

BLESSING THOSE YOU 'HATE'

SENTENCE: *"If you are kind only to your friends, how different are you from anyone else?"*

READ: *Jonah 1 – Jonah 4*

Jonah 1:1 – 3

- God told Jonah to go to Nineveh.
- Jonah bought a ticket going in the opposite direction.
- Nineveh was an 800 mile trip by camel – about 2 months.
- Tarshish was as far in the opposite direction known at Jonah's time – he went as far from God's presence as he could go.

Have you ever tried running from something you knew God wanted you to do? Explain Why do you think Jonah wanted to run to Tarshish? Why not just stay in his hometown and refuse to go?

Jonah 1: 4 – 16

- God sent a storm.
- The sailors were scared.
- All prayed to their God.
- Lots were cast to see who was at fault – it was Jonah.
- Jonah told them again he was running from God.
- The sailors asked what they had to do – Jonah said throw him overboard.
- The sailors cried out to the Lord – they tried to row ashore – then asked for forgiveness and threw Jonah over board.
- God trumped their god.
- The sea became calm and the sailors worshipped God.

**Why do you think the sailors worked so hard at trying to save Jonah's life?
Why do you think Jonah is so willing to die?
What about going to Nineveh has made him despair of living?**

Jonah 1:17 – 2:10

- Jonah swallowed by whale.
- He prayed for 3 days.
- The whale vomited him back where he started from.
- The whale is given lots of credit. (The whale seemingly gets an Oscar for a cameo)
- THIS STORY IS NOT ABOUT A WHALE!

**What is the greater miracle - the whale or the repentant city? Why?
There are 5 hearts revealed in this story - God, Jonah, Sailors, Fish, and the King of Nineveh.
*Describe what you see about each of the hearts being revealed.**

Jonah 3:1 – 10

- Jonah goes to Nineveh (It was about a 2 month trek by camel.)
- He delivers God's message – repent, God is going to destroy the city in 40 days
- The people heeded the message.
- All fasted and pray, wore sack cloth, and sat in ashes – even the animals fasted.
- God showed mercy.

What are the biggest differences you see between the sailors' view of God, Jonah's view of God, and the King's view of God?

How did their views of God impact their decisions?

How does our view of God impact our decisions?

Jonah 4:1 – 11

- Jonah gets mad at God for sparing Nineveh.
- He tells God – see I told you – this is why I didn't want to come.
- Jonah knew the goodness of his God – he knew His love, compassion, mercy, and grace.
- He didn't want molesters and murders to experience God's forgiveness and mercy.
- Jonah didn't go to Nineveh because he HATED them.
- Jonah never leaves the hillside.
- He is left in his misery.
- He is angry that God forgave those he hates.
- God gave Jonah a plant for shade – then worm comes and destroys.
- Jonah upset and shows pity for the plant.
- God asks Jonah, “you have pity for a plant for which you haven't cared for, how could I not have pity on such a great city with more than 120,000 people and many livestock?”

Hate is a STRONG word. It's hard for Christians to often admit they hate someone. However, often that hate is demonstrated in your thought life about the person.

Is there someone in your past that you struggle with in a negative way in your thought life?

Who do you hate so much that you don't want to forgive?

How can we want God to forgive us but we don't want to forgive or we don't want God to show them mercy?

Can you bless the people you hate?

- Things began to happen when you let it go.
- We don't say bad or speak evil but we think it, journal it, or post it on social media.
- They still deserve the same grace we have received from God.
- God gives grace – we are ALL guilty of sin.
- Jonah could not stand to see Nineveh blessed. He understood God was a good and forgiven God. Jonah, however, despised that God would bless those he hated so.
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Are you like Jonah?

“God get rid of those I hate, they don't need Your mercy. I can't bless them?”

Can you let go of the hate?

- It's the only way off the "hillside" – the misery you are living in.
- When you let go, you get to leave the hell you are living in.
- You can refuse to bless and be stuck until you die OR you can get up, bless them and go home.
- 150 years later Nineveh is destroyed – Jonah never saw it (The book of Nahum deals with the judgment of Nineveh).
- God doesn't overlook how we are treated.
- Quit trying to be God, let God be God.

Do you trust Jesus enough to let the bitterness go?

1. Verbally say, "I let it go."

- Don't get stuck in a life of bitterness and anger over those who have hurt you and wounded you. Truly, they may deserve everything you are wishing upon them. You may have an entire case of guilt built up against them. So you don't let them go because they are innocent. You let them go, so they no longer control you in anger or bitterness.

2. Verbally BLESS THEM.

- Yes this is tough, but you're a Christian who has received mercy and grace yourself.
- Blessing them doesn't mean you have to go have lunch with them. You can bless someone who has hurt you or wounded you and still keep up boundaries of safety around your life.
- Blessing them means you verbally ask God to show them grace, mercy, and help. Then, you release them in your thought life from all the 'hell' you may have wished upon them.

3. Pray this prayer.

Heavenly Father, this moment, I choose to forgive anyone who has ever wronged me, hurt me, wounded me, or abandoned me - they owe me nothing. I let them go. I forgive them. I take my hands off their neck and choose not to hold their guilt against them any longer. I ask you to bless them now - bless them with Your grace, Your love, Your favor, Your grace, and Your help. I choose to let you be God. I refuse to be the judge of their life. You be the judge. Thank you Father, in Jesus' name I pray this. Amen.