

Thank you for this opportunity to talk to you about my work as a missionary. My name is Jonah. I'm the son of Amittai. I grew up near the port city of Joppa. You may have heard about me. I have a great big fish story. My fish story began inside a great big fish. Yet if you have read my book, it's only 4 chapters, you realize that the greatest miracle I wrote about wasn't how the Lord used a fish to save me from drowning. The greatest miracle is how the Lord used his message to save the Ninevites from damnation.

What I'd like .... is for you to see how the Lord can use you to share the same message with those around you. Here's the best advice I can give you: DO NOT, I repeat, DO NOT follow my sinful attitude of selfishness as you think about who you can share God's message with.

For me, it's really hard to admit that I've sinned and done something wrong. It took all the Lord's patience and plenty of his time to teach me the hard lesson of how selfish I really was. I share this because I don't want you to head down the same deadly path I was on.

When the Lord first called me to go to Nineveh, I didn't want to go. It wasn't that I was lazy, or afraid of what they might do to me. I just didn't want those people to learn about the true God. They were Assyrians. You know, the people that hurt my country, captured many of my fellow countrymen and kept collecting huge amounts of taxes from us. They didn't deserve to hear God's Word. And what would my friends think of me, if I tried helping those people?

My sinful attitude of selfishness didn't want them to hear God's Word. Because you know what could happen right? They might repent and the Lord would show them compassion, something they never showed us.

So, I did what I had to. I got on a boat and headed in the opposite direction – toward Tarshish. I tried to put as many miles as possible between myself and those nasty Assyrians in Nineveh.

My sinful selfishness had me and wouldn't let go. So the Lord had to step in. He caused the storm while we were in the boat. Finally, the sailors threw me overboard to save themselves. I should have died and gone to hell because I refused to admit my sinful attitude.

The Lord stepped in. This time he sent this great big fish and kept me alive in its belly. And after 3 days and nights the fish spit me out on the shore. The Lord gave me a second chance to go to Nineveh and preach repentance. This time I went. I wasn't thrilled, but for 3 whole days I said exactly what the Lord told me to say: **40 more days and the Lord's going to destroy you.**

I knew what was going to happen. And sure enough, it did. God blessed the message. Everyone in Nineveh, even the king, repented. God forgave them. He showed compassion. He didn't destroy them like he had threatened.

You'd think I'd be happy. But my attitude was still selfish and sinful. When I saw that God wasn't going to punish the Ninevites, I got angry, so angry that I prayed: **LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.** If God wasn't going to kill the Ninevites, then he might as well kill me.

People repenting and believing in God isn't the kind of thing that should make anyone angry, unless they have a problem. I had a problem. The Lord stepped in. Sounds like a broken record with me, doesn't it? In his compassion he asked me: **Is it right for you to be angry?** I guess he was trying to call me to repentance just, like he was trying to call the people of Nineveh to repentance.

After my exchange with God, I went off to build a shelter. I wanted a front row seat in case God changed his mind about punishing the Ninevites. The sun got really hot that day. Guess what God did? He made a vine grow big enough in one day to provide shade for me.

Much better. But that didn't last long. The next day, God sent a worm to chew up the vine so that it dried up in a single day. The scorching sun and the hot desert winds made me miserable and angry. So angry, I think I repeated myself: **It would be better for me to die than to live.**

What's that? What was I angry about this time? The vine. I know it sounds dumb now, but at the time it really got hot sitting there. I know! I know! That's so selfish. I'm angry that my shade got destroyed, while waiting for a city, which included 120,000 children, to get destroyed. That sounds really bad. How sinfully selfish was I? I cared more about a plant than a city full of families with children!

Thankfully, the Lord patiently confronted my selfish sinful attitude again and again. Thanks to the Lord, he led me to see my sins. Thanks to the Lord, his compassion wasn't only on the people of Nineveh but it was on me too.

The Lord may not send you to a foreign city, but he's placed opportunities around you right now so you can share God's Good News. Don't fall into the same sin that I fell into. Make sure you closely examine your heart. Unfortunately, there's a Jonah inside of you too. How can you tell?

- Are their people you don't think deserve to have the Lord in their lives, like he is in yours? That was my attitude and it's sinful.
- Are their people you don't want to share the Lord with because their life style, their skin color, or their speech is different than yours? That was my attitude and it's sinful.
- Are you afraid of what your friends might say if you brought God up in a conversation? That was my attitude and it's sinful.
- Do you just want to stay in your own comfort zone, where it feels safe, and let someone else talk about God? That was my attitude and it's sinful.

When you and I examine our hearts in the mirror of God's Law, we see how it convicts us and every sinner. Repent! Confess your sins.

While God wants you to be well-aware of your sin, he also wants you to appreciate his mercy. He has compassion on you just like he had on me. And the same compassion that you've experienced, he has for everyone else too - no matter who they are, where they come from, or what they've done.

Share the forgiveness and compassion of God. Yes, we've failed to keep the Law, but the Savior has kept it for you and for me and for every sinner. And he's paid the price and suffered the punishment for you and for me and for every sinner. By faith God credits what the Savior did to your account and mine and everyone who believes.

You have one more thing to share that I never got the opportunity to share. You get to share the proof that this is not fake news. It is the truth. You can share the truth that is more incredible than me still being alive after 3 days in the big fish's belly. What is that truth? Jesus alive after being in the belly of the earth for 3 days. Yes! Jesus' Easter resurrection is the proof that God forgives you and me and every sinner.

So pray for opportunities to share God's grace and compassion with those around you. Pray that the message would touch their hearts like it touched yours and the Ninevites and eventually mine.

I pray that God has worked through my testimony this morning to encourage you to share the Good News with others. The Lord used that Good News to show me compassion and saved me, just like he's shown you compassion and saved you.