

## **Unearthed Sermon 5 Selfishness—Jonah**

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Greetings from Ozark Christian College!

You have been in a series titled “Unearthed.” Today we’ll be talking about selfishness, with Jonas as our example.

I don’t know you, but I know that you’re human. Selfishness is our default tendency.

- View the online sermon to hear the story of Cooper mowing. Now geometry matters!

We’ll walk through the story and see various dimensions of selfishness play out.

### **Jonah 1:1-3**

**The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.**

- God commissioned Jonah.
- He sent Jonah to Ninevah (Assyria; now Mosul, Iraq).
- Instead, Jonah went to Tarshish to flee from the presence of God.

#### ***First dimension of selfishness: stubbornness toward God.***

- This is a basic human tendency.
- We saw it in Adam and Eve.

### **Jonah 1:4**

**Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.**

- God sent a big storm.
- The others determined Jonah was the cause.
- Jonah said, “Throw me over.”

### **Jonah 1:17**

**Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.**

- While he was in there, he had a change of heart.

### **Jonah 2:10**

**And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.**

- Jonah got a second chance at life. . .
- . . .and at his mission.

### **Jonah 3:1-5**

**Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: “Go to the great city of Nineveh**

and proclaim to it the message I give you.” Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

- This time he obeyed.
- He had success—the people repented.
- But Jonah was upset.

#### **Jonah 4:1-3**

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord, “Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

- “I knew you’d forgive them!”
- Jonah was pouting.

#### ***Second dimension of selfishness: a lack of empathy for others***

- Sometimes it’s overt disregard for the work of others—Jonah resented God’s mercy
- Sometimes it’s simply neglect.
- All of this gets at the damage selfishness causes—such as the storm and the plight of Ninevah.

**James 4:1 “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”**

#### **Jonah 4:5-6**

Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant.

- Jonah waited and watched.
- God provided a plant for shade in the hot desert.

#### **Jonah 4:7-8**

But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, “It would be better for me to die than to live.”

- Was Jonah angry?
- Yes, to the point of death.

#### ***Third dimension of selfishness: self-pity***

- A kid on sidewalk wanting gum

- A guy going to prison and gratitude

### **Jonah 4:10-11**

**But the Lord said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?”**

- God has great compassion.
- “What do you want?”
- Jonah showed a couple good moments.
- “Throw me overboard.”
- He obeyed God’s command and preached to Ninevah.
- In both cases, he had shockingly positive results!
- The story invites us out of the self-destructive impact of selfishness and into the lifegiving power of selflessness.
- We see that on full display in Jesus.
- The prophet that Jesus most directly compared himself to was Jonah!
- Others—Moses (Acts 3), Elisha—all of them spoke of him.
- Where Jonah stumbled, Jesus excelled.
- Consider the garden scene:
  - Jonah resisted the will of God; Jesus submitted to it.
  - Jonah didn’t care for Ninevah; Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).
  - While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8).
  - Jonah felt sorry for himself; for the joy set before him Jesus endured the cross.
- We get to pick.
- “Appointed” appears four times in Jonah—fish, plant, worm, wind.
- This Hebrew word appears in the entire OT only 22 times.
- Rom 2:4 God’s kindness leads us to repentance.
- Even the sting of discipline is for our good.