

A Community to Redeem

God's Word:

Jonah 3:10 – 4:1

Key Verse:

“And he prayed to the Lord and said, ‘Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.’”

Jonah 4:2

Breaking It Down:

The Lord again tells Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach repentance. Imagine being Jonah, walking into a city of your enemies and preaching a message that is bound to be unpopular. It would be terrifying! But, this time, Jonah does as he's told and amazingly the people repent. The king orders all to fast, to put on sackcloth and to beg for forgiveness. (Jonah 2:1-10)

Nineveh is spared, and Jonah walks away from the situation angry with God. He builds himself a little shelter outside of town and pouts. He thinks that God should have destroyed the Ninevites rather than spare them. Jonah is so angry that he says he'd rather die than live!

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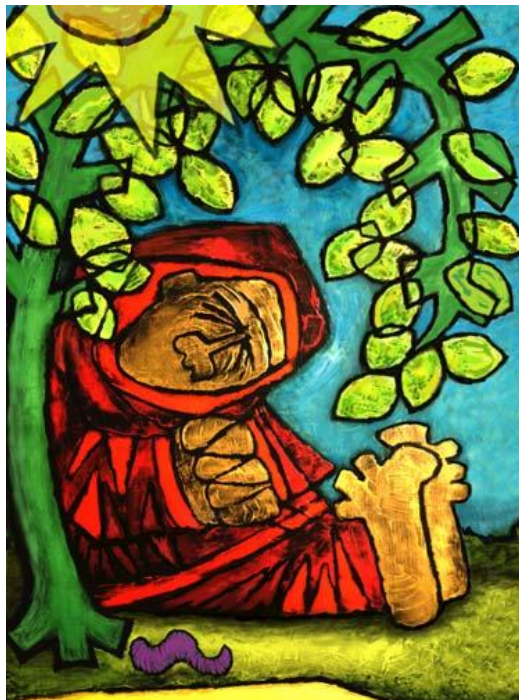
Jonah is a very confused man. God gave him a command and he deliberately disobeyed. As a result, he had a three-day adventure with a huge fish. He was vomited by this fish after praying



to God, and was given a second chance to do the work he tried to skip out on. Can you believe he is upset because God is showing mercy to the people of Nineveh? Jonah is upset because the Ninevites acknowledged their sins and were seeking God for forgiveness. Jonah must have thought: Bummer! Now I will not get to see God destroy them for all their evil deeds. After all the wrong they have done to us Israelites, they don't deserve to be forgiven. I can't believe God made me go through all that trouble, I smell like fish guts, and after all that, God is still going to forgive them. I knew this was going to happen. That's why I was trying to go to Tarshish.

Living It:

Wow, it is incredible to see the changes in peoples' lives when they listen to God and decide to seek Him. God told Jonah that there were more than 120,000 people in Nineveh who were living in spiritual darkness before He preached God's words.



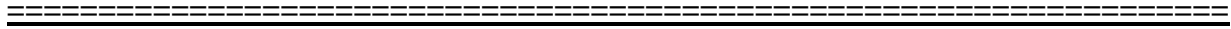
What a drama king. Jonah is furious that God gave the gift of salvation to a nation that Jonah considered undeserving. Jonah felt it was wrong for Jews to be sharing their God with people they considered heathens. It may seem foolish to us that Jonah got mad at God for sparing the Ninevites. Think about this, though. Don't we sometimes act just as selfish as Jonah? How about when we see someone doing evil, and instead of helping them see a better way, we say, "I can't wait until he gets what he deserves from God."

This is just what Jonah wanted. He didn't want the Ninevites getting God's mercy; he wanted them to suffer. God's mercy and salvation is for everyone, not just those we think deserve Him. If only those who deserved His love got it, we'd all be headed for hell. Jonah never comes to understand this. He continued to whine about his own condition, but felt no pity or mercy for the Ninevites.

This is a wake-up call for the young Christian. You shouldn't hide your light for there are so many today that are living in darkness. Too many times we worry about what we are going to say. Jonah just repeated what God told him to say. He didn't go into doctrine or any of the other things we grown-ups get so caught up in. As you can learn from Jonah, the power of God's words is not about who is delivering them but Who sent the message.

Understanding It:

1. What is the reason Jonah gives for why he didn't want to go to Nineveh in the first place?
2. Why do you believe God chose to give Jonah a second chance?
3. In your opinion, what is the biggest obstacle that keeps you from sharing God's message?
4. If you had the chance to bring someone to Christ, who would it be? What is keeping you from doing it?



Doing It!

There are days when we don't feel like doing much, especially when it comes to sharing the word. Despite that, pick a day this week and pray in the morning for God to send someone your way with whom you can share His message. Even if you feel unsure, do it because you might have the only chance this person gets to hear about God and His offer of salvation.

