

Sermon Title: When God's Grace Makes Us Angry
by: Pastor Alan Hannah

Scripture: Jonah 3:10; 4:1-11 NLT

¹⁰When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.

¹This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. ²So he complained to the LORD about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, LORD? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. ³Just kill me now, LORD! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen."⁴The Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry about this?"

⁵Then Jonah went out to the east side of the city and made a shelter to sit under as he waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶And the LORD God arranged for a leafy plant to grow there, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head, shading him from the sun. This eased his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the plant. ⁷But God also arranged for a worm! The next morning at dawn, the worm ate through the stem of the plant so that it withered away. ⁸And as the sun grew hot, God arranged for a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah. The sun beat down on his head until he grew faint and wished to die. "Death is certainly better than living like this!" he exclaimed. ⁹Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?" "Yes," Jonah retorted, "even angry enough to die!"

¹⁰Then the LORD said, "You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. It came quickly and died quickly. ¹¹But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Shouldn't I feel sorry for such a great city?"

Big Idea: We want to be God's favorites, not God's servants.

The book of Jonah is a brutal and honest look at what happens when God's mission collides with our own prejudices.

Jonah's anger reveals something deep and dark in his heart.

Who is your Nineveh? Who are the people that, if God showed them mercy and saved them, you'd be secretly disappointed?

The real scandal of grace isn't that God loves our enemies... it is that He loves our enemies and then commands us to love them too... with the same forgiveness we've received, the same mercy we've been shown.

What's stunning about this is that Jonah is angry at the very attributes of God that saved HIM!

Jonah believed that he and Israel DESERVED God's grace, but Nineveh didn't. Here's the crushing truth of the Gospel... None of us deserves grace.

Jesus is the Jonah that Jonah should have been.

Life Group Discussion Questions

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WARM-UPS

1. What was a recent temper tantrum/pouting/hissy fit you observed? What was the situation? Was it ever resolved?
2. When was a time you felt angry, disappointed or foolish because things didn't go the way you wanted or expected, even if it turned out for the best?

DISCUSSION

1. Read Jonah 3:10; 4:1-11 and Exodus 34:6-7. What was Jonah's problem with God's self-revelation? Share about a time when you experienced a "heart storm" like Jonah where your theology collided with God's character and attributes.
2. In his book "The Prodigal Prophet", Tim Keller draws a parallel between Jonah and the "elder brother" in Luke 15. What are the similarities between Jonah's attitude and the elder brother's? What does this comparison reveal about the nature of a self-righteous heart?
3. Read Matthew 5:43-45. Share some biblical, personal and historical examples of individuals who struggled with, yet overcame, hatred, unforgiveness and prejudice.
4. Review and comment on Pastor Alan's points on how Jesus is the better Jonah (see separate handout). What other comparisons or contrasts can you think of?
5. What did you find most challenging, helpful, or inspiring in the sermon today, and what will you do differently as a result? What did the Holy Spirit impress upon you?

IN THE WORD

Review some of the Scripture passages below and discuss how they are associated with this weekend's sermon.

- Romans 5:8 (The extent of God's love)
- Jeremiah 9:23-26; Romans 3:27-31 (Caution regarding self-righteousness and self-justification)
- Matthew 18:21-25 (Parable of the ungrateful servant)
- Matthew 25:34-40 (The great commandment)

PRACTICE

- At the end of his message, Pastor Alan asked the following question, *"How do we move from Jonah's heart to Jesus' heart?"* and gave some steps to live this out.
 1. Identify your Nineveh. Who do you struggle to love? Who do you secretly hope God doesn't reach? Write it down and pray about it.
 2. Confess the truth about yourself. Remind yourself, "I was Nineveh. I was God's enemy. I deserved judgment, and Jesus saved me anyway."
 3. Pray for your enemies daily by name who you struggle to love. Jesus commanded this. Pray for their salvation. Pray for their flourishing.
 4. Look for opportunities to show love.
 5. Remember, changed hearts change the world.