

Responding to the Work of God

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[0 : 00] Hey, are we excited that our King is coming back and all of heaven rejoices when we read about what is going on in heaven?

What is going on in heaven every moment of every day, 24 hours a day? What? The angels are praising God with a loud voice all around the throne room of God.

It was so exciting. It was so majestic. Isaiah had to bow down and just realize that he didn't deserve to be in the presence of God.

And shouldn't we, who are children of God, born of God through Jesus Christ, bought by the blood of the Lamb, know that we need to be praising God as well?

Not only is Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, but he is the Lion of Judah and he is in complete control today. This is not part of the message, but I just feel this week I've been hearing more and more about how sometimes we feminize Jesus too much.

[1 : 20] He looks like this little meek Italian that just looks like he couldn't fight his way out of a wet paper bag.

But you know what? Jesus was also called the Lion of Judah. He is majestic. He's powerful. He is going to come back one day.

He is going to set things in order. And that's the same Jesus that we serve today. He is powerful and he is almighty. Well, this morning we are in the book of Jonah.

And just to recap a little bit about what's been going on in Jonah's life, God calls out to Jonah. He says, get up, Jonah. I want you to go to Nineveh and I want you to tell them what I tell you, that their wickedness has come up before me.

And if they don't change their tune, I'm going to give them 40 days. And if not, if they haven't changed, I'm going to come down and I'm going to literally wipe them off the face of the earth.

[2 : 24] I'm going to overthrow them. But if they repent, then I'm going to show mercy upon them. Jonah didn't like that. He didn't like the Assyrians.

And he didn't think they were worthy of God's mercy and worthy of God's grace. So instead, he goes the opposite direction because he knew what God would do if they repented.

He didn't want to see that happen. So he goes the opposite direction, gets on a boat. There's a storm. Sailors end up throwing him in the water. God sends a fish. Fish swallows him. Jonah prays. Fish vomits Jonah out on dry land.

And he hits the ground running. He says, I'll go. He goes. He says what God tells him to say. And Nineveh repents.

Jonah doesn't like it. Jonah finally preached to the people of Nineveh. They repented. And Jonah was so unhappy.

[3 : 26] We looked at his motives and our motives last week for why we serve. Sometimes we serve out of obligation. You know, we've talked earlier about nursery workers.

We've talked earlier about cleaning the church building. Cutting grass. Whatever.

And if we ever come to it as saying, well, you know what? Nobody did it this week or nobody's doing it next week. And so, well, you know what? I got to do it.

That's not the right motive. It doesn't matter whether we're leading worship, whether we're preaching, or whether we're running a vacuum. Or whether we're taking care of a baby.

You know what we're doing? We're doing all, hopefully, doing all as if unto the Lord, not unto men. And so, yesterday on the lawnmower, it's like, I'm doing this for Jesus.

[4 : 26] And again this afternoon. If we're doing it with the right motives, there's going to be joy in our life. Our motives for service are always going to come out sooner or later, just like Jonas did.

And it's going to come to the forefront. Do you realize that God's mercy and God's grace should lead the believer to have joy and peace in their life?

If we see God working, and if we know that God is doing the work of God according to the will of God, it should give us peace and joy to be part of that program.

But that wasn't Jonas' place. He wasn't excited. He wasn't happy about what God was doing. You see, Jonas' hope was misplaced. What Jonas' hope was to see the Assyrians get their just desserts.

That's what Jonas really wanted to see because Jonas made everything about himself. If you read the book of Jonas, who is Jonas making all of this about?

[5 : 33] Not God, for sure. He's not making it about the souls of the Ninevites. Because everything Jonas does all throughout the story, the account that we have of Jonas, Jonas made it all about himself.

Well, I don't want to do it. Well, you know what? I'm upset. You know, I'm angry. God, just kill me. God, just, I don't want to go on living. I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm.

And the whole story of Jonas was about himself. See, Jonah responded wrongly to the work of God. Jonah responded in a negative way to what God was doing.

Think about this. Our attitude towards the will of God can have an effect on our actions toward the work of God. If we think that God is doing something that we don't particularly like, or if he doesn't do something that we would like for him to do, it's going to affect the way we serve.

You know, sometimes people stop giving because, you know, they don't like something. Or sometimes stop, people stop attending, attending worship because, well, you know, I'm, I'm mad at God.

[6 : 51] I'm upset at God because, because God didn't do what I wanted him to do. I've, I've seen, I've seen this all throughout my ministry. People respond wrongly because their attitude toward the will of God affected their actions toward the work of God.

And today's text in verses five through eight of Jonah chapter number four reveals some of the characteristics. about, of someone who has a negative attitude that allowed his emotions to control his life.

Let's look at the book of Jonah chapter number four, beginning with verse number five. So Jonah went out of the city. This was after Nineveh repented in sackcloth and ashes.

The king declares a fast and he says, we all need to repent because we're going to be in trouble if we don't. And they realized and they recognized that they were in trouble and they knew that it was urgent and something needed to be done.

And they needed to change their actions because they realized that God was all powerful. So this is the way Jonah responded. Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city.

[8 : 09] There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord prepared a plant, made it come up over Jonah that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery.

So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. And the Lord God prepared a plant. Now you're going to have to possibly change this.

Everything's getting goofy this morning. And the Lord prepared a plant, made it come over. That's not working. Come over Jonah that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery.

So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But as morning dawned, the next day God prepared a worm. And so it damaged the plant that it withered.

And it happened when the sun arose that God prepared a vehement east wind. And the sun beat on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

[9 : 18] Now, can we relate to this? What does it look like when a person's emotions get control of their life and get control of our response to the work of God?

Well, for example, a person may lose their job and then become angry and question God. And why would God allow such a thing to happen?

And they may let their emotions consume them, get upset at God, and fail to see that God has a plan for them. And maybe God has a better place for them.

And that losing their job was either something to teach them something, or that God had something better prepared. So if we let our emotions control us and we fly to a negative conclusion and we forget that God is always in control, God always has his hand on our life.

And everything in our life God is using to work towards his good and his will. Maybe a person's been hurt by someone and they struggle to forgive them, even if they know it's what we're supposed to do.

[10 : 41] Maybe their emotions of anger or their emotions of hurt may control their response and may be causing them to push away from what God is wanting to do, maybe in that relationship.

Or maybe a person wants something very badly, and they pray about it. And they become frustrated when things don't work out the way that they want it to work out, and they feel like God isn't listening.

Or God doesn't care about me because he's not answering my prayer and giving me what I want. And so then they allow their negative emotions to control them and control their attitude and their response to God instead of just trusting in sovereignty and trusting in his will.

Do we tend to respond to things like that in our life? You bet we do. So we all have the tendency to respond wrongly to the work of God.

There are some times in our life we may be tired, we may be frustrated, and we may tend sometimes to respond wrongly to the work of God in our lives, but also in the lives of others.

[12 : 00] Like Jonah, we can become angry. Or we can become frustrated because things aren't going the way we want. Things aren't being done the way we want.

And like Jonah, we can get frustrated. We can get mad about it. How did Jonah respond to the work of God? But it displeased Jonah exceedingly.

He said he got angry, verse number 4, and he became what? He became angry because what God was doing displeased Jonah so much, he got mad.

At whom did Jonah get mad, do you think? He might have gotten mad at God. He might have gotten mad at the situation. But nonetheless, he became angry.

Verse 5, So Jonah went out of the city, sat on the east side of the city, and then he makes himself a booth or a hut. The language seems to infer from it.

[13 : 10] So he made him some kind of shelter that he might sit in the shade and get comfortable till he might see what might become of the city.

Here's what I think. Jonah was still hanging on to the thread of hope that God would overthrow Nineveh. See, Jonah's selfish attitude caused him to miss an opportunity in ministry.

Because what happened? You've got 120,000 some odd folks that repent. Jonah is the prophet of God, called by God, sent by God, commissioned by God.

You've got a whole city that wants to begin following God. I'm thinking, Come on, let me add them. Let me disciple them, right?

No, not Jonah. Jonah goes up on the hill, and I think what's going on is Jonah was thinking that the Ninevites might recant.

[14 : 19] And then if they did, and they go back to their wickedness, then God would, in fact, overthrow them. This is what David Jeremiah said about this verse.

He said, Unfortunately, some Christians are uncomfortable being around people in whose heart God is at work. They look at them like Jonah looked at the Assyrians.

David Jeremiah says, I've actually had people say, You know, Pastor, I don't know if we want these kinds of people in our church. He says, That is the Jonah spirit.

Jonah didn't want anything to do with what God was doing in Nineveh. Jonah should rejoice at the salvation of Nineveh, but he didn't. He got mad when they repented.

See, Jonah should have been excited about the work of the Lord, but he pouted instead about the work of the Lord. Jonah hated what was going on in Nineveh.

[15 : 21] I think he still hoped that God would bring judgment on Nineveh. This is what Warren Wiersbe wrote. He says, He could have taught the Ninevites so much about the true God of Israel, but he missed his opportunity.

But he preferred to have his own way. What a tragedy it is when God's servants are a means of blessing to others, but miss the blessing themselves.

Instead of serving in the ministry, Jonah sat in misery. Here he was on the hill. Johnny Hunt said, Resentment and self-centeredness always causes one to miss opportunities to help and minister to others.

We may be quick to judge those who we think are less deserving of receiving God's mercy or maybe even God's grace. Outside the city, Jonah goes and he makes a shelter to shelter himself from the sun.

The east side of the city, geographically, is the hill country. What Jonah did was, Jonah goes up to the hill country and he finds himself a spot where he can look down and probably get the view of the vista of Nineveh.

[16 : 41] So he could see the entire city up from above. Why? I think because he didn't trust the Ninevites. He might have been maybe thinking that they would go right back into their sinning and that God would still have to overthrow them and he didn't want to be anywhere near the fire of God.

He wanted to get himself away from this. But Jonah was ready to wait for God's judgment as long as it took. Think about that.

Jonah was ready to wait for God's judgment as long as it took. Jonah was allowing his emotions to take control of him completely.

So the danger, what are the dangers of allowing our emotions to control us? When we allow our emotions to control us, it could be frustration, it could be anger, it could be any number of things that, any emotions that we might experience because of what's going on around us, our, maybe, what's happening around us.

we risk missing out on the blessings that are right in front of us. And we risk alienating ourselves from God, alienating ourselves from others.

[18 : 04] See, allowing, allowing our emotions to control us can, can cause us to miss some opportunities around us. Let me get out of this.

and then I'm going to let let Elaine control. Let me see where I am.

So there's a danger in allowing our emotions to control us. We might miss opportunities. Maybe God's working in the life of someone else. and maybe because we're frustrated about something, we're going to miss opportunities.

We won't be able to see. We'll be too occupied like Jonah. We'll be too occupied with ourselves and how we feel to get involved in the life of someone else and sometimes strained relationships.

Do you realize when we have a negative attitude, it strains relationships? Jonah could have had a relationship with the people of Nineveh. It could have been a brand new union between former Assyrian idolaters and now they're beginning to worship God and Jonah could have been right alongside and being involved in that repentance and in that great revival.

[19 : 36] But if we're always angry, we're always anxious, it can be difficult for others to be around us. Sometimes we might even, it might even lead to a negative mindset, allowing our emotions, our negative emotions to control us can lead to a negative mindset where everything around us, we see, we see the bad in every situation.

Great things are happening and we look around and all we see is the negative. Great things were happening around Jonah. God was at work. God was at work in the hearts and the minds and the souls and the Ninevites.

But Jonah was so full of himself, Jonah was so in control by his emotions, he couldn't see the good all around him. Instead, all he saw was bad.

That's what negative emotions can do to us. We'll see. And I fall prey to that. You fall prey to that. We all fall prey to that from time to time. So that's when we have to move back and say, God, change my heart, change my mind, help me to see people the way you see people, help me to see my circumstances the way you see things, rather than just seeing it the way Jonah looked around him.

In contrast, when we allow the Holy Spirit to manage our emotions, and when we're able to trust in God's will and trust in God's work, we open up ourselves to blessings that we may have been blind to.

[21 : 11] So allow the Holy Spirit to control us. Allow the fruit of the Spirit to be in control of our life, rather than the fruit of our emotions like Jonah was.

but when we let go of negative emotions, we create space in our life for peace and joy. When we let go of that anger, when we let go of that frustration, when we let go, when we just learn to let go, it leaves a whole lot more space in our life to experience joy and to experience peace.

Because you know what? It's miserable to be miserable. I mean, I've been miserable. And I was talking to someone this week, and they were talking about their mindset.

Remember that, brother? Talking about your mindset about work. When they finally realized this is an opportunity for ministry, and began to see their work differently, their whole attitude changed.

Rather than being distressed to go in, it became a blessing. What happened? The only thing that changed was the mindset. The only thing that changed was the attitude.

- [22 : 46] It went from a negative attitude to a positive attitude. It went from a negative mindset to a positive mindset, and it created so much space for joy and so much space. So let's look at what God, very quickly, what did God do for Jonah?

We look at the next verse. And the Lord God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

What was God trying to teach? Let's look at verse 6 through 8. But as the morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm, and so it damaged the plant that it withered.

Verse number 8, and it happened when the sun arose that God prepared a vehement east wind. The sun beat on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself and said, it is better for me to die than to live.

What was God trying to teach Jonah? The main point, the next main point, is he was trying to teach Jonah the importance of God trusting God's sovereignty.

- [23 : 57] Everything that God does is good. Everything that God does is right. Jonah, just trust me. Jonah, you need to learn to get out of your own self and learn to trust me.

The Lord prepared a plant just like he prepared a great fish. It was probably a tall, leafy plant that would have provided adequate shade.

So the importance of God, the importance of trusting God in his sovereignty, he provided adequate shade for Jonah. The original language that Jonah was written in seems to indicate that it was the castor oil plant that God caused to rise up.

Those just came up normally, naturally, all around Israel and it said it would grow to be about 12 feet tall. Now some believe it might have been a plant called the bottle gourd because those came up very quickly and withered rather quickly.

But we know that it wasn't natural means by which it withered. God caused it to wither. God sent a worm and started eating up the plant and it caused the plant to wither.

- [25 : 15] Notice how messed up Jonah was. We go to verse number six. And the Lord God prepared a plant, came up over Jonah so that it might provide shade for his head.

Obviously, his shelter was inadequate. It didn't totally keep him out of the sun. that it might be shade for his head and to deliver him from his misery.

Notice the next sentence. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. I'm going to explain to you how messed up that was. Jonah wanted God to rain down fire on the repentant people of Nineveh and he wasn't thankful for the work that God was doing in his life, but he was grateful for his own comfort.

He was upset and angry at the work of God, but a plant comes up and he goes, ah, ah, that's so awesome.

I'm excited. He got more excited about his own comfort than he got about the work of God. in the lives of others. Think about how messed up that was.

- [26 : 33] Like I said, he was so full of himself. It was all about Jonah. It was all about Jonah's own comfort. Jonah rathered people die than making himself uncomfortable.

Now, think about ourselves. We may not think this, and not go from preaching to stepping on toes.

Not individually maybe, but I think corporately. And not just us. I think the church, today's church as a whole. I think just like Jonah, we may not think this, we may not actively believe this, but I think practically speaking, churches, many churches today would rather people die and go to hell than make themselves uncomfortable.

Let me say that again. People would rather people die and go to hell than, God forbid, that the church service is not at the time they want, or the music is not the kind of music they like, or someone parts their hair the wrong way and they get upset, but they don't get a bit upset about people not hearing the gospel.

It's awfully quiet in here. Now, I'm just as guilty because if I really saw people the way God saw people, I would spend way more time sharing the gospel.

[28 : 21] I'm just being honest. I fall short. I think we all do. So, I think it takes like Jonah would need just a mindset shift just to begin seeing people the way God saw them.

And any time, now, let this be a, I want to give you a, something to remember. I want to give you a test that you can remember.

So, this is kind of like a litmus test for you. If we get to the point in our life where we begin to complain about our discomfort, let's ask ourselves, am I getting the Jonah attitude?

Am I more concerned about my own comfort? Or am I more concerned about what God is doing and wants to be doing in the lives of others? Think about that.

Let that be your Jonah test. Well, you know what? I don't like this. But what does God want to do? What is God trying to do?

[29 : 36] You know, God did what God was going to do in spite of Jonah. But God wanted Jonah to get on board and be part of it. But God wasn't finished.

With Jonah's object lesson. Let's go on. Look at verses 7 and 8. But as the morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm. And so it damaged the plant that it withered.

Verse number 8. And it happened when the sun arose, God prepared a vehement east wind, the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint, he grew tired, he grew weary, possibly even close to sunstroke, that he wished death for himself, and said, it is better for me to die than to live.

Notice this, or understand this, God is sovereign, and he can take away anything in our life that we love more than him. God can send a worm in your life, and he can take away that money, he can take away that job, he can even take away that family, if we put more love for that person or that thing than we do for God.

So that's what God was trying to teach Jonah, Jonah, I'm in control. Yes, I sent you the plant to give you comfort, but I can just as easily take away your comfort. I can just as easily take away that for which you're excited about.

[31 : 01] When we love things more than God, he can send a worm into our life to destroy that which we are attached to. So not only did God prepare a worm, but he prepared a powerful wind.

Now Jonah is miserable. We're going to see the real lesson next week in the following verses when we continue. But today, remember that God's sovereign and he's got a plan for each one of us.

Even when things don't go our way, even when things don't go according to our plan or our desires, God is still doing his thing.

Even when things don't go our way, we should still trust in God's sovereignty and trust that God is doing what is best.

Trust his goodness and trust his love for you. God wouldn't do anything bad to you. He's told us that. He loves us more than anything, so much so that he sent his son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in your place and in mine.

[32 : 07] God that we would never distrust or not trust what God is doing. May we never have the Jonah attitude toward what God is willing to do, not only in our lives, but in the lives of others.

So verse number five, as we close, Proverbs chapter five verses three, chapter three verses five and six. What does he say? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

Verse six, in all your ways, acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. Just as Jonah learned a valuable lesson for responding wrongly to the work of God, God could take it away just as easily as he sent it.

We too need to examine our hearts, examine our minds, and our attitudes toward the work of God, not only in our lives, but in the lives of others. Remember this, even if you forget everything else about the message, I want you to remember this, let go of negative emotions and trust in God's plan.

You might be frustrated, you might be jealous, you might be angry, you might be hurt, you might, whatever, whatever that emotion is. I've said this and as I counsel, individuals, this is something that I always, always, always have to stress.

[33 : 38] You can feel your emotions, but don't trust them because your emotions will almost always lie to you. Let go of negative emotions and trust in God's plan for he is always at work for your good.

Just let go of that negative emotion and trust God and trust his goodness in your life. Let's not have the Jonah attitude.

Let's pray. Father, this morning we're so, so very thankful for your work in our lives and Lord, I know that this morning maybe the message has been a little harsh for us, but sometimes we just need to look into our own lives and think about and ask ourselves, why do I do what I do?

And Lord, what's my attitude toward what you're doing in my life? Maybe it's sickness, maybe it's that we're not feeling as good physically as we'd like to and maybe we'd be prone to be sorry for ourselves or or, Lord, I just pray that you would help us just to turn our attention to you and just trust what you're doing.

Trust that you will always work things out for our good, those who love you. So, Father, we pray that you would help us to always trust you with our lives completely.

[35 : 20] And Lord, may we get on board with your plan in all that you want to accomplish, not only in our lives, but the lives of other believers and the lives of those out in the world that you want us to share love and grace with.

We thank you, Father, for what you're going to accomplish. Use us, Lord, as the body of Christ, as our faith family. Use us, Father, in your service.

Help us, Lord, to make a kingdom impact for you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. The End