

Father's Day

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[0:00] I actually should be okay for now. Morning, everyone. I am the James. Happy Father's Day to all of you.

I'm going to do something slightly different today, but we are continuing with the book of Jonah, and it's been a journey for me. It's been a journey for me just to learn and just to... God's been showing something about him to us through this book, and then he's been showing something about us to us, you know, something about God and something about humanity.

That's what we do in the DBS questions. And just as a recap, we're in the final chapter now, but I'm actually going to split the final chapter into separate chapters, a little bit like Harry Potter.

So it's the final one, the Deathly Hallows, but there's a couple parts to it. I haven't quite decided whether there's going to be two or three parts yet, because there's a lot here. And of course, because it's Father's Day, I wanted to take a little bit of a segue to talk a little bit about that.

But if you would allow me just to rewind your mind, at the very beginning, the question was, do you want to hear God's voice? Do you really want to hear God's voice? Regardless of whatever he might say, whatever he might ask you to do.

[1:08] And of course, we find out along the way that Jonah sins, just like all of us. And what is sin? Sin is basically choosing his own way, because he's saying, I don't trust you, God. Right? And so the question really becomes, actually, the point of sin, the source of sin is, do we really trust God? Because if we don't trust God, then we trust ourselves, and we choose our own way, and that's when we sin, and that's what leads to sin and death and destruction in the end.

And Jonah didn't trust God. But today, I want to swivel a little bit and maybe do a little bit of a plot twist, because actually, I'm here to kind of go back on what I said myself, which is, actually, Jonah does trust God.

He trusts very much in who God is. And we find out in this final chapter that actually, all along, he has trusted God. He just didn't like it. There's a difference there. And so we go through, because what happens last week is that he ends up in Nineveh.

He walks through this great city, and then he says, you're going to die in 40 days. Right? And they repent. They actually turn from their evil ways. And at the end of chapter three, God looks and relents from disaster.

He says, actually, you guys seem to have learned your lesson. You're not destroying each other. I'm going to spare you. The beginning of chapter four is fascinating. And we're going to jump into this first little bit, and we're going to do the first two verses.

[2:28] Actually, I want to invite Argus up to do this. We were joking. Argus, can we give a round of applause for Argus? He serves faithfully on the worship team for us.

But if you've heard Argus speak or sing, you'll know that he has this incredibly, what's an appropriate word to use for this? Beautiful. Thank you. That's better. That's right. I was going to go for sexy, but beautiful.

And I was like, man, Argus, you have such a radio voice, as opposed to my brother who has a radio face. All right, we're reading the Bible. That's right.

Gotcha. I thought you were going to be like, you've got a five-minute segment for jokes. I was like, okay. So anyway, all that to say, Argus is going to do with the great privilege of reading the first two verses of Jonah chapter 4 for us.

And please don't be distracted by his voice. And one of the ways that we do that is we stand for the word of God. So can I invite you to stand? Man, this word is powerful. This word we've probably heard before.

[3:31] This word is something that we're so used to, but I'm praying, my prayer is that today as we read this, as we received this word of God, that it would really pierce into our hearts. Jonah chapter 4, verse 1 to 2.

So it's only... Verses 4, 1 to 2. Okay. Jonah's anger and the Lord's compassion. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord, and he 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.

That's the word of the Lord. Praise be to God. Thank you. Thank you. Take a seat, please. Argus, you have the job forevermore now. You can do that always. Actually, Jonah didn't mistrust God. He knew exactly who God was. He goes into Nineveh and preaches this message of destruction. The Ninevites turn and repent, and then God does exactly what Jonah knew he would do, which would be to change his mind and relent and spare them.

[4:40] And so then it starts, chapter four, at the beginning, it says, But Jonah was exceedingly, exceedingly, but it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And then he says, I knew it.

I knew it. I knew you. In fact, this is exactly why I didn't do what you told me to do at the very beginning. If you remember, chapter two, we had that song from Jonah where he kind of repented, where he didn't act right say he was sorry, not sorry, right?

And so he had that, and we were like, oh, maybe he's changed his mind. Maybe he's learned his lesson. But then we realized he didn't, and now we really confirm it. Because you can't say sorry for something and then come back and say, well, that's exactly why I did it.

Have we had that, husbands, wives? When we apologize, but don't really apologize, but we kind of apologize because we just want to get through this issue, situation, and so we get through it, but then something else comes up, and then say, that's exactly why I did what I did and said what I said.

And so you're not sorry at all. That's what Jonah is doing because he's like, God, this is exactly why I ran away from you, and I ended up in the storm. I ended up in the fish. I almost don't regret it because I hated what you were going to do because I actually trusted in your character.

[5:52] I know exactly what you're like. Jonah knew his father's heart. And it's on this Father's Day as I was reflecting on this, and this is where, as I was preparing, I was like, you know what?

We might even just have a little stop here. And the question really is, how much do we know the Father's heart? How much do we really know what he actually feels for us?

And, of course, it's on this day. This is a strange day for me, and I know it's a strange day for a lot of people because a lot of people may feel, well, I don't have that kind of warm feeling when I think about my dad.

My dad's not around anymore. In fact, my dad inflicted more pain than warmth and love in me. So when you're all talking about the Father's heart and the Father's love, that doesn't actually quite add up for me.

It doesn't quite make sense. So my question to you again today is, how much do you really know your father's heart? Do you know your dad? On Friday, I had the privilege of going into school to visit my daughter's class, and they had a Father's Day special for me.

[6:54] So me, along with all the other dads, were packed into the classroom. Clearly, all of us really wanted to be there. And, honestly, it was a beautiful time, and I got to see a questionnaire that my daughter filled out about me.

And she's like, my dad's favorite color is blue. It is blue. I realize it is blue. It's actually navy blue, not, like, girly blue. But it's, like, I expect that.

And I wonder, what does your dad like to eat? He likes to eat McDonald's. I'm like, he does like to eat McDonald's. What is your dad good at? I was like, oh, okay. Do you know what she wrote? She wrote, anything.

I was like, she clearly doesn't know me very well. Honestly, there's only two things that I think I'm good at. One of them is talking, and the other is parking. If you've seen in my car, if you've seen me in my car, I'm, actually, I got this from my dad.

Okay? So those two things, talking and parking, I think I got from my dad. But I remember saying this when I was young, probably around Rubens Day. I was like, you know, man, my dad is shorter than everyone else's dad.

[8:01] But my dad can park better than all of them. That's literally something that I thought. And that's one of the things. That's one thing I got from my dad, of course, talking. He was a lecturer. But the other thing that maybe I got from him was the issue of punctuality.

That's where, and those of you who have been around me will know that's something that I hold. I have so many childhood memories of sitting in the car park, waiting for another family who we're supposed to go on a day trip with, and just sitting there waiting for them.

And I have so many memories of me going, dad, why are we here? We know that family's going to be late. So we just strategically come at the same time that we know they're going to come. And he's like, well, just because they're late doesn't mean we're late.

We have to wait. And so we're there 10 minutes early, because 10 minutes early is on time. On time is late for my dad. And actually, as a lecturer, he was famous for doing this one thing, which ended up getting him into trouble, which was at the time when the lecture, university students listen up, whenever he would start a lecture, he would lock the lecture theater doors.

So he wouldn't let them in. But again, of course, I guess this was in the 80s and the 90s, where there was fire and health and safety weren't quite a thing. But eventually, someone complained that, you know, actually, this is dangerous.

[9:07] So he relented. But yeah, so I got those things from my dad. And for me, this is an interesting day, because actually, I start my very first sermon nine years ago, as I practice, was on Father's Day.

And it's always a very special time for me, because actually, I think it's the reason, it's my dad, which is the reason why I'm here doing what I'm doing. If those of you who know maybe a slightly less funny story is before he passed, that was the promise that he asked me to give to him, that I would be true to my calling, that whatever God says, do it.

This is why Jonah speaks to me, because I'm caught. I thought I did my yes, God, I'll do it moment then. And I realized slowly over the years, as you follow God's will, it's not just that one time that you followed God all the way back then, five, 10 years ago.

It's every day. It's every day. You have to choose to be true to your calling, to be faithful to what God's called you to. And I think that's why I'm sat here. Honestly, that's why Joe's doing what he's doing.

We have a dad who just said, just listen to God and do whatever he tells you to do. And he can be trusted. So this is a mixed emotional day for me, because actually, I don't have that many regrets in life.

[10:18] I'm someone who actually makes decisions fairly quickly. And I like to say, actually, if you make decisions with the right intentions, then don't have regrets. Just at that moment, you know why you decided what you decided.

So then even if it ends up not being what you wanted, it doesn't matter because you made it with the right intentions. But I'd say I have probably one regret in my life, and that is that I didn't get to know my dad as an adult.

So my dad passed when I was 17. Who's 17 here? Ryan, how old are you? Okay, 17. Is it your age? I was a little bit better looking than you. But no, I really wasn't.

I actually, honestly, honestly, I wasn't. I was a lot taller back then. But yeah, so same age as Ryan. And that's my regret. I'm like, actually, I wasn't definitely was not as mature as Ryan here.

I was just a typical 17 year old. And that my dad had to discipline me and do all kinds of chase me around as I was chasing girls around those kinds of things. So that's my biggest regret.

[11:21] But I didn't get to know him as a as a friend, as some of you actually have the honor and the privilege to do. I didn't get to sit down and have a beer with him. I didn't get to travel with him and talk and get to know him.

Do you know when often dads or parents in general, we have a tough gig because we're supposed to make all the right decisions, do all the right things. And of course, we've all been hurt by our heavenly, our earthly fathers in some way.

But honestly, I can sit here and tell you as an earthly dad myself every day. I can look back and go, man, I could have said that better. I could have done that better. I could have been more attentive here.

I could have done this. We should have done that. Like honestly, honestly, constantly second guessing, knowing, man, I'm not a perfect dad in any way. And so my dream would have been to be

able to peel back the curtain and be able to sit down and have a conversation with my dad and go, oh, actually, why did you do that?

What was going through your mind as I was rebelling and doing this? How are you trying to cope with this? I thought that would have been a hugely fun activity for me, which is one of my regrets.

[12:26] But I'm going to have the honor now of bringing in a couple of friends that I've had in this gathering who are dads themselves. And for me, there's two objectives here. One, as we think about, and I'm going to jump into the scripture later, as we think about God's traits, I also want us to be able to know each other and actually know that we're not alone on this journey, especially when it comes to us dads are uniquely placed.

We're not the hardest workers when it comes to our families because out of the parents, the mom is the one that does so, so much. Sam and I were just talking earlier that we don't have the ability to hear our babies cry when they're sleeping, when they're crying in the middle of the night.

For some reason, as much as I want to wake up in the middle of the night to be able to help Christina, I can't. I don't hear it. I just don't hear it. And actually, Sam encouraged me and lifted me. He said, well, that's what Jesus did in the storm. So it's a divine gift of being able to just sleep through these different things. That shows, James, that you are truly abiding in God.

And so I was comforted by that. So that's why I'm going to bring him up to kind of share more wisdom like that to you guys when it comes to fatherhood. And, of course, Alex Lee is one. And I've got my dear friend Bill, who I want to bring up as well.

[13:46] Can we give him a round of applause? Yeah, so I'll sit here and then those three guys can. All jokes aside, I really can't hear when baby wakes up.

Oh, no. Actually, I think it was the first baby or the second one. I managed to refine my hearing skills to the point where I could actually fall asleep whilst they're crying.

Now that. Do you guys have that gift? No, I thought that. I thought that. It's all about just tuning them into a rhythm, like in the ocean waves. And eventually, eventually, you can fall asleep.

I'll teach you. Anyway. Sam, Alex, Bill, dear, dear friends of mine, fathers in your own right.

And I wanted to bring you up. I said that it was going to be a panel discussion, but none of us are experts here. We've all made constant mistakes. So it's more like a couch conversation just to kind of share some stories.

[14:48] But the first question that I want to ask is I shared a little bit about my dad and some of the traits that I both observed. And then I think inherited and caught from my dad as well, which are some of the funny ones.

And as you think back to your dad's, what's been your experience? And when you think about some of the traits that your dad had, as you observed, as you grew up, what was there? Bill, why don't we start with you?

Sure, sure. I'm grateful that my dad's still around and I'm able to grow up with him and share and see how he grew up. He's growing up as well.

What I saw him when I was growing up is that he was full of integrity. He was a hard worker, very sacrificial for the family and helping us, doing whatever he could to make ends meet and raise the family.

You know what? Isn't integrity one of the biggest ones? Well, isn't that one of the big ones that actually a lot of kids who grow up in church and end up leaving church, that's the one they struggle with. Because they see mom or dad doing all kinds of stuff at church.

[15:48] But then at home, it's a different person completely. And so actually, integrity is something that we don't take for granted either. Alex, what about you? I think for me, for those of you that have heard me talk about my mom, you know that my mom is the one that really makes the decisions and wears the pants in the family.

Whereas my dad is the one who's just always so steady. Like he's a perfect complement to my mom. Very steady, very consistent, very reliable. Whenever you ask him for something, he always responds.

Like he was always available to me. So I think that's something I hope to kind of mirror my own life in terms of walking with my family and those under my care. And just recognizing that he was also an immigrant from Taiwan to the States.

So just that sense of just wanting stability. He always just kind of valued just always being even keeled, never too high, never too low. And just putting his head down and doing the job as always.

So is that why you also don't wear the pants in your family? Touche. Touche. Touche.

[16:59] I ain't going to step down. They don't call me the Alex. Sam, what about you? What traits did you see from your dad?

I envy what the guys to my left said. I think I have a work in progress relationship with my dad. He's very typical, traditional, which goes to say, man of few words.

And I hear my name if I'm summoned to do something. If I am in trouble, I hear my full Chinese name. Some of you will relate to that. But I'm challenged by just the verse you read just now.

Because the description of God, that comes from Exodus 34. But Jonah omits a part of God's description. And so I'm challenged to think back on my own memories and to see which parts are recollection versus reconstruction.

Wow. I think we choose to remember things. And so for me, commandment five, honor your father and mother. That's my calling at the moment to figure out what that means.

[18:05] And to see goodness in all things. Yeah. And actually, as we become dads, isn't that the thing?

I mean, I think about I'm actually nearing that age where my dad passed. And as a teenager, trying to run away from him and trying to not be disciplined by him, I have all these kind of thoughts that actually he had it all together.

He was just this completely established person, insecure in every way. And now I'm sat here at a similar kind of age. I'm like, man, I'm still free. Like, yes, when I step out, I'm like, I'm pretending to look like I know what I'm doing with my kids.

But behind the scenes, the questions I have with Christina, what should we do here? What should we say here? Suddenly, it's kind of like, oh, man. Like, even our dads didn't quite have it all. And sometimes the things we remember aren't always the full picture.

Well, they're definitely not the full picture either. And so maybe just on that note, can you tell us, like, how's that impacted you and your fatherhood? What's that look like? I think long before I became a father, I wanted to become a father.

[19:16] It was my wife that took the tip to convincing. So I think, yeah, I think along the way, God was healing my heart.

And he put in, he allowed me to experience him as a father first, I think. I think before I can even figure out what it means to be a father, I have to relate to God as my father.

But so growing up in Sunday school, I'm Jesus, that I'm the way, the truth, and the life that we know that. And for some reason, the next part, you know, no one comes to the father except through me. That was a part that I just kind of escaped, you know.

And I didn't understand that. Yeah. So I guess in short, relating it to being a father began with the journey of knowing who God is first and knowing who I am.

That's huge. Alex, as you said, 10 months, 10 months in. So even this time last year, we had some pictures that, you know, you and Cara were still free and just traveling and enjoying life in a completely different kind of way.

[20:23] What have you learned? What have you learned as you step into this first season of Fathered? I think everyone always asks me, it's like, oh, you're a new dad. Like, do you feel like the weight?

Like, what is it like to be a dad? And honestly, my answer half the time is, don't fully feel like a dad sometimes. Like, 10 months in, I think the biggest thing I kind of felt in terms of my identity was more of, like, my identity as a child of God.

Like, I've been rehearsing 1 John 3, 1 over myself, where it says, like, see the kind of love that the Father has given us so that we may be called children of God. And, okay, very, like, plain Christian speak.

We always say, like, you know, we're children of God. But I think there's the later part of that verse that says, we're children of God and so we are, which kind of almost doubles down. It's like, you are a child of God.

Remember that. I think I don't, I didn't fully grasp that until becoming a dad and, you know, holding baby for the first time. Like, oh, this child is so, like, helpless. But it's just vulnerable.

[21:25] But she just wants this unconditional and perfect love. It's not a love that I can give, but it's a love that I recognize. Oh, that's the kind of love the Father shows me. And therefore, I should take, you know, ultimate satisfaction in my own identity as a child.

So, yeah, people ask me that question all the time. Like, what's it like being a dad? It's like, hmm, it's really just fun right now. I don't always sleep through the crying, but I think I sense the trajectory in terms of, like, in the years to come, there'll be that weight of, quote, unquote, responsibility where it's like, I'm going to have to talk to my daughter about this changing world and how complex it is. But for now, she just says, ga, ga, ga, and I just have to just hug her and play with her and just experience that joy for now. And I think God's really pleased with that. So I've enjoyed that journey. Yeah, right.

And Bill, of course, you have three adult children, Andrea, David, and James. And share a little bit with us, what have been some of the biggest challenges for you as you've watched all these seasons?

Like, we're all in kind of different seasons of parenting. Like, what's been the overall kind of journey and story that you've been learning through parenting? I think looking back, James, our children really helped raise me as a parent and as a person.

[22 : 39] I was, before being a dad, I was self-centered and arrogant, full of pride. And seeing what Alex described, this bundle of joy that's so dependent on you that I've become just more mature.

I think looking back at my old self, I don't know how I got through. And I think through the grace of God and knowing that. And I'm looking back at my children.

They're similar relations with what I have with God is they're asking me, us, my wife and I, am I loved? And can I get my own way?

The answer is yes and no. But when the time comes, something happens, it's hard to answer those questions. And same thing with my relationship with God is, yes, I am loved, but I cannot get my own way.

Maybe final question just to pose to all of you guys is, what is something that actually people who are praying for, let's say today is the day that they're praying for you and your fatherhood.

[23 : 47] What's something that you think actually you're really needing more of from God as you seek to father your children? For me, it's still continue to show that grace and forgiveness.

And when they do mess up, that day will come to us for help and advice. And I would show that grace and forgiveness that my father in heaven shows me.

I think for me, it's, you know, I expressed earlier, there's a lot of joy, you know, playing with a young child. But as you know, as the kids grow older and the needs become different, it's like, how can I sustain that joy? I think about my own relationship with my dad, it was very, again, reliable.

I call upon him. He helps me out. But I think it built a good foundation for me. But as I grew in faith, I realized, oh, the father's love is more than just you call and respond. He pursues you even when you don't ask for it or when you don't even realize you need it.

And I think that's where I kind of need prayers to be that kind of dad for Ari who pursues even when, you know, my name's not even being called on. If anything, it's in recognition that as a dad, your name is constantly, it's perpetual in terms of your name being called upon.

[24 : 57] It said that the best gift a father can give his children is to love their mother. I think that's true.

I think I can't be one way with my kids and another way to my wife. Tim Keller's mentioned before that unconditional love in the form of a picture.

It looks like this. It looks like a father hearing his daughter ask for a cup of water at 2 a.m. at night. And dad's going to get up and get it, no questions asked. But if the wife next to him asks for a cup of water, he might get a very different response.

And I know that's true for me because I get asked to get water. But I think I want to remember the first love God puts in my life actually over my children.

Yeah, I think that's a prayer for me. Is there anything you'd like to public commit to doing for Rachel whilst you're here? Yeah, she's not here today. Of course.

[26 : 02] Thank you. Thank you, friends. Can we give them a round of applause? Thank you. Thank you. Actually, we didn't do any prep for that.

But all three gentlemen ended up referencing something that I'm going to be talking about next, which I'm deeply encouraged by as well. Those words, those words that Jonah says, I knew it. This is exactly why I ran away from you. I'm so angry because you've let them off. Why? Because I knew you were gracious and merciful. I knew it.

I knew you would let them off the hook. And of course, Sam referenced Exodus 34. And that's what we're going to have a look into today. Because I want to address something here, which is a lot of people who are not Christians, they will look at Christianity and go, hey, I struggle with your faith because you seem to have two gods.

You have a God in the New Testament who's all about just warmth and love and forgiveness and die for you and all those kind of things. And then you have a God of the Old Testament, which is just filled with anger and wrath.

[27:13] This doesn't seem to make sense. This is a two-phase kind of God. I don't really want anything to do with it. Of course, now that can be easily resolved by a very fine intellectual skill, which is just called reading.

And if you look into the Old Testament and you look at how God introduces himself, you will see that he is not the God of anger and wrath that we seem to perceive on the outside.

We only, again, we only remember certain things. We only filter out certain things. But if you look at how God does it, what God actually, how God actually introduces himself, it's not that.

And Jonah knows it. And that's what he's angry about. That's what he is trusting so much in.

Because he's like, man, God, this is exactly why, because I knew that you are all these things. And what's he quoting?

He's quoting Exodus 34. Now, just to recap your mind, if you've forgotten that, that's where Moses goes up to the mountain and gets Ten Commandments. He comes down with the original iPad, the two tablets that he comes down with.

[28:10] And he comes down. And what happens? What comes down when he has those iPads in his hands? He sees Aaron and the Israelites. They've completely just lost the plot.

Now, there's no knowing how long Moses was up there. But what happens is he comes down. And basically, the people were like, hey, Moses is gone. Who knows whether God's even looking after us. Let's use some of the gold that we have and create a golden calf.

And let's worship the calf instead. It's a worthless idol. In fact, it's kind of the idol that Jonah talked about in his song in Jonah 2. That these people are clinging on to these worthless idols.

So he comes down and he sees us. And then, of course, he smashes the iPads because he's so angry at what they've done. And so then he goes back up to get some new ones. Okay? If only the apples still work the same way.

So he goes back up. And that's where God says. He goes back onto the mountain. And he says, and God comes and introduces himself. He says, I am the Lord, your God.

[29:08] I am gracious and merciful. I am gracious and merciful. I am. Let me show you the other ones. Slow to anger.

I'm abounding in steadfast love. And I am relenting from disaster. And Jonah quotes those. Can you imagine? We all have this concept of God.

And we feel maybe that some people know God more than we do. But imagine what they were going through, the Israelites. They see all these things. They see all these miracles. They see the escape from Egypt.

They see the Red Sea. They don't really know this God personally just yet. And now Moses goes up and he comes down. Wouldn't you ask, hey, you met God. What's God like?

Can you tell us what God is like? That's a huge, significant thing. And imagine Moses coming down and saying, I've met God. And I now know what he's like.

[30:05] Let's let Ari pass. Ari really doesn't like me. I don't think she's ever smart at me. Correct.

I don't think she ever has. Kara said today, oh, she's not crying. That's already a good sign. That's it. That's all I got. Can you imagine going up to the mountain, meeting God, then coming down and everyone's asking you, who is this God?

What is he like? Tell us more. Have we had that? Maybe you know someone who has met a celebrity. And so you ask them, well, what's that person like? And so Moses comes down and says, man, it's not what we thought.

He's not a God of anger. He's not a God of wrath. The first words God chose to share with me, to introduce himself to me were, I am gracious and merciful.

He's kind, everyone. He's a good God. It's like Aslan. He's not safe. No one said he was safe. He's dangerous.

[31:12] But he is good. Doesn't that bring comfort to your soul if you really think about it properly? If you really process what that actually means, that there is this God, this higher power, this sovereign being.

But he is kind. He is gracious and merciful. What's gracious and merciful? He's gracious. That means what you deserve, he's not going to give you. And what you don't deserve is what you're going to get.

You've done so much wrong. And you don't deserve any of these good things. But this God is going to give it to you because he's gracious. I think we take this whole statement that we hear, and Paul read it earlier at the beginning as well.

We hear this. God is gracious and compassionate. He is slow to anger. He is abounding in steadfast love. We hear this all the time. But I don't know if I truly process and digest what that actually means.

Because I don't know if I actually live that out knowing these things. I think it's incredible if you actually think about this powerful being who could crush you. Exodus 33 says, I can't show you my face, Moses, because if I did, if anyone saw it, you would die.

[32:16] That's how powerful I am. That's how out of this world I am. But I am gracious. Grace is what? Grace is just getting something that you don't deserve. I was having lunch with a friend who goes to this church, but the Cantonese side, and he's done everything here in this society.

He's worked in the government, worked as a CEO, worked in all these places. And you know what? The word that he just kept saying, like, James, all of this is just grace. I don't deserve any of this. I'm a terrible Christian. I'm a terrible person.

Every day I make mistakes. But God's grace, God's grace is getting something that you don't deserve. Getting the love, getting the life that we don't deserve. And it also says, he's merciful.

That's what Jonah says. I knew it. I hate that you are merciful. Of course, the irony in all this is, he himself was saved by God. But now he's forgotten. Don't we all have that?

Isn't that where a lot of the judgmental side of us comes from? We forget that we were sinners. We forget that we were forgiven. We forget that we were saved. I knew you're merciful. That means actually what I did deserve, the punishment I did deserve, you spared.

[33:19] And the NIV version says compassionate. What does the word compassionate mean? It means co-suffering. If you think about the Ninevites and all the evil that they did, even though they didn't know God yet, and they maybe didn't even choose to follow him afterwards, but what broke God's heart the most was the fact that these children were pursuing evil, which was inherently self-destructive and was destroying themselves.

But he is compassionate. He looks that and he is long-suffering. And that's what we talked about a bit last week. That why does God not eradicate all the evil? Because he is patient. Because he is long-suffering.

He is, he's waiting for the day. He's giving every chance for our repentance, every chance for us to come back to him. The word slow to anger actually means long-nosed. So if you think about what that actually meant is actually that before the fire comes out, it actually retracts.

That's what it's saying here, that God is just, he is slow to anger. This convicts me. This is something maybe similar to what Sam said about how he treats his children, how he treats his wife. Sometimes, and Christina and I, we are often guilty of this all the time. Thankfully, by God's grace, we kind of take turns making mistakes about this because we get angry. We get impatient. And there'll be moments where I'm like, man, I just, I snapped at them so much quicker than I would anyone else.

[34:39] But God is slow to anger. God is gracious. He is merciful. He's slow to anger. He's abounding in steadfast love.

That steadfast love is just this loving kindness that he has. He's kind and he is loving. And more importantly, he has this, he has this covenant that he's got with his people. That is, this covenant is a sustained one.

It's one that's where you can't lose it. He's there. He's abounding in it. Another translation is he's rich in love. Sometimes we think there's a limit to how much God loves us.

That actually we've used up all our quota. But God is abounding in steadfast love. And he is relenting from disaster. I think we need to understand this. I think we come from a culture that really, truly needs to understand this because we are so superstitious that we think that when we do

something wrong, that there will be consequences.

And of course there are natural consequences to the sin that we do, but then that we will also get punished. Right. And then, so we start building up this image that when we do something wrong, this God, this angry, vengeful God is going to punish us and slap us on the hand or even worse.

[35 : 48] And maybe just as bad as what we experienced as children. But God is relenting from disaster. What does this mean? This means that he is not vengeful. He's not doing it to spite you.

He's not doing it. He's not doing it in an egotistical way. He is relenting from disaster. The moment he sees your heart change, he is ready. He is ready right there for you.

That is the God that we have. In fact, that's what the whole book of the Bible is really about.

Gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.

It's funny. Cause Sam said, Jonah quotes this. Cause I knew it. It's exactly what it says in Exodus 34, that you are gracious and compassionate.

You are slow to anger. You are abounding in steadfast love. You are relenting from disaster. But actually that passage carries on. Jonah chooses just to kind of selectively use that bid against God.

[36 : 48] But afterwards it actually says that God will not leave the guilty without getting the, actually the justice that's required. And what it does show here is that Jonah really wasn't going for justice.

We might say that we are going for justice. Sometimes when we look at something that's been done to us, that's wrong, all we think about is justice. When actually all we really want is revenge. If you think about Jonah here, he's not going for justice.

He's going for revenge. I've had someone share with me and talk about James Bond movies. Who's watched James Bond movies here? Some of us, some of us are watching, judging all of you.

I haven't watched that many, but actually any, any evil villain in any kind of movie, when they get caught, what do you want to happen to them? This will tell you whether you truly want justice or whether you actually want revenge.

When an evil villain gets caught, do you want them to get a slap on that wrist and get handcuffed by the police, get shipped off into the police station, go through court and then end up in prison for a few years?

[37 : 52] Do you want that? Be honest. No, you don't want, you want them to be executed. That's what I heard earlier. Ryan. Yes. Need to pray for you, Ryan.

You are mature for your age. Honestly, if you ask yourself, when you see these evil villains, you just want them destroyed. Like you want them killed. And it's not even in the kind of like, oh, accidentally they don't realize, and they die in their sleep.

No, no, no. What do you want me here? Slow and painful. That's what you see in those James Bond movies, right? That the villain gets killed, but in the most slow, painful, and aware kind of way. And then the good person comes out, right? And sees all of it as well. That's the revenge stirring up in us, right? We want, and I think that's what Jonah was wanting.

Why though? Because I think he also really misses the main thing, which is that he himself is a sinner. He himself deserved to die. Sometimes we're fighting for justice, but when we actually just want revenge, I don't know what hurt you've had in your past.

[39 : 01] I don't know what pains that you are going through. My prayer is that first and foremost, before any of that, just again, just as Sam said, before we embark on any next step in our chapters in life, that we would first know God, and we would first know the grace that is bestowed upon us.

And I'll finish with this. We had an old Testament. I'll go into the new Testament here. There's these, there's a series of parables in Luke 15, and you will have heard of at least two of them. One of them is about the 99 sheep, the shepherd who has the 99 sheep, and then he goes and tries to save the one.

And then the other one is about someone who loses a coin. And then the third one is what? Does anyone know? The lost son, the prodigal son passed the journey for the win.

As you look at all those different parables, and we often do this, we often think, oh, well, the first one, the sheep, it's about, am I the 99 sheep, or am I the one sheep that got lost, and kind of need saving?

Maybe especially with the prodigal son one, you're like, okay, am I the older brother, or am I the younger brother? Am I the responsible one that stayed, and did everything that I needed to do, just had a heart of resentment whilst I did it?

[40:12] Or am I the younger brother who completely chose, and went the other way, and lost all of my inheritance, and came back crawling? When I think actually, the main point, now I think there's, there's merits in all of those things, as we reflect on ourselves, where are we in our own journeys?

Just like, what is there of Jonah in me? But I think the intent of those three parables, of Luke 15, is that, let's say the parable of the prodigal son, isn't really about whether we are the older brother, or we're the younger brother.

The point of the story, is that there is a father. There is a father who is always there, always waiting. Even when the son comes back, he doesn't show any kind of resentment, he just says, come straight in, we're going to have a party.

And even when his older son, comes to him and complains, I've been here all these years for you, and yet this brat comes back, and now suddenly you're using the fattened calf, I never had that calf either. Even then the father says, everything I have is yours son.

The younger one took everything of his already, everything else left is yours. But today, your brother has come back. I think the parable tells us, the main thing is the father's heart.

[41:19] This father who is gracious and merciful, who is compassionate, who is slow to anger, who is abounding in steadfast love, there is no end to his love for us. And that he is relenting from disaster.

He does not want trouble for his children, unless it draws us close to him. My question is, how well do you actually know him?

How well do you actually know this father? Yes, we've heard those verses before, but how well do you actually believe that? That he actually is gracious and merciful to you?

That he doesn't get angry easily. Abounding in steadfast love. And Alex's verse there was 1 John 3. How deep the father's love for us, that he would lavish that love onto his children, and that we are his children. And so I want us to spend some time now, and just in response to this, because I think we are surrounded by a couple of new realities here in this world.

[42:25] We're surrounded by fathers who are flawed, who have lots of mistakes, who have lots of shortcomings. We've been hurt by them. They've been absent in our lives. Whatever it may be.

And I think that impacts the way we perceive this heavenly father. I think how you have experienced your own father has put a lens or a filter on the way that you approach our God in heaven.

Just imagine again, Moses coming down from that mountain and goes, guys, I met him. He is kind. He is good. He's not safe, but he is good.

And he loves us. I think if we can truly understand who the father is and how much he loves us, it changes everything.

Imagine, the sovereign, supreme being in the whole universe loves you and is right beside you. That changes the way you tackle work.

[43:27] That changes the way you tackle problematic relationships. That changes the way you feel about your future that's uncertain. That changes the way you feel the tax from friends who talk behind your back.

That changes everything because you have a God who is behind you, beside you, within you, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. Let us spend some time, and maybe this is the prayer that I want us to read and I'll read over you.

It's Ephesians 3, which is this prayer for spiritual strength. And what is that prayer? That we would just be given the strength to comprehend what is the height and depth and length and breadth of the love that he has for us.

That we would be rooted and grounded in love. Because if we get that, if we get how deep the Father's love is for us, everything else makes sense.

Next week, we're going to tackle the rest of Jonah's response. And you'll see that we are a flawed being that constantly forgets. Jonah had the best access to God, and yet he didn't remember this.

[44:30] Let's spend some time now for us to really reflect on that. Can I invite, I'll invite the worship team up. But what I really want us to do is just spend the last few moments here of this morning just reflecting on that love.

And I want to read the prayer of Ephesians 3 over you. So I invite you just to join me in this prayer. Amen. So I don't know where you're at.

You heard from Sam, Alex, and Bill and I of the wrestlings and the challenges of being a Father. Of understanding the Father's love and all these things. I don't know where you're at with your Father. And I don't know where you're at with your Heavenly Father. But maybe on this day, more so than any other day, can we lean in to knowing that actually all our experiences on this side of heaven will be broken, will be fractured, will be flawed.

But His love covers a multitude of sins. His love covers a multitude of things that have happened to you. His grace is sufficient.

[45 : 53] And His power is made perfect in that weakness. How do I know the Father's love? Maybe that's a question that you have.

I hear people talking about it, but I don't really know what it is. I don't really know how to get it. How do I know the Father's love? I think it starts with just merely wanting it.

And so if that's you or if there's anyone here who just really wants to experience and understand what that is, I invite you to just soak in the words, the prayer that I'm going to pray with you that the Apostle Paul prayed over the church at Ephesus.

And if it's opening your hands to receive this prayer, then I encourage you to do that. If it's kneeling, as Paul says in this prayer, then I encourage you to do that.

Whatever posture you need to have to allow you to truly be able to communicate to God that I trust you.

[46 : 54] I want to trust you. I kind of know you, but I want to know you more. Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. I believe this prayer is for you.

Holy Spirit, as we pray these words, I pray that you would move and do as you will. you know the specific pains and aches and fears of each person in this room.

You know how their fathers have let them down. And on behalf of all fathers, we ask for your forgiveness. We have not shown the grace and the mercy and the patience and the love to our children that you have shown us.

hear the words of Paul.

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

[48 : 41] And according to the riches of his glory, he may be, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being. So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you, that we, may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Lord, we know that you love us because you did not spare your Son to die for us. that your love does not come without judgment but your love comes through the judgment, the judgment that was accomplished on the cross.

That out of love you gave your Son and out of love your Son laid down his life for us. a grace, something that we don't deserve, a mercy sparing us of the judgment that we do deserve.

help us understand today what the depth of that love is that allows us to be children of God.

And so we are. And so we declare with one heart you are kind. You are good.

[50 : 46] Thank you, Lord. So Father, we thank you that you are that you are gracious.

We thank you for the grace that you bestow upon us. For the mercy that you show us every time we fail. you are so patient with us.

So loving to us. And as we step out of here as your children, we pray that you would not let us forget that.

That will be the thing that is resonating in our hearts for the rest of this week. That we have a Father and he is good. that we have a Father and that he is good.

Thank you, Lord. Also help us celebrate the fathers that we still have in our midst. Allow us to honor them, respect them, and shower them with love.

[52 : 15] Whether they are ever-present or absent, whether they have many words or very few, whether they are easy to love or very hard to love.

Lord, we believe that you have shown us a way. you've shown us a way to love. So would you give us the strength today. In your name we pray.

Amen. Thank you.