



## **Jonah**

**“It ends with a question”**

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**Courage Church**

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Six weeks later we are wrapping up on series on the book of Jonah.

And before we get into the last chapter of Jonah, we need to do a brief recap of what has happened so far.

First, God says to Jonah “Go to Nineveh, that GREAT city” and preach to it... and it is important to note, that every time that God speaks to Jonah about Nineveh, he refers to it as that... as “that GREAT city.”

But Nineveh is the capital of Assyria and Jonah hates the Assyrians, because of all the pain to Israel, and really the entire known world at that time, that they had caused. They were a ruthless empire who did what they wanted to whoever they wanted, to get what they wanted.

So instead of making the 500 mile journey by land to Nineveh, Jonah travels to Joppa and jumps on a boat headed 2000 miles the other direction, to a place called Tarshish.

God then sends a storm to overtake the ship that Jonah is on, and he tells the other sailors on the ship that if they throw him over, the storm will stop.

Reluctantly they do it, and the storm stops. The sailors all get saved, and Jonah gets eaten whole by a giant fish, and he lives in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights before getting spit back up onto dry land.

Then God gives Jonah the exact same command: Go to Nineveh, that GREAT city. and this time he goes, and he preaches a sermon to Nineveh that is only 5 Hebrew words long, that basically said that Nineveh has 40 days before it is destroyed.

It was a horrible sermon. It was a heartless sermon. It was the kind of sermon that basically says “I am saying this, so that I am not the one responsible for these people anymore, but I don’t even want them to respond to this. Nineveh deserves what it has coming and the last thing I want to do is to stop the judgment of God from falling on this wicked place.”

That is where Jonah’s heart is at when he preaches... but then something amazing happens.

Nineveh repents.

They turn from their violence, they call a fast, they put on sackcloth.

and because of that, the unrelenting grace of God that meets us right where we are in all of our messes, our violence, our storms and our pride...

God forgives Nineveh, and he repents of the evil that he said that he would do to them. And that is where we pick up today.

With the last verse in Jonah chapter 3, and then we will read all of Jonah chapter 4.

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

## **Jonah's Anger and the Lord's Compassion**

<sup>4</sup> But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. <sup>2</sup> And he prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. <sup>3</sup> Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." <sup>4</sup> And the Lord said, "Do you do well to be angry?"

<sup>5</sup> Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup> Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. <sup>7</sup> But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." <sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." <sup>10</sup> And the Lord said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup> And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much livestock?"

*prayer*

One thing that we have talked about several times in this series is Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is a Jewish holiday that means “the day of atonement” - it is the holiest day of the year in Hebrew culture, because it is the day that all of the sin for all of Israel that entire year is dealt with, all in one day.

And it is dealt with by the sacrifice of two perfect goats. One was killed as a payment for the sins, and the other was sent away bearing the sins on himself so that they could never be brought back up again.

and one of the traditions on this Holy day, is to read the entire book of Jonah during the afternoon services.

For a lot of reasons.

They believe that Jonah’s story is your story. and they believe that it is my story.

and it is another case for how God’s love is so great, that it stretches to the farthest places, and reaches even the most unreachable people. Because on Yom Kippur, you forgive the one who wronged you knowing that God has forgiven you of a debt far greater than anything you could possibly hold over someone else.

But the last chapter of Jonah, is, to put it nicely: Disturbing.

It is really screwed up.

God did something amazing, he forgave an evil city. and in the end the only one that we are left wondering about is the prophet.

What ever happened to that Jonah guy?

The guy who preached, and brought an entire city to repentance, and then was mad that they actually did what he said.

Chapter four begins by saying:

“it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. <sup>2</sup> And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my

country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. <sup>3</sup> Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

Jonah is mad. And if you notice this, you see that from the beginning Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh for reasons *far different* than we are lead to believe in Sunday school as children. He was not afraid of himself getting hurt... because he himself states here that he wants to die. He is not afraid of dying, he has reached a point in his life when he would rather die than see something good happen to someone that he hates.

He makes it clear here, the reason he ran from God, is because he knew if he went to Nineveh, God would show them grace, why?

Because he knew that God is a gracious God, merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

The image that the Hebrew people associated to the concept of “loving kindness” or to be “abounding in steadfast love” as the ESV puts it, is the image of a mother swan who is plucking her out her own feathers and then lining her nest with those feathers so that her offspring won't get poked by her nest... she is bringing herself discomfort in order for them to be able to rest comfortably.

And Jonah knew, GOD IS LIKE THAT! He is willing to do anything for his children. He is willing to come alongside of them in their struggles and in their pain and meet them in their messes, and make himself hurt so that they can experience grace...

and suddenly, the work had been done in Nineveh... The mission was complete.

but there was still work to be done in Jonah.

look what he does:

Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.

So he throws a temper tantrum, he leaves the city, he goes and sits off somewhere in the suburbs where he has a city view, he crosses his arms, he puts a scowl on his face and he waits for God to bring destruction to the city... knowing full well that God was not going to do that.

Grace had already fallen.

But here is something that I don't think that people realize when they read this. God loves the city. He makes that pretty clear to Jonah. And he tells Jonah, "this is the place that I have called you to" and so Jonah goes, he does the littlest possible amount of work to still be able to say that he did the job and then he left.

He was in, and then out.

How many missionaries today do you know, that when God calls them to a city somewhere, they go, raise NOBODY up there, partner with NOBODY, just go in and leave and call it a day?

There is a reason that Jesus didn't say "go into all the world and make converts."

Because converting a person is great, but if you don't then come alongside of that person and begin to walk through what it means to actually be a follower of Jesus Christ, and how that looks in their lives, then how are they supposed to know? God makes it clear at the end of this book, Nineveh was a place that didn't know their right hand from their left.

That is another example of why Jesus DID say: "Go in to all the world and make disciples!" and he explains discipleship this way in Luke... He says "a disciple, when he is fully trained, will not be greater than his teacher... but he will be like him!"

Everyone is disciplined by someone. Our world is being disciplined right now... There are plenty of influences out there that are shaping our culture, just not necessary by the right people or for the right things. and the problem is that so often the church loses the opportunity to have that influence, because it acts just like Jonah. They come in screaming turn or burn, hell fire and brimstone... but they aren't willing to do the dirty work of getting down in the trenches with the people that need to meet Jesus.

And if you convert people but don't disciple them, over time they will likely start to fall back into the way that whoever is in their lives acts. And that is why people can get saved, and never ever grow... and even go backwards.

But Isaiah tells us that God's people will be known for rebuilding the cities. Not just giving them words of condemnation and then dipping out on them. And Nineveh was a place that had been met in their mess by amazing grace, but they needed more than a "one and done" crusade.

I love the way that the message version words Isaiah 58:12, it says:

"You will be known as those who can fix anything - restore old ruins - rebuild and renovate - make the community livable again."

God doesn't just call people into the city to do quick fixes.

He calls us to restore the streets that we dwell in.

Jeremiah 29 is one of the strongest cases you get for that... it is a situation similar to Jonah... Israel is in captivity in Babylon, so naturally they have an enormous amount of hatred and ill feelings towards the Babylonians... and so they are trying to, kind of create their own little suburbs off to the side somewhere and have their perfect country club world where they stick to their own culture and their own people and not interact at all with the Babylonians, who are the reason they are there in the first place.

but God says NO NO NO NO. I want you to build houses in BABYLON. I want you to take wives there, and plant gardens there, and dedicate your life to the place that I have put you in exile. Because you are there for a reason, and it is not just you... but until this place is thriving you won't

thrive either... everything about your welfare will be wrapped up in the welfare of the city.

God tells those in exile: as the city goes, so do you.

It is not just about a punishment.

It is also about potential.

Because if enough of my people make this place their home, rather than look at it from the outside and separate themselves from it... then this place is going to start getting better. People are going to start seeing houses get restored, and they are going to want to do it too. People are going to start seeing people working out issues together with a community, issues that everybody else feels like they are walking through alone, and they are going to want to be a part of THAT community.

and that is the same thing that God is trying to do in Jonah, but JONAH WILL HAVE NOTHING OF IT. and because of that, he made an "in and out" impact, that did cause God change his mind about how he would deal with them, and that generation was saved by grace... but it did not take long for Nineveh as a whole to fall right back into their evil and violent ways... and just like I have told you this entire series, just like Rome fell, and just like every other empire over the course of history that rose to power through violence eventually fell, the Assyrian empire fell as well.

Listen, do you realize how screwed up Nineveh was?

I am going to read something to you. And most likely this will surprise you. Because it is from a book of the bible that is not often taught from.

Have you ever heard of the book of Nahum?

It is in the bible. and it is believed to have been written AFTER the book of Jonah. Now, we know from Jesus, that Nineveh repented at the words of Jonah, so that generation was spared.

But look what happened, several generations later.



Nahum comes on the scene, and he describes a totally devastating picture of Nineveh. In fact it is the purpose of his entire book. He begins by saying

“An oracle of Nineveh.”

and he gives us some of the most graphic language that we get in the entire bible, about what the city of Nineveh was actually like.

2:10 -

Desolate! Desolation and ruin!

Hearts melt and knees tremble;  
anguish is in all loins;  
all faces grow pale!

3:1-5 -

Woe to the bloody city,

all full of lies and plunder—  
no end to the prey!

<sup>2</sup> The crack of the whip, and rumble of the wheel,  
galloping horse and bounding chariot!

<sup>3</sup> Horsemen charging,  
flashing sword and glittering spear,  
hosts of slain,  
heaps of corpses,  
dead bodies without end—

they stumble over the bodies!  
<sup>4</sup> And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute,  
graceful and of deadly charms,  
who betrays nations with her whorings,  
and peoples with her charms.

<sup>5</sup> Behold, I am against you,  
declares the Lord of hosts,  
and will lift up your skirts over your face;

So this is what later became of Nineveh, and I am sure that a lot of this was going on in Jonah's day which is probably more reason why he got out as quickly as he can.

Nahum describes the streets of Nineveh as being filled with dead bodies with no end. Heaps of corpses that you would stumble over as you tried to walk down the street.

Whoring. Prostitution. Anguish is in everyone and everyone's faces are pale. The place is a disaster.

Sin runs rampant. Violence runs rampant. Death is everywhere.

and I wonder, what could have been different had Jonah, the man of God who was called to Nineveh, actually determined that he was going to learn to love that city, determined that he was going to learn the things that they loved... and the things that they struggled with...

I wonder what would have been different if he figured out the sins that were plaguing that place, and rather than just telling them to lay it down and then he took off... and instead he moved in, and he held them accountable... and he did life with them the way that Jeremiah and Isaiah talk about the Godly moving in and actually being the change in the community.

Imagine if he determined that he was going to dedicate his life to seeing that city change.

we all know, change is much bigger than saying a prayer. Discipleship is a lifestyle and it takes place in the context of being in community with people.

It takes saying "I am all in."

But Jonah said "no way." He preached his message, God still moved, God still got his result, and that generation saw some amazing repentance.

but Ultimately, Jonah's bitterness may have got in the way of his destiny.

But the city, in the grand scheme of things, did not change.

I have had a lot of conversations with people lately about what it actually takes to see a city change... and of course that answer is far beyond me.

but from everything that I can tell when I read the biblical models that we get, it has everything to do with the people of God submerging themselves into the city... learning it, learning to love it, building things there, loving people there... not just serving people out of a guilt that says you should be helping... but actually living life with people.

but in a city like ours, that comes with all sorts of challenges.

Dawn and I were talking about it on our drive home last night, about a neighborhood in New York that it seems like hasn't quite caught up to the rest of the city when it comes to development. and of course the issue is simple, until people move in, it won't get better... but until it gets better, people don't want to move in.

I had a similar conversation with some of the students on Friday about *our* city... and about just how much Detroit needs. and we were talking about all the store fronts around that are just sitting, all over Detroit, but some even not far from here, on Vernor... and all the houses, everywhere, that are just sitting...

and they aren't doing anything with them...

Most aren't even for sale... because people are just holding out, waiting for the neighborhood to turn around so that everything will go way up in value and then they can sell it when it is at its peak and *then* get out.

That is the opposite of seeking the welfare of the city, and I will tell you why.

Take Vernor... amazing street filled with even more amazing potential, yet there are still entire blocks of storefronts just sitting empty with what seems to be owners who are just waiting out the market.

most not even on the market.

If they are listed at all, they make prices too high for anyone to come in and do anything great.

But until someone does buy them, and DOES put something amazing in, then the block will never get better. Until someone does buy the abandoned house, and does make it better, and does bring more hope to the neighborhood, it is never going to get better.

That is what makes the system so distorted and broken, because its selfish.

and I am not saying that everyone who owns property and is not doing anything with it is selfish... not at all. But if your entire plan is to hold on to something, and get rich off of the fact that other people care about something that you don't actually care about, and you are holding on to something that someone else could use to make a positive impact so you can wait and see what that impact could mean for your life... that is twisted. Can we all agree that we should be a part of the change, not wait for it!

A lot of people who do have their hands in our city, and any city for that matter, have their own comfort and future in mind.

People are holding on to something, hoping that *someone else* puts something in the neighborhood that makes it so they can sell their land for more. and they can cash in on what others are building.

But who is actually willing to do the work to make their little piece of the world better so that the rest of the world can gain a little?

Who will bloom where they are planted and see the world changed starting with their block? But most people don't think that way. They think about their own comfort, and how to most easily get the outcome that most benefits them.

Look at Jonah, all he thought about was HIS comfort, it was so selfish if you really think about it:

Verse 6-9:

“Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. <sup>7</sup> But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.”

Okay, so this is when it gets really weird.

Jonah goes out to the suburbs, watching. And even though God knows that Jonah is being a total poor sport about all of this, he appoints a plant to come and provide shade for Jonah. So this plant springs forth, and something happens that hasn't happened in the entire book.

Suddenly, Jonah is **exceedingly glad**.

Notice this. Jonah was NOT exceedingly glad about being called to Nineveh. He wasn't exceedingly glad when the fish spit him up onto dry land and He got the calling again... and He wasn't exceedingly glad when Nineveh repented at his five worded sermon... In fact, the opposite.

He preached. They repented. He himself became evil because he was so mad.

the only time in the entire book of Jonah that we see the prophet happy is when a plant comes and gives him shade that he can rest under.

The only time in the entire book of Jonah that our main character is happy is when he is comfortable.

It is not when he is serving. It is not when he is obeying. It is when he has retreated to his own little “safe space” in a world that he does not have to interact with anyone or be anything to anything and he can have his little

day dreams about bad things happening to people who had already repented.

What a sad sad reality.

So God wakes him up from that reality. And he sends a worm to come and kill the plant.

And suddenly Jonah is exceedingly angry about the plant, and he asks God to kill him.

It is the same thing that he says to God when he spares Nineveh, in verse 3... In verse three he says "Oh Lord, take my life from me" and now in verse 8 he asks God that he might die.

Over a plant.

I mean, he preaches a five worded sermon and brings an entire city to repentance... and he wants to die because of that...

the only thing that makes him happy the entire story is a plant that gives him some shade... and then the moment the plant goes away, he wants to die because the plant went away.

Because Jonah has a very distorted view of God. He believes that God should pity his comfort but should should confront Nineveh's past.

Jonah is a prophet who has the impression that his life is supposed to be comfortable. He gets called to Nineveh, instead he goes to Tarshish. A paradise. He hates the Assyrians with all of his heart and wants Nineveh to get torched... and yet he expects God to have compassion on him when his comfortable world gets a wrench thrown into it and in case you haven't figured this out yet, God is not interested in making sure we are comfortable.

Jesus didn't die so we could sit on our couches in our heated houses listening to our favorite songs all day and watching Oprah. He died so that we could live and so we could share that life with others and so he gave us

the great commission and he said GET OUT THERE AND MAKE DISCIPLES!

God asks Jonah... seriously... Jonah... “do you do well to be angry?”

and I seriously cant comprehend what on earth could be going through the mind of the prophet here...

“Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.”

and that sets God up for the finale.

So, lets look at the way this book ends.

Because it is peculiar and it seems open ended and in many ways it is...

Because we would expect the book to end with Nineveh repenting, Jonah rejoicing, and Gods name being glorified. and instead it ends by talking about a city that doesn't know its right hand from its left and it has a bunch of animals in it. Thats the last thing the book talks about... so lets look at it.

The book of Jonah ends with God asking Jonah a very interesting question...

“You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup> And should not I pity Nineveh, that *great* city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much livestock?”

There are several keys to this. Several things that really stand out. First of all, here we are at the end, and God is still using this word, “great.” Nineveh is not just any city, it is “a great city.”

The word “Great” is the Hebrew word: גדול “*gadowl*” and here are the meanings of the word: large, loud, **important**, **influential**.

**IMPORTANCE OF THE CITY.**

and I think that this is something that people tend to fly by.

but in the bible, and if you were to study the history of the early church and the way that it all spread, from the disciples to the missionaries that would follow, the majority of efforts to spread the gospel was always done in the city.

They went everywhere, but they focused the most effort on cities.

Because it is an undeniable fact that where comfort can be found in the suburbs, a nice green plant that will provide you with shade can be found in the suburbs...

culture is shaped in the city.

In the city, you have thousands and thousands of people walking down the same streets every day, working toward a lot of the same things every day... you don't usually have as much nature and as much space but what you do have are people.

A lot of them.

A lot more of them than anywhere else.

You can impact people anywhere. And we should be impacting people... But if you want to impact a culture your best shot at doing that is the city.

There are cultural centers. There are places that the world is looking to, to see how that place goes... and as the city goes, so will everything else.

Nineveh was a great city... it was by definition both important and influential. Which means that whatever became of Nineveh was going to have an impact on the rest of the world.

If the name of God is pronounced here... it will be heard of everywhere.

and we live in a city just like this. A place that is known for its violence. A place that is known for its crimes. A place that is known as the arson capital



of the world, and yet it doesn't take a genius to know that in the times throughout history when Detroit was functioning to its fullest capacity it was one of the most influential cities in the world. Everybody knew Detroit. and everybody had products that came out of here... everybody was sold what we were selling and they believed that they couldn't live without it.

Because when the city is strong, it is unstoppable.

A lot of eyes are on Detroit right now, for different reasons than in the past... because a lot of startups are coming out of here... a lot of artists are moving into here... people are creating and growing and learning together and they are kind of pioneering something new here. And what maybe began in downtown and midtown then spread to cork town, and it will continue to spread out and out and out from the center.

Things that are being created here are impacting the world.

I had heard, and I can't verify this, but I did hear that this last year was the first year we have recorded a growth in population, in a very long time... people are starting to see... "If I want to be a part of where culture is going, I need to get *there*."

and that is why God is so adamant that the church be the ones rebuilding those places because they are the centers of culture. Because Detroit is going to continue to grow and innovate and make impacts on our world and it is truly is going to go down in history as one of the greatest comeback stories of all time and when the church of Jesus Christ is front and center in that restoration then the gospel will move forward in so many ways that we could never imagine.

God loves the city because he loves people. And the city is FULL of people.

Look what he says: there are 120,000 people there, who don't know their right hand from their left...

He says, you care about a plant because it made you comfortable? Yet you expect that I would not have pity on 120,000 people who don't even realize

what they are doing to themselves? They don't even realize what they are doing to each other?

They don't even know their right hand from their left.

Maybe if someone would go in there, and show them their right hand from their left, it would be different. But they don't even know.

How can I crush people who don't even know? They don't know what the love of God actually looks like. They have never experienced *agape* love in any tangible form that they can understand.

and then he ends by saying: and much livestock... some translations will say "cattle" and others just "animals"

and this is where we come back around, to the beginning.

To Yom Kippur.

To repentance.

To forgiveness.

Because before Jesus Christ came and lived a perfect life and died on the cross ultimately fulfilling YOM KIPPUR so that we don't have to sacrifice animals anymore in order to have forgiveness.

the sacrificial system in the day was animals.

On Yom Kippur, it was two goats.

In Genesis 4 when Cain and Abel both brought an offering to the Lord, Cain brought some fruit off of the ground... but not Abel. Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and that was his offering. And the bible said that the Lord accepted Abel's offering... but he denied Cain's. He denied to fruit, and he accepted the livestock.

In Exodus during the passover, it was the blood of a lamb that had to be put on the doorpost.

It was the only system by which a person could move on with their lives, and never look back.

and so God ends the book of Jonah by saying “you have pity on a dumb plant... because the fact that it withered has taken away your comfort...”

why should I, a gracious and merciful God (who is like a swan who plucks her own feathers out for the sake of her kids... who gives up her own comfort for the sake of her kids) who is always on the side of *people*, not have mercy on such an influential world city filled with more people than anywhere else, who doesn't even know their right hand from their left.

God tells Jonah... THEY DON'T EVEN REALIZE WHAT THEY ARE DOING!

But the potential for repentance is everywhere in Nineveh.

All Jonah saw were pagans.  
But all God saw was potential.

and here we are, in Detroit. In a world that sometimes seems like it is so far from God that there is no going back, and yet the potential for repentance is everywhere you look.

and people are dying for something that will give them life here. They are.

and they can spend their whole life searching, But its only found in Jesus.

When John the baptist saw Jesus approaching him, he said these words, and they are so powerful... he said:

“Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the earth.”

What John the baptist is saying is that there only has to be one more sacrifice.

And we know now, that that sacrifice has been made. Yom Kippur was taken care of once and for all by Jesus Christ's death on the cross of Calvary.

and so the question now becomes, do you believe that God's grace is big enough to cover even the worst things that you have done? Do you actually believe that Jesus is Yom Kippur... that he is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world?

and if the answer to that question is yes, then the next question becomes:

Do you believe that God's grace is big enough to cover even the worst things that other people have done? Or is grace only limited to the people who are like you?

The book of Jonah ends with a question.

Should I not pity?

and I think that we need to ask ourselves that same question today, in the midst of our world right now... Should I not pity?

Should I not err on the side of grace?

Should I not meet people right where they are?

Should I not believe in peoples potential?

Their potential for repentance? Their potential for change? Their potential to make something out of their life that nobody would have expected out of them?

The reason the story of Jonah did not seem strange to his original audience is because they all felt the same way as He did. They all had hate in their hearts toward Nineveh. And that is why I think that that last line is so powerful... That last question...

Should I not pity?

It should be a wake up call to everyone who has ever held anything over someones head. and myself included. That should just blast me over the head for every time I ever failed to let something go.

It was a wake up call to Israel that they needed to relearn what it means to love and then they needed to direct that love toward Nineveh, a place they were taught all their lives to hate.

It was a wake up call to Jonah, that God loves people more than he does the things that make us comfortable.

and it is a wake up call to us. That we must love people. And believe in their potential to change, and never ever give up on that potential.

And it is a call to us, to search our own hearts, and see where real change needs to take place in us.

Because anything that isn't growing, is dying. And as long as you are growing, things will be changing. Your love will grow. Your capacity for others will grow. Your hope in Jesus will grow.

You will grow in your boldness to speak truth to people in love, even when you know that its not easy.

But isn't it comforting to know that even in a place as dark and as evil as Nineveh, all God saw was potential?