

“How can We be Hospitable to Enemies?”

Jonah 1:1-3; 17

10/13/24

Thank you for showing up to deepen your friendship with Jesus Christ. If we are Christian, we have accepted the extension of God’s hospitality as Jesus. I would say that the whole story of the Bible is God’s “generous and friendly treatment of visitor, guests,” and enemies, as Merriam Webster defines hospitality. We are following Jesus because we recognize our mistakes and flaws and receive Jesus’ love as a gift of hospitality. The goal of life is generous hospitality according to Jesus. But how can we be hospitable to enemies?

The book of Jonah revolves around that question and the questions that follow:

Have you ever run from God’s purpose for your life? God promises to save.

Have you ever been in a dark place, a low moment? God promises to save.

Have you ever needed a second chance? God promises to save.

Have you ever needed to believe God is in control of your chaos? God promises to save.

Have you ever been angry at God? God promises to save.

Have you ever not wanted to forgive? God promises to save.

If you get hung up on whether Jonah was swallowed by a big fish or not you are missing the capital “T” truth of this prophet: The Lord forgives people who we don’t believe deserve forgiveness. The Lord extends hospitality to enemies. Christians realize we were once such enemies.

Why Ninevah? Ninevah had the reputation of Las Vegas, the red-light district in Amsterdam and Rio de Janeiro, and called sin-city. In other ancient reports outside of the Bible, if you can think of the most horrible things that people can do, it was happening in Ninevah. Ninevah was the capital city of the ancient Assyrian Empire and conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722BC. God extends the hospitality of forgiveness to the most undeserving that we can imagine.

Let’s hear God’s Word in Jonah 4.

If you have never read Jonah, its only 4 chapters and its message is at the center of Jesus’ mission. Jonah is in the belly of a fish for 3 days; Jesus is in a grave for 3 days. Jonah is given a command by the Lord, go and cry out against the wicked city of Ninevah. Jesus’ primary sermon is “Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

So let's get a recap of this short story. Jonah is called by the Lord to extend God's hospitality of forgiveness. Ninevah is way eastward. Tarshish is that exact opposite direction that God commands. Have you ever gone the exact opposite way that God commands? Then you can relate to Jonah.

Jonah is running from God's calling on his life so much so that not only does he go the opposite direction, but he also gets in a boat sailing further away from where he is supposed to go. He goes down into the bottom of the ship and falls asleep to escape God. Remember how Jesus was with His disciples when a storm came, and He was asleep in the bottom of the ship? It may not seem like it, but the Lord is still in control of our chaos.

Then they throw Jonah overboard and he is swallowed by a fish for three days. Chapter 2 is Jonah's pray from the belly at his lowest moment, his darkest hour, trying to run from God. You might be there this very moment. God wants to save you! Heaven only exists because God forgives. Jesus wants us to accept the hospitality of forgiveness and offer it to others.

The Jonah is spit out. The Lord is the God of second chances, so the Lord calls to Jonah a second time. "Go to the big city of Ninevah and proclaim the message I will tell you." Jonah doesn't even mention God's name when extending the hospitality of forgiveness and the whole city repents. The cattle and other animals even repent! Who are the faithful ones? Jonah or the supposed enemies of God?

The richest part of the story is that Jonah is so angry at God that he would rather be dead than be alive with such a generous God. Can you hear Jesus telling the story of the generous Father? The prodigal goes away behaving like Ninevites and the generous Father extends His hospitality to a son that would rather him be dead and at the end of the story it is the elder son who is angry at the Father's generosity of forgiveness.

God's Word is clear that we don't want to behave like Jonah.

There is much to be learned from these 4 chapters of the Bible as we think about reconciliation between Russia and Ukraine, Israel, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and in this country as the election approaches.

How do we extend hospitality to our enemies? Like God as Jesus Christ, we must always see our enemies as a child of God for this is what the Lord does.

How do we extend hospitality to our enemies? We must understand that ultimately God is in control of the chaos. The Lord Jesus wants us to continue His ministry of extending hospitality to our enemies.

Love,
Pastor Curtis

