

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JONAH 3-4

On December 4, 1986 Gary Tindle was being tried on charges of robbery in the California courtroom of Judge Armando Rodriguez. In the midst of the trial Tindle asked the Judge if he could go to the restroom.

He was escorted by two guards to the men's room, who waited outside the door. Just as Tindle had hoped, this courthouse restroom had a dropped ceiling.

Tindle quickly shimmied up the plumbing and scurried down the crawl space, heading south. He made it about thirty feet when suddenly one of the panels under him broke. He dropped to the floor.

And surprise, surprise - *guess where Gary Tindle ended up?* He'd fallen right back into Judge Armando Rodriguez' courtroom. His escape attempt had failed.

Well, Gary Tindle and the Prophet Jonah have a lot in common! Both men fled the inevitable... both were on the run from the authorities... both came crashing down at the Judge's feet, back where they began...

The story of Jonah proves you can't run from God. Try as you might, no one escapes God's purposes.

God has providential ways of catching the run-away, and forcing him or her to *deal* with His *will*.

Last week we read in 1:17, “**Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah.**” And God will prepare circumstances to catch our attention.

The Lord knows how to place fragile ceiling tiles in our path. If need be, He gives us time in the belly of a great fish. God will manufacture a dark place where all you can see is yourself and your sin. He'll turn up the heat of your situation to melt your pride. He'll expose you to the gastric juices of brokenness designed to soften your heart and make you digestible to others.

In Chapter 1 we find our reluctant hero in [the belly of the ship](#) - trying his best to run away from God's call.

In Chapter 2 the scene shifts. Jonah is in [the belly of the fish](#) - repenting of his sin and running back to God.

Now in Chapter 3 we find Jonah in the city of Nineveh. He's finally running with God, doing His will. You could say he's finally in [the belly of God's will](#).

But in Chapter 4 He returns to his bigotry and prejudice. He's [belly-aching over God's desire to show mercy](#). In the end we find him running ahead of God.

Here's a convenient outline for the book of Jonah.

[Running away from God... Running back to God... Running with God... And Running ahead of God...](#)

We left off last week at the end of Chapter 3. Suddenly, a burp marks a new beginning for Jonah. The great fish pukes the prophet Jonah onto dry land.

Now in Chapter 3 God renews Jonah's call to preach to the city of Nineveh. And this time the prophet obeys!

Chapter 3, “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying...” Note the expression “*the second time.*” These words speak volumes about the grace and mercy of God. God was willing to give this reluctant, rebellious, run-away prophet a “*second time.*”

Queen Elizabeth I ruled England and Ireland from 1558-1603. She was a skillful ruler that brought peace to the British Isles. On one occasion Edward De Vere, Earl of Oxford, was bowing low before the queen when the Earl audibly broke wind. He was so embarrassed.

In fact, for the next several years he traveled abroad just to avoid another audience with the Queen.

Eventually, Edward's duties brought him home to England. The humiliated Earl was forced to face the Queen again. History records Queen Elizabeth's first words to him. She said, “*My lord, I hath forgot the fart.*”

And if ever there was a “*stinker*” it was Jonah!

His prejudice, His pride, His selfishness, His stubbornness - was a stench in the nostrils of God.

Jonah's rebellion reeked to high heaven.

Here was a prophet who smelled fishy long before he spent any time in the belly of the great fish. Jonah was so sour not even the fish could keep him down.

Pardon the expression, but I can't think of a more fitting label for the Prophet Jonah than, “*an old fart.*”

Yet God was willing to forgive Jonah. God forgave his nauseous behavior and gave him a second chance.

When Jesus told Peter that he should forgive his enemies not just seven times, but seven times seventy, He wasn't asking Pete to do anything He was not willing to do Himself. Jonah is another proof that God is willing to forgive and give us a another shot at His will.

Author, William Banks, writes "We are moved to speak of Jonah's God as the God of the Second Chance. But honest, sober reflection compels the saint to speak of Him as the God of the 999th chance!"

It's God's nature to keep forgiving and forgetting.

He is the God of the second chance, and the third chance, and fourth chance, and the 999th chance. The Lord forgives stinkers - even stinkers like you and me!

And God said to Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you."

We learn from 1:2, and the first time God called him, that Jonah's message was repentance. God said, "Cry out against (Nineveh); for their wickedness has come up before Me." In fairness to Jonah this was a frightful commission. Nineveh was the capitol of Assyria and the Assyrians had a savage and violent reputation. The Assyrian army showed no pity on their enemies.

A favorite Assyrian torture was to jab a stake under a man's ribs, then thrust it into a hole in the ground. They would then laugh as the man squirmed and convulsed, and gradually succumbed to the throes of death.

On occasion, the Assyrians would torture their captives by tying them spread-eagle on the ground and slowly skinning them alive. These folks were hideous.

I'm sure Jonah was asking God, "Lord, are you sure you want me to preach to the Ninevites of all people?"

This would be me like standing on a street corner in Mecca or Teheran, and proclaiming that Muhammed was an imposter and Jesus is the only way to God.

God had given Jonah a risky assignment.

But after three days and three nights in Shamu's tummy what could be worse? This time when God calls the prophet... *come what may, Jonah decides to obey!*

Verse 3, "So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.

Notice our text says Nineveh was "*an exceedingly great city.*" Ancient Nineveh was three miles long and one-and-a-half miles wide. The walls were 100' high and 40' thick - wide enough to race three chariots side-by-side on top. The walls were sprinkled with 1500 lofty towers. Nineveh was a magnificent city, and it was only one of a several large cities in the Tigris River valley.

We're told in verse 3 Nineveh was a "*a three day journey in extent.*" In other words, it took three days to walk across Metropolitan Nineveh. In ancient times a day's journey was 22 miles. Metro Nineveh was 68 miles in circumference. Estimates vary, but its population was between 600,000 and a million people.

A population comparable to that of Washington DC.

Verse 4, “And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” Much of the population lived outside the city - in suburban Nineveh.

That’s where Jonah began to preach, and notice his message. It was *brief* but *bold* - it was just eight words in English - even shorter in Hebrew, a mere five words, “*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*”

Notice a couple of points from Jonah’s sermonette...

First, he mentions a period of forty days. In the Bible the number “40” speaks of “*probation and testing.*”

Moses was on the back side of the wilderness for forty years. The children of Israel wandered forty years in the wilderness. The 12 spies spent forty days inspecting the land of Canaan before reporting back to the tribes. Jesus was tested by Satan for forty days. And after Jesus’ resurrection He was seen by the disciples for forty days before His ascension to heaven.

Here’s some biblical math... The number “40” is the product of “5” or the number for “*grace*” - by “8” which is the number of “*renewal, revival, new beginnings.*”

Forty denotes the period of testing that precedes the outpouring of God’s grace in the form of a revival.

The Ninevites heard in forty days God would judge their city. They reasoned, “*Why is He waiting forty days? He must be giving us time to repent. Perhaps if we do, God will have mercy and spare us?*” As we’ll see their perception, and faith in God's mercy, paid off.

“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.” From the king to the commoner - all the Ninevites believed God, and repented of their sin.

The king of Nineveh even called for a national fast.

His citizens humbled themselves in sackcloth and ashes, and cried out to the one true God for mercy.

Verse 6, “Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.” This was quite a revival. It reached all the way to the throne.

Imagine, the White House staff - Republican or Democrat - even the President - confessing his and the nation’s sin, humbling themselves, crying out in repentance. Sadly, the picture boggles our imagination.

“And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?”

The king issues an official decree calling for everyone to repent. Even the animals - the horses and mules - cats and dogs - repent in sackcloth and ashes!

Which reminds me of the story of the Christian Bear.

A guy was walking through the woods when a bear jumped out of the bushes and began to chase him.

The bear cornered him. There was no hope. So the man prayed, "Lord, please let this be a Christian bear!" He looked up and the bear was on his knees praying. He thought, *"Praise the Lord, a Christian bear!"*

He walks up to give his Brother Bear a hug when he hears him pray, "Lord thank you for this food I'm about to receive..." Here, though, even the animals repent.

Verse 10 records the results, "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it." God has mercy!

In fact, you could make a case this was the single greatest spiritual awakening in all human history.

At the Feast of Pentecost 3000 souls were saved.

Yet in Nineveh, a whole city repented and turned to God. Pentecost was pint-size compared to the Ninevite revival. We're talking the salvation of a million souls. This was truly the Greatest Awakening in all history.

And the amazing truth is that God did it through a reluctant, prejudicial prophet named Jonah! It proves, "God uses us more in spite of us, than because of us."

Yet when you think of it, the odds of Jonah doing what he did were truly astronomical. How did a Hebrew prophet turn a pagan city to the one true God of Israel?

I mentioned Jonah in Nineveh would be like me in Mecca... *not really!* It would be like a Jew in Mecca!

Actually, I believe there were at least four factors that contributed to Jonah's phenomenal success...

Factor # 1, **the time was right.**

The Assyrian king at that moment in history was a man named, Assurdan III. His reign was colored by several natural disasters that the Ninevites interpreted as signs or omens. An eclipse, an earthquake, a famine, several military defeats had primed the pump.

These were all scary phenomena for a primitive people. Their hearts were ready for Jonah's message.

Factor # 2, **the prophet was white.**

My skin is light brown. I guess I'm *manila* - but Jonah was *vanilla*. Imagine the prophet as he entered Nineveh. He looked like a prune - and the vitamin A in the whale's gastric juices would've bleached out his skin and made it flaky. He was a bright white flake. He looked like a bald, Jewish albino - a frightful sight!

And smell... the guy must've reeked. *Something was fishy about this guy.* He definitely attracted a crowd.

The puked-up prophet definitely got their attention!

Factor # 3, **they heard of his flight.**

In Luke 11:30 Jesus said Jonah was "a sign to the **Ninevites.**" Evidently, his story became well known.

Apparently, the Assyrians had some background on Jonah. They knew of his racial prejudice - yet God had loved them enough to employ some unusual means to overcome the

prophet's reluctance. Though Jonah didn't, it was obvious that his God loved Nineveh!

It's also interesting, that Assyria worshipped the fish-god, *Oannes*. He had the head of a man and the torso of a fish. In fact, the names "Oannes" and "Jonah" are only one letter off in their original spelling.

And since it was a fish that threw Jonah up on the shore, initially it may've caused the Assyrians to think he was *the messenger of Oannes*. If that's so, it would've provided Jonah an immediate platform from which to teach them about the one, true God of Israel.

Well, *the time was right, the prophet was white, they heard of his flight* - and factor #4, **the Spirit of God showed His might**. This is the case with all spiritual awakenings. God uses desperate circumstances - fired-up, even puked-out prophets - spectacular signs - but ultimately revivals are a work of God's Spirit.

In 2:9 Jonah said at his conversion, "Salvation is of the LORD." And it's true! No man comes to God, and embraces Jesus, unless God's Spirit draws him.

That was true of Jonah - it was true of the Ninevites - and it's true of me and you. In John 6:44 Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." Every time a man or woman is saved for eternity it involves the power of the Holy Spirit.

You can put a banner up in front of the church and advertise a series of meetings you call "A Revival" - but it may or may not be a true revival. That depends on the sovereign work of

God's Spirit. You don't schedule a revival, you pray for one. *I hope we're all praying...*

Again, verse 10 tells us, *"Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it."* Notice, here's another example of the Almighty changing His mind - a reality that baffles the Bible scholars. *God changes His mind?*

Certainly, there are scores of Bible verses that describe God as *immutable*, that He changes not!

In Numbers 23:19 we're told, *"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. He has said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good."* On the one hand, God never repents or relents. Yet here when the Ninevites repent of their sin, God relents of His judgment.

To be clear, the Bible does teach the immutability of God. Indeed, He never changes. Read 1 Samuel 15:29, Ezekiel 24:14, Malachi 3:6, James 1:17. God's plans and purposes are sure. I'm not always privy to His plans, but it's a comfort to know that regardless of life's ups and downs, God always remains the same!

Yet in His dealings with mankind, there are times when God does appear as if He changes in midstream.

The theologians call this an *anthropomorphism*. This is the technical term for what the Scripture does when it describes the eternal God as if having human traits. Here's a classic

anthropomorphism - 2 Chronicles 16:9, “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro.”

Obviously God doesn't have human eyes and eye sockets - and He doesn't need to look here; then there. I'm sure the omniscient God sees everything at once.

We really don't know how God sees, and if it were explained to us I doubt if we'd be able to understand. Thus, the Bible communicates to us in terms that we can comprehend - as if God were a man and had eyes.

The same is true when we read of [the hand of the Lord](#) or [the arm of the Lord](#). I'm sure God isn't limited to ten fingers or two arms. He's omnipotent. But to help our feeble understanding, He reduces Himself to human terms so we can begin to grasp His greatness!

And this is why the Scripture speaks of God *changing His mind*. The ways of God are too deep, too nuanced, too mysterious for us to fully grasp the interplay between Divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God dumbs it down for our limited logic.

The Bible speaks of both realities as if they were independent of each other, yet we know they're not.

God's purposes, and our part in His plan, work together, but *how* isn't always known. Does God's plan determine our actions, or do our actions determine God's plan? For simplicity sake the Bible teaches both.

At times we're told God changes His mind. While at the same time, we know that God never changes.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate this concept is to imagine a rock in the middle of circle. Picture yourself moving around on the circumference of the circle.

With every move you make you change your location in relationship to the rock. At one point the rock is south of you, yet when you're on the other side of the circle the rock is north. With each step you take, the rock seems to change, but in reality the rock hasn't changed at all, it's you that's changed. *And this is us...*

God never changes, but at times He *seems* to change, because of the change in attitude we have toward Him. This is the case in our passage here.

Chapter 4, “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord, and said, “Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!” This is an incredible reaction. You probably thought I was exaggerating when I said Jonah was a bigot - that he hated Ninevites. But this is proof.

Jonah thought the Hebrews were the only ones entitled to know God. In fact, Jonah would rather die than share his God with Gentiles as notorious as the Assyrians. In fact, when the storm raged Jonah chose to drown rather than repent and see Nineveh saved.

Now his original fears have come true. The reason he didn't initially go to Nineveh was He knew God. He understood that

if these sinners gave God any little inkling of a broken and repentant heart God would jump at the opportunity to forgive them and save them.

Now that's what's happened and it's made Jonah sick. He says, "*it is better for me to die than live.*"

Some folks accuse Jonah. They say he really didn't know God... *but the exact opposite was true.* Jonah's problem was that he *did* know God. He knew Him very well. He knew the enormous width and breadth of God's love. How willing and eager God was to save.

There's a hymn with these lyrics, "*There is a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea.*"

But not even the boundaries of the sea are broad enough to take in God's mercy. To realize how encompassing are the mercies of God you have to go to the cross and see Jesus' outstretched arms. That's how wide His mercies are! Every sin and every sinner are taken into account within His outstretched arms!

But rather than *rejoice* in God's salvation, Jonah *resented* His mercy. I'll say it again, because it's so true... **Jonah was an old fart.** He was one sick pup.

He was happy to receive God's mercies himself, but He didn't want anyone else to benefit from them.

This brings up another point that bears mentioning. Many Bible scholars have pointed out that the odyssey of Jonah is a type of the nation Israel's story.

Jonah was chosen and called by God to reach out to the Gentiles, but he was disobedient to that calling.

And likewise, God wanted OT Israel to be a light to the Gentiles. Instead bigotry and prejudice seeped into their hearts. Like Jonah they ran from God's calling, yet God preserved them to be a witness to the nations.

Eventually the Jews were spit back up in their land, but again *like Jonah* their attitude hadn't changed, and they resented God's mercies... Like Nineveh the Gentiles repented when they heard the Gospel. They came to know Jesus - experienced revival - but the establishment Jews remain proud and disobedient.

The Jews and Jonah refused to draw the connection between *receiving God's mercies* and *sharing God's mercies*. Yet this is the lesson Jonah is about to learn.

In verse 4 the Lord comes to Jonah and gently confronts his prejudice, **“Then the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?”** This is one of God's favorite techniques in dealing with people. *He asks questions.*

Remember in the Garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve sinned, God came asking, **“Where are you?”**...

When Cain killed his brother, Abel, God asked him, **“What is this that you have done?”**... When God wanted to humble Job He fired one question after another at him to prove how little Job really knew...

And after David's adultery with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan asked him, **“Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in His eyes?”**

And I could go on and on. God loves to stir up our thinking by asking us questions. In the remainder of the book God asks Jonah a series of three questions...

Verse 5, “So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.” Jonah was still hoping God would send fire, and like Sodom, singe the city.

He wants to see fireworks. He’s expecting God to send Nineveh up in smoke. That’s why Jonah keeps his distance. He climbs a hill east of the city, builds himself a shelter from the sun, and sits in the shade.

Yet it won’t be for another 150 years that God judges Nineveh. The Prophet Nahum, prophesied against Assyria prior to their fall to the Babylonians in 612 BC.

But Jonah's prejudicial heart was *way ahead of God*.

Much to Jonah’s chagrin, Nineveh’s repentance at his preaching bought a century-and-a-half reprieve.

How would you like to have a pastor like Jonah? A pastor you knew hated you and despised the fact God saved you? A preacher who stayed away from you because he expected that at any moment fire would fall on your head. In fact, that's how he was praying!

Well, that’s the kind of preacher God sent Nineveh and remarkably God used him mightily The Assyrians were saved more *despite* Jonah than *because* of him.

This is why Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 12:41, “The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.” Nineveh believed a man who hated them, while the Pharisees rejected Jesus, a man who loved them enough to die in their place.

And as Jesus said, these Ninevites will be called to testify against the Pharisees in the day of judgment.

Verse 6, “And the Lord God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.” This was probably a “*palm*.”

The date palms in the Tigris valley grow 8-10 feet high, with large, elephant ear leaves and tender stalk.

The plant is common in Palestine, India, and in parts of Africa. In fact, the palm is the symbol on Iraqi coins.

The ruins of Nineveh are today located in northern Iraq, outside the city of Mosul. There day-time temperatures can reach as high as 125-130 degrees.

And here God prepared Jonah some *supernatural shade*. Overnight, a leafy palm grew eight to ten feet and served the pouting prophet as a beach umbrella.

Jonah certainly didn't deserve God's blessing, but He received it - enjoyed it - and was certainly grateful.

“But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered.

And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." Again the Prophet Jonah wishes he were dead. This man had such a grim outlook on life. Rather than endure a difficulty his first reaction is to check out.

One night his plant grows up and provides him shade. The next night a hungry worm eats his plant.

Twenty-four hours earlier Jonah was surprised by the plant. It was a gift of God's grace. He was so thankful. But now a day later, he's saying he deserved that shade, and he upset - God had no right to take it away.

In verse 9 God again asks him a question, "Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" Again God approaches him gently. "And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!"

Wow, where did the humility and gratitude go?

Even after receiving grace from God, Jonah treated it as if it were a blessing to which he was entitled. No one received greater grace than Jonah, but he was a legalist to the core. It was all about what he deserved.

The palm lived 24 hours, but in that short time it became *His* palm. How dare God mess with *His* palm.

It's interesting how some people, in the absence of human relationships, get attached to plants or animals.

Some folks get obsessed with their plants or flowers.

A childless couple, or a widow or widower, will become obsessed with a pet. It's as if the dog or cat becomes an emotional substitute for their loved one.

Former Atlanta columnist, Lewis Grizzard, was a brilliant writer, but several failed marriages revealed that he was not as successful in personal relationships.

But he was close to his dog, Catfish. He once said about dogs, "A dog doesn't care where you've been, who you've been with, or what you've been doing. A dog is just glad you're home. You can't say that about a lot of people." And of course you can't. Human relationships are more complexed than life with a dog.

I once lived next door to a neighbor who was attached to her yard. She was an older lady and literally lived for her lawn. When the neighborhood kids ran through her yard she complained because they were matting down her grass. She managed to make an enemy out of just about everyone on our street, all because of her silly yard. It's sad when flowers and grass become more important to a person than people.

Jonah got attached to a plant because he hated people. Here God rebukes him here for loving his silly plant more than he had loved the Ninevites.

Remember "the grass withers, the flower fades" but the Word of God and people's souls live forever.

It's your neighbor that will go to heaven or hell. Your petunias turn back to dirt. People should be our priority.

And let me go ahead and say it. Perhaps someone here tonight needs to hear it - people are more important than a dog, or cat, or hamster, or goldfish.

Perhaps you sit all day playing video games, or cross-stitch, or paint, or read, or work on cars, or hit golf balls. None of these activities are evil in and of themselves, but use them as a way to escape people.

Only God is more important than people!

God loves Ninevites, not palm trees. And just as Jonah was surrounded by Ninevites, so are you. Are you *a plant person, a pet person, or a people person?*

When Minnesota Twins slugger, Harmon Killebrew, was inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame, Harmon told a story about his father. The elder Killebrew would often play pitch with his two boys out in the front yard.

On one occasion, Harmon's mom complained about the boys wearing out the grass. Mr. Killebrew reminded her, "Honey, we're raising boys, not grass." Always remember its people - not objects - that really matter.

Verse 10, "But the Lord said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night.

And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left - and much livestock?" God planted in Jonah's life something trivial, but something he enjoyed. Then He withered the palm to

reveal what was truly important. Jonah had become attached to a plant, and had withdrawn from the people God loved.

Jonah cared more about the demise of a stupid plant than he did the salvation of nearly a million people.

God's final attempt at softening Jonah's heart and burying his prejudice was an appeal to the children of Nineveh. God asks, "Is it not right that I pity the 120,000 persons who have yet to learn the difference between their right hand and their left? *Jonah, what about the kids? Don't you care that these innocent children will grow up in pagans, die, and go to hell?*" If anything can soften a heart it should be a little child.

Today, in Jerusalem Palestinian panhandlers use kids, innocent children, to beg for money. The kids approach you with those sad eyes and ask for help.

But here God is trying the same approach on Jonah. He mentions the innocent children to squeeze Jonah's heart and try to ooze out a few drops of compassion.

And perhaps we should ask ourselves the same question. *What about the children?* There are organizations that can feed a needy child for \$20 a month. Yet we spend more than that on dog food or even grass seed. Have we become a bit hard-hearted?

Did God's efforts to change Jonah's heart work? We don't know! The book leaves us hanging. But that's the point, it leaves us with a question for our own hearts.

Do we care about the people God cares about?

Or are we so wrapped up in our prejudices that we can't hear the voice of legitimate cries for help? Have we become immune to even the cries of the children?

Are we so busy petting dogs and watering plants that we don't have time for the people Jesus died to save?

Don't waste your life sitting in the shade of trivialities.

Care about what concerns God. Serve and love people. Yes, helping people is more difficult and a lot messier than tilling your garden, or even cleaning up after your dog, but in the end its far more rewarding!

Don't be a *Jonah*, be a *Jesus*! Be a *giver*, not a *griper*. Help grow *people*, not just *pets or plants*. God cared for you, now you need to care for others! Don't be a dead end for God's mercies, spread the love!

In the end, Jonah's outcome remains a mystery.

We do know archeologists have identified a mound near the ancient ruins of Nineveh called "[Nebi Yunas](#)" which is the local expression for "[the prophet Jonah.](#)"

The mound was so venerated among the locals that they prohibited the site from being explored.

It contained the reputed tomb of Jonah, which would indicate he actually died in Nineveh. We'd like to think that Jonah had laid down his prejudices and began to love the Assyrians, and stayed there to help them grow in their faith. This is why the site was so respected.

Sadly, in 2014 Isis fighters blew up the Tomb of Jonah. Though the Prophet Jonah is revered by Islam, Isis destroyed

the tomb and the mosque that housed it as an assault on the role Jonah plays in Christianity.

They know Jesus pointed to Jonah as a type of His resurrection. Jesus said in Matthew 12, “As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Isis’ hatred for Jesus and Christianity caused the attack on Jonah’s memory.

Let me wrap it up with an observation from author Lloyd Ogilvie. He writes, “Michelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican portrays the prophets, apostles, and patriarchs. Of all the faces he painted, none has a more radiant countenance than Jonah.”

Ogilvie surmises, “We wonder if Michelangelo knew something we do not know about what happened to Jonah after the sudden close of his biography.”

The renaissance artist portrayed Jonah with a radiant face. As if he were a man set free from prejudice and had fallen in love with God and his fellow man. This is certainly how I want to remember Jonah!

Remember, the book of Jonah is full of miracles... *the storm at sea, the great fish, the overnight plant, the hungry worm, and the sudden east wind.*

But the greatest miracle is when God transforms a bigot into a big-hearted person. That’s what we hope happened to Jonah... and we trust happens to us!