

OVERBOARD

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Jonah 4.1-4 | February 16, 2020
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series Overboard, engaging the story of Jonah, the Prodigal Prophet. As we will see in this study, Jonah doesn't only go "overboard" into the sea, but in his emotional and spiritual life, as well. And *why* he goes overboard in this final chapter might just be the biggest surprise of all – even bigger than living three days in the belly of a fish!

II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever been angry at someone else's success? Or, somehow, at your own!?

III. Study the Text

- a. In his book on Jonah, *The Prodigal Prophet*, Tim Keller writes, "Of all the books of the Bible, Jonah has the most unexpected and overlooked final chapter."

Do you agree? If so, why do you think that is?

How is this similar or different from losing interest in a movie halfway through?

- b. Read **Jonah 4.1**.

What "seemed very wrong" to Jonah? Why is he so angry? (Feel free to turn back to Jonah 3 to remember all the reasons why!)

When have you reacted to something similarly, like Jonah? Why did you do so?

How was that circumstance affected by your reaction?

- c. The two words "evil" and "great" have been used a number of times throughout this story (if interested, you can find "evil" in 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 3.8, 3.10 and "great" in 1.2, 1.4, 1.10, 1.12, 1.16, 1.17, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7).

Now, for the first and only time, Jonah brings these two words together. Does that surprise you? Should he feel otherwise?

- d. Read **Jonah 4.2**.

Is that what Jonah said when he was still at home? Is that what he was trying to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish?

Do we know for sure one way or the other? Even if not, what's your sense?



- e. In our first study guide in this series we engaged **2nd Kings 14.23-25**, uncovering a bit of Jonah's theological perspective. As we saw then, other prophets like Amos and Hosea prophesied against a corrupt royal administration. Jonah, on the other hand, simply ignored the king's wrongdoing in a nationalistic zeal to build up Israel's power and influence.

Recall that Jonah's chapter 3 proclamation, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown" included a potential double-meaning, a pun. It could also be heard as "Forty more days and Nineveh will be *converted*."

Which meaning was Jonah intending? What occurred?

- f. In verse 2, Jonah quotes God's own words in **Exodus 34.6-7**.

But what does Jonah leave out? What does that say about Jonah's theological perspective? What does he think of God now?

- g. Read **Jonah 4.3-4**.

How is Jonah's pity party prayer in chapter 4 different from his prayer in **2.1-9**? Why?

- h. How does God feel about Nineveh? How does Jonah feel about it? Why?

- i. Read **Matthew 6.5-15**.

What do you make of those last two verses (14-15)? Is our forgiveness contingent on forgiving others? Why or why not?

- j. One author explains Matthew 6.14-15 this way: "It is not that God is withholding forgiveness to get back at you. Jesus' point runs much deeper. He is making a profound observation about the nature of human character. It is simply psychologically impossible for us to understand and desire to live in the stream of forgiveness and reconciliation and mercy with God and not want that with human beings... Just as love is the ultimate expression of the law, so lovelessness is the ultimate expression of sin."

How does that open up your understanding of Jonah's actions and Jesus' teaching?

IV. Pray

- a. Sit in quiet reflection, asking God to bring to your mind and heart those with whom you have differences, like Jonah had with the Ninevites,
- b. Ask God to give you a love so rich and so deep, that it might be extended to even your most hated and feared enemies, whoever they might be,
- c. Lift up those who have been harmed by believers, that they might come to know the love of God through Jesus Christ who desires not that they be "overthrown" but "converted" to following Him.

