

We Must Care About Lost Sinners

Message 4 of 4 in the series: "Jonah: How to NOT Be the Worst Evangelist Ever!"

A. God wants all of us to be evangelists (proclaimers of the Good News).

"Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and **proclaiming the good news** that Jesus is the Messiah." Acts 5:42 (NIV)

"to proclaim the Good News" = "euangelizo" (NT Greek) = "evangelism"

B. The OT prophet Jonah gave us a good example of how to be the worst evangelist ever when he ran away from God rather than warn the wicked people of Ninevah of God's impending judgment.

"The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: '**Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.**' But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, **hoping to escape from the Lord** by sailing to Tarshish. But the Lord hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart... Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! ...Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from inside the fish... 'I will fulfill all my vows. For my salvation comes from the Lord alone.' Then the Lord ordered the fish to spit Jonah out onto the beach. Then the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time: 'Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh and deliver the message I have given you.' **This time Jonah obeyed the Lord's command and went to Nineveh**, a city so large that it took three days to see it all. On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: 'Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!' **The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow...** When 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."

Jonah 1:1-4, 15, & 17; 2:1 & 9b-10; 3:1-5 & 10 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! If we are willing to proclaim the Good News wherever God sends us (even if we don't want to go), God will be able to do amazing things...

...in the lives of others. "A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored. Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices. A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars. So, **the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect.**" Acts 19:17b-20 (NLT)

...in us. "Then Peter began to speak: '**I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism** but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.'"

Acts 10:34-36 (NIV)

IMPORTANT! The best/safest place we can possibly be is wherever God sends us. "**The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.** Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand... The Lord rescues the godly; he is their fortress in times of trouble. The Lord helps them, rescuing them from the wicked. He saves them, and they find shelter in him."

Psalms 37:23-24 & 39:40 (NLT)

C. Even though the entire city of Ninevah repented of their sins and prayed earnestly to God, Jonah was furious.

"This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. So 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.** Just kill me now, Lord! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen.' The Lord replied, 'Is it right for you to be angry about this?'"

Jonah 4:1-4 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God really is merciful, compassionate, slow to get angry, and filled with unfailing love. "The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. **The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.**"

Psalms 145:8-9 (NLT) (See also Exodus 34:6, Joel 2:13, Nehemiah 9:17)

“...he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

2 Peter 3:9b (NIV)

D. The Lord gave Jonah an object lesson to reveal his self-righteousness and shocking lack of concern for lost sinners.

“Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, ‘It would be better for me to die than to live.’ But God said to Jonah, ‘**Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?**’ ‘It is,’ he said. ‘And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.’ But the Lord said, ‘You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. **And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?**’” Jonah 4:5-11 (NIV)

IMPORTANT! We must never forget that ALL of us need God’s grace. “You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. **All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature.** By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. **(It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!)**” Ephesians 2:2-5 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Jesus cares about lost sinners, and He wants us to care, too. “Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with such scum?’ When Jesus heard this, he said, ‘Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.’ Then he added, ‘Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: “I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.” For **I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.**’”

Matthew 9:10-13 (NLT)

03-09-25 • John Schmidt • john@centeringlives.com
Vince Blubaugh • vince@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

Read Jonah 4, and then discuss the following questions:

1. Why do you think Jonah was so angry at God for sparing the Ninevites? How do you think Jonah justified his demand for God’s judgment on others knowing he had received so much grace from God himself? Do we sometimes do this, too? (Galatians 6:3, 1 Corinthians 10:12, Ephesians 2:1-9)
2. What was the point of the leafy plant object lesson God gave Jonah? (Jonah 4:5-11) Share a time when God used circumstances/trials in your life to reveal a bad attitude, wrong thinking, or a sinful habit.
3. How does Jesus feel about lost, sinful people? (Matthew 10:9-13, Luke 15:1-7) How do we feel about them?
4. Discuss these Bible verses about God’s compassion and love. (Jonah 4:2, Psalm 145:8, Exodus 34:6, Joel 2:13, Nehemiah 9:17) Why do you think many people view God as harsh, angry, and anxious to punish us?
5. React to the following statement: If we are willing to proclaim the Good News wherever God sends us (even if we don’t want to go), God will be able to do amazing things a.) in the lives of others. (Acts 19:17-20) b.) in us. (Acts 10:34-36)
6. Do you agree that the best/safest place for us to be is wherever God sends us even if we don’t want to go? (Psalm 37:23-40)
7. Spend some time as a group in prayer. Ask God to give us His compassion and love for lost sinners. Thank Him for our church and ask the Lord to give us the desire and the power to proclaim the Good News.