

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP**JOIN A SERVE TEAM****NEW HERE?****CONNECTION CARD****STAY UP TO DATE****SUBSCRIBE TO DIGITAL BULLETIN****Series: Jonah & the Mercy of God****Title: Mercy for Everyone, Even Enemies****Text: Jonah 3:1-10**

Can God's mercy really reach everyone? Who in your life have you quietly decided could never come to know the mercy of God in Jesus?

The book of Jonah is a complex mix of theology, history, and literary art. As literature, it is carefully structured to highlight God's broad mercy through parallel storylines. Chapters 1 and 3 focus on God's mercy toward outsiders: first, the pagan sailors in chapter 1, and then the wicked people of Nineveh in chapter 3. Chapters 2 and 4 focus on God's mercy toward Jonah himself, both in his desperation and his anger. This literary design emphasizes the book's main message: God's mercy extends to both rebellious prophets and undeserving people and nations. The Lord shows mercy by not treating us as our sins deserve, but responds with compassion, patience, and rescue, relenting the punishment that our sins warrant.

In chapter 3, the mercy that Jonah personally experienced is not extended outward in public toward violent enemies, the people of Nineveh. Chapter 3 teaches us that God's mercy reaches further than we do because we all have categories of people we quietly struggle to imagine receiving mercy.

God's Mercy Gives Jonah a Second Chance (3:1-3)

- God's word comes to Jonah a second time, which is an act of mercy. Jonah failed, rebelled, and ran; yet God speaks to him again. God is a god of second chances.
- This time, Jonah obeyed God and went to the great city of Nineveh. The scale of Nineveh takes three days to take in. The city's size underscores its importance.

God's Mercy Warns Before Judgment (3:4)

- Jonah's eight-word sermon (in English: 5 words in Hebrew) is simple, giving no hint of God's mercy, only of impending judgment.
- In Jonah 1:2, God told Jonah to go to "the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."
 - Nineveh would become the capital of the Assyrian Empire, one of the most brutal and violent empires of ancient history. Assyrian kings often documented their victories and boasted about burned cities and slain people. The prophet Nahum, about 100 years after Jonah, describes the Lord's judgment against Nineveh for its violence: "*What sorrow awaits Nineveh, the city of murder and lies! She is crammed with wealth and is never without victims* (Nahum 3:1)."
 - This northern enemy of Israel was feared because kings often tortured, killed, enslaved, and defeated nations. The Assyrian empire started demanding heavy taxes from Israel during the reign of King Jehu (842-815 BC; 2 Kings 9-10) and kept threatening the northern kingdom of Judah throughout Jonah's lifetime. In 722 BC, Assyria invaded Israel, destroyed the kingdom, and took many of its people into exile (2 Kings 17).

God's Mercy Reaches Enemies (3:5-9)

- When God tells Jonah to go preach to Nineveh, Jonah is not merely being asked to visit foreigners. He is being asked to carry God's warning, and potentially God's mercy, to the enemy. To Jonah, Nineveh was a violent oppressor, a threat to Israel's future, a symbol of pagan wickedness, and a nation he likely believed deserved judgment, not compassion.
- The Ninevites believed in God, and whether or not this was a belief in salvation, they definitely directed their actions toward God.
- Everyone in Nineveh takes up a posture of mourning, putting on burlap and ashes. They also fasted. Even the king humbled himself by stepping down from his throne and removing his royal robe.
- The king calls the people to national repentance from their evil ways and violence. Repentance is a turning from old ways to the way of God. Repentance changes direction.
- The king hopes that God will turn from his judgment and give mercy.

God's Shows Mercy, Not Judgment (3:10)

- Can God change his mind? God is both compassionate and just. Nineveh's violence demands justice, but God relents to show compassion in response to Nineveh's repentance. This verse does not mean that God is morally inconsistent. God delights in showing mercy.

Put yourself in Jonah's situation. What does this part of the story teach us about the mercy of God in relation to those around us who have not experienced the mercy of God?

1. Nobody is beyond the mercy of God.
 - We assume people will never change or that they're too far from God. Jonah 3 confronts these assumptions about people, even our enemies.
 - As followers of Jesus, we have received God's mercy. However, Romans 5:8 tells us that, "*But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*"
 - The people Jonah least expected to repent are the very people, sinners, who turned to God.
2. Mercy compels us outward.
 - Jonah wanted to keep God's mercy to himself, but God's mercy was never meant to stay with Jonah exclusively.
 - If we have experienced the mercy of God in Jesus, we are called to participate in His mission to others. Everyone can experience God's mercy, and we need to go to those who need to encounter it.
 - In Matthew 5:44, Jesus teaches us, "...love your enemies!" Pray for those who persecute you!"
3. Who in your sphere of influence have you given up on?
 - This is the question that lies beneath Jonah 3. Who have you quietly decided could never come to know the mercy of God in Jesus? Who is your Nineveh?
 - 2 Peter 3:9: "*The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.*"
 - Who is an enemy or someone you think is beyond God's mercy? Pray for them by name that they come to experience the compassionate mercy of God in Jesus.

Further Study of Jonah:

- Watch the BibleProjects video: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/jonah/>
- Read the book of Jonah at least once this week, or once a day this week.