

Sermon for Dec 6, 2020, “Jonah’s Anger at the Lord’s Mercy”

Jonah 4:10-11

¹⁰ Then the LORD said, “You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?”

Introduction: Why the Lord came to us

Today is the second Sunday of Advent. On October 14th, in Namyangju City, South Korea, a Protestant believer set fire to a Buddhist temple because it was a “revelation of God.” Korea is a country with a strong tradition of living in harmony and peace. Historically, Koreans of various religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, and Muslims have coexisted peacefully. However, these arson incidents happened recently. It is very sad.

What we must remember is that we must not use violence toward our neighbors to express our beliefs, for we are called to be God's holy people. That is why we must learn to understand and practice the word of God's revelation. The core of the gospel that the Bible speaks of consists of “**servicing, devotion, and love.**” Violence and exclusivity toward neighbors are not what the Lord wants.

In last week's sermon, I told you to focus on the salvation the Lord has given us and what He has done to achieve it. And I told you to live like a child of God with His help in the Lord. If we are grateful for the grace of salvation, our actual life must also go forward with service, dedication, and love for our neighbors.

Today's sermon is about Jonah, which is well known to us as ‘**Jonah and the big fish story.**’ Unlike other prophets, the book of Jonah revolves around his own experiences rather than proclaiming the word of God. A prophet named Jonah has a very three-dimensional appearance. He ran from God, complained, and resisted. He prayed obediently, but also revealed his frail nature. And while he loved his people, the Jews, he was hostile to the Gentiles, the people of Nineveh. When we think about Jonah, he is very similar to us, and he seems like he's not qualified to be a prophet.

However, God does not give up on Jonah, but teaches and uses him to save the people of Nineveh. I hope that the second week of Advent will be a time to think through Jonah about the reason the Lord came to us and how precious it is for us to live by the grace of the Lord.

Body: God who chooses, teaches, and sends Jonah

1. The reason why God chose Jonah

We have seen how faithfully God has chosen a prophet of faith through sermons over the past few months. Representatively, there are Amos and Hosea. Amos from South Judah went to the northern kingdom of Israel to preach the Word at the command of God. There he was despised and discriminated against, but he faithfully preached the word of God.

Hosea obeyed God's command to marry the obscene woman Gomer and kept God's word to the end. There were so many wonderful prophets at the time of Jonah.

But God calls Jonah for the people of Nineveh. It wasn't because there were no other people He could have called. It is for Jonah. Jonah was chosen in order to fully know God, to grow, and to be used in God's saving work.

For this same reason, the Lord chooses us as His children. The reason the Lord chose us is for us. It is to ensure that we know God properly, grow up, and allow ourselves to be used in the work of salvation that God wants to accomplish.

But there is something unfortunate. People are sensitive to their daily time for their dreams and goals, and are less interested in God's work of salvation. Also, people do not understand that the reason God called us is for us. I pray that you will be filled with wisdom from the Holy Spirit.

In this way, God chooses Jonah and us. And He teaches us to grow and change.

2. God teaches with patience for Jonah's change.

I would like to share with you my personal experience as a parent. In fact, before I became a parent, I had a lot of complaints about my parents, and I thought that my parents lacked a lot. Now I know how silly this was. But when I became a parent and raised my children, I realized that my parents were really amazing people. I feel my impatience and carelessness for my children every day.

However, God endures unchangingly to teach Jonah. He sends a typhoon in the middle of the sea to teach Jonah who flees against God's will, and prepares a large fish to save Jonah who was thrown into the sea. Through this process, God turns Jonah's thoughts back and gives him enlightenment. Because of this, Jonah prayed sincerely and confessed that God is the true Sovereign of the world. Eventually, Jonah goes to Nineveh and calls out to 120,000 people to repent and return to God.

However, unlike Jonah's changed appearance, there was a part inside him where he could not let go of his thoughts. Because of God's command, he cried out to the Nineveh to repent and return to God, but his inner heart was for the Nineveh to be judged.

To teach Jonah's stubborn heart, God teaches Jonah what God's mercy is through the gourd vine. There is no biblical record of how Jonah responded to such teaching. It's like the open ending of a drama.

The Lord teaches us what it is for us to be patient and to make our lives unchangingly blessed. What matters is our response and choice to the teaching.

Whether we live up to our stubbornness or turn around and change into a generous person depends on our choices. And if we made a choice that pleases the Lord, He will use us for greater work. Just as God used Jonah for Gentile missions, He will use us to accomplish God's saving work.

3. God sends Jonah and us to save the world.

In the introduction to today's sermon, I told the story of a Protestant Christian who sets fire to a Buddhist temple in South Korea. Perhaps the person who did such a thing did it according to his beliefs and convictions. However, the way Jesus came to this earth and showed us life was through love, devotion, and service for our neighbors.

The Bible speaks of that love very clearly. **It is from John chapter 3 verse 16 through 17. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."**

The reason God sent His Only Son Jesus to the world is **"Salvation, not the Judgment of the world."**

So Jesus also sends us to the world to save the world. **Matthew 28:19 say, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"**

Lord Jesus tells us to go beyond boundaries and go into the world. But our nature wants us mostly to settle down rather than go beyond boundaries Like Peter, "**Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.**"(Matthew 17:4)

My thoughts come before God's love for the world. We want first not to seek His kingdom and His righteousness, but my kingdom and my righteousness.

Boundaries are not crossed by doctrine, conviction, knowledge, or ability. Boundaries can be overcome with love, devotion, service, and obedience as taught by the Lord.

Now the Lord sends us to go beyond boundaries and into the world.

Conclusion: Not by my own power, but by the power of Christ

Now, let's summarize today's sermon. The place where Jonah took the boat to escape to Tarshish was Joppa. In New Testament times, the Apostle Peter saved Tabitha, who died here. As a result, all the people of Joppa came to believe in Jesus. Peter's power is not his own. It is a result of the power of the Holy Spirit in the Lord. And the power of the Holy Spirit is revealed through "love, service, devotion, and obedience."

Let us be grateful that the Lord has chosen us.

Let us obey the Lord's teachings.

And don't settle down, let's cross the boundaries for those who are still unsaved.

Then we will continue to grow, and many of the souls that the Lord cherishes will return to His love and blessings.