

FOCUS

The Magazine of Enfield Evangelical Free Church

Aiming to glorify God by calling and equipping people to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ

Jonah

Jonah is a wonderful book of the Bible. We have just started to look at it on Sunday afternoons at the Four O'Clock Service. It is jam packed with truth about God's character. Truth that, if we are honest, exposes how often we are out of line with God, how often we do not share His heart for this world. Take the first two verses of the book for example. In these verses alone we see four great truths about God.

He Is Not SILENT

"The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai."

Sometimes God is accused of being elusive and silent. If only He would make Himself clearer. But the Bible reveals that He is the God who speaks. If He speaks then that means relationship with Him must be possible. It must be possible to know Him. He has sent prophet after prophet and His final Word is Jesus. Let's never accuse Him of not speaking – the question is are we listening?

He Is Not LIMITED

"Go to the great city of Nineveh"

Now this really is shocking. Each of the nations had their own gods. Israel had the LORD, Nineveh had Ishatar (or something) and so on. But here is the LORD stepping outside His own patch. Who on earth does He think He is?

He is the LORD. He is the Maker of Heaven and Earth. He is the One who has the absolute right over every nation on this planet. And He demonstrates that authority by sending Jonah to Nineveh, an enemy city.

This claim to worldwide authority crops up all over the Bible. Jesus could not be more clear when He announced after His resurrection that

*"all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." Matthew 28.*

Our society's thinking is not so different to Jonah's day. People continually want to put limits on God. So we hear things like, "That is nice for you, but keep it in church. Don't come telling me about it." "We live in multi cultural London, let's keep God out of things."

Jesus has authority over every nation. There is not one nation, not one street, not one home where He does not have the right to speak. We need to believe it and act like it!

He Is Not BLIND

"...preach against it [Nineveh] because it's wickedness has come up before me"

Do you remember what Adam and Eve did in the garden right after they disobeyed God? They hid. Have you ever thought what a crazy thing that was to do? You can almost imagine Adam whispering to Eve, "Shh, stay quiet. Perhaps He won't notice."

Yet, how often do we act like that? We think God doesn't see our wickedness. We think He doesn't notice that we are ignoring Him. We think He turns a blind eye.

But He does see. He sees it all. And He is against it. That is a sobering truth isn't it?

He Is Incredibly KIND

Nineveh is a wicked city, a city that deserves to be destroyed by the anger of God so He sends them a preacher.

He warns them. And His warnings are part of His very great compassion. He is slow to anger. He does not fly off the handle. He warns.

He is not being soft, punishment will come. But warning first. Warning that is designed to make people take action. Sometimes people think that warning others of judgement is all a bit harsh and heavy. That could not be further from the truth. To warn people is to act in great kindness.

Have you ever noticed how much time Jesus spent warning people? And, of course, our Lord Jesus not only warns, but then died on the cross to provide the way of escape for wicked people.

God does not want to destroy people. He does not take delight in the death of a sinner. So He gives warning after warning. Are we listening? Do we share His desire for this world?

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