

JONAH

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Jonah 4.5-11

Prepared by Curtis Bronzan
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

I. Connecting With One Another

This is our final week in the Book of Jonah. Before diving into Jonah 4.5-11, spend some time reflecting upon what we've studied. If you have time, reread and discuss the passages we have addressed each week: Jonah 1.1-3, 1.4-6, 1.7-10, 1.11-17, 2.1-10, 3.1-5, 3.6-10 and 4.1-4.

How have you heard God's voice through this study?

Are you willing to share these things? Would you like to talk with a pastor about them? Click onto <http://gdshp.ch/imlrning> to do either - or both!

If you're familiar with Jonah, pretend for a moment that you aren't. How do you imagine this story ending? What prompts you to imagine what you do? How would you *like* to see it end?

Before continuing in this study, spend some time in prayer:

- a. That, as we conclude our study of Jonah, we would read not only this study guide, but find within it God's Word for us, and that, in gathering for worship this weekend, we would hear not only the speaker, but the voice of God's Spirit, leading us in faith,
- b. For those leading our worship gatherings, small groups, bible studies and children's classroom times – that God would guide their planning, preparation and leadership,
- c. That the Holy Spirit would convict us of the times we sit on the outskirts of God's Story, apathetic to His work in our lives, and renew us to rejoin His redemptive work!

II. Introduction to this Study

Last week we began chapter 4, the final section of the book of Jonah, which we conclude this week with verses 5-11. After hearing Jonah's "thirty-nine words" in verses 1-4, the final seven verses contain the LORD's thirty-nine: the narrator is careful to give both Jonah and the LORD "equal space." Especially considering the many questions within these 11 verses, we, the readers, are allowed – or required?! – to decide who wins their debate.

As in previous weeks, the verses before us in 4.5-11 contain a number of intentional word plays, which creatively engage all that has taken place earlier in the story. Quite opposite from Jonah, these verses clearly reveal God's grace and compassion, that He is slow to anger and abounding in love, that God relents from sending calamity! God's question at the end of verse 11 invites Jonah – and us, as the readers along with him – to say who and what God should be. And, by implication, who and what we should be in response.

III. Study the Text

- a. Verse 5 depicts Jonah ignoring the LORD's question (in verse 4) and instead turning his back on Him (again!). The verb for "going out" is linguistically linked with the Israelites "going out" into the desert from Egypt. This exile theme is continued when Jonah constructs a "shelter": the term used hearkens back to the Festival of Booths, in which God's people recalled and reenacted their exile, during which Israel was commanded to welcome Gentiles, strangers and foreigners within their gates.

Why do you think our narrator invites us to see Jonah's "going out" similar to Israel's exile from Egypt? What is the significance of the practice of hospitality for others in light of the story of Jonah?

- b. Last week we noted the phrase “a great evil,” which brought together – for the first and only time – two common words in this story, great and evil. In verse 6, our narrator does this again with the two divine names, the LORD and God. *Elohim*, a general name for God, has been used primarily with regard to the Ninevites, while *Yahweh*, God’s specific name revealed to Moses and the Israelites, has been in relationship to Jonah. Now, however, our narrator brings them together and uses them interchangeably throughout verses 6-11.

Is this merely a coincidence – or is our author trying to convince us of something? If so, what?

- c. We read that the LORD God “provided” a leafy plant, “provided” a worm and “provided” an east wind. The word “provided” is the same as when Jonah was swallowed – and, as such, saved – by a giant fish.
- Why would our narrator use the same word? Should this remind us of something? If so, what?
- d. Jonah has previously found “evil, a great evil” in God’s forgiveness of the Ninevites. The appearance and growth of, as well as shade “provided” by the leafy plant, however, causes him to “rejoice with great joy” (he sure has some high highs and low lows, huh!?).

Why do you think our narrator is so interested in communicating Jonah’s feelings? Should Jonah be so thrilled with such a minor occurrence as shade from a leafy plant? Why – or why not?

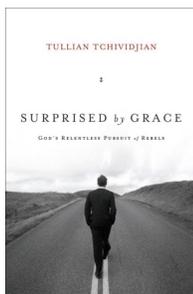
Was it “right” for God to take away the shade from Jonah? Why – or why not? Why do you think He did so?

- e. In the LORD’s response, he refers to the Ninevites as *adams*, the Hebrew word for “human being,” which should remind us of the kinship of all humanity. How is that different from how Jonah sees the Ninevites?

God says there are 120,000 *adams*, but He doesn’t say “one hundred twenty thousand.” Instead, He says, there are twelve *ribbô*, which means 10,000 (12 x 10,000 = 120,000). While the word *ribbô*, (meaning ten thousand) is not important, the number twelve sure is! Why would God allude to the number 12?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. How have you felt “in exile” before? Was it a difficulty in your faith? A relationship? Work related? Financially? Was it something that happened to you? Or was it a willful action on your part? How does Jonah’s experience “in exile” help you trust (or be reminded to trust) God in those times?
- b. When you discuss your faith with non-Christians, what words do you use for God? How do you think they understand the terms you use? How could you best share with them the good news that God loves them as well?
- c. How has the LORD God saved you? Are there ways you need to be saved still? (if so, fear not: the correct answer is “yes”) How do you still need to be saved? Do you trust the LORD to do so?
- d. Are there things you “rejoice in” that aren’t really worth the high praise you’ve given them? Has God ever taken something away from you to help teach you something? If so, what was it?
- e. Who in your life have you thought of as less than equal? Does knowing that God loves them and wants a relationship with them change your outlook? How can you join with God in revealing His love and offer of salvation to them?



In his book, *Surprised by Grace*, Tullian Tchividjian writes,

The story of Jonah shows us that this gospel of the cross – the good news that God relentlessly pursues sinners in order to rescue them – is just as much for Christians as it is for non-Christians. Jonah’s life proves this, because Jonah, who knows God, obviously needs divine deliverance as much as anyone else in the story. In fact, his need for rescue gets far more emphasis than anyone else’s. It’s *his* destitution, not that of the Ninevites, that gets the most play. That alone should be enough to convince us that God’s rescue is a continuing requirement for Christians and non-Christians alike. (page 154)