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The Kingdom of Israel

Jonah 1-4 Focus on:

A year through the Bible

June 4th, 2023

Production Notes:

* Text in green goes on the screen.
* Attached will be a picture of my accountability group for the opening illustration.

Pastoral Prayer:

I want you to see beautiful things. See beautiful things He has made. Beach, mountains. Pause.

I want you to walk even further into the place all beauty comes from.

I want you to see what is keeping you from this place and deal with it.

I want you to see beautiful things.

Scriptures:

Let me offer up a big idea.

A spirit of offense is the great enemy of intimacy.

Maybe I’ll say it like this.

It’s the easily offended person that keeps finding themselves feeling lonely and bitter.

Let me try it one more time.

Those that hold grudges also hurt themselves.

Let me try it one more time.

Satan wants to spin your desire for righteousness in a way that turns your heart bitter towards the very people who need the love of God shown through you.

This last week I had the awesome opportunity to get together with my lifelong accountability group. We are an odd bunch of people. Some of us are grad school educated. Some have no college at all. Some of us are married with kids. Some are single. Some of us are pastors others are not. We have slightly different views on everything from alcohol to a theology of freewill.

How in the world do we get along so well and have done so for so long?

I have found most people would love a best friend and a great friend group but can’t find one.

The reason most people can’t find a lasting friend group is precisely because they keep leaving a group and searching for a better one.

The road to good friendship isn’t found in perfect alignment of preferences but in learning to handle what you don’t agree on well.

Let me say it like this…

The road to great friendship isn’t found in perfect people, but a group of imperfect people refusing to give up on the pursuit of perfect love together.

Here is the way Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it.

“The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community.”-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together

My life long best friend group wasn’t found in perfect people but people refusing to give up on perfecting love together. Moreover, I have seen and felt their love most clearly on the days I didn’t deserve it.

You can’t understand the depth of the following text without understanding this.

A spirit of offense is the great enemy of intimacy.

The love of God (Charity) is seen most clearly in the places it’s most needed. This is true in marriage, in friendships, in cities and around the world. It’s true from the cross to the courtroom.

To the Text:

Today we will look at Jonah.

Jonah is unique among the prophets because the story isn’t about the words of the prophet but a story of the prophet himself.

Based on 2 Kings 14 and Amos 6 we already know Jonah’s character is flawed. He is a prophet gone bad.

The stereotyped characters do the opposite of what you would expect. The prophet is the guy with the bad heart. The immoral Sailors repent. The powerful king humbles himself and vile nation wants to be right with God.

Let’s turn to the book of Jonah.

Here is the story in a nutshell. Jonah is a prophet, one who speaks on behalf of God. He has a problem, it’s his heart. God wants him to try to rescue a vile group of people ensnared by sin called the Ninevites. Jonah refuses to be kind and spread the word of God to them on hopes on a boat going in the opposite direction. A huge storm comes and the whole crew is at risk of death. Jonah admits the reason for the storm is him. They throw him overboard and a huge fish gobbles him up. For three days God keeps him alive and works to detox his heart from arrogance and sin. The fish spits him up and God calls him again to go to Nineveh to preach. He finally goes. The people respond really well and humble themselves before God. Jonah, isn’t happy. He wants God to punish these people ensnared in the lie’s of the Enemy. In the final scene in this odd story we find Jonah wrestling with God over His grace and love. Let’s pick up here.

Jonah 4:1–4 (ESV)

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” And the Lord said, “Do you do well to be angry?” [[1]](#footnote-2)

Can you see it? God desires intimacy with all humans, not only hedonistic Ninevites and drunken sailors, but believers gone bad.

God not only want us to receive His loving Charity but participate in offering it to others.

The book of Jonah isn’t about Nineveh, it’s about Jonah. God is showing His Charity to people who don’t deserve it and the center character that doesn’t disserve the Charity of God is Jonah himself.

Final Thoughts:

There I was a few weeks ago sitting in a cabin with five of my closest lifelong friends and accountability partners. We are so different in many ways. We know so many intimate details about each other we could be the worst of enemies but instead we are the closest of friends. The one common thing that binds us is our desire that each of us can continually taste the Charity of God. I am grateful for Jesus saying, “Father forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.” I am also grateful for Jesus speaking through my friends to me at times in my life. “Father, forgive him, he doesn’t know what he is doing.” This all out rejection of offense is the way to our intimacy.

Nothing keeps us from the love of God being offered to us. What keeps you from experiencing the intimacy of God is a spirit of offense.

We are Jonah. We are people who have received the grace of God but have lost the ability to enjoy and walk in intimacy. We are an offended people. Our weaponizing of righteousness backfires on us and we lose the joy of intimacy with God and others.

Jesus is the perfect example of God’s desire for intimacy. He was fully innocent, truly mistreated, and desired reconciliation and intimacy with us at great personal cost. John 3:16 (ESV) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. [[2]](#footnote-3)

Let me end with a poem I wrote this week.

In the deepest part of the heart,

A tale of redemption often starts.

A journey paved by forgiveness' grace,

Where scars and hurts find their tender embrace.

When forgiveness blooms like a soft flower,

It has the potential to wield a great power.

For in its wake, love begins to arise,

Walls will crumble and souls will synchronize.

So let charitable love be our guiding light,

That illuminates the darkest night.

For in its wake, love's radiance gleams,

Forgiveness fulfilling our relational dreams.

Pull out the next steps card and let the spirit lead you.

1. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Jon4.1-4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Jn3.16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)