

Download the free audio from the Shane Hipps / Rob Bell / Mars Hill Bible Church sermon series about the book of Jonah: shanehipps.com/teachings/series/jonah/

What does this poetic, satirical story reveal about our hearts, relationships, rhetoric, and world view? Can it help us re-examine our categories, labels and boundaries? How does this story connect to your story?

THE STORY OF
Jonah



WEEK 5 / JONAH 4:1-4
Troubling Love

SYNOPSIS

God responds to the Ninevites' repentance with compassion and grace. But Jonah is angry, claiming that this sort of compassion is exactly why he didn't want to come to Nineveh in the first place. Jonah knows that God is slow to anger, abounding in love, and unwilling to rain destruction down on anyone. While Jonah is almost suicidal in his fury and frustration, God asks him if he has any right to be angry.

FROM THIS WEEK'S RECORDING:

This is what we are ultimately called to – the ultimate ethic that Jesus comes to model is love of enemy. That's the most profound, powerful, unthinkable thing that anybody could do. ...

God is not nearly as interested in punishing our enemies as we are. And God is not nearly as interested in punishing you as your enemies are. ...

God comes along and says, "Hey, I want you to know something. We're all good here. I don't need to punish you the way they want me to. Because that's not how my love operates. It never has. Even if people say that it has, it hasn't. ... Look, I forgave the most brutal empire in the world that committed genocide and all kinds of terrible things. Do you think you can even remotely compete with that? You're easy."

What would it mean to join with this God in receiving that kind of compassion, and offering that kind of compassion? How different would our world be if people were capable of that kind of forgiving in their lives?

– Shane Hipps

Does Jonah have any right to be angry? Why is he so upset?

Is the extent of God's grace dependent upon your behavior? Does God forgive you as long as you are only sorta bad? Can God forgive you if you're really bad? What if you're downright violent? Can God forgive you if you're Hitler, or ISIS, or if you've opened fire with an assault weapon in a public place? Does God's compassion and grace have limits?

What would you do if you were in Jonah's shoes? How would you feel about professing God's grace and forgiveness to the equivalent of Hitler, ISIS and mass shooters? Would this make you bitter, like Jonah?

Is anger over God's love and compassion a strange response? Isn't grace a good thing? Would you prefer a vengeful god over a forgiving god? Why don't we want expansive grace?

How do you feel about the terms of this prophesy? [Around 17 minutes into the audio]. Does God give the Ninevites too much time to repent? How does this lack of urgency and "karmic debt" feel to you? Is it frustrating? Why? Are we as a culture all about urgency, karma and knee-jerk reactions? Why are we so quick to place blame, to tear other people down on social media, and to exact revenge?

Why is it so hard to imagine the enormity of God's love and forgiveness? Does God work in a completely different way than we do? How can we learn to work God's way?

What would it mean to join with God in receiving this kind of compassion, and offering this kind of compassion? How different would our world be if we were capable of that kind of forgiving in our lives?