



THE ORCHARD

We Can Worship

Jonah 4:1-11

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Introduction:

- We've been looking through the book of Jonah.
- And we've seen how God pursues those who run away.
 - When we turn away from God, he doesn't turn away from us.
- Then we saw how God listens to our prayers even when they're not perfect.
 - Jonah cried out to God.
 - But he still thought he was better than others.
 - But we saw how God answered his prayer and kept working in his life.
- And then last week, we learned how God graciously gave Jonah a second chance.
 - God didn't choose another prophet
 - He came to Jonah a second time.
 - And we saw how God restores broken people.
- As we come to the last sermon in this series, we'll see today how God calls us to share his compassion.
 - We see this in the last verse of the book of Jonah.
 - God says:



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- **“And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city?”** Jonah 4:11
- Do you notice how the book ends with a question?
- It’s a question not only for Jonah, but also for us.
- If God has compassion for those who far from him, he also wants us to show compassion as well.
- And isn’t this what our world desperately needs today?
 - Every day, people are pressured to perform and compete.
 - It’s all about more success, better grades, better looks, building our brand, trying to fit in.
 - Do you ever feel exhausted from trying to prove yourself?
 - Well today, we’ll see how we can shine the mercy of God to a weary and broken world.

1. Jonah’s Anger:

- As we begin, I want you to first notice an angry man, who wouldn’t let it go.
 - Jonah wasn’t willing to submit to God’s will.
 - He wasn’t willing to let his anger go.
- Take a look at verse 1:
 - **“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.”** Jonah 4:1
 - Jonah was really mad.
 - This word “displeased” is actually the word for “evil.”
 - It’s the same word used in chapter 1.
 - In chapter 1, verse 2, Nineveh’s evil rose up to God because of their wickedness.
 - But in chapter 4, verse 1, because of God’s mercy Jonah felt a great evil had been done to him.
 - He felt betrayed by God.



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- There are some who struggle to believe how a loving God could also be a judging God.
 - But that wasn't Jonah's problem.
 - He didn't struggle with the judgment of God.
 - He struggled with the mercy of God.
 - Jonah was wondering:
 - "How could God forgive people who are evil?"
 - "How could God bless those who don't deserve to be blessed?"

- And honestly, haven't we struggled with this as well?
 - "After all the hard work I've done, how can God allow that person to get a promotion and not me?"
 - "Why do people who cut corners, and don't play by the rules keep getting ahead?"
 - "How can people who hurt others, not be punished by God."
 - Jonah couldn't understand how God could spare such a wicked nation.

- Jonah was able to articulate God's steadfast love.
 - He says:
 - I know you are a gracious and merciful God.
 - He knew the Scriptures.
 - He preached God's word.
 - God used him to turn a whole city around.
 - And yet, he wasn't able to fully know the mercy of God.
 - Jonah's anger blinded him from having a deeper understanding of the love of God.

- Even more, instead of taking responsibility.



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- Jonah begins to explain why he ran away.
- **“That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God...”** Jonah 4:2
- Do you see how he’s blaming God?
- “If you weren’t so merciful, then I would’ve obeyed your word.”
- “It’s all your fault.”
- Because of Jonah’s anger, he began to justify himself, to justify his sin.

- Do you see how dangerous anger can be?
 - It can make us feel we have the right to do what we want.
 - “It was because I was under so much pressure.”
 - “I really didn’t have a choice.”

- And because of Jonah’s anger, he tells God he’s wants to quit.
 - Listen to verse 3:
 - **“Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”**
 - He’s done with ministry.
 - He’s done serving others.
 - There’s no way he’s going to see God spare the Ninevites.
 - So, he says to God:
 - “Just kill me now.”
 - That’s why I think in verse 5 the Bible says that Jonah left the city and made a booth for himself.
 - He abandoned the city.
 - “Pastor Jonah, shouldn’t you be helping the people in the city that just repented before God?”
 - “They don’t know anything about God.”
 - But Jonah basically says:
 - “I’m not going back.”
 - “I’m done with this!”



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- Sometimes we can disobey God because of fear, or because it may be too costly to obey, or when we feel inadequate.
 - But here, we see that Jonah disobeys to shake his fist, to stand in opposition.
 - “If that’s how it’s going to be, well then, I’m going to live the way I’m going to live.”
 - “I’ll stop going to church.”
 - “I’ll marry who I want to marry.”
 - “I’ll compromise my beliefs.”
 - “I’ll stop serving and giving my time.”
 - He’s challenging God.

- If you think about it, Jonah’s missionary resume was off the charts.
 - Jonah was someone who was called by God.
 - He had sound theology.
 - He’s a man who prayed to God, and even experienced God answering his prayers.
 - He’s a man who knew the Bible.
 - He had a successful ministry not only in Israel, but also in Nineveh.
 - He even experienced great suffering and was delivered by God.
 - On paper he was the perfect missionary, the perfect candidate.
 - But do you know what he was missing?
 - He was missing love.
 - He could talk about God’s mercy, but he didn’t share God’s heart.
 - He didn’t love the people he served.

- Do you see how dangerous anger can be?



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- Anger can make you resent God's mercy.
 - It can cause you to justify your sin.
 - It can make you raise your fist.
 - It can keep you from deeply knowing God's love.
- Here we see an angry man, who just wouldn't let it go.

2. God's Patience:

- But second, we see in our passage God's patient love.
 - We see a patient God, who meets us in our weakness.
- Can you imagine Jonah sitting under the shade?
 - He's angry at God, disappointed by life, annoyed things didn't turn out the way he planned.
 - "I can't believe this."
 - "It's not fair."
 - "I hate my life."
 - He's acting like a child.
- At this point, you'd expect God to let Jonah die.
 - "You want to die?"
 - "Okay fine, I'll let you die."
 - And the last verse could say:
 - "So, Nineveh was saved from judgment, but Jonah was destroyed by a flash of lightning because he wanted to die."
 - Thankfully, that's not how the story ends.
- Rather, I want you to see how God meets Jonah where he's at.
- In verse 4, God asks Jonah:



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- **“Do you do well to be angry?”**
- What you notice is how Jonah doesn't respond.
- I feel like he's shutting down.
- He claims up and walks away.
- He doesn't want to face his sin.
- He doesn't want to admit his anger at God.
- And so, he storms out of the city.

- What's so fascinating to see is what God does next.
 - He doesn't abandon Jonah or put him to shame.
 - He patiently helps Jonah to see, what he couldn't see on his own.
 - He sends a vine that brings Jonah great comfort.
 - Then he brings a worm and a scorching wind that beats Jonah down.
 - Jonah thought he was going to faint.
 - And he tells the Lord he wants to die.
 - And listen to what God says in verse 9:
 - **“Do you do well to be angry for the plant?”**
 - Jonah wasn't willing to talk about his anger at God, so God uses a plant to expose Jonah's heart.
 - God goes down to Jonah's level to meet him where he's at.
 - “You don't want to talk about yourself, well let's talk about the plant.”

- There may be times when a child may slam the door and say that life isn't fair.
 - Or that it's all your fault.
 - “Parents, have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do?”
 - There will be times when children are stubborn and refuse to listen.



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- And yes, there are time we need to just say:
- “Listen, you need to get in the car.”
- But a loving parent will need to patiently guide their children.
- Even though you clearly see selfishness and immaturity.
- Just yelling at a child and telling them they’re wrong won’t help.
- You have to teach them how to think, and how to love, and how to respond.

- And that’s exactly what God is doing for Jonah in chapter 4.
 - After Jonah left the city, the Lord could’ve said:
 - You’re a prophet of God.
 - You shouldn’t be this immature.
 - You should know better than this.
 - But instead putting Jonah down, God patiently works with Jonah to move him from anger to compassion, from judgement to mercy.
 - It may be, you didn’t have a parent who was patient with you.
 - It may be you were never able to meet their expectations.
 - But you have a Father, who’s able to meet you where you’re at, and bring you to himself.

- Not only does the Lord meet Jonah where he’s at, but he also reveals the idols in his heart.

- After sending the vine, the Bible says that Jonah was exceedingly glad.
 - He was exceedingly angry, but now he’s exceedingly happy.
 - He was happy because God sent him shade from the heat.



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- He wasn't happy when 120,000 people repented of their sin.
- But he was happy because of this simple shade.
- Do you see how disordered his happiness is?
- He should've been joyful about those who were saved, but he's more joyful about his personal comfort.
- And when his personal comfort is taken away, again he gets fuming mad.
- God was revealing the nature of his heart.

- And so, we need to ask ourselves:
 - Is there a vine in your life you couldn't imagine losing?
 - God will give good gifts for us to enjoy.
 - But we also need to remember that life isn't about loving the gift, but loving the giver.
 - Every vine in this world will eventually wither away.
 - Every job, every ministry, every achievement.
 - But the only thing that remains will be the hope we have in Christ.
 - That's why Jesus says:
 - **“Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”** Luke 10:20
 - If our rejoicing isn't rooted in salvation, it may be we may have an idol in our heart.

- Furthermore, when we face difficult times in life, let's also remember how God is sovereign over all.
 - He appoints the fish, and the plant, and the worm, and the wind.
 - God is the one who controls all things in our lives.
 - That means nothing enters our lives apart from his hand.
 - The vine that comforts us.



THE ORCHARD

- The wind that humbles us.
 - The blessing.
 - The trial.
 - God is sovereign over everything in our lives.
 - That should comfort us.
 - I hope that comforts you.
- Alan Redpath was the pastor of Moody Bible church many years ago.
 - But when he was in his late 50's, he suffered a stroke that slowed him down.
 - And he says how he felt humbled by God.
 - The stroke helped him to repent of his pride, so that Christ would become everything to him.
 - And during this season of trial, listen to what he wrote:
 - “There is no circumstance, no trouble, no testing, that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose which I may not understand at the moment. But I refuse to panic, as I lift up my eyes to Him and accept it as a coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart.” (Smith, Jonah, 108)
 - When you face difficult times in life, remember it hasn't come without first going through the hand of God.
 - How does the Lord patiently help?
 - The Lord meets us where we're at.
 - He reveals the idols in our hearts.
 - Finally, he gently speaks the truth.
 - Some people believe that loving others is only about listening and understanding.



THE ORCHARD

- That's one part of meeting others where they're at.
- But you also need to gently speak the truth.
- You need to confront.
- Jesus met the Samaritan women where she was at, but then he confronted her about the man she was living with.
- Nathan the prophet approached King David patiently and wisely.
- But in the end, he said to him:
 - "You are the man."
 - And here, God confronts Jonah about his lack of love.
- Listen to verses 10 and 11.
 - **"You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"**
- The point that God is making is this, if Jonah cared so much about a simple plant, how much more should God care about a whole city.
 - How much more should we care about a whole city.
- Imagine a person who buys a new car.
 - But then someone scratches the car.
 - And all they can think about is the scratch.
 - "Lord, why did you let someone scratch my car?"
 - Later that day, they hear that 120,000 people came to know the Lord.
 - But they don't care, because they have a scratch on their car.



THE ORCHARD

- And God would say to this person:
- If you care so much about this scratch, shouldn't I care more for those who don't know who I am?
- That's what God is telling Jonah in this chapter.
- He's gently confronting Jonah with the truth.
- And he's gently confronting us as well.
- If we care so much about our possessions, our comfort, even a sports team, shouldn't we care much more for those who don't know Christ?

- And one reason we need to pity those who don't know the Lord is because they don't know their right hand from their left.
 - God is saying how the Ninevites were spiritually blind.
 - This doesn't mean they didn't have any sense of good and evil.
 - Rather, it means they couldn't clearly see the truth.
 - They were blind to sin.
 - They didn't know judgment was coming.

- Some years ago, I got pulled over for speeding.
 - And I honestly didn't realize that I was going over the speed limit.
 - The officer said I was going 15 miles over the speed limit.
 - And I said to her:
 - "I am so sorry."
 - "And I don't know if you'll believe me or not, but I really didn't know what the speed limit was."
 - Well, she came back and she said:
 - "I won't give you a ticket, but just be careful next time."
 - "This is a speed trap."
 - "It goes from 45 to 35."
 - And she let me go.



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- There are so many people in our world, and they don't know they're breaking God's law.
 - They don't know anything about God.
 - And God is calling us to care for others as he cares for others.
 - We don't know how Jonah responded.
 - Most likely, if he wrote this book, it must mean he repented and learned to love.
 - But regardless, what matters is how we respond today.
 - We need to put the salvation of others over our comfort.
 - We need to learn to show mercy and not judgment.
 - Here we see, how God gently speaks the truth.
- Jonah was an angry man, who wouldn't let it go.
- But our God is slow to anger and rich in love, and he patiently met Jonah in his weakness.
 - He met him where he's at.
 - He revealed his heart.
 - And he gently spoke the truth.
- As we close, let me leave you with 3 ways to apply this whole book.

Application 1:

- First, let's show compassion, by meeting others where they're at.
 - Are there people who should know better?
 - Yes.
 - Are there people in the church who should know better?
 - Yes.



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- But look at how God met with Jonah.
- Jonah rebelled against God.
- He blamed God instead of owning his sin.
- He was self-centered and self-righteous.
- But still, God patiently worked with Jonah and counseled Jonah.
- I know people can be hurtful.
- There may even be times when you feel like the town punching bag, the family punching bag?
- Do you ever feel that people keep putting you down?
- But let's remember that Jesus didn't wait for us to come to him.
- Rather, he came down to us and took on flesh.
- And died on the cross to meet us where we're at, and to bring him to himself.
- That's what it means to show compassion.
- To become all things to all people, so that you might win more for Jesus Christ.
- I know it can be hard, but let's learn to meet people where they're at.

Application 2:

- Second, let's give others a second chance.
 - Is there someone in your life you've given up on?
 - Someone you keep avoiding?
 - Now, if they don't want another chance.
 - There's not much you can do.
 - But one way we can show compassion is by giving others another chance.

- I said that on paper, Jonah had great credentials.



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- But if we checked his references, I think we'd hear a different story.

- Can you see a missions agency asking the sailors what they thought?
 - Could you tell us about Jonah?"
 - "Oh Jonah."
 - "Well, I'd have to say, he caused us so much trouble."
 - "We almost died because of him."

- "Hello Mr. Fish."
 - "What do you think about Jonah?"
 - "He was one really stubborn guy."
 - "He wouldn't obey the Lord."
 - "He had to stay in my belly for three whole days."

- "People of Nineveh, what do you think about Jonah?"
 - "Man, that guy was really rude."
 - "He came and preached."
 - "And we thought he'd stick around and help us learn, but he just left."
 - "I think he wanted us to die."

- "Mr. Worm anything to add?"
 - "That guy was so immature."
 - "He cared more about his comfort than the people."
 - "Yea, you definitely shouldn't hire him."

- "What about you God?"
 - "Did Jonah obey your voice?"
 - "Well, not at first, but then he did."
 - "His heart wasn't in the right place."



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- “Well God, what do you think we should do?”
 - “It looks like we shouldn’t invite him to join our agency.”
 - “We’ll let him know that he wasn’t chosen.”
 - “Does that work for you?”
 - And you know what God would say:
 - “No, no, let’s give him a second chance.”
- Let’s show compassion, by giving others another chance.

Application 3:

- Let’s show compassion, by serving others through the hardship.
- It’s easy to serve God, when life is good, when community is thriving, when finances are booming, when marriage is peaceful, when children are listening.
 - But the mark of a true believer is that we learn to serve God even when we face the storm, and the worm, and the wind.
- I believe that as a pastor, one of the best ways I can love you all and serve you all, is by serving even when it’s hard.
 - And with all of us, it’s when we serve each other, love each other, and reach out to others, even when it’s hard that we can shine the light of Jesus Christ.
 - That’s what true mercy is.
- Pastor Colin Smith wrote a book on Jonah.
 - And listen to what he writes:



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- “Whatever work you do for the Lord, it may be that the greatest contribution you will make to the advance of Christ’s kingdom is to love Him still through pain and suffering. I often say this to people who are battling their way through great sorrow and disappointment. Usually they are surprised. But it’s true. By loving Christ still in the pain that is hard to bear and in the mysteries you may never understand, you contribute to the advance of Christ’s kingdom in more ways than you know. Cynics are unsettled, believers are strengthened, heaven rejoices, and hell shudders in consternation...there is no higher worship than that which comes out of your pain and your loss.” (Smith, Jonah, 114)
- We don’t know how Jonah responded, or if he ever learned to serve God in the pain.
 - But there are many people who did.
 - Job and Joseph, Ruth, and Paul.
 - And because they did, they made a huge impact for the kingdom of God.
 - And of course, Jesus Christ served through his pain when he hung in the cross.
 - Receiving our punishment.
 - And so, like Christ:
 - Let’s meet others where they’re at.
 - Let’s give others a second chance.
 - And let’s serve the Lord through the hardships of life.
 - And when we show this kind of compassion, we’ll see more people come to know Jesus Christ.