

BACK TO SUNDAY SCHOOL: JONAH

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Jonah 4 (NRSV)

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ²He prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. ³And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' ⁴And the Lord said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' ⁵Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶ The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his

discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'

⁹ But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.' ¹⁰Then the Lord said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?'

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Context

Jonah is one of the minor prophets found in the Hebrew Scriptures. He is known for his three day residence in the belly of a fish whose species is unknown (although we like to claim it as a whale). But there is SO much more to the story of Jonah that meets the eye. Jonah is one of the most reluctant prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. He has no desire to follow the will of God and when he finally does, after being saved from the belly of a fish, he is angry at God's mercy for the city of Nineveh.

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Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. When you have time, read the whole book of Jonah in one sitting. What are some common themes you see throughout the book?
3. What does this chapter of Jonah teach us about the nature of God?
4. When have you ever been shown compassion or mercy when you didn't deserve it? How did that impact you in the days that followed that experience?

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