



Key Passage: Jonah 4:2

Key Thought: The Sovereign Lord has compassion and a desire to rescue that extends to the ends of the earth.¹

The Story of Jonah:

1. Assyria is a bad place (See Amos—fishhooks in noses). Feels good and right when God judges evil empires. Feels out of place when good things happen to bad, and bad things happen to good.
2. So we can understand reluctance to go preach there. What if they respond and God relents?
3. 4 Chapters and 4 parts
 - Chapter 1: Jonah runs away from God. The prophet rebels.
 - Question: why does He run? (not answered yet)
 - Chapter 2: Jonah runs to God. Prayer calling on mercy. Pagan sailors repent!
 - Never technically repents. Thanks God for not abandoning Him.

¹ Note, key passages, key thoughts, and hook questions come from Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*. These notes are compiled from 4 principal sources. In addition to Michael Williams book, notes are also derived from Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences*, Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, and H. H. Drake Williams, *Making Sense of the Bible*.

Promises to stay with God.

Chapter 3: Jonah runs “with God”. (?) Wicked King repents.

40 days, Nineveh shall be overturned.

No mention of Nineveh’s sin, how to respond, or even God. (sabotage?)

City proves more noble than God’s own prophet.

Overturned: can mean overthrown (Gen 19:21), but also transformed, changed (1 Sam 10:6). So words come true but not as intended.²

Chapter 4: Jonah runs ahead of God. (even cows repent—satire). Prayer hating God’s mercy. Hates God for loving His enemies.

Reason he left: Because God is so compassionate. Ex 34:6

Prays that God would kill him on the spot.

God: Is your anger justified?

Jonah ignores. Goes outside the city. God provides plant then worm to take plant. God: Is your anger justified? All an attempt to get through to Jonah. Aren’t humans more valuable than vines?

What Jonah Failed To Recognize:

1. Jonah failed to recognize that Israel was called to be “a light to the Gentiles” (Isa 42:6; 49:6)
2. Jonah fails to recognize that Israel was no more deserving of God’s gracious compassion than Nineveh.
3. Jonah fails to recognize that God wants all nations, and all people, made in His image.
4. Jonah fails to recognize that maybe God sends Jonah to preach a lesson to Jonah!

Question: Are you ok with God loving your enemies? Or even HIS enemies?

Seeing Jesus and the Gospel in Jonah’s Story:

Obvious references: 3 days in the tomb—belly of the great fish in the deep of the ocean. Jonah means “dove.” Not sent to destroy. Sent to find life, to find fruit, and meant to return with an olive branch (Gen 8:11).

1. John the Baptist: “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29)
2. Jesus came as the light of the world, and he came to share God’s favor. Lost sheep. House of Israel. But also Canaanite women (Matt 15); Samaritan women (John 4); military officials and officers in Herod’s army and Rome’s army (Matt 8; Matt 27; John 4).

² Bible Project on Jonah. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/jonah/>

3. Always had Gentiles in mind. See John 10:16. “whosoever” believes in him (John 3:16). Including Assyrian Nineveh.

4. Sometimes we fail to appreciate the enormity of God’s love and the wideness in His mercy. We are all his creation—the lost are wayward creation, and none of us deserve the mercy he gave us (Rom 5:6-8). Compare with Pharisee who says “I thank you that I am not like other men” (Luke 18:9-14). It was the one who recognized his own sinfulness and looked to God for compassion who went home justified before God.

“The ship of the whole human race has sunk, and we are all splashing around helplessly in a sea of sin and death. We have been hauled aboard a lifeboat with unseen hands. Let’s get busy helping to haul aboard as many others as we can.”³

5. As we are filled with the Spirit of God, we, too, begin to imitate this wideness in God’s mercy, this indiscriminate compassion. See Col 3:12-13.

6. Warning: acting like doormen only letting in those who look the part. But then none of us would be in. But God doesn’t check our resumes, and he doesn’t hold over our heads our rap sheet. He only looks at Christ, and those who are in Him. Entrance into Him is not cheap—we can’t afford the cover charge. But the fee is waved for everyone who knows the owner’s Son. Our courage and motivation to share with others will grow the deeper we realize this gospel truth.⁴

Hook Questions:⁵

1. What does your life say about God’s compassion? Do you put limits on the exercise of compassion?

2. What *should* God’s compassion look like in your circumstances? Like Jonah, do you run away from your responsibility to communicate divine compassion?

3. Do you push yourself to extend to those who are different from you (perhaps even hostile to you) the good news of the compassion of God in Jesus Christ? To whom do you have the most difficulty showing compassion? Why might this be so?

³ Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*, p.132.

⁴ Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*, p.132.

⁵ Taken from Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*, p.132.