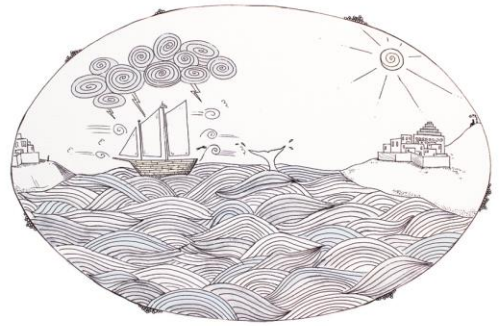


JONAH

When God loves people more than you do.



Week Five: Grace to Know Your Place

Text: Jonah 4

This week's passage has one main take away, which is that God extends mercy to sinners because it is in his character to do so. His desire to show mercy instead of judgement is never based on our humanity, but is based solely on who He is. This is great news for so many reasons, but primarily it is good news because we know ourselves well enough to know that we are undeserving and that if it was up to us to earn it, we would be lost in his judgement forever.

1. JONAH'S UNEXPECTED REACTION AT NINEVEH'S REPENTANCE

- Read Jonah 4:1-3

Jonah's response to God's decision to relent from his judgement against Nineveh tells us 2 important things.

The first is about human nature:

- We are all so sinful.
- God showed mercy, and Jonah didn't approve of God's decision, in fact he despised it to the core of his being. Jonah had such religious spirit, believing that one should only get what one deserves. He believed the Ninevites deserved judgement, not mercy. And he obviously believed that he deserved better. How little he understood the grace of God.
- Even in doing God's work we can be arrogant, ungrateful and exceptionally proud. We despise who God is when we reject his character.

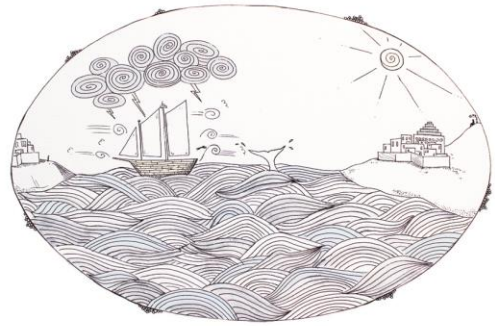
The second is about God's nature/character that does not change:

Jonah knew that God would be the same as he always was: *merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love & faithfulness...forgiving*. God's desire was and is always for us to turn back to him, regardless of how far we have strayed, as was the case with the evil Ninevites. God showed them mercy as soon as they turned from their evil ways, and he continues to show mercy and draw us back to him when we repent today. We are totally dependent on Him for mercy. It's something he has to extend to us; we cannot earn it, or manipulate him to gift it to us.

- ❖ Q: Why was Jonah so angry about God's decision to relent from judging Nineveh?
- ❖ Q: Have you ever been in a place where you too have been extremely angry at God's decision that was based on his character? What does anger and attitude this reveal about our own character?
- ❖ Q: Why is it so important for humanity that God's mercy is given to us based on *his* character rather than on our own performance?

JONAH

When God loves people more than you do.



2. THE ROOT OF JONAH'S PROBLEM

- Read Jonah 4:1-4-5

God demonstrated his patient fatherliness with Jonah in his interaction with him. Even after all of his rebellion, followed by a childish tantrum, God still tried to gently reason with Jonah. But because of Jonah's ungodly character, he refused to engage with God. Instead of marvelling at what God had done in Nineveh and waiting to see what the fruit would be, Jonah left sulking. His heart was not in the mission, and that caused him to retreat.

The great irony is that when we retreat from the places where God's word and God's people are, we lose out on what God has provided for us. We have all experienced times when we have not felt like going to church or to Gospel Community, or other soul-edifying times, and yet when we have gone (despite how we felt), we have come away feeling alive, and re-connected to God and his people.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think God tried to gently reason with Jonah at this point?
- ❖ Q: What does Jonah's reaction towards God's mercy show us about his own character?
- ❖ Q: Why is it the most foolish thing for us to retreat from where God is working in and among his people, even when that's all we want to do?

3. GOD TEACHES JONAH THAT HIS CHARACTER DEMANDS THAT HE BE MERCIFUL

- Read Jonah 4:6-8, 11, 1

God did not leave Jonah to just cool off, he challenged him on his beliefs and attitudes, by using the plant. In so doing, God showed Jonah how important Nineveh was to him, and that it was only right – according to his character- that he extended mercy to them.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think God used the plant to teach Jonah about his character?
- ❖ Q: What do we learn about God's character through the way he made the plant grow and then how he took it away?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think the author left out Jonah's response?

4. CHRIST IS GOD'S TANGIBLE DISPLAY OF HIS MERCY

- Read Jonah 4:1-3 & Ephesians 2:1-5

The Bible is full of stories of God showing his mercy to undeserving people. His greatest display of his mercy was in sending his Son to die for the sin of mankind.

- ❖ Q: Why is it important for us to see that throughout the Bible there are examples of God extending his mercy to rebellious sinners?
- ❖ Q: Why was God's greatest gift of mercy the offering of Christ on the cross and is this something we really take to heart? Explain your answer.

Personal Reflection Q:

- ❖ What is one big take-away from this week's message that God is pushing you to deal with this week?