**Jonah – Running Ahead of God**

**(Jonah 3:10, Jonah 4:1-10)**

***Pastor Mike Ngui***

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened. (Jonah 3:10)

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord, “Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”But the Lord replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?” 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 4:1-10)

# Introduction

In this series of Jonah, we have witnessed how Jonah was first repulsed by the mission, how later he was soften by the mission, how he then delivered the mission, and finally, how his heart was towards the mission fulfilled. In this last chapter of Jonah, it was clear that although he has fulfilled the mission, he was bitter that God relented when the people of Nineveh repented. So, Jonah set himself outside the city to watch, still hoping that the Ninevites would forget their ways and God will bring about destruction. Nevertheless, the book of Jonah is not about Jonah’s rebellion, but about the boundless compassion of God.



**BIG IDEA**: God still loves the people

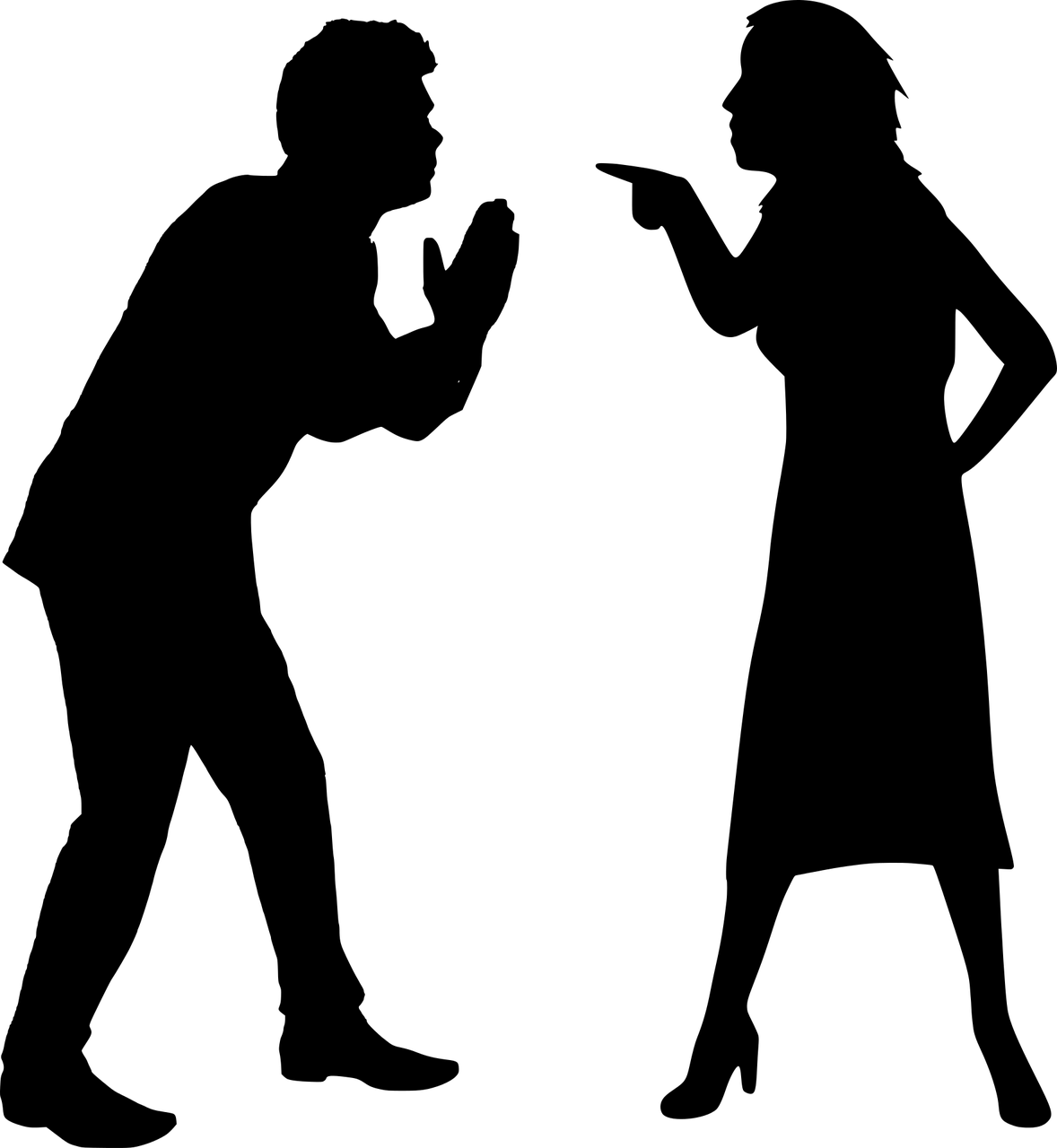
we don’t.

# God Forgives. Jonah Forgets.

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened. (Jonah 3:10)

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. (Jonah 4:1)

When the Ninevites turned from their evil ways and repented, God relented and did not bring about the destruction he had threatened. This caught Jonah by surprised and he was angry at God. Jonah was angry at God as he felt that the Ninevites did not deserve God’s grace and compassion. He was also angry at God because God was consistent with compassion. Jonah ran away from God because he knew the character of God-that God is compassionate, and he was afraid God will save Nineveh. Jonah threw a fit when God relented. He wanted to die rather than to live. But God, instead of answering Jonah’s prayers, chose to allow Jonah to pause and reflect. For one that has been saved, Jonah forgets forgiveness. Jonah forgets he was forgiven for running away from God.

Have we been angry at God too? Perhaps, when someone less deserving is awarded with a promotion? Or when we lose a loved one? Or when our business did not turn out well? Do we have people in our lives that we just do not like to be together in the same room? In another example, there are people who kept a list of their “mortal enemies” since 9 years old! Clearly, we forget that we are to love our enemies as commanded:

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44)

In short, we get angry at God when we do not get our way. But, we forget that getting angry at God does not work. It will not affect God’s plan. We often make the mistake of thinking that God’s forgiveness is limited to those who deserve it only. And God in his compassion, responds by allowing us to reflect on ourselves. God calls us to reflect on our own ways-our actions, reactions, and responses to life’s situations.

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. (James 1:19-20)

“We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience.” - John Dewey

# God Provides. Jonah Protests.

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. (Jonah 4:5)

At this stage, Jonah still wanted to see of the city of Nineveh would fall. So he made a shelter for himself and waited. And then God provided for Jonah three times-the leafy plant, the worm and the scorching east wind.



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. (Jonah 4:6)



But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. (Jonah 4:7)



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. (Jonah 4:8)

Jonah was happy initially that God provided the leafy plant to him. He felt that God has blessed him. But when God provided the worm, which withered the plant, and the scorching wind, which caused Jonah great discomfort, Jonah turned against God and threw a tantrum again. He just wanted to die rather than live. But God, again, instead of answering Jonah’s prayers, chose to allow Jonah to pause and reflect.

Jonah’s anger is unrighteous and unreasonable. It tainted his response to God. We are like Jonah, anger makes us irrational and unreasonable. We fail to understand that what God provides, God can also take away. And God brings discomfort into our lives to discipline us, treating us as his children. God will use uncomfortable circumstances to bring discipline into our lives.

Because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son (Hebrews 12:6)

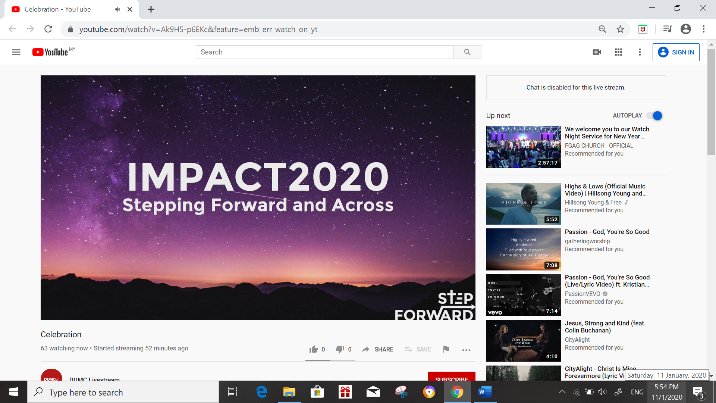
“God whispers in our pleasures, but shouts in our pains”- C.S. Lewis

God provides us with opportunities to know him and grow to be like him. Understand that God’s goal for us is not to make us happy, but to shape us to be more like him.

# God Explains. Jonah Exits.

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 4:10-11)

God explained to Jonah that the Ninevites are spiritually and morally lost. So morally destitute are they that they cannot be assumed to know what to do. As such, with repentance, God relented and spared the great city of Nineveh. Although in Jonah’s eyes, Nineveh was a city that did not deserve God’s compassion, God still love the people (Ninevites) that Jonah does not love.

What is our Nineveh today? Could it be the world that we live in? All around us, spiritual blindness exists and people have lost their moral compass. There is corruption, orphans, abandoned babies, and hungry people. Are we not living in Nineveh today? Life is more than just our own comfortable lives. It is also about the people around us. People who are pursuing God, not to be judged but to be saved. What are we doing about this? Do we see the Nineveh around us? Respond to IMPACT2020!

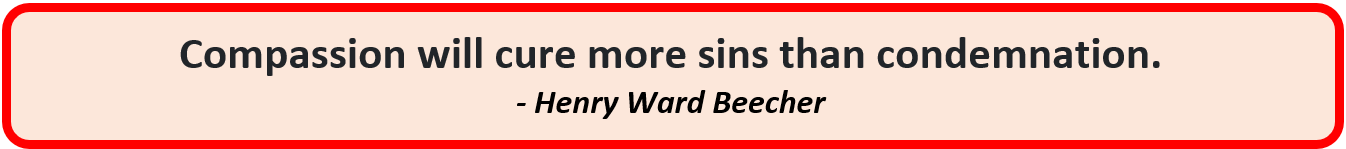
Conclusion



The book of Jonah exposes our self-centredness and selfishness. We see how we can be like Jonah, who grudgingly fulfilled the mission, who obeyed, but did not have the heart of God. God is filled with compassion. He gives grace to the undeserving, including us. So as people captivated by grace, we need to learn to extend the same grace to others. We want to have the Father’s heart of compassion.

The Book of Jonah ends, leaving us with the questions:

* Are we like Jonah?
* Or are we God’s children?



Sermon summary contributed by Adeline Ting.