

PP Jonah: God's Relentless Grace-Part 15

Jonah 4:5-6

2/27-28/2016

Intro...Getting my truck up my driveway in the winter...sometimes I have to put it into four wheel drive...that is what we are doing in this sermon...

Last summer on the RHM bike tour, several of us went to the campground's lake to swim and what began were all kinds of water competitions

One event in our water Olympics was to see who could swim furthest underwater in one breath I have contacts so I cannot open my eyes underwater, and I discovered that I have no ability to swim straight if I cannot see where I'm going...focus determines direction

Similarly, racecar drivers are taught to never look at the wall to their right, bikers to never focus on that rock in the middle of the trail in front, and motorcyclists to never stare at the middle section of the curve in that road

Focus determines direction, and the same principle is true with our own spiritual lives

I appreciate the Message's paraphrase of **Hebrews 12:2**, "*Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both*

PP *began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever.*"

If we focus on ourselves in self-directed living, we will inevitably hit the wall in this race of life, run off the curve in the road of life, hit the rock in the middle of the path of life

Over and over, God rescues us from self-directed living

Several of us are reading Tim Keller's book, Prayer, and in it he quotes Flannery O'Connor

PP who wrote in her prayer journal, "*I do not know You God because I am in the way.*"

It's that selfishness that lies at the root of chronic conflicts in marriages

It is there in our irritability, depression, anxiety, and judgmentalism

Despair, hopelessness, anger...all by-products of a self-focused, a self-directed life

We hit the wall, run off the curve, smashing onto the rocks of life

Selfishness elevates our goals and happiness to the highest importance and makes servants of everyone including God

Selfishness is often why the church is so ineffective in our world for Christ

Simply put, we get so busy with our own lives, or we are afraid of moving toward others and risking rejection, that we are for all intents and purposes, off mission

It is incredibly difficult to keep our eyes on Christ and live out His mission of redemption

By contrast, it is incredibly easy to let our eyes lock onto ourselves, and one of the fast tracks to a self-directed life is *success*

Jonah made it to the proverbial top—he was '*The Prophet*'—all the national fame that came with it

He correctly foretold that Israel would regain their northern territories from Syria and Assyria who had taken it from them through warfare

Jonah's preaching galvanized them to fight, and they got their lands back, and a star was born

But stardom can bring a pride that believes the self knows better than God, in fact believes that God ought to listen to our counsel

There are signs of a self-directed life, like anger, defiance, accusation, bitterness, frustration

PP (Just the italics) Jonah had them all, but he would learn what I am about to say: *The selfish life is always on a collision course with a sovereign, loving God*

He will not adjust His plans to ours, or they would always be less than perfect, less than the best
Instead, He will work in us to help us step off the throne that doesn't fit us, and back to the place of a glad, faithful servant

And we saw last time, that He will *often* do this by exposing our hearts with powerful questions
To expose what we entirely unaware of, but is robbing us of life

God asked Jonah in **verse 4**, ***"Do you do well to be angry?"***

Do you really have a good, right and true reason for your anger?

The power of the question silenced Jonah's mouth, but not his heart

Without responding, he ***'went east of the city'*** and waits to see if God would destroy Nineveh

We saw previously that in the bible, ***'east'*** is often the place where God's blessed presences isn't

PP It is a biblical metaphor for this dry, barren world that's desperate for God's saving love

Think of this meaning of *world* you read, ***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only***

PP ***Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him."***
John 3:16-17

You see, we should view the book of Jonah as one of 66 dazzling facets of a glorious diamond

The diamond is the gospel, the good news that God is redeeming everything to Himself through Jesus Christ

PP (Chart of the gospel) All creation was brought into being by God for His pleasure, His glory
Similar to the pleasure and joy an artist gets when he or she creates a masterpiece, similar to the glory as observers are filled with awe at the artist

But the greatest work of God, the magnum opus, was His creation of humanity, who alone is made to reflect His image, His character and attributes

Adam and Eve, when unsullied by sin, reflected like living mirrors the glorious essence of God bringing Him fame

But sin, that inward impulse of rebellion, moved that first couple to defy God, fracturing that image of God in man, that mirror of glory in creation

The damage that resulted is seen in war, racism, illiteracy, suffering, death, pain

In that instant, the *world* became inhospitable, opposed to God with pain, thorns and thistles

PP It is an energetic system vigorously opposed to God

If you stop to listen and observe, it is evident in popular movies, art and music everywhere

Consider these lyrics from Hozier's song *Take Me To Church*

PP ***"Take me to church, I'll worship like a dog at the shrine of your lies, I'll tell you my sins and you can sharpen your knife, Offer me that deathless death, Good God, let me give you my life."***

His purpose for the song was an indictment against institutions that undermine humanity, most notably the right of people to love whichever gender they want

The song swept up awards, including 2014's most streamed track on Spotify, plugging in to the spirit of our age in the quest to define life the way we want, no matter what the bible says

The beauty and hope of the gospel though, is that our loving God would win His creation back, and He would do it by dying for humanity. to save them from sin

The power of salvation streamed from that terrible, cursed cross upon which the Son of God died

And those who *'believe in Him'*, trusting Him to save them from the power and penalty of their sins, will be forgiven, the charges dropped

Can you remember with me, two wonderful, beautiful, awesome words, both found in the bible?

PP The first is *'justified'*, which most simply means to be declared right with God

This happens in an instant when a person trusts in Christ for salvation

PP *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."* **Romans 3:23-25**

You're declared right with God, because of faith in Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven, your charges dropped, and you are now joined inseparably in Christ

PP (Chart) But your redemption doesn't end with salvation, any more than the gospel story does. We are now part of God's plan to restore all things to Himself, and we are participating in the recreation of all things

The kingdom of God, begun small like a mustard seed, is growing and increasing and God's glorious reign, and His people's glad service is spreading like a great tree

You see, God is on a mission to restore His creation, and it will culminate finally and fully at the sunset of human history when He recreates the heavens and the earth

The very power of this is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

PP *"For in [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through [Christ] to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."* **Colossians 1:19-20**

The lost relationship between people and God, caused by sin, once it is removed, is restored. And it is restored by what Christ did for us

There is no better way to restore God's creation, there is no other way!

Jesus Christ had to die, and in dying, He is saving the world

And Christian, this is critical...you and I participate in this recreation!

We are ambassadors to the lost, we are light bearers to those who live in darkness, we are ministers of reconciliation, helping people find their way to the God Who loves them

But we have a problem, a big one, and it returns us to that selfish bent we all struggle with. If left to ourselves, Christians will return to self-directed living, and you must hear this, it will prevent you from embarking on the mission of God to restore His creation to Himself

You will not tell others about Christ, for you will not care, because you cannot love

PP *"I'm a Christian to help prevent me from being myself,' and that seems to me exactly right. Nothing...seems to me more ill-conceived than the apparent general optimism about human nature which is now so pervasive. My vision of evil is of pure and unbridled egotism, and we live in an age which appears systematically to encourage this."* Maxie Dunnam

We find our prophet in *'unbridled egotism'*, full blown self-centeredness, off mission, waiting for the city of Nineveh to die

He preached the good news, and lived its opposite...completely useless to God

Yes, Jonah was saved, rescued out of the 'world', justified and declared right with God

But fame had brought pride, and pride produced a self-directed life which muted his mouth with a loveless, graceless heart that rendered him ineffective in the mission of God

His self-directed heart was on a collision course with a sovereign, loving God, and God will reclaim His servant

And He'll do the same for Israel, and He will do the same for us, the purpose of this book

Now we are ready to return to Jonah for a brief look to prepare for our final laps in this series

“Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there.

He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.” 4:5

Closing thoughts with a preview...

Amen?

Pray