

JONAH: RUNAWAY PROPHET
MEET YOUR MAKER

Tuesday, July 14

Reading: Jonah 4:1-3

Jonah 4:2 *I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.*

How do you view God? Is He the Lord of the Universe? Is He the kindly old Grandfather in the sky? Is He the Cosmic Cop waiting to strike you with a lightning bolt when you mess up? What is the essential character of God? In Jonah's complaint, he quotes one of the primary descriptions of God from Exodus 34:6, a description repeated throughout the Old Testament.¹

What makes this revelation in Exodus so interesting is that it occurs right after the people of Israel sinned by worshipping the golden calf! God could rightly have destroyed the whole nation, but instead He declared Himself to be the loving and forgiving God. Notice the words this declaration uses to describe God:

Gracious and Compassionate: These two words are usually used together to describe the mercy and forgiving heart of God. They are only ever used in reference to the Lord.

Slow to anger: God is patient – not watching to pounce on us when we sin so He can punish us.

Love: This is the great Hebrew word *hesed*. It is impossible to define this word in a simple way. It speaks of God's love, faithfulness, mercy, grace, goodness, truth, righteousness, and many other attributes.

As Jonah repeats this classic definition of who God is, he pictures it as a negative. He did not want God to be compassionate to the people of Nineveh! He wanted them to be destroyed, not forgiven! In fact, he would rather die than see Nineveh be forgiven. He preferred death to watching his enemies receive life. Jonah had said all the right things (chapter 2) and even done the right things (chapter 3), but his heart was still wrong!

Like Jonah, you may know all the right words. Your theology about God may be sound correct and your outward actions may look acceptable. But where is your heart? Jesus told us:

"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous...Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:44-45, 48)

How would you describe God to some one?

How does your view of God's character change the way you think and act?

Instead of selfishly thinking about ourselves, what attitude should we have?

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek You; I thirst for You, my whole being longs for You, in a dry and parched land where there is no water...Because Your love (*hesed*) is better than life, my lips will glorify You. I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up my hands. (Psalm 63:1, 3-4)

¹ See Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:5, 15; Psalm 103:8; Psalm 145:8; Nehemiah 9:17; Joel 2:13