Series in the minor prophets…Jonah

There are no Exceptions. With God

Scholarly debate over who he was, who wrote the book lots of interesting things when you look, for instance Jonah is the only minor prophet mentioned in the quaran..

Whatever theory we land on, God is speaking to the readers of this book and wants us to listen.

**More in the notes on the website..**

Summarise the story

**Brief Summary:**Jonah’s fear and pride cause him to run from God. He does not wish to go to Nineveh to preach repentance to the people, as God has commanded, because he feels they are his enemies, and he is convinced that God will not carry out his threat to destroy the city.

Instead he boards a ship for Tarshish, which is in the opposite direction. Soon a raging storm causes the crew to cast lots and determine that Jonah is the problem.

They throw him overboard, and he is swallowed by a great fish. In its belly for 3 days and 3 nights, Jonah repents of his sin to God, and the fish vomits him up on dry land (we wonder what took him so long to repent). Jonah then makes the700k plus-trip to Nineveh and leads the city in a great revival. But the prophet is displeased (actually pouts) instead of being thankful when Nineveh repents.

Jonah learns his lesson, however, when God uses a wind, a gourd, and a worm to teach him that He is merciful.

So what is the message, the theme the scene that God sets for us in this account of a minor prophet.

I have summarized the theme as

**With God there are no exceptions..**

“ **God’s Grace is for all his creation. No exceptions” ….**

Define Grace… Gods undeserved, un earned and relenting Love for this world.

For some the idea of Gods grace seems to be only a NT idea, the law came through moses, grace comes through Jesus….but it’s a theme in the OT and this book highlights that.

Overarching theme is that the redemptive grace of God is available to be received by all, once received, is to be given to all….no exeptions…

Jonah presents the vivid image of a man who had experienced the grace of being one of God’s chosen people but who refused to offer the message of that grace to those he considered beyond grace.

Grace shown to pagan sailors…Saved by God through the actions of Jonah…although their problems were caused by him in the first place… God used Jonah to save their lives. Grace

God used everything at his disposal to cause Jonah to retrace his steps, offer the message of repentance to those who did not deserve it, and to rejoice in the opportunity.

Jonah, however, does not rejoice and the book is left open-ended.

Gods grace to all his creation, not just mankind, never more evident than the story of noah and the ark…

Gods love is for all His creation.

God wants to reconcile the whole of creation back to him, the way he does this is through His Grace.. never more evident than through the death and resurrection of Jesus..

**Obeying God is the best option. No exceptions**

*After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.*

***4****Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.****5****All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.*

*But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep.****6****The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”*

***7****Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.****8****So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”*

***9****He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”*

***10****This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)*

***11****The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?”*

***12****“Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”*

***13****Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before.****14****Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.”****15****Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.****16****At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.*

I have believed for a long time, that we are not vessels to be filled by God with his love, grace, mercy and forgiveness, but piplines, supplying these blessings from God to others…

God used Jonahs mess to bring people closer to him…

when we are unhealed, when we are hurting, its our normal, and so we respond to others in such a way that we want to experience our normal for them… what if our normal, was a position of Grace.. what if God wants to use your mess for His glory..?

You may run from God’s desire to use you to offer grace to those who do not deserve and who have hurt you.

churches are filled with spouses, businesses persons, parents, children, and church members who have been hurt by marriage, business partnerships, family relationships, and church fights.

God calls to us from through Jonah…a radical call, the call of Jonah, to move toward those we need to forgive

I would go so far as to say *You Contradict the Christian Gospel when You Refuse to show Grace to pass it on.*

Interesting …while the pagan on the deck were calling out to their gods, the prophet of the living God was asleep. The captain had to wake him up to get to the prayer meeting of the pagans.

Its almost as if when faced with impending death, they were more willing to engage with he idea of an almighty, than the one charged by the almighty to speak on his behalf.

When we refuse to show grace in family, work, community, school, and church we fail to see how God is at work in the lives of others..

**Pray always , no exceptions…**

The pagan sailors, calling out to their God then a level of acknowledgment of Jonahs God, our God.. then Jonah too, in desperation..calls to God.

[Jonah 2:2](https://www.bibleref.com/Jonah/2/Jonah-2-2.html), "In my distress I called to the LORD, and He answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry."

Everyone at some time calls out to God.. Do you let God use the hard circumstances of your life to harden you or turn you to prayer?

There is no place too deep, far, or dangerous that you cannot pray your way out. You can pray during the worst day of your life and God can make it the best day of your life. Or at very least be with you through it.

I think all of us could thing of a time where we made some sort of deal with God…if you do this…I will do that…etc..

Some people will promise God anything to get out of bind. Jonah made promises to give and to live in a way that would please God.

But when a really hard thing came…what the ninevites..not that…that wasn’t part of my deal… he broke his promise to God..

Jonahs adventure in the belly of a fish is an example of no place, physically, spiritually, emotionally… silences our prayers when we faithfully call out to Him.. may not answer them as we hope…but will listen… pray always..no exeptions…

**Repentance leads to salvation, no exceptions**.

*Show Your Repentance (Jonah 3:7-10)*

[Jonah 3:10](https://www.bibleref.com/Jonah/3/Jonah-3-10.html), "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened."  
  
Repentance demonstrates itself not only in inward emotion but in clear outer behavior that you have repented. But its not so much an action we decide , but a realisation that without God youre heading in the wrong direction and you need him to bring you back.

Call of God through Jonah to repentance, sometimes circumstances are Gods call to repentance…story of the prodigal son.

In this case… ninevites living a life without God, journeying away from him.. someone needed to point them back in the right direction, call them to repentance..to bring them to the realisation that life in disobedience of God was not the best plan.

I believe God uses places people or events in our lives, when we are turning our backs on him, living in disobedience of Him..to bring us back towards him and his love, grace and mercy…restoring us in relationship with Him

*Repentance leads to salvation…no exceptions*..

**Gods’ salvation and mercy is for all creation, no exceptions.**

*Show Mercy (Jonah 4:2)*

***4 1-2****Jonah was furious. He lost his temper. He yelled at God, “God! I knew it—when I was back home, I knew this was going to happen! That’s why I ran off to Tarshish! I knew you were sheer grace and mercy, not easily angered, rich in love, and ready at the drop of a hat to turn your plans of punishment into a program of forgiveness!*

***3****“So, God, if you won’t kill them, kill me! I’m better off dead!”*

***4****God said, “What do you have to be angry about?”*

***5****But Jonah just left. He went out of the city to the east and sat down in a sulk.*

*You have received mercy. Let God be as merciful to others as he is to you.*

***6****God arranged for a broad-leafed tree to spring up. It grew over Jonah to cool him off and get him out of his angry sulk. Jonah was pleased and enjoyed the shade. Life was looking up.*

***7-8****But then God sent a worm. By dawn of the next day, the worm had bored into the shade tree and it withered away. The sun came up and God sent a hot, blistering wind from the east. The sun beat down on Jonah’s head and he started to faint. He prayed to die: “I’m better off dead!”*

***9****Then God said to Jonah, “What right do you have to get angry about this shade tree?”*

*Jonah said, “Plenty of right. It’s made me angry enough to die!”*

***10-11****God said, “What’s this? How is it that you can change your feelings from pleasure to anger overnight about a mere shade tree that you did nothing to get?*

*You neither planted nor watered it. It grew up one night and died the next night. So, why can’t I likewise change what I feel about Nineveh from anger to pleasure, this big city of more than 120,000 childlike people who don’t yet know right from wrong, to say nothing of all the innocent animals?*

Show mercy and help mercy find those who do not deserve it considering the character of God and his mercy to you.

A godless response to the mercy of God is to hope God still judges your enemies. Pipelines….of mercy, Gods mercy is for all creation, no exceptions

SUMMARY ENDING

*Gods Grace available to all, no exceptions*… and it is given to us so we may pass it on

*Obeying God is the best option, no exceptions*.. we can easily convince ourselves that we know more about what is good for us and the lives we live than God… obeying him is always the best option.. no exceptions

Pray always, no exceptions you don’t need to craft special words, or be particularly articulate, in some cases people who talk to God don’t even follow Him. Prayer is Gods communication with us and ours with him, *prayer is for everyone, no exceptions*.

*Repentance is knowing* that you need Jesus to live your best life, life to the full and that you are not able to do that on your own, because you’ve tried it, and theres still something missing. Realising this and turning to God, confessing to Him that you need him, repentance is our part in restoring our relationship with God, his salvation, grace and mercy is His..

*Gods mercy is for all creation*, not lost that God cared for the animals of Ninevah as well, they were going to be destroyed too…Gods world, that he Loves, His mercy is imparted to us and intended for all creation…

Like Jonah, we are given a message of repentance, salvation, mercy and grace for all of those around us, we receive it, we are to pass it on and live it out… NO EXCEPTIONS.

Play Just Grace, mike rayson..