

Mid Week • Jonah

INTRODUCTION

A woman had to fly cross-country to attend a business conference but she hated flying.

Being a Christian she took her bible with her and as soon as she was seated in her seat on the plane, she took it out and began reading it for comfort.

A man soon sat down next to her just as the plane started taxiing away from the gate.

He looked over and saw her bible, but said nothing.

Several minutes later as they were now in the air, he leaned over and said, "I see you're reading the bible."

She looked at him, nodded and said, "Yes, I find much comfort in it."

He sneered and said, "You don't really believe that stuff do you?"

She replied, "I certainly do."

He gave a wicked little smile and said, "How about that whole Jonah thing? You really believe that Jonah was swallowed by a whale?"

She said that she did – it was in the Bible.

He sat back and said – "There isn't a whale alive that could swallow a man – their throats are too small. SO, how's it possible?"

The woman said, "Well, when I get to heaven, I'll ask Jonah."

The man said, "What if Jonah's not in heaven?"

She replied, "In that case, YOU can ask him."

The Book of Jonah is a well-known story because it is a favorite Sunday School lesson.

The problem is, as with some many well-known Bible stories, some of the details have gotten mixed up and confused.

This book is a bit different from the other minor prophets in that while most of them are simply the oracles, the prophecies of the prophets, this book is mostly narrative – it tells the story of Jonah rather than being a long record of his message.

In fact, Ch. 2 is the only passage which records his words at length – the rest is narrative.

As I mentioned Sunday, Jonah is a virtual grab-bag of rich spiritual lessons.

So we have some wonderful truths to investigate tonight.

Jonah lived at roughly the same time as Amos, which we've just studied.

This is during the reign of Jeroboam II and is a time of peace and prosperity for both Israel and Judah.

But that peace and prosperity is only a thin veneer over the moral corruption of the nation.

One of the reasons Israel is prosperous and not being harassed by her neighbors is because they are all in a period of decline due to their own internal squabbles and trouble.

We know that at this time there were intrigues going on in different families and groups vying for the thrones of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon.

And because of this, these nations were in no place to be staging wars of expansion.

Prior to Jonah's time, Israel had had some run ins with Assyria, who had threatened her borders.

So there's some bad blood between Assyria and Israel – they are enemies. History tells us that the Assyrians were a brutal and cruel people – to their enemies anyway.

They were the first nation to use *terror* as an instrument of war.

They thought that by being vicious and cruel to their defeated foes, it would weaken their opponents and cause them to give in more quickly.

It worked this way – If the Assyrians came out against a nation, if that nation surrendered quickly, the Assyrians would treat them better.

But if the nation resisted, then when they were conquered, the Assyrians would take the leaders and key people, as well as many of the common people just by lot, and then torture them in the open before the eyes of the rest of the populace.

They practiced drawing and quartering people.

They flayed people – skinned them – poked out their eyes – roasted them - and tortured them in all kinds of sadistic and terrifying ways.

This is the reputation Assyria had in Jonah's time.

CHAPTER 1

¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai,

Let's stop right there.

While there are many who would like to relegate Jonah to the realm of legend or myth, this isn't the only place we find Jonah mentioned.

In 2 Kings 14:25, Jonah, the son of Amittai is said to have prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II.

Even more importantly, Jesus referred to Jonah and said that His resurrection was prefigured by Jonah's time in the fish.

Jesus even referred to Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites. [Matt. 12:38-41 16:4 Luke 11:29-32]

These references to Jonah by Christ all imply Jesus' belief that Jonah was a real, historical person and that his ministry took place just as it's recorded in this book.

**¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” ³But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.**

Nineveh was one of the chief cities of the Assyrians, Israel's major enemy at this time.

Jonah was a loyalist to his nation.

But that loyalty to Israel had unfortunately interfered with his loyalty to the Lord which ought to have been the higher priority.

As a prophet, Jonah knew that God delights not in judgment but in mercy.

And he knew that if the Ninevites repented, God would relent of His determination to judge them.

Jonah didn't want mercy for the Ninevites – he *wanted* them to experience God's judgment.

So while *God* may delight in mercy, Jonah did not.

When the Word of the Lord came to him telling him to go to Nineveh and warn it of God's judgment. Jonah, concerned the Ninevites would heed his message, repent and so be spared, determined he was not going to go.

In fact, he got up and went the opposite direction!

Nineveh is NNE of Israel.

Joppa, the seaport he fled to is SE of his home in Gath Hopher in the region of Zebulun.

Tarshish was the land at the absolute western frontier of their navigational experience at that time.

Beyond that it was uncharted water.

Let me give you an idea of what Jonah is doing – I mentioned this last Sunday.

Let's say you live in Chicago and during your devotions one morning the Lord speaks to you and tells you to go to New York and warn them that if they don't repent, He's going to rain down judgment on them.

So you go all right, but in the opposite direction.

You go to O'Hare Airport in Chicago, board a plane for San Diego, and once there, you board a ship headed for Sydney, Australia.

This is what Jonah did.

God told him to get up and go – he got up and went, in the exact opposite direction!

Now, before we get too down on Jonah, let's stop and think about this for a moment and see if we can't sympathize with him a bit.

And let me return to the illustration of *you* being called to proclaim God's judgment on New York City.

What's New York like?

It's massive and filled with millions of people!

It's decadent and dangerous.

Some of the burrows of New York are moral cesspools of the highest order.

Okay, now picture yourself faced with the task of ALONE, going to New York and walking it's streets – doing what?

It's the proverbial guy with the sandwich board sign which reads – “Repent, the end of *your* world is near!”

How do you think the people of NY are going to receive you.

Okay, now let's take this up a notch and say that it isn't New York that God tells you to go to, but Berlin during the height of WWII.

God was telling Jonah, a fierce Jewish loyalist to his nation, to go to his nation's sworn enemies and warn them of judgment to come.

And this judgment was coming, not because they were Israel's enemies, but because of their great *moral wickedness*.

So in Jonah's mind, they strike out on two counts.

And the task of walking the streets of the massive city all alone seems a task too big, too intimidating.

On one hand – he's intimidated, and on the other he's fearful his mission might be successful and Nineveh will repent and be spared.

So either way – he sees it as a lose-lose situation.

So he runs.

Now, let's stop right there – while we may be able to sympathize with Jonah when we put things in the perspective *he* was putting them, we realize that his perspective was

all wrong.
God was sending him on a mission of mercy – but Jonah was not a man of mercy.
Mercy was not a part of his program.

Are there people today we'd like to see smoked by God's judgment?
Are there groups, cities, maybe nations that we find ourselves regularly provoked
against and wish they'd just dry up and blow away?
So we become incensed against liberals or conservatives – against Republicans or
Democrats?
Do we look at militant gays or abortion rights advocates and wish they'd all come
down with some plague?
Do we ever wish that Osama Bin Laden and his terrorist followers would be on the
receiving end of a bullet or bomb?

Where's the mercy?
Does God want their judgment or their repentance?
He wants their repentance!
And whose task is it to pray for them and to represent Him as a God of both justice
& mercy before?
It's our task.

Friend, when you find you have a desire for judgment on a person or group, I encourage
you to immediately pray for them that they would repent and turn from their sin that
they may know mercy and not judgment.

Jesus died to deliver us from judgment – to be His follower means to be compelled
by a ministry of mercy, not judgment!

Jonah had forgotten this priority of the heart of God.

So he paid the fare, boarded the ship, and they set sail westward.

Not the last phrase of v. 3

**. . . so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish
from the presence of the LORD.**

Jonah's communion with God ended at precisely the point he turned his back on God.
Friends, while God is omnipresent and there is no where we can go to escape from
Him, *fellowship* with Him ends the moment we resist Him.

We can go no further with God than the point of our last refusal to obey.

If you feel dry and the presence of the Lord seems to be lacking in your life, it may be
that you've resisted His leading at some point and then thought you could go on as
though everything was okay.

You pray, "Lord, where are You."

But your very words betray you – for if He is LORD, then why don't you obey
Him?

Jonah thought he was headed for Tarshish – but he was about to learn a hard lesson –
and that is that God is relentless.

**⁴But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty
tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.**

**⁵Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and
threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load.
But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain**

down, and was fast asleep.

This storm was so bad, these sea-worthy and experienced sailors realized there was something supernatural about it so they called out for divine protection.

They did what they could to save the ship but it wasn't enough.

Interestingly, Jonah seemed oblivious to the storm and is asleep in the hold of the ship.

How could he have been asleep when the storm was so fierce?

The text doesn't say, but we may venture a guess.

Notice it says that Jonah had gone in to the hold of the ship.

It may be that Jonah is worn out by the sense of guilt he's been feeling in running away from God.

As often happens, if guilt does not work a *positive effect* and bring us to repentance and confession, it works in a *negative direction* and can turn in to depression.

And people who are severely depressed can come to the place where they literally do not care about anything.

Sleep is their only relief because when they are awake all they see is their depression.

Recognizing the divine origin of the storm, and seeing that their appeal to their gods has not brought help, the captain goes to Jonah . . .

6So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

7And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble *has come upon us*." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. **8**Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause *is this trouble upon us*? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

9So he said to them, "I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD [YAHWEH], the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*."

10Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled 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 be calm for us?"—for the sea was growing more tempestuous.

The sailors thought maybe there was something they could do for Jonah that would calm the storm.

They weren't ready for his answer.

12And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest *is because of me*."

13Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.

14Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, "We pray, O LORD,

please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You."

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

These men were not murderers and deemed throwing Jonah over the side as an act of murder.

So they tried to return to shore so they could drop Jonah off and be rid of their troublesome cargo.

But the storm would not permit them and as it became clear the ship could take no more beating, they prayed and asked God to hold them guiltless as they hauled Jonah over the side.

Immediately the storm abated and the sailors knew that it had been sent by Yahweh.

So they offered a sacrifice and made vows of loyalty to the God of Israel.

There is something interesting in the structure of verses 4 through 16.

This is known in literature as a *chiasm*.

A chiasm is a symmetrical literary device that looks like a mirror.

Here's how the chiasm of this passage looks . . .

The sailors' fear of the storm (vv. 4-5a)	The sailors' fear of the Lord (vv. 15-16)
The sailors' prayer to their gods (v. 5b)	The sailor's prayer to the Lord (v. 14)
The sailors' unloading the ship (v. 5c)	The sailors' rowing of the ship (v. 13)
The captain's speech to Jonah (v. 6)	Jonah's words to the sailors (v. 12)
The sailors' word to each other (v. 7a)	? The sailors' question to Jonah, "What shall we do?" (vv. 10b-11)
The sailors' question to Jonah, "Who are you?" (vv. 7b-8)	The sailors' question to Jonah, "What have you done?" (v. 10a)
Jonah's confession (v. 9)	

As the ship goes sailing away on calms seas, we look back to find Jonah treading water.

He's far from shore.

How long did he dog-paddle, I wonder?

¹⁷Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Note that it says this was a great fish, not a whale, but a fish.

And this fish was specially prepared by the Lord.

The idea of this being a whale came in through a mistranslation by the King James translators of a word in the Greek Septuagint.

In any case, the Hebrew word is imprecise and leaves us little light on precisely what animal it was the swallowed Jonah.

There have been numerous attempts to give credence to this passage by identifying particular sea creatures that could swallow a man and he remain alive for a period of several days.

Both the sperm whale and the whale shark have been proven to be capable of this sort of thing, and there are even some unverified cases of people who were swallowed in such a fashion and then liberated.

But finding a *natural* explanation of this isn't necessary for it may very well be that Jonah did in fact die!

In Matthew 12, Jesus said this . . .

39“An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. **40**For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Since Jesus likens His time in the tomb to Jonah's time in the belly of the fish, and we know Jesus was dead, it may very well be that Jonah died, and God resuscitated him after three days.

Or, Jonah may have been alive the whole time but living in a place that was very much like being dead and buried.

There could have been air in there and the sign Jesus was referring to was simply the miracle of God's bringing someone back to life who for all intents and purposes was dead.

Whether Jonah was alive or dead in the fish, the point is that his deliverance to life after 3 days was a miracle from God.

So let's not get hung up on the mechanics of what's going on here.

Let's just realize that the point is that God is far bigger than our expectations.

And He knows all the eventualities of our lives.

He knew the day would come when Jonah would be treading water in the Mediterranean Sea.

So years before He had caused a fish to be born that would many days later be large enough to swallow Jonah.

And God so ordered that fish's life that it happened to be right there when Jonah was hoisted over the side.

God knows the end from the beginning.

He knows every day of our lives.

In Psalm 139 we read this . . .

16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.

17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!

18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.

Friend, you will never come to some point in your life that the grace of God hasn't already prepared all that you need to endure.

He has been working in unseen ways for years to make sure that everywhere you go and everything you do is also attended by everything you need.

JONAH 2

1Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly.

“Then” → When? After 3 days!

Do you see how far Jonah's rebellion has gone?
He is in such strong opposition to God that it took 3 days before he repented!
We rarely see this kind of settled resistance to God in scripture.

2 And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice.

Sheol is the Hebrew word for the grave and the dwelling place of those who await judgment after death.

Jonah felt as though he was buried alive – and in fact, he was.

When it got to be too much, he cried out to the Lord.

So God used the affliction to bring Jonah to his senses.

God *will* use adversity to wake us to the peril of our rebellion and resistance to Him.

In fact, as we saw in our study last Sunday, God will use *whatever means* are necessary to bring us to repentance.

He is relentless in His love and determination to bless us and if we will not respond to His gentle hand of gracious blessing, then He will turn up the heat.

3 For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

4 Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

5 The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head.

Sitting there in the fish's belly, he knew he was there as the result of his own foolish choices, but still alive because God was not finished with him yet.

6 I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.

7 "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple.

Jonah could feel the pressure increase inside the fish as it dove down deeply into the sea.

And right at the point where he despaired of life, he realized that his still being alive was evidence that it was not too late to repent.

He couldn't go to the temple and offer a sacrifice of atonement as the law required, but he could turn his heart back to the temple and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise to God.

He did – and the moment he did, everything changed.

For it is not the formality of going to the temple that moves God, it is the heart that surrender to Him completely that moves Him.

8 "Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy.

This is the lesson Jonah came to realize – this is the defining truth this whole thing has

taught him.

What man needs is the mercy of God – but man turns from God and sets up a god of his own desire and design.

We are like the man in the middle of the desert who is dying of thirst.

What he needs is water – but he bypasses the Sparkletts cooler to drink a cup full of sand.

Jonah, the prophet of God, the man who knew God, turned away from that knowledge and erected a fake deity in His place.

By doing so, he cut himself off from the essential thing he needed – Mercy!

But at the same time that Jonah realized his own error, he also realized the grave peril of all those people in Nineveh.

And now that he's just tasted the critical need for mercy, he realizes how desperately the Ninevites need it too – and soon, because God has purposed to let His judgment fall on their sorry heads.

9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."

Jonah's hope was in God alone.

He had made a vow many years before to follow and serve the Lord, and though his recent adventure has taken him away from that vow, it's not too late to repent and return to it.

Now that Jonah's rebellion has been forsaken and he's returned in heart to the Lord, God moves to restore him.

But that restoration is to his call to go to Nineveh.

The proof of Jonah's repentance will be his obedience – just as John the Baptist said to the people of his day – bring forth fruit worthy of repentance.

If repentance is genuine and not merely feigned, then it will result in obedience to the call and command of God.

10 So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

From the boat to the belly from the burp to the beach – Jonah's off and running on his way to preach.

You know how you look when you've soaked too long in the bathtub or stayed in the pool too long – all wrinkly. Imagine what Jonah looked like!

And the gastric juices of the fish had to have bleached his hair and skin pretty white.

So Jonah has to look rather – uh, interesting.

Maybe this would be part of what would earn him a hearing by the Ninevites.

JONAH 3

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,

2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message

that I tell you." 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent*. 4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh

shall be overthrown!"

Jonah was given a second chance.

Our God is the God of the second chance.

The story of Peter is the story of second chances.

Even though Peter denied the Lord, Jesus made it a special point of restoring him and his call.

As long as we draw breath, we can turn and be restored – but there are no second chances beyond the grave.

Excavations of Nineveh reveal that the circumference of the walls surrounding the city were 8 miles – which is quite large, but nowhere near the *60 miles* spoken of here in the 3-day's journey.

This refers to the district or city-state called Nineveh.

In the ancient world, empires were divided up into districts, and each district was administrated by a main city.

If you remember studying Greek history in High school, you'll remember how the Greeks were divided up into city-states with each of these being comprised of a main city that dominated the smaller cities in it's region.

The district usually drew its name from that main city.

The city of Nineveh was the administrative center of the district of Nineveh which was about 60 miles across.

Inside this area were many smaller cities, towns and villages.

Jonah was sent to the entire district.

As soon as he entered it, he began to proclaim the message God had given him to preach.

40 days, then Judgment will fall!

⁵So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

As Jonah *begun* his preaching, the people immediately believed his word and repented.

On the very first day of his mission, the people demonstrated genuine sorrow for their sin by fasting and putting on garments that reflected a sincere heart of turning from sin.

Rather than wearing the immodest clothing that marked the moral corruption of their time, they wrapped themselves in burlap robes.

And everyone did this, from the greatest to the least.

This was a society wide revival!

Word quickly spread to the main city of Nineveh and the king's palace.

What do you suppose his reaction will be?

⁶Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. ⁷And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. ⁸But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may

not perish?

This is a dramatic and seemingly sincere revival.

The Holy Spirit worked along with Jonah's message to produce godly sorrow and conviction of sin in the hearts of people and they realized they were indeed ripe for judgment.

They couldn't wait to repent – and did so in dramatic fashion.

What's remarkable about this revival is that it crosses all socio-economic levels.

From the king to the lowliest slave, they all repented.

The king even commanded that their animals become a part of the revival by joining the fast and wearing sackcloth instead of their normal reins and yokes.

The point was – all work and play came to a screeching halt as the people gave themselves completely over to repentance.

10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

Repentance – the kind that results in a change of behavior, is what God was looking for.

And when it came, He relented of His purpose to judge them at that time.

But this was the very thing that Jonah had feared . . .

JONAH 4

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this 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 in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

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

There it is – Jonah's heart is laid bare – he wants the Ninevites to die!

And now that they have repented and God has relented, Jonah feels himself something of a traitor to his own nation.

God's judgment could have been the doomsday device that ended the Assyrian threat against Israel – he thinks.

4 Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

The God who's been longsuffering with Nineveh is showing longsuffering here with Jonah.

Who or what is Jonah angry with?

He's a bit angry with himself – but mostly, he's angry at God.

So angry in fact, that he sees now way out but death.

So he asks God to kill him.

The lesson of the belly of the fish has already been forgotten!

There is so much here that we could spend hours digging into the lessons Jonah teaches us.

Let's just confine it to this tonight:

1) How often is it that we learn some major lesson at a heavy cost.

But then a few months or years later, we find ourselves learning it all over

again?

There is an old axiom that goes; History teaches us that we learn nothing from history.

And another that says: Those who refuse to learn from the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them.

One of the things we ought to do is to build memorials to the lessons God teaches us.

God told the nation of Israel to do this so they wouldn't forget His might redemptive acts on their behalf.

Passover was a celebration commemorating the Exodus.

The feast of Tabernacles was a memorial to how God had provide for them for their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

He told them to erect a piles of stones on the west bank of the Jordan River as a memorial to their crossing of the river.

The rainbow, the Sabbath day, and circumcision were all meant to be markers that reminded them of the unique relationship they had with God and how He had promised to be their God if they would be his people.

When God gives you a break-through or He reveals Himself to you in some new way – build a memorial to that event.

2) God asked Jonah, “*Is it* right for you to be angry?”

And the answer is a loud and resounding – “NO!”

Friends, it is never, ever right to be angry with God!

Now, I know that in our modern age when we have trivialized the holiness of God and turned Him from the righteous King of Heaven into a senile old grandfather in the sky – or an amorphous mass of gelatinous goo – that people who have suffered some loss or set back are told that it's okay to be angry with God.

Well meaning counselors tell them that they need to vent and get their anger off their chest.

“Yell at God,” they say. “Tell the Almighty of your rage and anger.”

This is terrible counsel!

God is *perfect* and never does *anything* worthy of the ire or anger of man.

Our anger at God is only a sign that we do not know or understand Him, or as in Jonah's case, that we do indeed know Him and don't like it!

Tell me, who was in the wrong here? Jonah!

And anyone who is angry at God is in the wrong.

If you find yourself in the place where you are tempted to be angry with God, then it is a sign you are in the wrong place.

The remedy is repentance.

But you know what – God is longsuffering, even with those who are angry with Him.

Look at what happened to Jonah . . .

5So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.

Even though God has relented of judging Nineveh, Jonah decided to wait the full 40 days and see if maybe judgment might come anyway.

See what happens when you willfully reject the light God gives you?

You end up being plunged into complete darkness.

Jonah had been told God had relented of judging them – but he decided to look for it anyway!

I have know several people who rejected the Word of God in some specific area of their life because they didn't want to comply with it – and as a result, they ended up going off into complete apostasy.

Jonah made himself a little gazebo to provide some shade and sat down to wait for the fireworks.

6And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. **7**But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. **8**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.*"

9Then God said to Jonah, "*Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?*" And he said, "*It is right for me to be angry, even to death!*"

10But the LORD said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. **11**And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?"

God used Jonah's desire for a stupid plant as the backdrop for a lesson on mercy.

Jonah grieved over the death of the plant.

How much more ought he to have grieved over the potential death of hundreds of thousands of men and women who were created in the image of God?

120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left refers to young children who haven't been taught the difference between their hands yet.

This translates into a total population of at the least 600,000 people!

God wanted the Jews to be His representatives to the World.

In Genesis 12, we read that it was God's intent to bless all the world through Abraham and his descendants.

In Exodus, when God called them to enter in to a national covenant with Him as His special people, He said that as they walked with Him obediently, they would be more blessed than any other and this blessing would result in many nations coming to the knowledge of Him through their example.

Though Jonah is a prophet, in this book he stands more as a representative of *Israel* than a representative of God.

Israel despised Gentiles and believed they and they alone were the objects of God's love and favor.

Gentiles were only good to fuel the fires of hell as far as they were concerned.

They had lost sight of the fact that God loves all people and that they had a mission to

represent Him, not their hatred, to the other nations of the world.
Jonah typifies Israel, who had receive the Word of God, but had rejected it and gone the other direction.
And though God had worked dramatically in her past by taking her from the belly of slavery in Egypt, she had forgotten her lessons about the love and mercy of God on the undeserving and had become proud and elitist.

CONCLUSION

The Church today can fall into the same trap if we are not careful;
Thinking that we are the elect of God and better than everyone else.
We can think that God's grace and mercy begins and ends with us, that He does not care for those outside the walls of our church, or movement, or denomination.
Like Jonah and Israel, we can come to despise and hold nothing but disdain for that disgusting, morally corrupt world that seems like it's our enemy.
That Jesus hasn't come yet is proof God is not finished saving the Lost.
And you and I have a mandate from our Lord that we are to go with His Word of Grace and Truth and warn them that God judges sin but forgives the repentant sinner.