

Jonah 3:10-4:11

¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

Jonah's Anger at the LORD's Compassion

4 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. ² 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. ³ Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

⁴ But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. ⁸ 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."

⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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?”

Matthew 18:21-35

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

²² Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

²³ “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶ “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ ²⁷ The servant’s master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.

²⁸ “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

²⁹ “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

³⁰ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had

happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³² "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵ "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Intro

Please keep your Bibles open at chapter 4 of Jonah.

You can follow the outline in your bulletin and take notes if you wish.

In the world of **studying the mind and personalities** – there is a **theory** called **transactional analysis** – and one aspect is **life positions**

It's best explained by a simple diagram.

[Powerpoint 1-Diagram]

I am OK - you are not OK Superiority Complex (Better than others)	I am OK – you are OK Healthy position (Everyone happy)
I am not OK – you are OK Inferiority Complex (Everyone better than you)	I am not OK – you are not OK Hopeless position (No hope for anyone)

The idea is we have **4 ways of thinking**.

A lot of people - fall into the **2 categories on the left** (in Red)

People in these categories -either **think** they are **superior** - better than anyone else.

Or they **think** they are **inferior** - worse than anyone else – and feel sorry for themselves a lot of the time.

The healthiest position is – when we are OK and the other person is OK – because everyone is **happy**. This is the IDEAL position!

And the worst position is when no-one is okay – and this is a **position of no hope**.

This brings us to Jonah. He falls into the category of “**I am OK – You are not OK**”

Jonah has what we will call the “**Jonah Complex**” – he thinks he’s OK – and the Ninevites are not OK.

And to be fair to Jonah – there’s a good reason for him to be like this.

Remember he is a Jew – a **prophet** of Israel.

And according to God in **Exodus 19 verse 5 and 6** – here’s what God said about Israel.

[Powerpoint 2 – Exodus 19:5-6]

⁵ Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

The people of Israel saw themselves as special – **God’s special people** – and they saw any other nation – as the Hebrew word – “**Goyim**” – other nations. And to Israel – all other nations – were **Gentile Dogs**! [that’s not quite what God meant – but that’s how the Jews thought]

That's how Jonah saw Nineveh – Jonah had a superiority complex – a Jonah complex.

And we should be able to see also – that Jonah's complex – has been given a great boost – in the way that God has pursued him in chapter 1 – miraculously protected him inside the belly of the fish in chapter 2 & given him a 2nd chance in chapter 3. No wonder he's thinking he's superior – he's been greatly blessed and seen more of God's glory than most!

[PowerPoint 3 – Jonah Complex looks like]

So, let's see what the Jonah complex looks like – and how God deals with it – AND – let's see if we have any of the symptoms of the Jonah complex...

[PowerPoint 3a-Anger]

Anger

So first off in v1 of chapter 4 – we see Jonah's anger towards God because God has forgiven the Ninevites and stopped his planned destruction of the whole city (see chapter 3 verse 10) – because Nineveh repented!

To Jonah that just **seems plain wrong**.

How could God forgive those wicked and terrible Ninevites?

Having lived in England – many times I've heard people say – **they could never forgive the Germans for what they did in the holocaust and the POW camps?**

And having lived in Ireland – I’ve seen the **anger and hatred some Irish people have towards the English** – they **haven’t forgotten the potato famine [1845-1852]** – and some Irish people will never forgive the English – **and want their whole country back!**

That sort of thinking – basically **refuses to forgive no matter what!**

And that’s Jonah’s thinking – the **Ninevites should never be forgiven!**

Jonah is angry because as he says in v2 – he **knew God was a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love!**

How could Jonah be so angry that he wished he was dead in v3 – just because God is merciful and loving and compassionate?

Is there **someone** we know [maybe they’ve done some bad stuff in their life and been in jail] or **some groups of people** [like terrorists, extremists, drug dealers] or is there **some nations** (like North Korea, Afghanistan) – who we think are so bad – **that we believe God should never forgive them, even if they repent?**

If we think like that – then **we have the Jonah complex** – we think we are OK – but they’re not OK! And **we** need to repent of that thinking!

(pause)

And notice how **very patient God is with Jonah** – he doesn't get angry with Jonah – **God simply asks in v4 – *Is it right for you to be angry*** – a better translation would be ***'You're very angry aren't you?'***

There's nothing like a simple statement about our behaviour – **to bring us back down to earth** – is there?

It's like a parent saying to a daughter – ***"You're an angry young lady today, aren't you?"***

When God asks Jonah if he has the right to be angry – **Jonah chucks a tanty** – a hissy fit – and **goes and sulks east of the city in v5** – and builds himself a little shelter and waits to see what will happen to the city.

Jonah still hasn't given up his disobedience – he's **still holding on to the hope that something will happen to the city.**

He could have been having dinner with the King of Nineveh and celebrating their repentance and forgiveness – instead of sitting out in the heat!

Without realizing it – **even though Jonah thinks he is OK and Nineveh is not OK**

It's actually the over way around – right now

Jonah is not OK – he's **angry and bitter-and** - **Nineveh is OK** – they have **repented!**

And Jonah's anger doesn't stop there as we'll see in a minute.

Whilst he's sulking **God provides a leafy plant in v6 to give Jonah some shade and ease his discomfort.**

It's a bit like a child storming off to their bedroom for a sulk and hissy fit – and the parents still feed them – but also leaves them to stew in their own juice for a while.

And for a while - Jonah's anger is subsided and he's happy about the shade from the leafy plant – but the next day - he's all fired up again because God sent a worm – a pretty hungry worm at that – in v7 – to chew down the leafy plant. That's the end of Jonah's shade – and worst still God sends a scorching East wind in v8 - which just about fries Jonah – and he starts to grow faint. And Jonah's angry again!

And again, God is patient and asked him the same question again in v9 – *'Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?'*

And Jonah is so fired up he says *'Yes, it is right for me to be angry – I'm so angry I wish I were dead''*.

But God's teaching Jonah a lesson through the plant – He's saying in v10 – *you're concerned about the plant but you didn't look after it or make it grow - I did!*

An example of the Leafy plant might be our church – our ministries grow and are thriving and everything is going great – but we start looking at what WE'VE done – and we say look at our Leafy Plant how it is growing – Then God sends the worm to nibble at the plant – to remind us. IT'S NOT OUR PLANT – IT'S GOD'S PLANT. IT'S NOT OUR WORK - IT'S GOD'S WORK. IT'S NOT OUR CHURCH – IT'S GOD'S CHURCH!

And like Jonah we need to be reminded - God is sovereign and in control of all things.

The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21)

[PowerPoint 3b-Judgmental]

Judgemental

Another aspect of the Jonah complex is - he is **judgemental**.

Jonah makes a judgment call that the **Ninevites are not worth bothering with** and **writes them off as beyond forgiveness**. Isn't that why he ran off to Tarshish in the first place.

He writes the Ninevites off **based on their race** – they are not-Jews –they are **goyim!**

But are we any better? – do we write people off - because of - their **race** – their **colour** – their **poverty** – their **looks** – their **job** – their **education** - their **mental health** – their **appearance** – dare I say their **smell?**

And just like Jonah – we can also **take God's work all too personally**.

We can see ourselves blessed as a Christian or blessed as a church – and get so involved in it – **we start thinking we're the only Christian, or we're the only Church** – or the only denomination that matters!

I came across the story of the Baptist Church and the Presbyterian Church in a small village – **both having their own evangelism outreach on the same weekend**.

After the weekend – the Baptists said ***"We didn't get much of a revival – but thank God – neither did the Presbyterians!"***

That's the Jonah complex – if God is going to bless me – I don't want him blessing you?

[PowerPoint 3c-Proud and Ungrateful]

Proud and Ungrateful

And the Jonah complex continues...

Jonah is **proud** and **ungrateful**.

He's more concerned about himself.

Remember his 8-word sermon in back in Jonah 3:4 to the Ninevites – “***Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown***”

Well, that **didn't** happen – God **stopped** his pending disaster and forgave them.

Now Jonah will look a GOOSE – because his prophecy didn't come true.

Jonah's so proud – he couldn't bear it if someone came up to him and said “***Jonah – you told us we were going to be wiped out, but it didn't happen***”

Jonah's pride was hurt! He couldn't bear the thought of losing face.

He loved the thought of being vindicated and proven right – more than he loved seeing God's mercy and compassion and glory.

The whole mission became about Jonah – not about God and the Ninevites.

Jonah forgot he was God's instrument. He forgot he was the person to reach the Ninevites!

He wanted to be able to say to the Ninevites – “***I told you that you were doomed***” – instead of saying – “***Look how compassionate and loving God is!***”

As well as being **proud** – Jonah is **ungrateful**.

In his anger – Jonah has quickly **forgotten** what God has done for him:

- God has forgiven him – for running away
- rescued him from the sea and storm –
- kept him safe in the belly of the fish –
- given him a 2nd chance.
- What blessings Jonah has had from God!

He doesn't see that – and **he still has more to learn.**

Can't we be like that?

We get some blessing from God – a tremendous answer to prayer – and then a while later something goes wrong – and **we forget the blessing** – and **start whinging** about the next thing

(pause)

Jonah's so angry about the Ninevites being forgiven – and so angry about the plant that **he forgets what God has done for him.**

And he cares more about himself and the plant – **than about 120,000 people [and many animals] who are living in ignorance of God – and who need saving!**

If he stopped and thought about what God had done for him and he was actually grateful about it – **he might want God to bless others in the same way – instead of being selfish.**

Perhaps we're the same – we've been saved by believing in Jesus – but **we haven't thought about others that need to believing in Jesus?**

[PowerPoint 3d-Unforgiving]

Unforgiving

The final aspect of Jonah's complex is that he is **unforgiving**.

In our NT passage this morning (Matt 18) – **Jesus told the parable of the servant who owed his master 10,000 bags** (talents of gold) – **a bag or talent is worth 20 years wages** – so we're talking **120,000 years wages**.

The servant couldn't pay back the debt so the master let him off.

But then the servant went to a person who owed him 100 days wages and choked him for the money – and when they couldn't pay – he **had him thrown into prison.**

The first servant **had forgotten how much he had been forgiven, and he didn't apply the same forgiveness that he had received from the master to the people who owed him.**

That's what Jonah was like – **he'd been forgiven heaps – but wasn't prepared to see the Ninevites forgiven in the same way as he was! Jonah is so unforgiving!**

Early in that passage from Matt 18 – we see in v21 – Peter asks Jesus *how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?*

And Jesus' reply – is *'not seven, but seventy-seven times'* – the meaning could be **seventy X seven** - rather than **seventy-seven**.

But that's not the point here – it's not meant to be literally forgiving 77 times and keeping a count of each time we forgive – the point is - that **we must forgive and forgive and forgive – with no limit!**

What we need to realize is that as Christians – **we have had ALL our sins forgiven by the ONE who died on the cross for the sin of the world – that's Jesus.**

In the same way that we have been forgiven heaps by Jesus – **others deserve that same opportunity for forgiveness.**

No one is beyond forgiveness if they genuinely say sorry and repent like the Ninevites did.

So, if Jesus forgives you and me – **he can also forgive the person we have a grudge or anger towards.** So **today is the day to let go of that grudge, let go of that anger and let go of that unforgiving heart.** Make that phone call – have that conversation we have been putting off

(pause)

Here's what Jesus says about forgiveness in **Matthew 6 verses 14 and 15.**

[Powerpoint 4 - Forgive]

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

A serious warning from Jesus

(pause)

Example of Forgiveness

[PowerPoint 5 – Renee and Eric]

I want to finish this morning with an **amazing example of forgiveness**.

On 11th May 2002 – **Meagan Napier and Lisa Jo Dickson** were killed by a drunk driver Eric Smallridge in a tragic car smash. Eric was sentenced to 11 years jail for each of the girls – so he had **to serve 22 years all up**.

Meagan's mum, Renee Napier, made it **her mission in life** to share the girl's story.

She **wanted to raise awareness of the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol** and to promote forgiveness and healing.

Since March 2004 – Renee (the mum) has **presented the girl's story to thousands of people, young and old**. In her presentation Renee tells the girl's story, talks **about the healing power of forgiveness, shows videos that feature Eric** (the drunk driver) in prison.

From April 2010, **Renee was allowed to have Eric** (the drunk driver) **join her in her talks, bound in shackles and handcuffs**, to share his powerful testimony.

Renee concludes her talks with a **compelling slide show of Meagan and Lisa and Eric**.

Then the audience is **invited outside to see Lisa's mangled car from the accident**.

Both of the girl's families pleaded for Eric sentence of 22 years to be halved. And a judge granted their request and Eric's jail term was halved. Eric was released in 2012.

Through Renee's amazing forgiveness – Eric has been led to have a relationship with Jesus – and many many people have learnt about the dangers of drink driving – and many many people have learnt how to forgive and be healed.

Renee is applying the principle that the Apostle Paul lays down in Ephesians 4:32 –
forgiving others just as God forgave us in Jesus!

[PowerPoint 6 – The Complexes again]

Renee ALSO has a complex – **it is the healthy (green) complex** – we talked about at the beginning – **“I am OK – you are OK”**.

Friends – **let's NOT be like Jonah and have the Jonah complex** – where we're angry with God and with others, where we're judgmental and write people off, where we're proud and ungrateful and where we're unforgiving.

Instead embrace the God who is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Adopt the healthy complex – I am OK you are OK –

The healthy complex that says – I am forgiven by Jesus – you too can be forgiven by Jesus.

Our act of forgiveness could well lead someone to Jesus – just like Renee led Eric to Jesus.

Let's pray.

Father forgive us for the times we are angry with you, for the times we are judgmental about others, for the times we are too proud and think only of ourselves; for the times we are ungrateful for what you have done for us; and for the times we are unforgiving of others.

Heavenly Father, help us to understand the depths of your grace and forgiveness. Help us to have hearts that align with yours, filled with compassion and love for all people; even those whom we might find difficult to forgive.

Help us to understand the immeasurable forgiveness we have through Jesus' sacrifice and help us to have a desire for others to share in that same forgiveness, so that they are saved for Heaven! In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Benediction (Ephesians 4:31-32)

³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Amen.