

Catching God's Heart for Missions

Jonah 4 – March 7, 2010

Mark 10:29-30

Matthew 28:19-20

Acts 1:8

Luke 15:7

- **Developing A Heart for Missions: Understanding God's Plan for _____** Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 26:4

- **Developing A Heart for Missions: Observing the _____ Heart** (Jonah 4:1-3)

Jonah was consumed with _____.

Jonah's _____ about God's character was excellent!

His _____ about God's character was a different story.

Jonah's two problems

1st - He was preoccupied with his own _____.

2nd - He was selfish with the _____ of God.

- **Developing A Heart for Missions: Catching _____** (Jonah 4:4-11)

Jonah tries to justify his _____.

Isaiah 1:18

God's compassion vs. Jonah's compassion

God's pity for Nineveh was intensified by the thought of _____ being destroyed.

Psalm 67:1-7

God wants to bless His people for the sake of the _____.

Wrap Up

John 3:16

My NEXT STEP for this Week:

"But what can I do?"

- Church Workday March 13 (8:00 a.m.- noon)
- Parlier/Orosi Outreach (March 29 - April 2)
- Write to a new believer in Wasco State Prison (We'll provide you the address)
- Email a missionary or two (get a list at the Information Center)

Catching God's Heart for Missions

Jonah 4 – March 7, 2010

Intro: ONE OF THE GREATEST PROMISES FROM THE LORD'S VERY MOUTH FOR MISSIONARIES ...

Mark 10:29-30

Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, 10:30 but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

Jesus is not promising money nor financial prosperity!
And this is not only rewards in heaven.
This promise is for blessings IN THE LIFE OF SERVICE!

Don't miss this! Jesus is saying

There is more satisfaction and purpose in life by living in the center of God's will, and the sacrifice of creature comforts – and family, than there is in any other endeavor.

Today I am going to speak on World Missions. Preaching on this subject, rather than having a missionary speak. I am not opposed to missionaries speaking – but I think Riverpark needs its pastor speaking on missions more. This is so because an interest in missions needs to be dominant from the heart of the person who stands in the pulpit. So I'm preaching to you and I'm preaching to me today. For I need to hear what I have to say so that my heart for missions increases.

As you know ... Linda, Pastor Mike and I just returned from Abu Dhabi. It was a fabulous trip. Right in the midst of a Muslim nation an International Evangelical Church stands. And the ministry there is flourishing under Pastor Cam Arensen's leadership. When I went to seminary in the 1970's – missions was never an option for me. I could not picture myself living so far from my family. But almost every time I have opportunity to visit one of our missionaries – I recognize – I could have done this. Missions is exciting work.

But there are attitudes I am prone to ... and I believe many in this church have ... that need to be addressed in order to be a missions minded church.

Matthew 28 is not a suggestion ... it is a command

Matthew 28:19-20

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The Bible is clear as to where we are to go ...

Acts 1:8

"... you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. "

The biggest problems as I see it for the church is not lack of information about missions ... it is lack of interest in missions. My friends, God has a passion for missions. And because He does – we must too! And if the church exists because of God’s missionary heart – we better have a missionary heart too. If we do not have his heart for missions - the church is in danger of losing it’s blessing from God.

This morning we are going to examine the attitude of Jonah for missions. For Jonah’s attitude reflects the attitude of many Christians today ... even some in this room.

When the 3rd chapter ends ... there is an incredible revival in Nineveh. The response was due to God’s work in the hearts of the Ninevites ... but also a result of the preaching of Jonah. Never has a preacher experienced more success ... but less joy than Jonah.

In many ways it would have been nice for the Book of Jonah to end after chapter 3.

Jonah 3:10

When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

But God doesn’t want to give the false impression that Jonah is on the same page with Him. But ... Jonah is ticked off with God.

Jonah – what a paradox

- ✓ He runs from God ... and is caught ... swallowed by a large fish
- ✓ He then surrenders ... accepts the fact that he is going to drown ... but is unexpectedly saved
- ✓ He’s given a second chance and obeys
- ✓ He preaches with no heart for the Ninevites ... and is embarrassingly SUCCESSFUL
- ✓ He now blows up ... and lashes out at God
- ✓ His frustration intensifies when things don’t go his way

WHAT A CONTRAST: Observe the attitude of the heavenly hosts over Nineveh’s repentance ... in contrast to Jonah’s ...

Luke 15:7

"... there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

My friends ...

When the angels witnessed God’s forgiveness upon the Ninevites ... they had quite a celebration in heaven ...

But Jonah wouldn’t ... on earth.

Two points we will look at over and over this morning

It is my prayer that missions become more interesting to a greater number of people at Riverpark. For if missions is a priority to God it needs to be a priority to us!
 But all kinds of things keep us from having missions as a priority that we see in Jonah.
 #1 – Preoccupation with ourselves
 #2 – No desire that others experience God’s grace

Jonah was into Jonah. And Jonah did not think God’s grace that special that it find those who desperately need it.

➤ **Developing A Heart for Missions: Understanding God’s Plan for ABRAHAM**

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you;
 12:2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;
 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

What I’d like to draw your attention to is what is to happen as a result of Abraham being blessed.

Two phrases:

12:2 – *“I will bless you ... and so you shall be a blessing”*

12:3 – *“... in you all the families of the earth will be blessed”*

There is an important principle here. God blesses us so that we might bless others. And the greatest blessing we have is our salvation. Therefore the greatest blessing we can provide others is through the work of missions – bringing the gospel to the unsaved. We are saved so that we might be involved in the salvation of others.

Genesis 26:4

“... and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;

Application:

Those of us who know Christ have been blessed with salvation. There is no greater gift than the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. There is no greater joy than knowing our names are recorded in heaven. But this joy is to be followed by a desire for others to have this same joy in salvation.

Transition to the Book of Jonah: But there are several things that keep us from an interest in world missions – especially in America. That which keeps us from a heart for missions is the sedative of comfort and prosperity that we have had as a nation. This is vividly revealed in the life of Jonah.

The principal person in this story is not JONAH, but GOD!

It is about God’s love for sinners ... and man’s problem of missing this fact of God’s nature.

It is about God's willingness to pardon and forgive

It is about God's dealing with His own disobedient children ... especially when they do not share His heart for the lost ... and a desire that God's grace be lavishly known.

It is all about God's sovereignty!

Nineveh was located about 550 miles away from Israel ... the capital of Assyria

What we know about this city:

- ❑ RUTHLESS to prisoners
 - ✓ They often buried their enemies alive
 - ✓ Committed brutal atrocities on their captives
 - ✓ They often skinned their prisoners alive
 - ✓ They impaled their prisoners on sharp poles under the hot sun
- ❑ Israel's mortal ENEMIES
- ❑ They were idolatrous!
- ❑ Israel hated the Assyrians ... and the Assyrians hated Israel!

But ... God said to Jonah ... go to Nineveh and preach to them about their sin!

➤ **Developing A Heart for Missions: Observing the WRONG Heart**

(Jonah 4:1-2)

At the repentance of an entire city ... we get Jonah's response

Jonah 4:1

But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry.

My friends, the problem Jonah had is the very same problem we have. The reason we are lethargic or disinterested in missions is what Jonah reveals. The problem for Jonah and the problem of us is the same.

Jonah was consumed with **HIMSELF**

- ✓ His own will
- ✓ His own desire for vengeance upon Israel's mortal enemy
- ✓ His desire that the prophecy of destruction come about

Why the anger?

Jonah's greatest **FEAR** had come true. God extended grace to people who did not deserve it! The bottom line is ... Jonah didn't like **SOME THINGS** about his God

Jonah 4:2-3

And he prayed to the Lord and said, "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

Don't miss this:

Jonah's **THEOLOGY** about God's character was excellent!

His **ATTITUDE** about God's character was a different story

The truth is made known: 4:2

Jonah is admitting ... he didn't want to go to Nineveh ... from the very beginning ... because he wanted to stop God's whole plan!

4:2

"... Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country?"

What should be precious truths ... were irritating to Jonah:

Jonah 4:2

"...I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

Jonah's theology is right on – for he affirmed several truths:

- #1 – He knew God was **GRACIOUS** to sinners
- #2 – He knew God was **COMPASSIONATE** to evil people
- #3 – He knew God **WAITED** long before punishing
- #4 – He knew God changes from dealing with people in **WRATH** to dealing with people in **MERCY** when repentance occurs

Jonah knew all these things about God ... and it really bugged him!

HIS INTEREST IN ONLY THINGS THAT MADE HIM COMFORTABLE - KEPT HIM FROM SHARING GOD'S HEART

A problem in the church

The church is so drugged with the tranquilizers of comfort and ease and prosperity that we have developed the same attitude as Jonah.

Transition: Jonah is upset with God ...

Jonah's two problems

1ST - He was preoccupied with his own **COMFORT**

2ND - He was selfish with the **GRACE** of God.

God's grace was something he appreciated when it was directed to him ... and his own people (the Jews) but was not interested in any other nation having it.

My friends ... this is a subtle problem in the United States. We are gospel saturated ... and the church has lost its interest in others receiving God's grace.

Let's examine Jonah's response to God's missionary work

Jonah 4:3

"Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life."

Jonah reveals his preoccupation. Jonah is saying to God, "God, life is all about me ... and I don't like you wanting me to be concerned about sinners."

And herein is the heart problem concerning missions. We are NOT concerned about what concerns God when missions is not a priority in the church!

Jonah has no love for sinners ... people that are not Jews. Rather than wanting the Ninevites to know mercy ... he has no problem with them getting what they deserve.

He's so bothered by God's mercy ... that he asks God to take his life ...

Jonah makes an **irrational** request and God in His mercy **ignores it!**

Transition: God is going to have a little talk with Jonah ... followed by an object lesson ...

➤ **Developing A Heart for Missions: Catching GOD'S HEART**

Jonah 4:4

And the Lord said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"

God asks Jonah a question ... And Jonah doesn't answer ...

People are believing in Jonah's God

People are repenting of their sin

People are terrified of God ... and seeking forgiveness.

Two incredible things happen ...

1st – An entire city turns to God

2nd – A prophet isn't struck dead for his terrible response to God

It is natural for us to be disappointed when there is no success.

But it is something else to be disappointed because men are being saved.

What is precious to see:

God doesn't return ANGER for ANGER

Transition: As I was reading this story ... I recognized that Jonah forfeited all kinds of joy because He did not share God's heart for the lost. And we forfeit a lot of joy when we do not have a heart for missions.

God is going to work to change Jonah's heart. Rather than deal with Jonah as he deserves ... God will teach him some lessons. Notice how God taught this to Jonah.

Jonah 4:5-6

Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city.

4:6 So the Lord God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.

Interesting:

- ✓ Jonah finds a spot a safe distance from the city
- ✓ He's up on a small hill looking at the city
- ✓ He makes himself a little hut ... quite primitive ... but adequate

- ✓ He's going to watch and wait ...
- ✓ What he's hoping to see ... he hopes that God will see that the Ninevites are a bunch of PHONIES ... and unrepentant
- ✓ He's hoping that God will not accept their brokenness for sin.
- ✓ He's hoping to see fire and brimstone come down!

God has a different plan ...

But the plan includes an object lesson for Jonah ...

God secretly intervenes

- ✓ God makes a plant grow very quickly ... to give Jonah shade ... making Jonah comfortable for a day

(vs. 6) "*... and Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.*"

Notice

Jonah is more delighted about a WEED than he is the souls of Nineveh!

Transition: His day is delightful ... he's hoping for quite a show of judgment from heaven ... but in the meantime ... he's enjoying his little camping experience ...

Jonah 4:7-8

But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered.

4:8 And it came about when the sun came up that God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life."

Kind of interesting ...

The animal kingdom does what they're told

A large fish did what it was told

A worm does what it is told ... all would do what they were told!

The death of the plant:

Happens just a day after it had been given. Jonah loses his shade and things get uncomfortable

"... God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head ..."

Again he begs to die ... *"... he became faint and begged with all his soul to die ..."*

Application:

Creature comforts are gifts from God.

Sometimes creature comforts are taken away because they are not seen as a blessing ... given so we might be aware that we're to be a blessing to others. Jonah will now be admonished by God

Jonah 4:9

Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death."

What is amazing:

Jonah tries to justify his **DEFIANCE!**

"... {Jonah said} I have good reason to be angry, even to death."

God is giving instruction here:

First ... God would **grant** a gift ...

Next ... God would then **remove** the gift

Finally ... God asks **questions** about that gift ... and gives a divine lecture

Jonah 4:10

Then the Lord said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work, and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight."

Jonah's justification:

His **HAPPINESS** was the issue, not God's **MERCY**

What is still a marvel:

God is patient with a defiant prophet ... and reasons with him

God is still in the business of doing this ...**Isaiah 1:18**

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool."

The general lesson:

God has a heart for the lost

It is a heart that longs for sinners to be reconciled to Him.

What a contrast in compassion: Jonah's compassion was on a plant that had no SOUL

"... you had compassion on the plant" ... a plant that had no soul

Parallel

Jonah's problem is our problem ...

God's compassion vs. Jonah's compassion

Is for **PEOPLE** made in His **IMAGE**

Jonah's compassion

Was on something that **COST** him **NOTHING**

"... you had compassion on the plant for which you did not work"

God's compassion

Was for people **HE CREATED!**

Was for people He would ultimately **DIE FOR!**

Jonah's compassion

Was for something provided without his **LABOR**

"... you had compassion on the plant for which ... you did not cause to grow"

God's compassion

Was for people for which He **PROVIDES** and sustains

Jonah's compassion

Was for something **TEMPORARY**

"... you had compassion on the plant ... which came up overnight and perished overnight"

God's compassion

Was for people who have **ETERNITY** ahead of them. People not only have a life on this earth ... they will live eternally separated from God ... or eternally with God ...

Jonah's compassion:

Was for **ONE** insignificant **PLANT**

God's compassion

Was for an entire **CITY**

Jonah's compassion:

Was for something **ORGANIC**

God's compassion

Was for **INNOCENT** children

Jonah 4:11

"And should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

From God's perspective:

God's pity for Nineveh was intensified by the thought of **CHILDREN** being destroyed

Isn't it wonderful:

God has a heart for children that do not know right from wrong.

The rest of the story:

Jonah doesn't give a final reply ... but because Jonah wrote this book ... it is my hope that he came to his senses ... and caught God's heart for missions

Transition: Psalm 67 is going to be examined during the Flock times ... but I want to just touch on it this morning. We find in this Psalm a request to be blessed ... individual blessings ... corporate blessings for God's people. But that's not all that is involved in this blessing. Look at this with me.

Psalm 67:1-5, 7

God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us—Selah.

67:2 That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.

67:3 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

67:4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy ...

67:5 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

67:7 God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

As a church ... God wants to bless us. But His blessing is not exclusively for the church.

Watch this

God wants to bless His people for the sake of the **NATIONS**

And I am concerned that we will not be interested in this.

“What is the primary objective and purpose of missions?”

Some would say ... to save souls ...

Others would say ... so we will be obedient to the Great Commission

But the answer is found in verses 5 and 7

67:5, 7

Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

67:7 God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

The purpose of missions is so that people will praise God!

In other words, the purpose of missions is to glorify God

Wrap Up

We will never have a heart for missions until we catch God’s heart for the nations.

When we catch God’s depth of compassion for the nations ... we will want God’s blessing on us that we might be a blessing to people in other parts of the world.

And let’s not forget ...

God has an **INFINITE** love for the world

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.