

Life-Link

Topic: How dare you call it unclean II?

Life- Link Study #39

Introduction

Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?" "Yes," Jonah retorted, "even angry enough to die!" Then the Lord said, "You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. It came quickly and died quickly. But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Shouldn't I feel sorry for such a great city?" Jonah 4:10, 11 (NLT)

We all remember the popular story of Jonah and his mission to Nineveh with God's message to the city. Nineveh was known as the wicked city (vs 2), and God needed someone to alert them of their act and warn them of the impending danger. Jonah was unwilling to go to Nineveh, not because he hated Nineveh, nor did he prefer God's wrath on them, but because of his own self-image. We read that Jonah escaped heading towards a different direction. He would rather endure a suicide dive in the sea rather than ease off the ship of his self image. Jonah was God's messenger, and overtime he has learnt how God responds to people - absolutely merciful, slow to anger, massively kind.

Just as he expected, the people believed Jonah's message and decided to repent. From the story it feels like Jonah would rather have them disbelieve his prediction for the doom and gloom message he brought to come true. All he wanted was to be held in high esteem for his accurate prediction. However, just as Jonah envisaged, God changed His mind when the people repented (Read Jonah 3:5-10).

"This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. So he complained to the Lord about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. Just kill me now, Lord! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen." (Jonah 4:1-3, NLT)

In essence, Jonah got upset: *God, how dare you change your mind!? - How could you make me a liar instead? - Couldn't you destroy this city to enhance my credibility as a messenger of God? - For my credibility, I'd rather you destroy the city*

Whilst Jonah paid attention to his pride, he lost sight of the one hundred and twenty thousand residents of the city. Just like Peter, instead of seeking the inclusions of others into the commonwealth of promise, he excluded the rest of the world by focusing on the rule (refer to study 38). Quoting from the previous study, "acceptance is a difficult call if all you have known is focused in one direction (self). The inability to accept change, accept others, accept new ideas or become teachable is the condition known as, 'small mindedness.'

Q1: Criticism is one way of measuring people against our standards. Acceptance is being vulnerably satisfied. Discuss how these statements describe a willing messenger of God. [Who do we change to see a change, me or them?]

Q2: Is it possible to apply God's perspective in an obviously lawless situations? How can we do this?

Prayer

Lord, if you gave me an opportunity to choose where I would belong, I would choose to be your eyes, to see my city the way you see me. Help me to accept others without grudge or criticism, just the way you took me in. Amen.