

TALK 1: Jonah – Grumpy about GRACE

Jonah was not very happy was he about the fact that God showed mercy to Nineveh.

In fact, instead of rejoicing because Nineveh listened to his warning and repented – **Jonah throws a pity party** ... he gets very grumpy and sits waiting – even HOPING that God would destroy Nineveh...

This was because Jonah hated the Ninevites – I mean, how could God love them?

they didn't believe in God and they were a horrible people who did the most terrible things –

why should they be forgiven?

Have you ever had someone do something to you that was mean – and then they get away with it?

they don't get punished for it - how does that make you feel? (probably quite angry) ...

BUT...Have you ever done something wrong to someone else ...and YOU get away with it – you don't get punished for it.... how do you feel then? (probably very relieved!)

It's funny how we feel different depending on whether or not we are the ones who were spared the punishment.

I think Jonah was full of pride – he was a prophet – and he told the people that they would be overturned in 40 days...

In Jonah's mind, that meant they would be destroyed... but they weren't destroyed – they were overturned – their lives were indeed turned over, transformed... but Jonah was so upset with god –

Jonah probably felt like a laughing stock... he probably thought – “I told these people this would happen that they would die and it didn't happen.... now what do they think of me!”

Jonah got so angry that HE WANTED TO DIE! Jonah was so bitter – he said I knew that you were gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness...Jonah is saying, I knew it, I knew you would find a way to spare and bless these pagans, these people who don't even follow your ways...

The problem is that Jonah doesn't recognise that he as bad as these people in Gods eyes....

God tries to teach Jonah a lesson about his goodness, about grace

He sends Jonah a plant to shade him in the heat of the sun... even though he's grumpy

And that seems quite nice doesn't it...

Now in order to make a plant grow what does it need?

Soil, water, someone to take care of it?

But Jonah didn't do any of this...He didn't own the plant, he didn't create the plant or help it grow... and yet when god then took the plant away by sending the worm to eat it... Jonah was so upset... and yet, its God's choice... after all he made, it was his to give... so had the right to give it or not to give it... it's the same with the Ninevites God can choose to forgive them or not ... it was his gift... They were his creation after all...

But Jonah just doesn't seem to grasp the concept of grace... and we'll talk more about Grace in a moment...

Talk 2: God of Grace

So let's talk about Grace... we said earlier that Jonah didn't recognise that he was as bad in Gods eyes...

God doesn't sit in heaven looking down at us grading us to see who is better and who is worse

He doesn't say "hmm... on a scale of 1-10 how good is Dianne? – oh she's an 8 out of 10, so she's worthy of my love...."

But Luke.... Hmm... He stole Dianne's chocolate bar the other day so he's now a 4 out of 10 ...so he's now so worthy....

Jonah knows that he has disobeyed God, but Jonah still seems to think that he is worthy of God's love... After all - His sins are nowhere near as bad as the Ninevites....and in their lies the problem... Because God says NO ONE is worthy – we all deserve punishment...

Jesus is 10.... None of us can ever be as good as Jesus! It says in the bible that we've all fallen short of Gods glory....

And that's great news! Because that means none of us are good enough...and if none of us are good enough, then we can all be good enough!

And what I mean by that is that we can all stop **trying** to be good enough, worthy enough to get into heaven...instead God has made another way... He knew we couldn't do it in our own strength and so he sent his Son Jesus to die for us on the cross.

Even just a little bit of sin in our lives means the punishment is death.... But Jesus (who was the only one good enough) paid the price for us all...

And he asks us to just believe...

This was god's plan from the beginning... he is a God of grace... he made you and he loves you - 2nd Timothy 1:9

"He is the One Who saved us from the punishment of sin. He is the One Who chose us to do His work. It is not because of anything we have done. But it was His plan from the beginning that He would give us His loving-favour (His grace) through Christ Jesus."

... God is not interested in your past... and what I mean by that is yes he cares about every aspect of your life... but he's ready to wipe the slate clean, **don't let your past hold you back...** there's nothing you could do that is bad enough to separate you from Gods love....

We have a God who is very much interested in your future...and he longs for you to know him... to accept his forgiveness, to turn from your old life and let him bless you with a new one... **WE HAVE A GOD OF SECOND CHANCES.**

He wants you to have a life where we no longer have to rely on our own strength to get through the storms of life, **A life full of promise, full of purpose...**

You are very much loved by God and his forgiveness, his grace, his mercy is there for the taking... **God says come to me all who are weary, tired, burdened.... And I will give you rest.... Come to me all who have sinned and I will give you eternal life!**