

Theme: Return: Realigning w/God

Message: Realigning w/God's Heart – Jonah 4:1-11

Aim: Check our attitudes at God's door.

Intro: Have you ever been angry w/God? If you're honest, certainly you have. And it's ok to be angry w/God, as long as you don't stay there.

Who do you suppose is in the right? Theme: Return: Realigning w/God. The book of Jonah ends w/God revealing His heart toward Ninevah & it clear whether or not Jonah ever did. It's my opinion that he did, at least eventually, align w/God because it is agreed by most Biblical scholars that Jonah himself wrote this account, by the direction of the Holy Spirit. David Gudzik wrote about Jonah, "It was all right for Jonah to honestly express his anger w/God, but he also needed to repent of it. Is God good? Is He all wise? Does He really do all things well?" These are questions we must ask when we are angry or disappointed w/God. Then, there's only one way to go. Jonah 4:1-11 [READ] I) **Jonah's Anger.**

Vs1 reads, "it displeased Jonah exceedingly," referring back to 3:10, "*When God saw what they did (Ninevites/Assyrians), how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that He had said He would do to them, & He did not do it.*" God didn't overthrow the city, destroying it as He did Sodom & Gomorrah. As Pastor Derek has pointed out, the Assyrians (w/Ninevah their capitol city) were not nice people but treated their enemies (Israel being one) ruthlessly. That God relented of His plan to destroy them, in response to their repentance & hope in God, it displeased Jonah. Jonah considered God's response of grace & mercy toward Ninevah to be evil, thus questioning God's morality, wisdom & sovereign will. Jonah indicted God w/wrongdoing! That sounds as bad as it is when we hear it like that, but don't we do the same when we are angry w/God? Jonah was furious, incensed – that is the strength of that word angry. He prayed, "I knew it, God! Didn't I tell you? This is why I fled to Tarshish. I knew you are a gracious God & merciful, slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love, & relenting from disaster." God was guilty of all of that. Aren't we glad! Jonah should have been mindful of God's mercy & grace toward him when he was in the belly of the whale. Gudzik: "Jonah called on the mercy of God (from inside the whale) & enjoyed the mercy of God when it was extended to

him. Now he resents it when it is extended to others” – because he didn’t like them. Knowing God is gracious & merciful & slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love, Jonah shouldn’t have been surprised by God’s sovereignly granting repentance to Ninevah nor by God’s response to Ninevah’s repentance. Is there anyone you hope God doesn’t save? Think about that. And Jonah was even angry about the success of his own preaching! Usually, preachers are glad when someone responds positively to God as a result of their preaching. But Jonah was so angry that he just wanted to die. He didn’t want to live to see God not destroy Ninevah. “Lord, take my life!” He didn’t mean that the way we sing it. But consider II) **God’s Gracious Reply**. How patient & gentle God was w/Jonah! He simply asked him, “Do you do well to be angry?” In other words, “Do you have good reason to be angry?” Think about that – a good question to ask yourself when you’re angry, in any situation but especially angry w/God. Do you have good reason to be angry w/God (or others) when you don’t get your way? When things don’t go the way you expect? When God blesses others toward whom you aren’t favorable? Are you right to be angry w/God? Do you believe God’s ways are right even if you don’t understand? We see God’s heart here in that He didn’t grant Jonah’s request. God could have taken Jonah’s life w/a word. “Ok, you asked for it. Zap!” How good & patient God is that He doesn’t rashly react to our impulses! Of course, He never rashly reacts in any case. God was gracious & merciful & slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love & relenting from disaster w/Jonah & He is w/us. III) **God’s Object Lesson**. Jonah went “out of the city” – not headed home, but just “east of the city,” seemingly up on a hill overlooking the city. Note what seems to be Jonah’s thinking, even after his conversation w/God. He hadn’t given up on seeing Ninevah destroyed. He went a safe distance away, just in case... He built himself a makeshift shelter, a booth to give him some shade from the sun, so that he could sit down & watch. Watch what? He wanted to “see what would become of the city.” He was still hoping w/in himself that somehow Ninevah’s repentance wouldn’t be complete. After all, how quickly can you go from being obstinate to sincerely, humbly repentant. Surely, there would be some who would not comply w/the king’s proclamation.

He was hoping to see a laser show of God's wrath raining fire & brimstone down upon the city. We don't know how long Jonah sat on that hill. How many of the 40 days had elapsed? We read that God appointed a plant – the Hebrew word leads scholars to think it most likely “the castor oil plant” – that would provide better shade from the hot sun than the makeshift booth. Note that “God appointed a plant & made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort.” That word discomfort can be translated evil. That's often our thinking about discomfort, isn't it – it's evil? Our prayer is “deliver us from discomfort.” It seems the plant grew up overnight – God's work. God was mindful of Jonah's needs, even in his rebellious state. Yet, God had more in mind than Jonah's comfort. He always does. God's top priority is not our comfort or happiness or success (as far as the world sees it). This was the same God who “appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah,” who “spoke to the fish, & it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.” And, as we'll see, God is not done w/appointing. Jonah was “exceedingly glad because of the plant.” As glad about the plant & the shade it provided as he was mad/displeased about the Ninevites' repentance. Gudzik points out that this is the 1st time in the book that we find Jonah happy. James Boice wrote: “Jonah was pleased because at last, after all the compassion of God for other people, God was finally doing something for Jonah. Selfish? Of course, it was, & petty, too! Jonah's happiness was just as fleshly as his anger.” Maybe Jonah thought that God was finally on his side, seeing things his way. But again, “God appointed...” God was at work to make His point. “God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered.” God sent judgment upon the plant, which He created. The word for worm used here is not the usual Hebrew word for worm – rimma' – but a different one, used at specific spots throughout the OT for specific purposes (I think). The word used here – w/out coincidence, I believe – is “tola.” This is a bit of a side note, but an important one, not a rabbit trail. It's agreed that “tola” depicts “coccus ilicus,” or red worm, specifically the female, which was used to make red dye, the color of blood. In Psalm 22:6, written by David but prophetically pointing to Jesus, the appointed One says, “*I am a worm (tola) & no man...*” Think

about it, as God was making His point to Jonah. Jesus, the appointed, anointed One, is the Judge who paid the penalty of our sin, w/His own blood, for all who believe & repent, as these Ninevites had! God could have destroyed those Ninevites & the city of Ninevah & have been just doing so; or He could put their sin (along w/Jonah's & mine & yours) upon Christ, the worm, when He died upon the cross. It's all according to God's sovereign grace, based upon the work of Christ. Now back to Jonah's story. God appointed that worm that destroyed that appointed plant, then He "appointed a scorching east wind, & the sun beat down upon the head of Jonah, so that he was faint." That phrase "beat down" is the same word as "attacked" – as the worm attacked the plant. Again, he asked to die. "Just kill me now, God!" Again, God asked, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" Jonah was understandably angry that the plant was destroyed. Angry at that worm, angry at the Ninevites for being who they were & necessitating his being there. Angry at God for not doing things his way. He said to God, "Yes, I've got reason to be angry. I loved that plant that served me so well. Why did it have to die?" Again, Jonah was more concerned about his personal discomfort than he was about Ninevah's need to repent & his call from God to preach repentance. That was IV) **God's Point** – vs10-11. "You pity – have compassion for - the plant, Jonah, but you didn't create it nor work to plant it. You didn't tend it & cause it to grow. It came up overnight & was destroyed overnight. You didn't do anything to cause or benefit the plant, yet you are concerned about it. You went thru an awful lot to get here & tho reluctantly, you preached My warning to Ninevah, yet you have no compassion on them. You think your comfort is more important than their deliverance from judgment. Shouldn't I have compassion on Ninevah, as much My creation as is Israel? I created those 120,000 & every creature w/in the city. I have used them for My purposes. I sent you to them to warn them of coming judgment. Shouldn't I care about them as they respond to that warning, as they respond to Me? Do you/I care about God's purposes? Do we care about those He created in His image? Do we care about the mission to which God has called us? Or are we more concerned about our comfort? Gudzik wrote that "Jonah made 3 errors angry people often make. 1) He quit; 2) He separated

himself; 3) He became a spectator. But God kept working on Jonah's heart, as He graciously keeps working on ours. The lesson of Jonah is what he himself proclaimed before being freed from the fish: Salvation is of the Lord, & not of any race or nation or class. It's the message of God to Peter in Acts 10 – God shows no partiality.” God calls us to return in all our thinking & doing to His way of thinking, to His heart. That applies to every area of our lives – marriage, family, all relationships, work, leisure, etc. We realign w/God's heart when our top priority is His purpose, His mission, His kingdom, His glory & not our comfort. We need to check our attitudes at God's door.