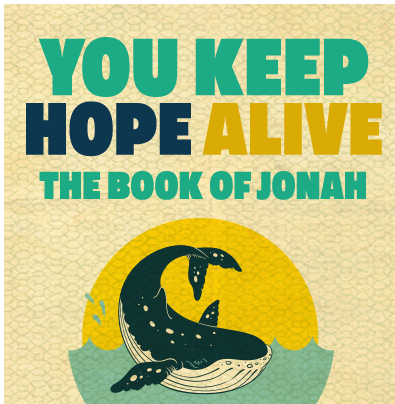




WEEKLY STUDY

Jonah - Week 4

We finished our month in Jonah this week. There has been so much to learn about God and about ourselves in this short book of the Bible. Chapter 4 reveals Jonah wrestling with the mercy of God...towards others. His actions are easy to judge until we begin to see ourselves in his response to God's kindness and patience.

For those of you continuing to pray through the Psalms daily, you will read Psalms 106-112 this week.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for someone who is struggling with a false image of who God is. Pray for opportunities to reveal the grace, compassion, and forgiveness that God offers through Jesus Christ.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: JONAH 3.10-4.1 (NIV)

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry.

- Jonah's anger is one of the main characters in this finale of the book of Jonah. He wanted to be delivered from calamity back in the 2nd chapter, but now he doesn't want the same for Nineveh. Oftentimes we want to manage the grace of God, but it is not our to manage. God can show mercy on whomever he wants to show mercy. Have you ever felt a lack of happiness for others whom God has saved?
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- **Prayer Prompt: My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. (James 1.19-20)**
- *God, I am sorry for the times when I resent your forgiveness of others. Forgive me and align me more perfectly with your will. Amen.*

TUESDAY: JONAH 4.2-3

² *He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."* ³ *Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."*

- Jonah's prayer is honest and refreshing. God probably received it that way as well. My prayers are often an attempt to mask my heart. Jonah decides to tell it like he is. The guy who has been saved from the belly of a great fish is now filled with complaints when God's salvation reaches Jonah's enemies. And Jonah doesn't want to live in the presence of his forgiven enemies. Our status quo, our sense of normalcy, is established by what we are against. That was true in Jonah's day as well. As you think about those who are classified as "enemies", consider what it would feel like if the one in charge let them off the hook. It's probably not difficult to imagine. Jonah couldn't imagine going on with his life in a situation like that. Can you imagine what life would look like if your enemies were walking around forgiven (just like you)?
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- **Prayer Prompt: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5.43-45)**
 - *God, I want to love my enemies with the love that you have given to me. Your love is grace. It is underserved, but you give it freely. Transform my heart towards my enemies, O Lord. Amen.,*

WEDNESDAY: JONAH 4.4-5 (NIV)

But the LORD replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

⁵ *Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city.*

- In response to his own indignation, Jonah marched outside of the city and plopped himself down. His posture revealed his heart. He just knew that God was going to be gracious when Nineveh repented (a preacher/prophet would typically be delighted at such a response to his or her message). He agonized over what he knew was coming. What would look different about your life if God turned the hearts of those who are farthest away from Him?
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- **Prayer Prompt: “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ (Luke 15.28-30)**
- *God, I want to have a heart of rejoicing when your lost sons and daughters come home. I am one of them. And yet my heart can also fill with jealousy. Purify me and let me see my brother as you do. Amen.*

THURSDAY: JONAH 4.6-8 (NIV)

⁶ *Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant.⁷ But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered.⁸ When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the*

sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

- God is setting the stage for the moment of truth. The repentance of those in Nineveh was not Jonah's work. And Jonah didn't deserve the rescue at sea he had received after running away from God. God seems to have been preparing Jonah's heart for a moment of truth. Has God ever seemed to set you in a place or specific situation where you later realized you were being prepared for a lesson?
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- **Prayer Prompt: For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2.6)**
- *God, I yield to your great wisdom. I lean on your understanding. Prepare me today for the word you have for me tomorrow. Amen.*

FRIDAY: JONAH 4.9-11 (NIV)

But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."

¹⁰ *But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight."* ¹¹ *And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"*

- Jonah appears childish in many spots in this story. None more than here. "Yes, I am right to be angry at what you have done, God!" "I wish I was dead!" But God's response is instructive. He reveals that he is a God who desires flourishing for his creation. 120,000 people and animals are at stake. If Jonah had his way, this story would have ended differently. Have you ever been grateful (in hindsight) that you didn't get your way?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. (Jeremiah 32.17)**
- *Sovereign Lord, you can redeem anything or anyone you want. I lower my will and my human heart in obedience to yours. Amen.*

SATURDAY: PSALM 103.6-10 (NIV)

*The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.*

7

*He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:*

8

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.*

9

*He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;*

10

*he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.*

- God is gracious, compassionate, and slow to anger. This is everything about God that is behind our own inclusion in the story of salvation today. God loves us who do not deserve it. God has compassion on those who suffer and are downtrodden. God is not quick to leave us to the consequences of our sin. This idea is all throughout the Bible, and we would do well to hold this truth up in the face of false ideas about who God is. Spend a moment thanking God specifically for his grace and compassion.

- **Prayer Prompt: But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them, (Nehemiah 9.17)**
- *God, You have revealed your true nature to me. You are gracious, compassionate, and slow to anger. The other images of you that are proclaimed in this world are false. Let me cling to grace I know through Christ Jesus. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Use the questions below to guide your conversation.

1. Jonah knew God was “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love,” but in Jonah 4 those qualities became the source of his frustration. Why do you think it was so difficult for Jonah to celebrate God’s mercy toward Nineveh?
2. God asks Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry?” Anger often grows from something real—hurt, disappointment, injustice, discouragement, or a situation that has not gone the way we hoped. What do you think changes when we move from simply asking, “Do I have a right to be angry?” to asking, “What is this anger doing in me?”
3. Jonah’s anger eventually leaves him sitting alone outside the city while an entire city has turned toward God. Even justified anger can begin to shape our hearts and create distance from God and others. What signs might help us recognize when anger has moved from an emotion we are experiencing to something that is shaping our hearts?
4. God continued pursuing Jonah through the plant, the worm, the wind, and even the questions He asked him. What does God’s persistence with Jonah reveal about His love for the angry or resentful heart? Can you think of a time when God used a circumstance, another person, Scripture, or something unexpected to get your attention and invite you to see something differently?
5. Jonah’s story ends much like the story of the older brother in Luke 15, with an angry person standing outside while a celebration is taking place. Neither story tells us whether he ultimately joins the celebration. Anger, resentment, disappointment, or discouragement can keep us from fully participating in what God is doing. What might it look like for you to “go to the party” by releasing what is isolating you and begin celebrating what God celebrates? How can we pray for you this week?