

June 28, 2020

JONAH



Jonah's Anger

OPENING PRAYER

O God, we thank you for this challenging text about your Prophet Jonah. We long for you to teach our hearts what it truly means to have your steadfast love and compassion. Open our minds today, to the ways that we “other” people in our lives, categorizing them as people beyond your reach. Help us take steps today to love as You love. We pray this in the name of your Son, the one who came so that we could know your love. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Jonah 4:1-11 (NRSV)

¹ But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. ³ And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” ⁴ And the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” ⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶ The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the

bush. ⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”

⁹ But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.” ¹⁰ Then the Lord said, “You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?”

INTRODUCTION

In this passage, Jonah says that he is angry with God. Why? Because God is a “gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing.” Do you see an irony in Jonah’s response? God never gave up on Jonah, and yet for Jonah, the Ninevites were unforgivable, and beyond God’s reach. When have you categorized someone or some group of people as undeserving of God’s compassion? Only a powerful understanding of God’s compassion for us can free us to truly understand the reach of God’s compassion and love.

QUESTIONS

- 1) In this passage, we find Jonah suffering in scorching heat. When it’s hot, what is your favorite way to “beat the heat”?
- 2) When you were a child, how did you usually express anger or react when you didn’t get your way?
- 3) Share a time when you, like Jonah, became angry at God and/or depressed over what seemed like an unjust situation? How did you work through these feelings and how long did it take? Is there anything currently going on in your life that you are angry or depressed about? (You may wish to stop and pray for those in your group, who are struggling with anger.)
- 4) Why do you think Jonah was angry and depressed about the Ninevites repenting and turning to God? How would you have felt in Jonah’s situation? To whom are you unwilling to extend God’s grace and forgiveness? Is there a group of people that you consider “those people,” beyond God’s reach? How has God been challenging you?
- 5) What can result when we hold on to anger, even when it seems justified? Why do we struggle with giving forgiveness more than receiving forgiveness? What are some reasons (or excuses) we use for not forgiving? What has God’s compassion and steadfast love meant to you and how has that love changed your life? Pray that God would lead you to a spirit of forgiveness and inclusion.