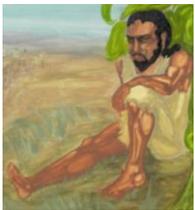


Jonah 4:5-11

Oct. 12, 2014

5 Jonah went 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. *6* Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. *7* But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine 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." *9* But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die." *10* But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. *11* But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot



tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

What do you see? [picture] I see on the man's face – here is a guy who is unhappy. Whatever has just taken place, he's disgruntled about it.

If you were able to see inside him, you'd see a person a lot like yourself. Here is a believer. He is in the throes of an internal conflict. At present, the rebel will is getting the upper hand. This is Jonah. And he is sitting on a hill overlooking a great city [expanded picture] – Nineveh.

The Bible gives us a "scenic" view, to watch the Lord reach out with his Fatherly hand, and lovingly correct his dear child, Jonah. Yes, Jonah remained His dear child. And, as we watch how the Lord handles Jonah, there is plenty of application for us.



The rebel will of our sinful nature rises up with us at the start of each day. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. It seeks to get the upper hand. So today, put yourself in this scene [referencing the picture]. Our Lord reaches out to you through this Word from Jonah before us today. Fatherly, lovingly the Lord teaches & corrects, comforts & restores, and empowers each of us.

You might know that Jonah was told – more than once – to go to the city of Nineveh. Jonah at first wanted nothing to do with this, ran the other way, faced a storm at sea, mercifully got swallowed by a large fish, and by God's "search & rescue, special delivery service" ended up on dry land 3 days later.

Jonah did go the 2nd time the Lord called him. He did preach God's message to the people of Nineveh. They repented. And the Lord was gracious to them, and forgave them.

So what's the deal with Jonah sulking on top of the hill now (ch.4)? He's angry! He's angry that God spared the city of Nineveh from destruction. As you view Jonah's reaction to this outcome, get a brief glimpse of the historical context. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Assyria was an enemy of Israel

(Jonah's homeland). And the Assyrians were known for their merciless cruelty. Now the Lord in grace had spared them from destruction.

Jonah flat out doesn't agree with the Lord's decision. It may be that Jonah can't come to grips with Nineveh's survival being in the best interest of him – of his people. But that doesn't excuse it. For whatever reason, Jonah's will is set against the Lord's will.

Jonah's sinful nature, which ran from God's will, had gotten the upper hand earlier. That's ch.1. The Lord had reached out and turned Jonah and his heart around (ch.1&2). Now, after sharing God's Word with Nineveh as God desired (ch.3), the sinful will of Jonah was attempting to re-exert its influence. That, right there, is the unique element of this portion of the account of Jonah (ch.4): Jonah is *re-struggling* with his sinful nature.

Just take a moment. Pause, and relate with Jonah. Our sinful nature too is engaged in a constant effort to re-exert its influence and control. So let's sit in as the Lord teaches. The Lord, in this case, uses a lesson plan that includes some "Experiential learning" for Jonah. Let's learn the lesson as we sit in the Holy Spirit's classroom by means of the Living Word of God.

Names

- “God” : emphasizes his almighty power & rule
- “LORD” : expresses his unchanging nature & faithfulness; the biggest application of this is His keeping His promises of grace (undeserved love) & mercy to us

The names used for God in these few verses highlight what is happening.

- “God” – emphasizes his almighty power & rule
- “LORD” – expresses his unchanging nature & faithfulness to His promises, which feature his grace (undeserved love) & mercy to us

So now look back at the verses.

God - [click to highlight the times “God” appears] - showed Jonah his unlimited power - controlling a plant (vs.6), a creature (vs.7) and the weather (vs.8). Three times God did his providing – a shade plant, a hungry worm, a brutal wind. Yes, God “provided” these.

What was the LORD God’s goal? He was carrying out His step-by-step method of His effort to get through to Jonah.

The LORD - [click to highlight the times “LORD” appears] – was seeking Jonah's eternal good. The LORD revealed his never-ending patience and love. He showed Jonah his grace and mercy.

6 Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. 7 But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine 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." 9 But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die." 10 But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

That is what the final words of the book of Jonah highlight: grace and mercy. In comparison, Jonah's concern for the vine was nothing but self-interest. Jonah had never invested an ounce of labor into the vine or an inkling of care for it. Jonah's self-interest is stark in comparison to the Lord's self-less interest in Nineveh. The Lord cared about the people. He was their Creator. He cared about their souls. He was their Savior God.

The Lord used this lesson to bring Jonah's rebel attitude to a halt. The Lord used this lesson to lead Jonah to His gracious attitude – namely, His desire to show mercy to Jonah, and to Nineveh.

The book of Jonah ends in dramatic fashion. The Lord's Word to Jonah is the final word. Jonah "stands down" - he speaks no more.

Jonah shared the lesson. We read it today. We are left with our LORD God's truth ringing in our ears. Apply it to your life.

The Lord shows you love when he corrects you. He uses his clearly stated law – here in His Word –, in order to lead you to "put your hand over your mouth." He silences our excuses for sin, leading us to confess: "Lord, I was wrong to question your ways, your plans. My attitudes have been out of line."

Then, he doesn't leave you stranded in shame & fear & hopelessness. He uses his gospel, in Word and in the Word attached with Water (baptism) and in the Word given with bread & wine (Lord's Supper). He uses his gospel, in order to bring you the assurance of His gracious attitude toward you. When the sinful flesh has raised its head again showing its ugly presence, return here. And see God's grace and mercy to Jonah on a hill outside Nineveh.

Ultimately, that grace and mercy is seen on a hill outside another city. We journey from Jonah on a hill outside Nineveh, to our Lord on a hill outside Jerusalem. There our Lord, once-and-for-all, proved his love for each of us. Instead of sitting there desiring judgment and destruction, he was hanging there providing deliverance. Although he had every right to be angry with each and every one of us – to the death, namely our eternal death –, he in grace and mercy took our death blow upon himself.



Our Lord God has reached out to us just like he did for Jonah. He has brought us out of spiritual darkness and unbelief to know and believe: Jesus has taken our sin to his grave, and has swallowed up death in His resurrection victory. We are raised with Jesus. He is our life. He provides our peace.

- We have *"a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* We have *"an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."* 1 Peter 1:3-5

We see the Master plan perfectly completed to bring our salvation. *Only then* are you and I enabled to entrust ourselves, our loved ones, our future days to God's will.

It's hard sometimes to see God's big picture, as different things take place in our lives or take center stage in our world.



What do you see? [picture] I see individuals distraught. It's easy to relate with the thoughts that might be running through their heads: "God, how is this for my good? It's so painful. What's going on?"

Pull the camera back to see the bigger picture [expanded picture]. Zoom out. See how you have been shown grace & mercy. In Christ, you are forgiven – you have peace.

Re-frame the picture of your life. See at the center of your life the incomprehensible gift – the staggering grace of God. Only with that in view are you and I empowered to entrust ourselves to God's will. Through this view, he works in us trust. Whatever he allows in our individual lives and in the world will work out for our good. He promises. And his promises are sure.



In this confidence, we are moved to pray:

Our Father in heaven... dear Father, I recognize the undeserved and immeasurable grace you have shown me in making me your child & daily keeping me in that good standing through Jesus' blood shed for me and righteousness that covers me.

Father, your will is always good. I bow my head and thank you for creating in my heart the understanding and desire to say: your will be done.

Father, your kingdom come - to people from every tribe, language, people and nation. Bring them to the same gracious standing that I enjoy through faith in Jesus. Amen.