

**“The Heart of Jonah”**  
**Jonah 4:1-4**  
**Mercy Hill Church | July 4, 2022**

<sup>1</sup>But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. <sup>2</sup>And he prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. <sup>3</sup>Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>4</sup>And the LORD said, “Do you do well to be angry?”

### **Recap of Jonah 1-3**

- In Jonah 1, Jonah runs away from God as Jonah refuses God's commission to go to Nineveh. We see Jonah's animosity, lack of compassion and prejudice towards Nineveh (the Assyrians) which prompts Jonah to run away from God on a ship to Tarshish.
- But on the ship, Jonah along with the other sailors encounter a supernatural storm (from God) which ultimately leads to the sailors throwing Jonah overboard. As Jonah is drowning in an ocean in Jonah 2, Jonah cries out to God and is mercifully rescued by a fish (whale). While in the belly of the fish, Jonah prays and begins to run towards God.
- As God recommissions Jonah to go back to Nineveh to preach His Word, Jonah in obedience runs with God to Nineveh to deliver God's message. The people of Nineveh (including the king) respond with repentance and believe as they fast and pray to God.
- This would normally be cause for a celebration, but Jonah responds quite differently...

**Big Idea: *What we get disappointed or angry about can reveal the deeper condition of our hearts -- and more so reveals how well we truly know God and understand the Gospel message.***

### **1. The Response of Jonah: Anger (v.1)**

- Nineveh's response to Jonah's message is one of repentance (cf. Jonah 3:4-10), much to Jonah's disappointment. This great disappointment turns to outright anger.
- The Depth of Jonah's Anger
  - Not just a minor disappointment but Jonah was greatly disappointment and angry about Nineveh's response of repentance and belief in God
    - Literally “And it was bad/evil to Jonah a evil/bad great...”
- The Irony of Jonah's Anger
  - What kind of prophet would get upset that his preaching results people turning to God? Only a prophet whose mind and heart misaligned.

### **2. The Reason for Jonah's Anger (v.2)**

- So why is Jonah so disappointed and angry?
  - Jonah's reason is made clear in v.2 as Jonah prays to God – Jonah is disappointed and angry that God would be gracious and merciful towards the city of Nineveh
    - Jonah wants God to withhold His mercy towards Nineveh and bring forth His judgment and wrath on Nineveh – because of Nineveh's cruelty and violence.
    - Jonah does not believe Nineveh is worthy or deserving of God's mercy
- Jonah Knows God's Attributes (Characteristics) But Not God's Heart
  - It is clear that Jonah knows what and who God is like (i.e. God's attributes or characteristics) – cf. Exodus 34:6-7

- It is also very clear that Jonah doesn't know God's heart – Jonah doesn't really understand and know who God is, His will, and His desire(s).

### 3. Jonah's "Dramatic" Request (v.3)

- Jonah's final response to God is a ridiculous request (command) for God to take Jonah's life. Why?
- The False Dichotomy of Jonah's Thinking
  - In Jonah's twisted mind/heart, Jonah believes it's an either-or – God has to choose *either* Jonah (and Israel) *or* Nineveh – that God can't be merciful, gracious and loving towards *both* Jonah (and Israel) *and* Nineveh.
    - New Living Translation: "Just kill me now, LORD! I'd rather be dead than alive."
    - Message (paraphrase): "So, God, if you won't kill them, kill me! I'm better off dead"
- Jonah's Forgetfulness of God's Love for All People
  - In Jonah's frustration, anger and sin, Jonah has forgotten God's missional heart for all peoples to know Him
    - Cf. Genesis 12:1-3, Isaiah 49:6, John 3:16
  - Instead, Jonah is trying to fit and force God into Jonah's own expectation and desires of what God should do.

### 4. God's Response to Jonah: Mercy (v.4)

- God Responds with a Question
  - To help Jonah to pause, (re)consider, and (re)examine his own heart
  - Similar to how God asks Adam & Eve a question after they disobeyed God and sinned in the Garden of Eden (cf. Genesis 3:9-11) and how Jesus in the New Testament often responded with questions (cf. Mark 8:27-29, Luke 10:25-28, Matthew 22:17-22, Luke 10:36-37)
- God Reminds Jonah Who's Who
  - God reminds Jonah that God is God – not Jonah (cf. Job 38-42, Romans 9:20-21)
    - God has more of a "right" to be angry than Jonah
  - NIV: "Do you have any right to be angry?"
  - NAS: Do you have good reason to be angry?"
  - God is trying to bring proper perspective on the situation to Jonah – once again revealing God's mercy towards Jonah (cf. Matthew 18:21-35)

### Christ Connection

- In Jonah's anger towards Nineveh reveals how blinded Jonah is to his own sin and disobedience of God. Jonah has become self-righteous (cf. Luke 18:9-14) and has made himself "judge" as to who is – and is not – deserving of God's mercy and God's judgment. Ultimately Jonah has made himself God as he tries to force God to do what he wants to do.
- The Gospel message reminds us that we are all sinners – not one of us is worthy of God's mercy and all of us are deserving of God's judgment – whether we're like the people of Nineveh, full of cruelty and violence, or like Jonah, full of self-righteousness.
- Yet the Gospel message also reminds us that if we acknowledge, confess and repent of our sin, we have a savior, Jesus, who took on the judgment and wrath we deserve at Calvary – the place where Jesus was crucified as a sacrifice for our sins. We see God's mercy toward us and God's justice – regardless of who we are or what we've done.
- The Gospel finally reminds us that this good news isn't just for people like you or me, but for all and every kind of people – all ethnicities, all cultures, all types of people – and through God's grace and

mercy through Jesus, we have been freed to be a part of the mission (cf. Galatians 5:13-15, Matthew 28:18-20).

**Big Idea:** *What we get disappointed or angry about can reveal the deeper condition of our hearts -- and more so reveals how well we truly know God and understand the Gospel message.*

### **Reflection Questions**

- What are the things, situations or people who've disappointed you and/or ? Why? What might that reveal about your values -- and more importantly the condition of your heart?
- Are there areas in your life where your anger, bitterness, disappointment or frustration has hardened your heart towards others – as well as towards God?
- How are you like Jonah in perhaps knowing who God is (i.e. His attributes/characteristics) but not really knowing God's heart?
- In what ways do you need to be reminded of God's missional heart for the world -- and His plans and purposes to include you (and our church) in being a part of that mission?
- For Parents: Spend some time this week in helping your child understand not just what they get angry about -- but why. Remind them of who Jesus is and how God shows us mercy -- even when He had every right to be angry at us.