**“God of Mercy: The Making of Missionaries”**

**Jonah 4:1-11**

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 8/1/21)

Every day we encounter people who are on their way to Hell… a Christ-less eternity. How would we know them, or why would we even care about them if we are out of tune with the God of the Bible? If our personal comfort, or our reputation, or anything else takes precedence over our commission from Christ, we are not even going to notice “those people.”

The Book of Jonah is primarily a book about God. His mercy is relentless toward those on the outside, and His mercy is relentless toward His own children. God wants to bring us from our state of half-hearted obedience to whole-hearted obedience as His ambassadors.

Verse 11 ends with no answer from God’s sulking child. Jonah is not suffering from a lack of understanding about God; his struggle is that he doesn’t live out what he knows to be true about God. Jonah needed to learn about himself. He needed to be confronted with the fact that he cared more for his comfort than he cared for the perishing people of Nineveh. Jonah’s affections are bound up in his circumstances and God’s gifts, instead of in God Himself. God’s affections are attached to people He has made in His image, those He proposes to save.

Some commentaries say that “those who don’t know their right hand from their left” refers to young children. Pastor Steve thinks that that phrase refers to those who are spiritually ignorant, those in spiritual darkness. This was true of the Ninevites, “believing themselves wise, they became fools.” Then God opened their eyes when His word was sent in the power of His Spirit. How about people in 2021? Most are in spiritual darkness, measured against God’s holiness. Unfortunately, many of us immerse ourselves in church culture and end up ostracized from “those people” (those God intends to save). (see Rom. 10:13-15) Is it right for you to be so caught up in “church” or politics or busyness or ??? when people are dying to hear the Gospel?

We have come to the last verse of the last chapter in the Book of Jonah. Has Jonah learned his lesson? He was called to go to Nineveh… he disobeyed. He was called again to go to Nineveh… he obeyed half-heartedly. He was moved by the Holy Spirit to write down this account… and he wrote the book that made him look like a dweeb, a failure. HE OBEYED! Read Matt. 12:39-41. Jonah’s experience points us to Christ so that we, too, will have Christ’s fragrance. Jesus refused to give the people a new sign because the entire history of the Hebrew people is a record of God’s grace and mercy. Jonah is eclipsed by Jesus, to the glory of God. Our part in this mission (Matt. 28:18-20) is all about the glory of God.

Read John 15:12-14 and John 3:16-19. Jesus is greater in His message: He didn’t just say, “Judgment is coming.” He gave His life for us and He is coming a second time, when He will ask you to give an account of your life. Are you ready for that day? To escape God’s wrath, there is only one way: to be found ***IN*** Christ, who has already been judged for your sins (swallowed up by death itself for your sake). We serve a RISEN Savior! Jesus will not cast away a single sinner who comes to Him in repentance and faith. Read 2 Cor. 5:20-21. Your sin is covered by His righteousness. Have you run to the shelter of the One who is greater than Jonah?

Jesus is greater than Jonah in His mission. Read Matt. 28:18-20 again. Jesus commands us to share in that mission. Are we pointing others to the same shelter we have found? Pastor John Harper was on the Titanic, heading to Chicago to preach at Moody Church. As the ship was sinking, he went from person to person asking, “Do you know Jesus? Will you repent and turn to Christ?” Surely, we can do the same as long as we have breath. Amen.

**QUESTIONS**:

1. The Book of Jonah ends with God’s probing question to His prophet. How do you think Jonah answered? Explain your answer.
2. Read Jonah 4:2 again. What else do you know to be true about God?
3. What is your role in foreign missions? What is your role in the mission field of your own neighborhood? What is your role in the mission field of your own family?
4. Why does God choose to use imperfect people to fulfill His mission? He could easily do it without us.
5. What all is involved with being an ambassador for Christ?
6. Read the first two lines of the second verse of “Amazing Grace.” What do those two lines mean to you? How should that affect your missionary outlook?

“Amazing Grace” (John Newton)

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see.

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear

The hour I first believed.