

Who Is My Neighbor?

I. Can You Imagine?

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” ³But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

⁴But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. ⁶So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

⁷And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” ⁹And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” ¹⁰Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

¹¹Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. ¹²He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.”¹³ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴Therefore they called out to the Lord, “O Lord, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.” ¹⁵So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

¹⁷And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. – Jonah 1:1-17

II. Background of Jonah

1. Difficulties?



2. Danger?

“Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims! The crack of the whips, the clatter of the wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots! Charging calvary, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses- all because of the wanton lust of the harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and people by her witchcraft.” – Nahum 3:1-4

3. Disobedience!

And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. – Jonah 4:2

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God Cares Deeply About How Deeply We Care About People!

III. The “Theology” of Jonah

1. God is Merciful

“...for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.” – Jonah 4:2

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2. God is Sovereign

“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths (or in Jonah’s case, on the inside of a ship), you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” – Psalm 139:7-10

“When events are in front of us, we have a moral duty to act. When events are behind us, all we can do is place our trust in God that he is ultimately guiding history.” John Stemberger

IV. The Implications of God’s Mercy and Sovereignty in our Calling

1. God has sovereignly put people in your life and path. What will you do?

2. We should not be “outdone” by unbelievers in showing mercy!

“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” – James 2:15-17