And the point was simple—people matter to God.
- But the question of the book of Jonah moves beyond Jonah.
 - People matter to God...
 - But do people—all people—matter to us?

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:43-48)