

**Series: Compassion**  
**Message: A Compelling Compassion**  
**Scripture: Jonah 3:10-4:4**

→ Last week we jumped into our first series as Compassion Church of the Nazarene with a series entitled, “Compassion.” Last week our focus was on the truth that The One true God longs to be found and longs to be known. Our primary text was Moses on Mt. Sinai as the One true God introduces himself as the LORD and that he reveals that at the Core of his character is Compassion.

- ◆ So the core characteristic of God is compassion.
- ◆ I had a friend share with me after last week’s message that he had a seminary professor proclaim he doesn’t refer to the qualities of God as characteristics but rather perfections. I love that!
- ◆ **The core perfection of God is compassion.**
  - God just isn’t compassion. Our God is “perfected compassion.”

→ So, The core perfection of God is compassion. Last week.

→ This week. **The core perfection of God is compassion. This is not so in the original nature of humanity.**

→ Have you ever said or heard someone say, “Such and such isn’t a believer but he/she is a really good person?”

- ◆ I know that I have said it.
- ◆ Reality: It just isn’t so.

→ **Jeremiah 17:5 This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord. 6 That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. 7 “But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose**

**confidence is in him. 8 They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?**

- “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draw strength from mere flesh”
  - ◆ Why? “The heart is deceitful above all things.”
- “BUT blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.”
- Apart from a man placing His total trust and confidence in God there is no cure for the condition of the human heart.
- So in December as we began to promote the desire to become, Compassion Church of the Nazarene we denoted three important reasons for the change.
  - ◆ 1. **Compassion better reflects our History:** The new name better reflects the history of our denomination. In the early 1900’s our very first church was planted in Los Angeles. As other churches escaped the problems of the urban centers our church moved in to meet the needs of the marginalized and urban poor.
  - ◆ 2. **Compassion better reflects our Mission:** The new name better reflects what we are currently up to in our city, in central Virginia and around the world. From our Compassionate Ministry Center that houses our food pantry and our disaster relief team, to our Christmas food Outreach, to our Celebrate Recovery Ministry to our village that we adopted in Guatemala. We are here to extend the compassion of God to the world.
  - ◆ 3. **Compassion better reflects our Vision.** Listen closely. We didn’t change our name to Compassion because we got it all figured out and we have arrived.

We changed our name to Compassion as a challenge to grow and be more like Jesus.

◆ **We haven't arrived in compassion....we have only just begun.**

- I received this text from one of you this week.

**Carrying the name Compassion already has challenging implications as the Lord says this morning...yes that bill in your wallet will be the tip, the one with larger numbers!**

**Compassion=generosity.**

**#cheerfullysurrendered**

- "Challenging implications" Why? At the core of the human heart is selfishness and not compassion.
- The end of the text "cheerfully surrendered"

→ Today I want us to turn to the back half of the short book of Jonah. We will begin in Jonah 3 and move into chapter 4.

→ **Jonah 3:10 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.** Now into chapter 4 **But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2 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. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." 4 But the Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"**

- ◆ So what's going on? Let me give you a quick breakdown (real quick).
- ◆ In Jonah 1:

- **The Lord calls Jonah (Jonah 1:1-2).** The Lord comes to Jonah and calls him to go to Nineveh to “preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before God.”
  - One verse later....
- **Jonah runs from the Lord (Jonah 1:3).**
  - Jonah not only says “no” to God’s request but he runs in the opposite direction of Nineveh and jumps a boat out of Joppa that is sailing to Tarshish.
  - One verse later...
- **Jonah finds himself in a storm (Jonah 1:4).**
  - Those on the boat discover that Jonah is the source of the problem. They do their best to show Jonah “compassion” even when they discover that his disobedience is the reason for the storm.
  - In the end they honor Jonah’s request to be thrown overboard.
- **Jonah is swallowed by a huge fish (Jonah 1:17-2:10).**
  - At the end of chapter 1 he is swallowed at the end of chapter 2 he is vomited out.
  - You may think. Not possible. A man can’t be swallowed by a fish and live to tell about it. Well then you aren’t too caught up on current events. In June of last year Michael Packard, a lobster fisherman in Cape Cod was swallowed whole by a humpback whale. The 56 year old man lived to tell the tale after the mammal spat him back out.
- **Jonah is called a second time (Jonah 3:1).**

- **Jonah 3:1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”**
- The GOD of second chances. It was a second chance for Jonah to get it right and it was also a second chance for the people of Nineveh to come to repentance. Why? He is the God who has perfected compassion. It is the core of who he is.
- **Jonah says, “Yes.” (Jonah 3:3).**
  - The second chance Jonah obeys.
  - He goes to Nineveh and preaches the impending judgement of God because of their sinfulness. How do they respond? They repented. They listened to Jonah. They turned from their wickedness.
  - What did Jonah think about it?
- ◆ **4 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2 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. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” 4 But the Lord replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”**
- ◆ So at the beginning of the text we are alerted that after Jonah has been faithful to call the people to repent that it angers Jonah.
- ◆ The LORD asks a question of Jonah that isn’t for the benefit of God but for the benefit of Jonah. “Is it right for you to be angry?”

→ Why is Jonah angry?

→ **In Jonah's mind the Ninevites were the enemy.**

- ◆ Why?
- ◆ Pagan worship was a priority for these people. Even though the pagan god Dagon isn't mentioned in Jonah we know that he was one of the primary false gods that was worshipped by the Assyrians that inhabited Niveveh.
- ◆ The false god Dagon was a god that was part man and part fish.
  - We should all find this very interesting. Jonah, a man who was swallowed by a fish now comes to call the people who are worshipping an idol that is part man and fish.
  - This pagan worship was elaborate and in many ways dominated every facet of the Assyrians life.
- ◆ These Nivenites are the enemy.....
- ◆ The Nivevites were a cruel and murderous people. Jonah knew that these people were the sworn enemies of God's people and savagely cruel. They at times skinned their enemies alive and hung their skins on their city walls as warnings to their enemies.
  - In Jonah's mind these people didn't deserve to be warned.
  - The judgement that God threatened is exactly what Jonah was wanting to see.

→ A second reason for why Jonah is angry.

→ **Jonah was more concerned about his own reputation than he was the repentance of the Ninevites.**

- ◆ Here me out. Think about this.
- ◆ The prophets of God often brought bad news to the people regarding God's justice against those who are wicked.

- ◆ So if a prophet comes and announces this and the people don't listen and don't repent, disaster comes and the prophet can say, "See I told you so."
- ◆ Illustration: If a meteorologist calls for 3 feet of snow I have a suspicion that they are hoping for 3 feet of snow. Why? The reputation of the meteorologist depends on it. Sure 3 feet of snow would be hard on many but a meteorologist makes his living on weather prophecies.
- ◆ Jonah is mad because the people of Nineveh repented and Jonah knew all along that upon their repentance what the response of God would be.

→ Return to the text...

→ **4 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2 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. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." 4 But the Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"**

→ Let's be honest with ourselves. The God that we serve has revealed himself as the God who has perfected compassion. Yet, the human heart is very different.

→ When you boil it down Jonah is angry because....

- ◆ **He cares more about his own reputation than he does about the well-being of his enemies.**
- ◆ The Jonah story doesn't really impact us until we come to realize that Jonah's anger and posture runs rampant in the human heart and we aren't void of it.
  - For instance, I often tune in and watch my favorite sports teams play. I pull for them to win. However, if my favorite team isn't playing and our rival is

playing I love to sit down and watch them with hopes that they will lose.

- This is absolutely fine because we are talking about competition and we are talking about a game.
  - However, do we have that same demeanor when it comes to eternity?
  - For instance, as a pastor do I get as excited about people getting saved in other churches as I do about people getting saved in this church? I should.
  - Illustration: Headed to the beach for vacation and I received a phone call celebrating this unbelievable generous gift that they had received. I celebrated with him and then got off the phone. Then this thought hit me. We certainly could use something like that at our local church. Immediately, I took that thought captive and made it obedient to Christ. As a response, in the cab of my truck I gave God a lengthy clap offering for my friend and his congregation. The next day I got a call from Cavan while I was on vacation and his first words, “Are you sitting down?” Yes, I said. He said I just opened a letter that I thought was a bill.....instead it was a letter and a gift for \$37,000. I came unglued when he told me. As I celebrated with Cavan I felt as if the Spirit of God said, “I appreciated the clap offering you gave me yesterday.” :-)
- Let me bring the story of Jonah to present day reality. Today Nineveh is now present day Mosul, Iraq. Mosul, Iraq rings a bell for many of you. You have heard about Mosul in the news.

- At the beginning of the 21st century Iraq was home to one of the most robust populations of Christians in the neighborhood of 1.4 million Christians. Today the number hovers somewhere around 200,000. An 80% drop off.
- Why? In August of 2014 ISIS commanded that Christians leave or be killed. The Christians in the area had already faced significant persecution and this move of ISIS simply added fuel to the fire.
- ISIS terrorists waged a bloody blitz through Iraq's Nineveh province, including its capital of Mosul, where Christian homes were stamped with the red Arabic letter "n" for "Nazarene," and throughout the Christian towns of the Nineveh Plains. Their assault on the Plains included crucifying, beheading, raping, kidnapping, torturing, and enslaving people. ISIS drove out every member of the region's 2,000-year-old Christian community.
- **Post a red arabic symbol that is denoting N.**
  - ◆ So ISIS would move throughout Mosul and the Nineveh province posting this red "N" on the doors and businesses of Christians.
  - ◆ The N stood for the Nazarene....as in Jesus the Nazarene.
  - ◆ ISIS didn't realize it at the time but their willingness to identify Christians for persecution and elimination created this movement around the world where people joined the cry of those facing these atrocities.
- Let us all consider today how that makes us feel? How does that make you feel about ISIS? What's the emotions that center upon them?
  - ◆ What if the word came to you today to go to Mosul, Iraq and to be a missionary to ISIS?
  - ◆ You see Jonah lived about 800 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. We live 2000+ years after His birth, death and resurrection.

- ◆ It was Nineveh then. It is Mosul, Iraq now. The same truth that was revealed to Jonah is the same truth that has been revealed to us.
  - ◆ The truth first came from the mouth of God himself in Exodus 34 (last week's message) and now is heard from the lips of Jonah when he proclaimed,
  - ◆ **I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.**
- Application. For Jonah he had determined that the enemy was the Ninevites. Today I think in solidarity we could easily say that ISIS is our enemy for what they want to do and have done to Christians.
- Let me ask you? Who's your enemy? Don't sugar coat it. I'm not looking for the Sunday School answer. I'm seriously asking you to consider your true thoughts and feelings. Who's the enemy in your life? Who has wronged you? Who has hurt you? Who do you believe is against you? Who do you currently hold a grudge against thinking that grudge actually helps you?
- Can I tell you that they aren't the true enemy.
- The Word of God is clear. We read in **Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**
- Wishing ill on others. Holding a grudge against others. Thinking that others are the enemy isn't hurting them nearly as much as it is hurting you. As a matter of fact in some instances it isn't hurting them at all.
- ◆ Do you have to allow them to continue to hurt you. No, that isn't required. IN most all instances for the sake of

your own health you should distance yourself and seek healing from the hurt that you have experienced.

- I stumbled on this testimony that I found very fitting for today's message. Listen closely:
- *The story of Jonah is personal to me because I have a father that I have abhorred most of my 54 years of life. Now my greatest struggle is to show him respect and assist in his frailty of life at 90. All my siblings have distanced themselves from him... he is vicious and he prides himself on this. As my youth has passed I have grown apathetic to him ever being saved, and worse it has grown into a repulsive attitude towards him. Yet God has called me to minister to him. God has extended his life so that I can bring the message of God to him. I understand why Jonah ran... I understand now better than ever. Jonah felt Nineveh deserved judgement, they were proud, vicious and a ruthless people. However, God said they were morally and spiritually blinded...who do not know the difference between their right and left hand. Since God is gracious and compassionate and slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness... should God destroy them or show compassion on them? Our job is to remove ourselves from judgement and just deliver the message of God's compassion hoping that they will be transformed by God's love.*
- Conclusion: I recently had some parents visit us here at Compassion with their college age daughter. They sought me out to thank me. They said, "Pastor, we want to thank you for being so proactive in loving our daughter well. She has flourished and grown as a result of this church's intentional compassion." My response, "It is easy to show compassion to your daughter. She is full of compassion herself."
- Here's my desire: That each of us will allow the core perfection of our God which is compassion to flow in us so

that we may have compelling compassion both to those who love us and those who persecute us.

- So how does Jonah end? Well it doesn't end with what I am hoping we will be able to accomplish. It ends with the words of God.
- Jonah's last words are in Jonah 4:9 ..."**I'm so angry I wish I were dead.**
- **Jonah 4:11 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....**
- As I sat and meditated on this text I felt like the Spirit asked, "Stephen, does this text remind you of another text in the New Testament."
- **Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.**
- How do we do it? Spirit, you are welcome here. May your compassion flow through you.
- What if we became a people who are compelled by compassion even toward our enemies? What if we allowed the Spirit of God to live in us in such a way that our love became like that of Jesus? What if we genuinely sought to forgive and show compassion toward those who have hurt us the most? To realize that they spiritually don't know their left hand from their right hand?

#### NOTES

- The incident of humpback whale swallowing and then spitting out the diver took place in Cape Cod in Massachusetts, USA. A lobster diver was swallowed whole by a humpback whale. Thankfully, the 56-year-old man named **Michael Packard** lives to tell the tale after the mammal spat him back out. Jun 12, 2021

- ◆ Jonah is a weird guy. He is a representative of God but a very poor representative of God.
- ◆ In Jonah's story he is angry at God. Why is he angry at God?
- ◆ He's angry at God's compassion? God has told Jonah to go to Nineveh and call them to repent by sharing about his compassion.
- ◆ The problem. Jonah hates the people of Nineveh and he knows if he calls them to repent and share about God's compassion that they will actually do it.
- ◆ **I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."**
- ◆ Bottom line: Jonah knew about the nature of God but he himself had a horrible disposition against those who were lost and in need of repentance.
- ◆ Can I ask you? Are you a good ambassador for the compassion of God? Does your nature reflect the nature of God?

The primary theme of the story of Jonah and the Whale is that **God's love, grace, and compassion extend to everyone, even outsiders and oppressors**. God loves all people. A secondary message is that you can't run from God. Jonah tried to run, but God stuck with him and gave Jonah a second chance.

They worshipped **false gods** which is a horrible crime against their Creator. They were the sworn enemies of God's people and savagely cruel. They at times skinned their enemies alive and hung their skins on their city walls as warnings to their enemies.

This is personal for me because I have a father that I have abhorred most of my 54 years of life. Now my greatest struggle is to show him respect and assist in his frailty of life at 90. All siblings have distanced themselves from him... he is vicious and prides himself on this. As my youth has passed I have grown apathetic to him ever being saved, and worse it has grown to a repulsed attitude towards him.

Yet God has called me to minister to him. God has extended his life so that I can bring the message of God to him. I understand why Jonah ran... I understand now better than ever. Jonah felt Nineveh deserved Judgement the people were proud,vicious and a ruthless nation...but God said they were morally and spiritually blinded...who do not know the difference between their right and left hand.

Since God is gracious and compassionate and slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness... should God destroy them or show mercy on whom he desires? Our job is to remove ourselves from judgement and just deliver the message and hope that they will believe and change morally. Our job is to go and not run no matter how much we fear, hate, or repulsed by them. The greater the struggle... the greater the harvest.