

Seeing People As God Sees Them – Jonah 3.1-3

3 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. ⁶The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.” ¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it (Jonah 3.1-10, ESV).¹

Memory Verse: “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.”. (Jonah 3.2, ESV)

Sometimes God has to work on us more than just once, Jonah was no exception. God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and Jonah said, “No” by running to Tarshish. Others paid for Jonah’s disobedience, just like when we sin others have a tendency to pay for our sins as well.

However, God was not content to just let Jonah go, so He sent a great storm on the sea to get his attention, but he was asleep in the bottom of the boat. Before we condemn Jonah for sleeping through the storm, we need to look at how many times we have slept through situations and circumstances where God was working with us and we just ignored everything He sent our way.

The sailors were afraid and tried everything to save the ship; finally, the captain got Jonah and told him to cry out to his God, but Jonah told them he was the cause of the storm. He told them to throw him overboard and the storm would stop. Nevertheless, they rowed even harder to get to land and could not. So, they finally threw Jonah into the sea and the storm ceased and Jonah was swallowed by a great fish which God had prepared.

While in the fish Jonah did the only thing he could, pray; not so much for his salvation or so he could carry out his task; but so, God would end him and his misery would finally be over. But God had other plans and hearing Jonah’s cry He told the fish to vomit him up onto the dry ground, near Nineveh.

This is where we find Jonah, once again set on his mission, God says to him, “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach the message that I tell you” (Jonah 3.2, CSB).² This time Jonah got up and went to Nineveh, this great city to preach the message God had given to him. What had changed in Jonah’s life or mind that caused him to go? Why obey now and not before?

Jonah, like many of us, looked at the situation and saw he had but one choice, to obey. He must obey God or suffer more punishment at the hand of God. He still did not want God to be merciful to the people of Nineveh, nor did he care if they repented and followed God. But what choice did Jonah have? Many times, we feel the same way, like we are trapped with no choice but to do something we do not want to do.

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jon 3:1–10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² *Christian Standard Bible*. (2020). (Jon 3:2). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

We see those people, people who do not deserve God's saving grace and mercy, and we say why must we go and tell them anything about God, or show them Who He is? Our real problem is the same as Jonah's we are not looking at these people the same way God is. God sees them as His creation, those who are lost and without a shepherd (Isaiah 13.14).

We see them as our enemy, those who we hate and care nothing for. We need to learn to see people through the eyes of our Savior Jesus Christ Who, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9.36, NIV).³ See, He had 'compassion' on them, do we have compassion on the people, they are lost, without any guidance, blind, walking where they may be running into everything, because they cannot see where they are going.

We are called to be the 'salt and light into a lost and darken world' (Matthew 5.13-16). Jonah was asked to preach to a people who God saw as lost and dying, hidden in the darkness of the world. He wanted to bring them the light of salvation using His servant Jonah. But Jonah did not want to go, he was reluctant, yet now he is obeying what God has asked him to do.

As we have said before God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55.8), therefore, God saw the city of Nineveh as people; people lost in sin and wickedness, people without God and without hope in the world (emphasis added).⁴ While we see them as our enemy, or those we just do not like, or cannot stand. We must obey God's command to share His gospel with everyone, no matter who they are, where they are, or what their background might be.

Christ commands us to Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28.20-21, NASB95).⁵ Therefore, we must obey and go, telling others about our Savior, His love for the world, and how they too, can have what we have, an intimate personal relationship with Him, by asking Him into their life.

Application

1. Have you ever found yourself in a place where you did not want to be? Why do you think God brought you to that place? Explain the situation.
2. This place you were in how did you serve or not serve God while you were there? What might you do differently after knowing what you know now? Please explain.
3. **Deeper Thinking:** Read Matthew 5.13-16 and 9.35-38—explain how these verses would lead you to share the gospel with others, and with what kind of attitude?
4. Commit to memory Jonah 3.2 and seek ways to share the gospel at school this week.

Prayer

Lord, You are awesome, most worthy of all praise and honor. Lord I know I have not always given You the respect or reverence You deserved. Lord I ask forgiveness for my attitude toward Your command to serve You and to share Your Gospel message with others. Lord help me to have the same level of compassion and insight You have. I need to tap into the Holy Spirit which lives within me and listen closely to all He has to say and teach me, so I may be obedient to Your commands. Lord give me the wisdom to follow You and walk as You walked and bring glory and honor to Your name. Help me to continue to seek You daily, to serve You in every circumstance without question or fear and to share Your gospel with others. In Your Son Jesus Christ's Name I pray, Amen.

³ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Mt 9:36). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁴ Williams, P. (2003). [Jonah—Running From God: An Expository Commentary](#) (p. 75). Epsom, Surrey: DayOne.

⁵ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#). (1995). (Mt 28:19–20). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.