

Mission Minded - Part 3

The Completely Unfair Mercy Of God

Jonah 3:10-4:11

Memory Verses: 1 Peter 3:18

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

The Great Commission in **Matthew 28:19-20** says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." We are on a mission as Christians, to reach the world with the Gospel to see them Transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Simple, specific, let's do it. Right?

But there's a problem. Many of us don't want to do it. We're scared, we're nervous - "I thought we paid the pastor to do that." And trust me I get it. Sharing our faith can be very scary. But over the past three weeks we've been looking at the story of Jonah and what we've seen must be taken into account. If like Jonah, we run from our mission, God will get our attention, whether by storm, being thrown overboard, being eaten by a giant fish... or most likely something else more familiar to our context. The point being, if we run from our mission, God will either turn us around or take us out. We must repent from a lifetime spent pursuing comfort and convenience rather than the great commission. We must become mission minded.

Last week we saw that sharing the Gospel isn't a burden... but a blessing. God doesn't need us to fulfill his mission, he wants us to fulfill his mission, so we can be blessed through the process. He equips us, encourages us, and entrusts us with his Gospel, that through us the world may know about him. The greatest miracle in this world is when a sinner comes to repentance... and praise God we get to be a part of it. We are not to merely accept this... we must embrace this. We must become mission minded.

And so, this week we are going to look once again to the book of Jonah and in the process we are going to see something very interesting as it relates to the mission. We are going to see that when we take the Gospel of Christ and the message of repentance and salvation to sinners, that if they repent and turn to God, he will be merciful to them. Just like that he will save them and forgive them. No matter how evil they were, no matter how vile they were, no matter how deceitful, destructive, slanderous, treacherous, and murderous they were - for their whole lives... in that moment Jesus will cover all of it with his blood and welcome them in as a sons and daughters. And it may seem unfair. Look

at **Jonah 4:1-2** real quick. This whole thing started with Jonah running from God and his mission and going to Tarshish instead of Nineveh, right? Why did he run? Not because he was scared of the people, not because it would be uncomfortable, although that probably played a part, but the main reason was because he didn't think it would be fair if the Assyrians repented that God would be merciful and save them. He knew that if he took the message of salvation to the Ninevites that they would probably repent and if they repented God would save them... and he didn't think that that was fair.

Is he right? Is it fair? Perhaps you are like Jonah this morning and you struggle with the mercy of God poured out on sinners. Perhaps you are aware of this struggle... most likely you are not.

But what if you struggle with the unfair mercy of God and you don't even know it? I think most Christians would say... what's wrong with Jonah... why's he being like that... of course God mercifully saves sinners and that's a good thing. Why would we think of it as unfair. Okay, I get that... but let me ask you this. What about someone like Samuel Tannyhill who while robbing a dinner in 1955 was recognized by one of the waitresses who called out his name. He took that young waitress to a bridge where he shot her in the head and dumped her in the river. That waitress was someone's daughter... and Samuel just murdered her in cold blood. Surely he deserved the electric chair and the hot embers of hell that awaited him right? But he never felt the burn of those embers. You see, he repented of his sins while in prison and accepted Christ and now dances the streets of glory for all eternity. Is that fair?

Or what about Jeffery Dahmer who murdered and cannibalized 14 boys in the 90's. Someone like that certainly deserved to be killed and spend the rest of eternity burning in hell, right? But, what if I told you that while he was in prison waiting to be executed he repented of his sins and was radically saved and gave his life to Jesus Christ and the mercy of God accepted him as a son. What if I told you that I believe that Jeffery is in Heaven right now, enjoying the reward that we all wait for? He murdered 14 boys, 14 sons. Sons of families that will never see their little boys graduate or have little boys of their own. But now he sings with the angels on streets of Gold. Does that seem fair?

Or what about someone like Hitler. Now to my knowledge Hitler never repented and accepted Christ as his Lord. But if he did... God, not doubt would've mercifully forgave him and welcomed him into heaven as a child of the King... would you think that fair? He murdered over 6 million people... and all he has to do is repent of his sins, and turn to Christ and he's saved? Is that fair? Of course not!

Of course that's not fair. None of these are fair. And that's the point. The love, forgiveness, and mercy of God to save us sinners is utterly and completely unfair. And in order for us to embrace the mission of taking the Gospel to the lost, we must accept this fact and more importantly

understand why it's not fair. Why? Because if we are to become mission minded, we must understand the mind of Christ in saving those who do not deserve salvation. The point today is clear... **The Mercy of God is Completely Unfair. That's Why It Cost An Equally Unfair Price.** Let's flesh this out a little more as we look at Jonah chapter 4.. Let's start by reading **Jonah 3:10-4:11**.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to discuss here is this... **The Mercy of God is Unfair Because We All Deserve Hell. And Yet God Relents (Jonah 4:1-4)**. It's clear here that Jonah had no desire to see the Ninevites saved. What he wanted was to see them face justice for their sins. He wanted God to destroy them. And that's what God had every right to do. The Ninevites deserved hell. As we discussed last week, they were a pagan society, they hated the Jewish people, they had rejected God. Jonah felt that they had already had their chance and they missed it... now it was time to see them suffer the consequences of their paganism. Jonah wasn't much different than those who thought hurricane Katrina was a just punishment for the evil people of New Orleans or that the 89 earth quake was a just punishment for the evil, sinful people of San Francisco.

And we aren't much different than the Ninevites either.. We like the Ninevites deserve hell too. **Romans 3:23** tells us that we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But look at **vs2** again. God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. We all deserve to suffer the wrath of God and yet all we have to do is repent and we can be spared? That doesn't make sense. Our repentance should not be enough to balance out the scales weighed down by our sin but God says it's all good? How's that fair? **Belief and Repentance shouldn't be enough to counter a lifetime of sinfulness.**

Jonah reveals this injustice. He had a point right? Jonah, a faithful Israelite prophet his whole life, didn't think it fair that the sinful Ninevites could repent and just like that receive the same salvation that he had been given. It reminds me of a few stories in the New Testament. In **Luke 15:11-32** Jesus tells the story of a son who takes his inheritance, wastes it on sinful things, and then comes home and receives a party. How is it fair that one son can live his whole life in perfect obedient service to his father and one son can spend all his father's money and revel in a sinful lifestyle, and when he comes home he is treated the same, if not better, than the faithful son?

In **Luke 20:1-16** Jesus tells the story of a master who hires some day workers. He hires some in the morning, some in the midday, and

some one hour before quitting time. At the end of the day the master pays them all the same wage. The point is clear. How is it fair that some live their whole lives for Christ and are paid the same reward of those who live one day for Christ?

Turn over to **Luke 23:39-43**. Here we see Jesus on the cross among two thieves. One of the men looks at Jesus and says remember me when you enter your kingdom. Now, you tell me, how is it fair that the thief on the cross can live his whole life in blatant sinfulness and yet say a few words in favor of Jesus right before he dies and inherit an eternity of paradise? It's not fair... thank God it's not fair. **it doesn't matter if you've been faithful 90 years before you die or 90 seconds...** the mercy of God saves all who repent. **The Mercy of God is Completely Unfair. That's Why It Cost An Equally Unfair Price.**

The next thing we need to discuss real quick is this... **The Mercy of God Demands We See Ourselves Among The Lost (Jonah 4:5-11)**. Here we have a very weird side quest. It feels like it doesn't belong with the rest of the story... but it does. God sends a plant to give Jonah shade but then the plant dies and Jonah hates his life and wants to die. So God says... you care more about this plant than you do the 120,000 lives in the city. The point being God says that human lives are sacred and they mean something to him. God loves all people and desires to see them all saved. So..doesn't it stand to reason that... **If God loves all people and desires to see them saved... then so should we.**

So... why does Jonah not desire to see the Ninevites saved? I think it has a lot to do with the fact that he has forgotten that he too was once a lost sinner in need of a savior. He has forgotten that he didn't earn his salvation... but that it was graciously given to him by the mercy of God. Jonah has forgotten that he has no more of a right to salvation than the Ninevites... for no one has a right to salvation... it is a gift of God. When Jonah looked into the faces of the Ninevites he shouldn't have seen sinners deserving the wrath of God... he should've seen himself in need of God's mercy. When we look into the faces of the lost at our jobs, our schools, across the street, or across the world... it should remind us that we too were once sinners in need of the mercy of God and it should motivate us to see as many saved as possible. **The Mercy of God is Completely Unfair. That's Why It Cost An Equally Unfair Price**

Application

So... what's the bottom line. It's this right here... **The Mercy of God is Unfair Because It Cost The Death of God Himself (Jonah 4:10)**. God tell's Jonah, "you are upset about the plant and yet you aren't the one who made it grow." In the same way God is the only one who can give salvation. God is the author of salvation. Get this... this is so important. We

aren't saved because of our belief and our repentance alone. Yes, they play a huge part and one can't be saved without them... but salvation wouldn't be possible if someone hadn't paid the price for it. So what was the price and who paid it? **1 Peter 3:18** tells us that Christ suffered and died for the unrighteous. And who is Christ? **John 10:33** says, "I and the father are one." So get this... God gave himself over to the most excruciating death anyone could ever endure to take his wrath upon himself... the wrath that we all deserved. **We the creation who deserved hell, are spared hell, because God the creator endured hell in our place.** Now, Is it fair that God had to send himself in the form of Jesus Christ to die in our place... the sinless for the sinful? Is that fair? Nope... it's the most unfair thing ever! So be careful when you ask for fairness. You've been given salvation, the most unfair mercy of all time. **The Mercy of God is Completely Unfair. That's Why It Cost An Equally Unfair Price**

Conclusion

As we finish up this morning it's important that we recognize that God's mercy is unfair. But it's also important that we recognize that the completely unfair mercy of God is the greatest news this world has ever known. Why? Because that means you still have a chance to be saved. You can't sin enough to be disqualified. You don't have to be faithful for 50 years to earn salvation. You can repent today, die tomorrow, and you will be as saved as Abraham, Paul, and Billy Graham.

And it still means your family and friends and neighbors all still have a chance too. It means that you still have time to share the Gospel with them and see them repent and turn to God before it's too late. It means that today is the day of salvation. **The Mercy of God is Completely Unfair. That's Why It Cost An Equally Unfair Price.** Praise God for his completely unfair mercy