

**Suffering from Near-Sighted Vision
Mercy for the Depraved People
Jonah 3-4**

As Marshall McLuhan predicted, our world has become a "global village."

Paul Borthwick, in his book, *How to be a World-Class Christian*, tells us, "Jet travel, international networks, and interdependent economies have simultaneously shrunk the world."

In the face of this shrinking global picture, we find ourselves attempting to live on a world-class level.

Airlines are described as "world-class."

Television introduces us to "world-class athletes."

What does it mean to think of ourselves as "world-class Christians?"

"Seeing myself as part of God's program on a world-wide level and dreaming God's dreams for the whole world, rather than just my little corner of it."

Barrier to dreaming God's dreams: Caring about our country and nothing beyond

— becoming insulated and isolated!

How big is your world? How big is your God?

How far does our responsibility for the world extend? [The correct basis for our answer:]

THE COMMISSION: MAKE DISCIPLES Matt 28:19-20

THE EXTENT: TO JERUSALEM, ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, TO THE FARTHEST CORNER OF THE EARTH Acts 1:8

THE PROBLEM: NEAR-SIGHTED VISION Jonah

We're all familiar with the story:

It seems hard to believe that God's choice spokesman should try to flee from His presence, doesn't it? *What could motivate him to do that?*

— Assyria was already causing problems for Israel.

— To preserve it was to preserve a potential enemy.

God's judgment was coming against Nineveh because of exaggerated

perversion.

God sends His prophet to warn them

The result: the preservation of Nineveh, and probably all Assyria

Assyria was the nation later used by God to destroy Israel.

Jonah, as a faithful Israelite, living in a period of increasing nationalism, would not have favored the salvation of Nineveh.

Think about it. How would you like to go to Baghdad and preach God's judgment against the city if they don't repent.

How would you like to try that if you were ***an Israeli?!!!***

What do you suppose ***Saddam Hussein*** would think about that?

That's what Jonah was up against.

But he didn't especially *want* his "Saddam Hussein" to repent and be spared!!

While the purpose and theme of Jonah's messages were directed toward Nineveh,

The theme of *the book* presents the judgment pronounced on a sinful city and their forgiveness as a result of repentance.

It teaches a practical lesson on the greatness of God's mercy.

God forgives repentant *sinner*s who seek to obey Him.

God's mercy extends to rebellious preachers who repent, as well as to the pagan nations of the world.

He is no respecter of persons.—He seeks *sinner*s who turn from their sin to Him.

Two distinct demonstrations of God's mercy: [see dgm.]

- I. **God's mercy towards Jonah, His rebellious prophet (1-2)**
- II. **God's mercy toward Nineveh, the perverted pagan nation (3-4)**

GOD'S MERCY TOWARD JONAH, A REBELLIOUS PROPHET 1-2

Jonah's disobedience 1:1-16

God executes a three step plan to halt Jonah's flight and return him to the original plan (1:4-2:10):

First corrective step: He sent out a great wind (1:4-16)

Second corrective step: God prepared a great fish to swallow

Jonah and to save him from certain death in the sea. 1:17-2:9

Jonah's praise 2:1-7 *Where was Jonah when he made this prayer?*

This description fits his situation while in the sea–NOT in the fish.

He almost died there and then called out to God for salvation.

He prays from *inside* the fish (1), praising God for salvation.

He praises God for saving him from the sea.

Jonah recognized his dependence on God, praised Him for His deliverance, and promised to fulfill his commission.

Jonah's promise 2:8-9

He promises to fulfill His vow: to present the praise of his testimony.

What is his testimony? "Salvation comes from Yahweh."

Jonah's liberation 2:10 *THEN*, following the prayer, the fish vomited.

Third corrective step: God spoke to the fish.

It vomited him out on dry ground.

GOD'S MERCY TOWARD NINEVEH, A DEPRAVED PEOPLE 3-4

Jonah's preaching 3:1-4

Repetition of the commission 3:1-2

What's the commission?

His attempt to escape having ended, Jonah is once again instructed to go to Nineveh.

God's plan hasn't changed–He keeps insisting until He gets His way.

What does that teach us about God's revealed will and His plan?

Response by the prophet 3:3

How does Jonah respond this time?

What has he learned?

Jonah obeys this time and delivers God's message.

Message from the prophet 3:4

Nineveh's repentance 3:5-9

How did they respond to his message? The people? The king?

The result is repentance by the people of Nineveh.
 People's repentance 3:5
 King's response 3:6-9

Yahweh's response 3:10

What three things did God do?

Because of their repentance, God is merciful, forgives them, and stops the judgment.

Jonah's response 4:1-11

*How does Jonah, God's servant, respond to their repentance and salvation?
 Was he excited about the thrilling response to God's message?*

Jonah's anger 4:1-3 4:2

Jonah protests God's deliverance of his "pagan" enemy.

Description of anger 4:1

Cause for escape 4:2

He is not surprised at the result of his preaching!

What's his view of God?

That's why he tried to escape in the first place!

Desire to die 4:3

Why was he angry?

His view of gentiles (pagans!) = abominable, not worth saving

His historical context

How do we respond when God extends His grace to our "pagan" neighbors?

Yahweh's answer 4:4-11

Yahweh's question 4:4

Jonah's shelter 4:5

Yahweh's object lesson 4:6-11

God gives Jonah an object lesson

He "**prepares**" some other things for Jonah!

What did God prepare for him?

Vine enjoyed 4:6

A gourd is prepared over Jonah's head to give shade.

How did Jonah respond to the gourd?

Jonah is pleased with it because of *its value to him*.

Vine destroyed 4:7-8a

God prepares a worm to kill the gourd, and a sultry wind and hot sun to bother Jonah.

Vine lamented **4:8b-9**

How did Jonah respond to the new development?

Again Jonah is angered.

What did God ask Jonah?

How did Jonah respond to God's question?

Vine explained **4:10-11**

What was the lesson God wanted Jonah to learn?

Jonah delighted in the gourd – he really cared about it.

But he hadn't made it – he just got the benefit.

God had invested a great deal in making and loving this people.

Shouldn't HE care even more about 120,000 people and animals?

If Jonah was concerned over a gourd that he did not make, God is even more concerned about people and cattle He created and loved.

WHAT IS THE BOOK TRYING TO TEACH US? 4:2

- *God is still no respecter of persons*
 - *God still cares about the lost, those around us, those on the other side of the world.*
 - *God is merciful– He is not willing that any should perish, but wants all people to come to repentance. 2 Pet. 3:3-9*
- He is – Gracious – Abundant in lovingkindness
 – Compassionate – Relents concerning evil (calamity)
 – Slow to anger

This is just as true whether the object is a rebellious people or a rebellious prophet!

Jonah was only concerned about the results of the mission for his people

The enemy would be preserved

His own people might eventually be wiped out by Nineveh

Sometimes we are only concerned about the results of mission for our people

Can't afford to "weaken the base" at home

Have to take care of ourselves (family and church) first [Chinese church model]

Don Hillis describes the typical American Christian: "Listen to [his] prayers. His requests are woven around a tight little circle of loved ones and friends. They seldom reach beyond his localized situation and never—just never across the ocean. Obviously his god is a tribal deity."

THE PROGRAM: "GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOSPEL!" Mark 16:15 ["Get with the program!"]

Acts indicates that it does begin at home.

We will never really understand God's dream for the world, until we understand His dream for our own neighborhood.

We start with our own family and friends

From there the vision extends to our community, to the county, to this valley

But it will never equal God's dream, until it encompasses the whole world!

THE RESULTS: ALL NATIONS PRAISING HIM

Rev. 7:9-10

John Piper's message:

Missions isn't the ultimate goal of the church; *worship* is!

Missions exists because *worship* doesn't!

What can we do about it? One suggestion:

Identify a country or group of people you wish to learn about and searching for information in the news or other places.

—Begin praying for that area or people

When you see world events in the paper, does it motivate you to pray?

[cards]

—See if you can establish communication with someone from that area

—Pray for ways you might be able to participate personally in getting the gospel to those people

maybe by visiting there yourself, or participating on a work team
 One pastor's family became concerned for the Himalayan country of Sikkim and eventually mailed a New Testament to every home listed in the local phone directory (350 in the whole country!), and then prayed. They later heard from eight people, one of whom had come to know Christ.
 Maybe you could find an international student studying at the U. from that country and invite them for a meal with your family

A vision for the world is created by exposure to the world.
 Unless we see it, experience it, learn about it, this will just be a paper map.
 When you experience a country, either personally or through the experience of others, you begin to develop a vision for that area, and to dream God's dreams for it.

Borthwick's final chapter asks: *"We can barely make it through the winter or manage our household budget; how can we start caring about 1 billion people in China or the hungry in Latin America?"*

He responds: start small and build our vision as part of our ongoing discipleship.

You see, as in so many areas of life, the issue isn't the money, the issue is vision. It's not our treasure that causes us problems, it's our heart.

We have become so ingrown that we spend all our time talking to God about ourselves: *our* family, *our* needs, *our* friends, *our* world.

We've lost sight of the simple truth, "For God so loved *the world* . . . !"
 Jesus left heaven's glory to die as a criminal among angry, hating, rebellious humans!

How can we help but share that vision? Can somebody explain that to me??!!

The day will come when multitudes of saints from every nation will be gathered together around a great communion table, with our Lord serving.

We'll all worship *together* before Him, black and white, Indian and Hispanic, and some from unknown groups whose names we can't even pronounce!

Will we have had a part in getting them there? How's YOUR vision for the

world?

Have you begun to dream God's dreams for the world?

Our world begins on our doorstep. We need to see God's dream for this valley.

But we also need to expose ourselves to the rest of the dream – the big picture: "*God so loved the world!*"