

Jonah, Part 4 of 4

Jimmy Harris November 12, 2017

Review of Jonah

- The Lord brings a word to Jonah — he flees (God is always speaking to us!)
- The Lord brings a storm (God will thwart us, to save us — to use us)
- The Lord silences the storm (Jesus brings us peace!)
- The Lord sends a fish to save Jonah (God is ALWAYS saving us!)
- The Lord miraculously saves Jonah in the belly of the whale (God gets our attention)
- The Lord recommissions Jonah (God NEVER stops — we are never so far gone)
- The Lord relents from the destruction he had planned (his mercy is radical!)

We are Jonah

- **Jonah 4:1-4**
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!” 4 Then the Lord said, “**Is it right for you to be angry?**”
- You can know God. You can do his will in your life. There can even be fruit. And still miss the whole point.
- Jonah is right about God. He is right about Assyria. A generation later they return to evil.
- He’s wrong about God’s mercy for all people. Even Jonah’s enemies.
- **God’s grace is so radical you won’t really have a handle on it, until you can learn to love your enemies.**
- **Luke 6:32-36**
32 “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.
33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.
34 And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.
- **Love my enemies?** That doesn’t even make sense. Is that a real thing? Can I really do that? Yes. That is available now through Christ.
- **What is an enemy?**
 - An enemy is simply the person who can hurt you. (Jonah — Assyrians)
 - Most of the time that is the people that are closest to you — not strangers.

- **Love, my enemies? I can't do that.** I struggle to love those closest to me. You are right! Love is not something you can just “do.”
- **What is love?**
It is willing the good for another person. Benevolence — “willing the good.”
- **You might not FEEL loving feelings** towards your enemies, but you can choose to *want* what is best for them, and act accordingly.
- **But I have no desire to love the people that have hurt me.**

“Love is not desire — it is *to will the good of others*.
We say, ‘I love chocolate cake!’ But really, we want to eat it.
We love something or someone when we promote its good for its own sake.”¹
Dallas Willard

- (Of course, that does not mean that you give your enemies whatever they want. That might be the worst thing you could do to an enemy.)
- **This is not a feeling.** It is something God does inside us, when we engage our will to do what is best for others — whatever that might be.
- Start with pity — By praying for those who have hurt us, by thinking about what they need, by meditating on what God might do to save them...
- To do this though, we must abandon the outcomes of our love to God.

“To **Abandon Outcomes to God** is to accept that we do not have in ourselves — in our own “heart, soul, mind, and strength” — the wherewithal to make *this* come out right, whatever “this” is. We don’t try to make things happen.
We don’t try to get people to do things. We don’t manage our image.
We learn to abandon outcomes in Jesus’ easy yoke. It is the secret to peace!”²
Dallas Willard

God's Mercy

- **God's mercy towards us is just too good!**
The grace of God wrecks us. **Should turn us upside down.** Until all the bitterness and anger and hate falls out of our pockets. All that's left is his mercy even for the worst of enemies.
- **God's mercy offends us.** Gods ways — are greater than our ways — God's love is unsettling. And too good. We can't handle it! Its unsettling. Even confusing.
- **Luke 15:25-31**
²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the

¹ www.soulshpherd.org/2013/05/dallas-willards-definitions

² *ibid*

fatted calf.’²⁸ “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.²⁹ So he answered and said to *his* father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.’³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’³¹ “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.’³² It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.”

- **God’s mercy is risky. (Hope is more dangerous than doubt.)** When we hope, when we pray for our enemies — ask God to do something great — we risk being terribly disappointed. It’s crushing to put your heart out there for someone, and have them hurt you again and again. Remember, that is exactly what we have done with Jesus.
- **God’s mercy is costly.** Jonah is not just being dramatic when he says that he is angry to the point of death... It’s true! This kind of love is costly. It costs everything!
- **Matthew 16:23-25**
²³ Then He said to *them* all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?
- **What is the cost of following Jesus? Everything.**
- **Matthew 16:13:44**
Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
- Cost of the field? Everything he had! But, it’s a bargain. (he gains the treasure in the field) You can’t buy the treasure in the field unless you go sell everything...

Jonah’s response to God’s mercy

- **How does Jonah respond to God’s Mercy? He hoped... for their destruction!**
- **Jonah 4:5**
⁵ So 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.
- **Sitting in the seat of Judgment.** What does Jesus say about that?
- **Luke 18:9-14**
⁹ Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: ¹⁰ “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people— cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector!’ ¹² I fast

twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’¹⁴ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

- **Jonah 4:6**

And 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.

- **Every blessing is from the Lord — every breath.**

- **Jonah 4:7-8**

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.”

- We start out loving God, and he covers us — he favors us — and it’s not long before we love God’s favor more than we love God.
- **God will continue to turn up the heat** making you so uncomfortable that you have to make a choice

- **Jonah 4:9-11**

Then 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!**” But 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. 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?”

The book of Jonah ends as a “cliff hanger.”

How did Jonah miss the whole point? Why do we miss the point?

We are Jonah.

We make everything about us, about our comfort, about our plans, about God protecting us from our enemies.

We are prone to sit in judgment.

We hold grudges.

We are glad we are not like “them.”

We get comfortable and cry out to God about the very comforts he has given us!!!

Traditionally the book of Jonah is read aloud in its entirety, in the Synagogue, on the evening of the day of atonement (Yom Kippur). This is the day where atonement for sins is brought before God (originally by Aaron — first priest). It is a time for those in the Synagogue to contemplate the mercy of God, and his forgiveness. God’s mercy to us, and to everyone.

- **If He could forgive the Ninevites, He could forgive us.**

*This story is about **Jonah**. This story is about **us**.*

*Ultimately, it's all about **God's love**. His **mercy**, His **faithfulness**.*

The book of Jonah is a “type,” a picture, a “foreshadow” of the Savior Jesus Christ

- Jonah runs from the presence of the Lord
Jesus humbled himself, and was perfect in His obedience to God the father
 - Jonah is asleep in a storm — oblivious to the harm he is causing everyone else around him
Jesus was awakened in a storm and with a word — He silenced the storm...
 - They cast lots to show that Jonah was guilty
They cast lots for Jesus' clothes — but He was totally innocent
 - Jonah unwillingly gave himself into Gods hands and was cast into the sea
Jesus willingly went to the cross to take the wrath of God on himself for us
 - Jonah went into the depths and God saved him with the fish
Jesus descended into Hell and set the captives free
 - Jonah was in the fish three days
Jesus was in the grave for 3 days
 - Jonah was spat up on the beach by a fish
Jesus arose victorious over sin and death!
 - Jonah sits in judgment from the hill
Jesus ascended into heaven and intercedes for us — He wishes none to be lost
 - Jonah is angry because of God's grace, he wanted to die
Jesus died because of his great love to bring life to the whole world
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Prayer and a blessing for you...

Prayer

You pursue us
You love us
You redeem us
You are always saving us!
You re-commission us for your great purposes
You use us, even when our hearts aren't right,
You pursue our hearts — and call us to love —
A radical love that only you can accomplish.
It's going to take a miracle —
But break through to our hearts,
Fill us with your mercy, Lord...
Amen

Blessing

- **Ephesians 3:14-21**

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. What has God had to “do” before in your life to “get your attention”?
2. How can you “will” yourself to “love someone” when you don’t “feel” like it?
3. Discuss how God’s mercy can be “offensive.”
4. Have you been guilty of loving God’s favor more than loving God?
5. Read Jonah 4:10-11. How do you think Jonah reacted? What do you think you would have done?
6. Why is it hard for us to accept God’s mercy — for our enemies — for ourselves?