

Theme: The same improper beliefs and attitudes that afflicted Jonah also prevent Christians from joining God on mission to reach the world.

## I. Intro - Gran Torino

- A. Clint Eastwood as racist who hates Asian neighbors
- B. Tough to listen to his racist comments
- C. But he is alienated from his kids & their lives
- D. Eventually willing to die for the Vietnamese neighbors
- E. Reminds me of the reluctant prophet Jonah - but we are never even told if Jonah changes
- F. What is up with Jonah? What can we learn from it?

## II. Jonah the Reluctant Prophet

### A. A brief overview of Jonah's story

1. Jonah commanded to go to Nineveh & preach

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai:  
<sup>2</sup> "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." Jonah 1:1-2

- a. Jonah the prophet knew God's voice and call
- b. We expect to read that Jonah went and proclaimed

2. Jonah disobeyed God's call and fled

But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. Jonah 1:3

3. Jonah's flight from Yahweh ends in disaster (1:4-2)
4. Jonah goes and proclaims God's word (3)

5. Nineveh repents and God forgives, Jonah is angry  
When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.  
<sup>1</sup> But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee 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. <sup>3</sup> Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."  
<sup>4</sup> But the Lord replied, "Have you any right to be angry?" Jonah 3:10-4:4

6. God gives a plant to shade Jonah - and a worm to kill it - and Jonah is angry again
7. The book ends with the tension regarding Jonah's attitude and actions

### B. The big questions posed by Jonah

1. How could a prophet of Yahweh disobey like this?
2. What prompted Jonah's disobedience?
3. Do the same problems afflict me so that I do not obey Yahweh's call for me?

## III. The Jonah Cycle - His Sins and Ours

- ### A. Jonah's volitional problem - disobedience to God's call
- The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai:  
<sup>2</sup> "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." <sup>3</sup> But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. Jonah 1:1-3

1. There is no question - Jonah knew God's call
2. He simply disobeyed and fled from God's call
3. We know God's call to go to the lost & the nations - but many simply disobey
4. But the disobedience to embrace the call to mission is the fruit of deeper sins that must be exposed, confessed, and repented of by God's people.

B. Jonah's theological problem - selective acceptance of Yahweh's word and will

He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher. 2 Kings 14:25

1. Jonah prophesied the success of Jereboam II
2. He willingly received God's word and will that promised success for his own people
3. Jonah boldly spoke God's word as long as it lined up with his own desires and predispositions
4. But Jonah rejected God's word and will when it did not line up with his own desires
5. Today many will boldly proclaim God's word and will where it lines up with their own desires and dispositions, but refuse to do so when it crosses their own desires and dispositions.
6. We will not join God on mission when we selectively choose which parts of His word and will to accept.

C. Jonah's compassion problem - don't forgive Nineveh

He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee 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. Jonah 4:2

1. Jonah disobeyed because he did not want Nineveh forgiven!
2. Nineveh was wicked & he wanted them to pay!
3. Jonah acted as if he was holier than God! God might forgive their sin but Jonah would not!
4. James says mercy triumphs over judgement, but Jonah wanted judgement to triumph over mercy for his enemies!
5. Jesus cried out "Father forgive them" but Jonah cried out "Don't you dare forgive them! Judge them!"
6. This is the root of his theological and his volitional problems. He did not obey God because he rejected God's word of forgiveness to Nineveh.
7. We will not join God on mission if we prefer judgement over mercy and thus do not want to see wicked and idolatrous people forgiven.

D. Jonah's discrimination problem - they are not part of us

1. Jonah hated the sins of Nineveh and did not want them forgiven - but he gladly accepted forgiveness for his own sins (see Jonah 2)
2. Jonah hated the sins of Nineveh, but apparently never spoke against the sins of his own people - though he lived in a time of great wickedness

He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. <sup>25</sup> He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher. 2 Kings 14:24–25

- a. Jeroboam II did evil in Yahweh's eyes - but Jonah did not mind prophesying success for him!
- b. Jeroboam II led Israel in idolatry - but Jonah did not mind prophesying success for Israel!

3. Jonah could boldly decry the sins of Assyria, but he overlooked the sins of his own people and simply longed for them to prosper.
4. It is always easier to see the sins of others and to denounce them, than it is to see our own sins.
5. It is always easier to demand deep repentance from others while lightly excusing our own sins.
6. We will not join God on mission if we see the sins of others as more heinous than our own, demanding repentance from them while excusing ourselves.

E. Jonah's ethnocentric problem - we are better than them

1. Defining ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view our culture as superior to all others and the standard by which all others are judged.

2. Map of world from Australia's perspective
3. Jonah loved his own people more than the Ninevites because he thought Israelites were better

4. Jonah knew that Assyria would soon rise to power and conquer Israel - and he did not want this
5. Jonah loved and was more committed to his own people than he was to the cause of God! But our first allegiance must be to God, His glory, and His cause - not our own nation or culture.
6. Like Jonah we are all tempted to prefer our own people & culture over other people and their culture, and to identify God with our own culture to the exclusion of them and their culture.
7. We do not want God to bless others if we think they might undermine our own culture and way of life.
8. We may even want others to receive the Gospel - as long as they will become like us or stay under our control.
9. Today we experience this as American exceptionalism - we are unique in history and the best. But this distorts our actual history.
  - a. We have undoubtedly been a force for good, and a major force for the spread of the Gospel.
  - b. But we also stole land and exterminated the people who already lived here, built our nation on the backs and blood of slaves.
  - c. Our nation is like every other nation throughout history - a mix of good and evil and in need of the yeast of the kingdom to permeate it.
10. Church history is littered with ethnocentric people who refused to reach out to other people and cultures with the Gospel - until God brought them to their doorstep
  - a. Goths, Angles & Saxons, Vikings - and Muslims
  - b. Often even when the flood of immigrants and conquerors came, Christians were more concerned to maintain their own culture and peace than reach out to those God had brought to them.

- c. Such behavior is the final result of the Jonah cycle - and it is direct disobedience to the call of God.

11. We will not join God on mission if we love our own nation and culture more than we love God and His cause in the earth.

#### IV. The Mission - Applying the Word

##### A. The basis of mission - the Gospel

1. Jonah was not sent on mission to get a relationship with God - he was sent on mission because he already had a relationship with God
2. Jonah had received God's covenant promises and forgiveness before he was sent to Nineveh
3. When Jonah disobeyed, God forgave him and re-commission him (see Jonah 3:1)
4. The mission does not bring us into relationship with God; our relationship with God propels us into mission
5. The Father loved us before creation, made us in His image, and chose us to be His people in Christ
6. Christ have lived in obedience for us, died to bear our sin, conquered death in our behalf, and rules all things for our good
7. The Spirit called us from the grave of sin, regenerated us, applied Christ's work to us, indwells us, and will one day raise us from the dead!
8. This is the Gospel - hear and believe the Good News!

##### B. The overflow of Gospel gratitude - mission

1. As those who have received all of this - will we join God on mission?
  - a. We have been forgiven so much; will we love much?
  - b. We were the other - and God loved us - will we love those who are "other"?
  - c. But to do this, we must forsake these beliefs and attitude outlined above
  - d. If we do not let the Spirit reveal and change these things in us, our participation in the mission of God will always only be partial
  - e. To miss the mission of God is to forsake our own joy!
2. You, Jonah (Thomas Carlisle)  
And Jonah stalked  
To his shaded seat  
And waited for God  
To come around  
To his way of thinking.  
And God is still waiting for a host of Jonah's  
In their comfortable houses  
To come around  
To His way of loving.
3. A prayer of repentance, confession & consecration

#### The Barriers To Mission: The Jonah Cycle

Jonah 3:10-4:4  
October 9, 2016  
Prayer  
Genesis 12:1-3

Teaching keywords: Evangelism & missions; great commission; obedience

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Genesis 12:2–3

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. <sup>4:1</sup> But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the Lord, “O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee 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. <sup>3</sup> Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>4</sup> But the Lord replied, “Have you any right to be angry?” Jonah 3:10–4:4