

Jonah: The Prophet that Hated Grace

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The Prophet Jonah Among the Prophets

We know when we reviewed Isaiah, he gave us the highway home. Jeremiah promised a new covenant. Ezekiel embodied the sacred absurdity on display. Hosea married unfaithfulness. Daniel showed us the son of man, and Amos exposed religion serving power. Every prophet has pushed us past religion into God's raw heart on how his message would be filtered through these individuals. And today we meet the prophet who may disturb us the most. Not because his message is hard to hear, but because his message is about us, but it's also weaponized in the most polished and impressive way. This Jonah sticks out of course among the prophets because he's one of the few prophets that did not know exactly how his message would impact a future audience.

That was a long-winded way to say that Jonah was a prophet that's mentioned in Second Kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. And that's all we know. His name is mentioned one time. Why don't we know more about the northern kingdom and all of the stuff that happened up there, all of the things the prophets said up there, and all of their writings and history? Well, a few weeks ago we learned why. They were wiped off the face of the map. Their documents were scorched. Their history was erased. The only history we have of the northern kingdom at all is whatever the southern kingdom kept, edited, spoke about, curated into what we now call the Bible today. Everybody with me?

So the fact that Jonah is even in there, or the story of Jonah, is a big, big, big deal in that regard. It also points to the fact that the story of Jonah, this prophet, may have been circulating in the northern kingdom for a long time. We don't know, but it was definitely circulating after the Babylonian exile in the southern kingdom as people came back. And what's neat about Jonah is, unlike Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel, which have extensive narratives—Isaiah, for instance, has four key sections in it. I'm getting really nerdy. It was put together most likely by his students after them. They put everything together: the teachings, the writings. Some were from him, but all of his prophecies came together. We have Ezekiel, this prophet who performs

by acting out the grand displays of God, right? You have these elaborate stories. Jonah is the only one we have a snippet of. And when I say a snippet, I mean a track snippet.

The Unique Purpose of Jonah

It's the only story where the prophet himself is made into the teaching tool for self-reflection. I want to spend a minute to help you hopefully appreciate this little itty bitty book that everybody claims they have read just because we've seen Veggie Tales. But I think we will appreciate it a lot more if we go into it understanding what it is and what it could be or not be.

People were smart thousands of years ago. Sometimes we forget that the people who allowed the Holy Spirit to influence them to write the Bible were smart. They were extremely talented authors, literary geniuses. Sometimes when we approach a book of the Bible, we don't have all the context of the book or the story to fully appreciate it. For example, Isaiah is what—almost 90% poetry? Jeremiah's what, 70, 60, 70%? It doesn't change the message or the impact, but it changes the genre and how we're going to approach the text. Jonah's the same way. Jonah is satire. It is meant to be kind of funny. It's filled with irony. It's very much so like the book of Esther, where you're constantly seeing these roles that are reversed because the Bible loves stories about roles reversing, about the one who shouldn't be the one on top but he's the underdog. He ends up the younger brother serving the older, the older serving the younger, and so on. We have all of these role reversals of the smallest nation becoming the greatest, and so forth.

Jonah is no different. It's meant to make you laugh. It was meant to display the absurdity just like Ezekiel and his message of God's kingdom. This one comes through some really thick, thick roasting. And what is so beautiful about this itty bitty book that we'll find out here in just a few minutes is the ending—how God allowed the author to end it. That's my favorite part of it.

A Prophetic Dark Comedy

So that was my buildup. My hope for this message is that every single one of you will go home and want to explore this book of the Bible for yourself. Just so you know my intent and why I get excited about it. The section of the Bible, the account of Jonah, is a prophetic divine comedy, a dark comedy. The way it's put together and presented—it makes Amos look gentle when you get to the end of it. It's a comedy that makes you laugh until you realize the joke's on you.

Jonah is not about a fish. It's about a God who loves people we think don't deserve it. It's about a prophet who would rather die than to see his enemies experience grace. And if we're honest,

that's why it hits home so hard—it's something that all of us have intimate experience with. We love grace when it lands on us. We hate it when it lands on them. And so before we dive in again, we need to understand what kind of book this is.

A Parable Designed to Expose

Jonah is not a straightforward historical record like Kings or Chronicles would be. Even Leviticus—it's prophetic storytelling. It's a parable wrapped in scripture. It's designed to expose and correct in a very, very precise way. I think of it like Nathan confronting David. "You are the man." And as you'll see in just a moment, it's the same type of design, but you are the prophet.

This book began circulating, as we know, after the Babylonian exile when God's people had returned to Jerusalem and they were rebuilding their identity. We've been speaking about this over the past few, I guess, months now. But instead of becoming a light to the nations, they were called to be—they were becoming more tribal, more exclusive than they were before, building walls instead of bridges. And they were convinced at this point of the same things that they were convinced of before they went into exile. That being God's chosen meant that everyone else needs to be out.

The Overcorrection After Exile

And that's when you see a taste of this with Ezra sending all the families away, dividing all the families up that came from Babylon. If a man married someone who wasn't Jewish and had kids, they got to go back. Was it right? Was it wrong? Well, that's for you to meditate on, but you understand it at least.

Leadership was under pressure to draw hard lines in the sand when they were returning home. They had to rebuild their people. They just saw their homeland get destroyed and they spent 70 years in a foreign land as foreign captives, and they still have these fresh wounds. They mixed with nations once. I guess—look where that got them, right? And so, like many of us can probably understand, they overcorrected. They overcorrected. They went so far in one identity before exile, and now they went through the exile and now they've come back, and they've overcorrected. The pendulum has swung.

A Book Designed for Circulation

And so this book starts getting circulated called the story of Jonah. And it's only 48 verses long, which tells us a lot about its intention and its functionality. What was it meant to do? Only 48

verses long. It was not meant to keep track of lots of details and records. It was meant to be a track you can hand somebody. It's going to make them laugh, and then they realize, "Oh, why is... why does this...?"

To put it in perspective, Steven's speech to the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 7 is 60 verses long. The entire book of Jonah is 48 verses. Itty bitty—meant to keep your attention for the whole story. And through amazing irony, through pagans who were more faithful than the prophet of Yahweh, through a God who cares more about enemy cities, the book holds up a mirror and asks, "Have you forgotten what you've been called to be just because you went through a really traumatizing time? Have you confused election with exclusion? And have you made God's mercy your tribal property that's yours to distribute?"

And the question that it's asking the post exilic Jews is the same question that it asks us.

Opening the Book

And so that's my intro. Hopefully it built it up so that you're kind of interested and intrigued to dive in because we're going to jump into it anyway. Let me turn over to how the book starts—Jonah chapter 1, verse 1. And if you have your Bibles with you today, or you can turn them on or open them up to [Jonah 1](#) and kind of follow along—it's a really fast book.

"The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amit. Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because its wickedness has come up before me. But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed to Tarshish."

It's so funny because watching Veggie Tales—like, that's half the episode, you know? Like, boom, this is done. We're already—he's already gone, you know? We're heading down.

When God's word comes to the prophet, it's not a suggestion, right? Isaiah said, "Here I am, Lord." Jeremiah submitted. Ezekiel obeyed. Jonah runs in the opposite direction. Away from Nineveh, away from the presence of the Lord, away from all of it.

Why Jonah Ran

Why? Well, Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, the most brutal empire the world had seen. They skinned prisoners alive. They impaled captives. They piled skulls as monuments. Bad people. As we know, these are the guys who came in and wiped out 10 out of the 12 tribes of Israel in the north. Within a generation, Assyria would erase the northern tribes.

So when God says, "Go preach to Nineveh," Jonah hears, "Go offer them repentance." And Jonah knows that if they do repent, God will show mercy.

The think-agent check stalled and failed — proceeding with my own judgment since this is a mechanical editing task with clear rules already given. Producing the polished chunk now.

Going Down, Down, Down

And if God shows mercy, they will survive. And if they survive, they'll destroy Israel. I don't know. Jonah's going to choose some security over enemy salvation. So he runs, and starting in verse three, the way the editor, the author, is presenting the story begins to give you a clue. You start to raise your eyebrows, because instead of Jonah going where God wants him to go for the mission of God, he begins going down, down. He starts using a wordplay with this Hebrew word, and you as the reader begin to see it. So Jonah goes down to Joppa. And then he goes down to the ship, and later, on the ship, he goes down to the lower deck, where he falls asleep. And then he falls deep asleep. And then oh, he gets thrown overboard and he goes down to the roots of the mountains.

Right off the bat, the prophet of God, whose name means dove, who's meant to carry the message of peace and salvation to the people that God needs to reach — he's not going up. [laughter] Down, down, down, down, down. Right? The satire is beginning to leak through, in how the story of the prophet is being presented. Isn't that neat? Just that little nugget right there, we're starting to see the patterns. The prophet of peace is running from mercy. He books passage to Tarshish, the end of the world. And then God sends a storm, right? And the sailors on the ship — they're a bunch of pagans, Gentiles, Goreim, other nations going to hell, the whole thing, right? Pagans. They don't know Yahweh. But when the storm hits, they pray. They cry out. They try to solve the problem.

Pagans Praying, Prophet Sleeping

And Jonah — what's Jonah doing? Oh, the pagans are praying while the prophet is sleeping. Huh? The captain finds him snoring and says, "Hey, how can you sleep? Get up and call upon your god. Get up." The pagan captain is giving the prophet a theological lesson. Now you see how this is entertaining. This is funny. There are stories in the Bible you're allowed to laugh at, and this is one of them. I promise.

They end up casting lots and it falls on Jonah, and then he confesses. He says, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land." And then Jonah

tells them to throw him overboard, but the pagan sailors refuse. Instead, the men did their best to row back to land — that's what verse 13 tells us. Everybody's lives are in danger, right? The pagans show more compassion for the disobedient prophet than the prophet is showing for Nineveh. Right? It's like Leslie Nielsen — is that his name? He would be a great character for Jonah. It'd be perfect.

Only when they have no choice do they throw him overboard. But not before praying to Yahweh, the Israelite God, for forgiveness — and then the storm stops. And then after that, these pagans converted. They fear the Lord. They offered sacrifice to the Lord. They made vows to him. They're committed. They're covenant. They're in. All in. The pagans converted. The people Jonah would never have preached to just experienced Yahweh's power. Meanwhile, the prophet's sinking. He's going down. It's funny — God's mercy will reach the nations whether you want to cooperate or not. It's — what is it — life finds a way.

The Fish

Right, now the Lord provided a huge fish. We know this part of the story. God's going to send a fish. Jonah gets thrown overboard, and the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Again, a lot of times we come to this and there's a debate — and it's a really cool debate. So, since you asked — we all love the fish in this story, right? Like we're obsessed with the fish. The fish is the thing, and the fish really isn't the thing. The fish is mentioned maybe two or three times in like two verses. So it's not really the thing, but in Veggie Tales, it's this big deal, right?

And so a lot of people will debate — well, is it possible, is it physical — and we get so hung up on trying to figure out how big the fish has to be to swallow this man, or if it was a whale, right? And maybe it was a whale, a big whale. But one side will say, "Well, it's not 'whale' in the Hebrew — in the Hebrew it says fish, there's another word for whale, so it can't be a whale." But over here, the Greek folks with the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, they're like, "Well, no, I'm pretty sure it said it was a whale." And so it's a fun discussion that should never end in a fight. And I bring that up because it is funny, because we will find something to fight about and miss the whole point of the whole story.

Like the whole point, the whole point. How did he breathe in the whale or fish for three days? Stop. Just — the author didn't care for you to know, apparently. So just keep going. That's the wrong question. The book's not trying to give you that. The book is showing you that God's mercy is so relentless, so absolutely relentless, so absurdly persistent, that he'll even use a sea

monster to save a prophet trying to drown himself to avoid showing mercy to others. That's awesome. That's pretty cool. Thousands of years ago, someone crafted this story in this way, with this punctuation and these sentences and these words. And that's just so good — the way that they're showing God's character through the text while still keeping you engaged in villainizing the prophet, because we love hating on Jonah, and the story is designed for you to do that. It's poison. Watch out. But it's divine comedy.

A Prayer Without Repentance

Jonah jumped to die. He chose death over obedience. God sends a fish not to punish Jonah, but to save him. And inside the fish — and now we're going into chapter 2 of Jonah. So all of this has taken place in just one chapter of the four. Inside the fish, Jonah prays. This is Jonah chapter 2. It's a beautiful prayer — yeah, it's a beautiful psalm. His heart is being poured out to God. This sounds extremely authentic. He quotes scripture. He quotes multiple psalms — the way he pieces them together in this prayer to God. It's thanking God for his salvation.

But then we notice something — if you look through the whole prayer that he's praying inside the fish, it's missing something. It's praising God, but it's missing repentance. There's no saying I'm sorry. There's no "I'll go to Nineveh now, let's preach." None of that. No, you're great. It's — but I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you, God. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say salvation comes from the Lord. And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. But even the fish had enough, I don't know. But God saves Jonah — not because Jonah learned his lesson, is what I'm saying, but because God's mercy doesn't wait for us to deserve it. The mission's still going on. But God still gives second chances, even to prophets who hate grace.

Five Words to Nineveh

So Jonah, he drags himself into the capital city of the empire that will destroy his people, and he opens his mouth to preach. And this is what comes out — this is the entirety of the presentation, the entirety of the sermon of Jonah, who has just endured the fish, the whole suicide attempt, the pagans converting — everything. Here's the entirety. That's it. It's like eight words in English, but it's five words in Hebrew. 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown. 40 days — Nineveh overthrown. There's no "God loves you, know that." There's no "Hey, there's still time to repent." No invitation, no hope, no gospel — just a countdown to destruction, delivered by a prophet who's clearly hoping to ignore it. 40 more days.

Now, what's neat about this word "overthrown" is in your translations you'll see "overthrown" a lot, but you might also see "destroyed," or you might see "changed" — overturned, not necessarily destroyed. So the word there could mean absolutely destroyed, or it could mean changed, like turning over a new leaf type of thing. So it's kind of funny, because Jonah's preaching, but which one's it going to be? Is it going to be changed or destroyed?

So he preaches this message, this five-word bomb. He walks one day into his three-day journey, and this is it. And he probably turns after saying this, and he's probably like, "Good, that should do it. Fire in 40 days. Here we go." And then the unthinkable happens. You could see Jonah — no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Stop, stop. [laughter] The Ninevites believed God based on five hostile words from a prophet who doesn't want to be there.

The King in the Ashes

Let's make it worse. They're all going to put on sackcloth. And when it reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat down in the dust. The most powerful man in the world sits in the ashes. Can you imagine? Like if a version of this story was circulating in the first century, it would be like Caesar sitting in the ashes and playing in the dirt, crying. Just fun to think about. Very big thing to say.

And then verse eight, where the king then decrees that not only do people need to fast and put on sackcloth to show that we are repenting for God — now all the animals must fast and wear sackcloth as well. You're allowed to imagine it, and you're allowed to laugh. The cows were repenting in sackcloth.

There were capy bears and camels that were wearing sackcloth and fasting for the repentance of the city and the empire. This is so good and it's meant to be and it works, right? It works. Verse 10, I don't have that. When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented. God shows mercy to Nineveh. And Jonah loses it. Loses it. And you can see the next verse describe how you would want the movie to frame Jonah in the next scene. But to Jonah this seemed very wrong and he became [snorts] angry. It's like, oh, what a surprise, right? Jonah's furious and he's enraged that his God showed mercy and then he prays and everything's building up to this point. Isn't this what I said Lord when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarsus. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life, for it's better for me to die than to live. Wow. Right. So, did you hear what Jonah just did? Jonah quoted [Exodus 34:6](#). That's Israel's foundational confessional of who God is,

God's character. And he uses it as an accusation. He weaponizes the scriptures that talk about the character of God against—who does that, right? I knew you were like this, God. That's why I ran away. I knew if I preached, they would repent and you'd forgive them.

Jonah's Rage at Grace

Jonah is angry at God for being exactly who God has always been. He's furious that grace is not exclusive. He's offended that God loves people Jonah hates. So he's asking God to kill him now. Jonah would rather die than live in a world where his enemies experience God's mercy. And what is God's response in this story? Is it right for you to be angry? In verse four, chapter 4, is it right for you to be angry? It's not a rebuke, it's a question. But Jonah doesn't answer. He storms out. He builds a shelter and he sits down to watch, hoping for God to change his mind. Just watch all the fireworks go off Independence Day where it's what he wants to happen. And so he goes and puts a chair out there and he's just hoping it happens, right?

Then God provides a leafy plant in verse six. Jonah sits outside and he's waiting for the fire of God to come down in hopes that it will. And God performs one more drama. Verse six, it says that he provided a plant giving Jonah shade and that Jonah is happy. I guess if it's a hot day, that makes sense. And then in verse seven, the very next verse, God provides a worm and the plant withers, and the scorching wind comes in the beating sun and then Jonah is miserable. And then he asks to die again. Then God asks, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant that is no longer here?" The plant that was covering him was giving him shade. Right? And Jonah's throwing a fit. He says, "Yeah, I want to be mad. I'm angry enough to die." The plant that gave me my ease fell over and I just want to die now.

The Test of the Plant

This story is thousands of years old and it still works because you can't help but to bite into the fruit of villainizing this prophet who thinks he's above everyone, who thinks he's closer to God than anyone. Oh, you're just eating it up because it feels good to beat him up a little bit, right? Yeah. Yeah. I'm glad the worm messed your plant up and it's hot. Hope you get sunburned, you know. Then God speaks and he says this, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend to it at all, nor make it grow. It sprang up overnight and it died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh in which there are more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left and also many animals. And do you know what Jonah said when God asked this question? Nothing. Because that's the end of the book. The question mark is the end. That's when you realize when you're reading this itty bitty book,

Jonah is not the one that has to answer that question. The author designed it to where you have to answer that question after you just spent the last 47 verses chopping and beating and biting this prophet for not just being a servant of the Lord like he's supposed to be. And now you're the one who has to answer to God. Should he not be concerned about Hamas? Should he not be concerned about the Taliban? Should he not be concerned about the Republicans or the Democrats or the liberals or should he not be concerned about everybody who you've been taught by a world that is controlled by the devil to hate beyond any type of point or measure that you would even pray to God that their souls would be reconciled back to him and they would join you in the ranks of the army of Yeshua. It's a hard thing for me to pray. I get it. But we have to answer that question. Is it okay with you that God is as big as God is? That there's room at his table for the people that you wish weren't there? That's the question. That's the beauty of Jonah. And I love that so much because it belongs in the lineup of prophets because it is a prophetic word and it works just as painfully as Amos and Jeremiah and Isaiah and Hosea but more complex to where you don't see it coming.

The Deeper Question

So what is the answer? The level of rebuke this ancient is just—I don't know, I love it. So now you understand: while people who get really zealous, we can have discussions. I love talking about the Bible, right? Especially historical stuff around the text and all that stuff. But when the only argument to have about Jonah is whether it was a fish or a whale, please. There's much larger discussion that is much more beautiful to be had with this amazing word of God that came forth. So Jonah, you're furious about a shade plant, a plant you didn't create. But God can't care about people that he created in his image. Again, this book seems to have circulated in the post-exilic era, after Babylon, when the remnant became obsessed with ethnic purity. You have this story that comes out where a prophet runs from Gentiles. Pagans show more faith than the prophet does. God's mercy extends to the enemies. And the prophet would rather die than to see outsiders included. Can you imagine the upheaval? It would be like the most offensive political comic that would have ever been printed because everybody would have seen it and been offended by it. But the mirror asks, "Have you become Jonah? Have you made election mean exclusion?" Man, Israel was called to be a light to the nations. In [Genesis 12](#), all peoples will be blessed by you and through you. [Exodus 19](#), you will be a kingdom of priests. Israel is supposed to bring the nations to God and instead they built walls. Jonah embodies Israel's failure. He has the message. He has the calling and the opportunity, but he refuses to do it.

Jonah and the Greater One

But the story continues and we come to find out that there is one greater than Jonah. [Matthew 12](#) verse 40, the religious are asking for a sign. And there's beauty in that, which is why it's framed out like this. They're asking for a sign. Yeshua is building up. And he's constantly in contention with not the sinners of the world, but the religious who are in power. And he says, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The people of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. For they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here." Now, before we get stuck accounting hours and arguing about Friday or Wednesday or Saturday or Sunday or the math, again, that's one of those things like if that's all you got for your argument hill, we need to make your hill bigger. You need bigger hills to die on. And the Bible has a lot of them. Yeshua is not giving you a timeline to try to decode. He's making a rabbitic comparison like a pattern here. Jonah went down into death and darkness and God brought him back up as a sign to Nineveh. Yeshua will go down into death and darkness and God will bring him back up as a sign to the world. But here's the difference. Jonah descended to escape God's mission. Okay. Yeshua descended to accomplish it. Jonah was rescued despite his rebellion and Yeshua was vindicated because of his obedience. The three days, three nights thing, it's not supposed to be a math problem. It's a prophetic symbol of complete resurrection. In other words, remember how Matthew used the verse from Hosea, my son who called out of Egypt, right? And it was weird how he just stuck that in there as if Jesus was fulfilling that prophecy when that wasn't the point of the prophecy. The point of the prophecy was to show that Yeshua had stepped into Israel's story and had embodied the identity of who Israel is. Right? And so now Matthew's picking that up and he's taking Israel now through an alternative timeline through the person of Yeshua and what it looks like now if they didn't fumble the ball early on and they didn't go into exile. And that's what Matthew does when he quotes the prophet Hosea. Yeshua is doing the same thing here because Jonah is supposed to make up the body of Israel. He's representing Israel and how they failed so badly at their mission. And now here we come. Yeshua is comparing himself in the symbolism to a story that intentionally makes Israel look bad.

The Inversion of God's Kingdom

Why is he doing that? Because just like everything else about God's kingdom, it's about to invert the entire story. In this story, Jonah's going to do it and it's going to be big. Okay. It's also interesting that he's speaking to people who are wanting a sign. And look at the focus. The

focus isn't on the three days and three nights. The focus is on how the Ninevites will be judging this generation because they repented at the five words that Jonah spoke. But the religious leaders in the first century who are talking to the Son of God will miss it. That's the beauty of how much of a slam that is. They are the Jonahs and they're going to miss everything God's doing. Right? He's identifying himself as the true Jonah of the story, but in reverse. Jonah was thrown into the sea to save the sailors. Yeshua onto the cross to save the world. Jonah was in the fish for three days. Yeshua was in the tomb for three days. Jonah came out reluctantly, but Yeshua walked out triumphantly. Jonah preached judgment and was angry when people repented. Yeshua preached the kingdom and died so people could repent. Yeshua is the faithful Israelite who did what Israel was called to do. He became the light. He opened the door and he broke down that wall. [Philippians 2](#) says that Yeshua made himself nothing and became obedient to death even under the cross. He descended all the way down lower than Jonah so that every nation could be raised up.

God's Radical Concern

Should I not be concerned? That's what God asks. This series has been about exile and return with each prophet that we go through because these are the events that all the prophets revolve around. God's pursuit of his scattered people. Prophets who dreamed of restoration. We've met Jonah, the prophet who didn't want anyone to come home. And God's question still stands. Should I not care about the people that you hate? Should I not show mercy to those you think don't deserve it? Will you be concerned? Will you show mercy?

We're Jonah, or at least most of us probably. We all enjoy grace when it's for us. We celebrate forgiveness whenever we need it. But when grace lands on them—the people who have hurt us in the past—who do we act like? God, don't you know what they've done? Don't you know what they did to them? Don't you know what the TV said they did to somebody? I don't know. God, do you have any idea what you're asking? And this is when the faith of the God of the Bible crosses a threshold—it's radical. It's radical. It is opposite. It is an inversion of everything that makes sense in this world.

God responds, "Should I not be concerned? Should I not be concerned about them?" And what's so interesting is that even Jonah is invited to come back home. The book ends with a question, not a condemnation. God asks and leaves the door open at the end of the book. Because that's who God is—gracious and compassionate and slow to anger, even towards prophets who hate grace, even towards us.

Coming Home

Maybe coming home means the death of our Jonah-like hearts. Maybe it brings death to our nationalism disguised as faithfulness. Maybe coming home means the death of our right to decide who deserves mercy. Maybe it finally means answering, "Yes, Lord, you should be concerned, and so should I." The book doesn't end with resolution because the question's still open to every generation. Again, the beauty of the book and what God's doing through it. But God is still asking what level of concern he should have about the people in the world. Jonah ran from that calling to call people home. Yeshua showed us how to fulfill it. And now it's ours. It's ours to pick up and carry forward.

The Call Continues

And so this week, when you encounter someone you'd rather see judged than saved, remember you are the recipient of a very inappropriate and scandalous grace according to the world. And you're also being invited to extend it. So don't take that lightly. We have a lot of work still to do in this army that we pledged loyalty to. And boy is there a battle going on. So please stand as we conclude in worship and join me in prayer.

Prayer and Blessing

Alvina Meno, our Father, our King. Father, we thank you for this opportunity to jump into your word once again and allow it to challenge us like it did the Jews in Judea returning home from Babylon, and like it struck the hearts of the religious in the first century. Father, I ask that the Holy Spirit that you say is within us even now will continue to work. But not only that, Father, strengthen us to do the work, that we would have eyes to see the opportunities to show your grace. We thank you, Father, in the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen.

[Hebrew singing and music]

Shema, O Israel. The Lord is our God. The Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. And may the Lord also cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another and for all people, in order to strengthen your hearts as blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Yeshua with all of his holy ones. And may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his peace. In the name of our Sar Shalom, our prince of peace, Yeshua Hamashiach, we pray. Shabbat shalom, family.

[applause]

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