

## Jonah 4:4-11 – The Picture and Personification of God – Lesson Summary

My 2-year-old daughter is in that stage in which she believes she's self sufficient and in control. It's as if she's become an immovable rock of independence and authority. Perhaps you've had the same experience. When considering the conclusion of the book of Jonah we see Jonah behave in a similar manner. He firmly plants himself on a hill awaiting Nineveh's destruction. Despite God's deliverance, Jonah wants destruction. Jonah wants his way above God's. However, God wants to reveal Himself to Jonah. I believe the final verses of Jonah provide the clearest picture of God as He interacts with His stubborn prophet.

The story has come full circle. Jonah is not ok with how God is handling things. He's just blamed God for his sin and asks God to take his life. He opposes God's grace as he uses God's Word against Him. However, God displays His grace again as He asks probing questions in order to expose Jonah's heart. God asks Jonah if he "does well to be angry". He's helping Jonah see the error of his ways. He's pointing out Jonah's blindness to the very grace he has received. Yet Jonah's response suggests he's still lost in his own stubbornness.

Without words Jonah's heart is exposed as he remains silent. Rather than answer the question he simply leaves Nineveh, sets up a tent, sits down, and waits for destruction. Essentially Jonah establishes his little tent "kingdom", sits on his "throne", and hopes for Nineveh to be consumed by fire. Despite his actions, God continues to move toward Jonah as he provides an object lesson in order to prepare Jonah for His next question. God provides a plant and shade for Jonah. For the first time, Jonah is exceedingly pleased. God's provision of the plant brings him great joy. This is the opposite of Jonah's response to God's deliverance of Nineveh in which Jonah is exceedingly displeased. God brings Jonah comfort and he's happy. But God doesn't allow Jonah's comfort to last too long as He provides a worm to eat the plant and causes a scorching wind. In his discomfort, Jonah wants to die again. God addresses Jonah once more by asking him if he "does well to be angry about the plant". In Jonah's final words of stubbornness and self-righteousness he proclaims, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die". Praise God His final words are much more gracious.

As God responds to Jonah's words He displays His full character. He shows us that He's a God of great compassion, provision, and grace. He's a God who cares deeply for the lost and His people. He desires that we would do the same. There is no greater display of these truths than the person of Christ. In Mt. 12:38-41 Jesus refers to the story of Jonah. As He's challenged to give a sign, Jesus points back to Jonah and declares that He is the greater Jonah, that He will descend to the depths, and that He will provide deliverance and salvation to those who trust in Him. Jesus' life reflects the complete opposite of Jonah's. Jonah walks away from wicked Nineveh but Jesus moves toward the wicked and broken. Jonah builds his own little "kingdom" but Jesus leaves His Heavenly Kingdom. Jonah sits on his "throne" of judgment but Jesus steps off of His throne of righteousness. Jonah waits for destruction but Jesus takes on destruction and surrenders His life for the guilty. His body is destroyed so that we might experience His grace. If Christ did not take on the form of man, live a perfect life, die a perfect death, and be resurrected, we would be lost in our hopeless state. Jonah fails to understand the depths of God's love for the unrighteous, Jonah included. The story of Jonah is a story about God. It's a story about our God who gives grace to the graceless through Jesus Christ.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1) What are the areas in your life in which you find yourself the most stubborn? Why do you think you react this way? How do you act like Jonah at times?
- 2) Jonah is happy when he gets good things but angry when others do. Ultimately this exposes Jonah's entitlement (believing he is owed something). What are the areas in your life in which you feel most entitled? What are the things that you believe you deserve?
- 3) Jonah set up camp (his own little kingdom) and sat down (on his throne) to wait for destruction. Jesus does the complete opposite. Jesus leaves His Kingdom, steps off His throne and takes on mankind's deserved destruction. What kingdoms have you built in which you feel entitled to play God? How can you surrender that kingdom back to the Lord?