

# Jonah: Grace That Still Won't Let Go

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning. Is everyone asleep still? Good morning. Oh, there they are. If you don't know me, my name is Eric.
- I'm the youth guy here at Watermark Church. And I'm here today to finish off our last week of Jonah. We've been looking at Jonah for the past four weeks, and it's been a wild adventure that he has been on.
- We started out looking at God calling him to go reach out to the city of Nineveh. And Nineveh was the enemies of the Israelites, which was Jonah's people. And Jonah was not interested in going to talk to his enemies about God, so he ran away.
- He got on a ship sailing the opposite direction, and then a storm hit. God sent a storm. Jonah, the men on the boat, found out that Jonah was responsible for this storm, and they said to Jonah, what do we have to do to you to save our lives?
- And instead of saying, turn it around, send me to Nineveh, Jonah said, throw me overboard. I'd rather die than obey God. He's thrown into the water. He's crashing, waves crashing over him.
- [ 1 : 0 3 ]     He's sinking, sinking, sinking. And he cries out to God, God save me. And God sends a fish that swallows him and saves him from drowning. Jonah spends three days in the belly of this fish, and he is praying to God, thanking God for saving his life.
- And three days later, God commands the fish. It spits Jonah out onto the dry land, and God again says, Jonah, go to Nineveh. This time, Jonah figures, maybe I should obey. He heads over to Nineveh.
- He starts telling the people of Nineveh, 40 days, and your city is going to be destroyed. And the city of Nineveh says, uh-oh. And they start repenting. They turn. They start crying out to God to save them.
- And God does. He relents from his plan. He changes his plan and says, I'm not going to destroy Nineveh anymore.
- And that's where we left it last week. God has decided he will not destroy Nineveh. Today, we pick up the story with Jonah's response to that. And we're going to see Jonah has a misplaced anger.
- [ 2 : 0 6 ]     He has a misplaced love. And that God contrasts that with his perfect love. First, Jonah's misplaced anger. When Jonah sees God's forgiveness towards the city of Nineveh, it says that he becomes exceedingly angry.
- Jonah has just been used by God to save an entire city. And he's angry about it. He looks at God, and he says, how could you do this?
- You're supposed to be our God, the Israelites' God. Not the Ninevites' God. Our God. And yet you forgive them. And we see that what happened with Jonah is that he had a lot of national pride.

He loved his country. He loved his homeland. He was an Israelite to the core. But his love of a good thing, his love of his nation, had warped itself into an idol in his life. He had taken his love of his nation, which was a good thing, and elevated it above his love for God in his life.

He had made it into what we would call an idol, something that takes God's place in our hearts. And because Jonah had developed this idol in his heart, it turned him into a racist.

[ 3 : 17 ] It turned him into someone who would rather see an entire city of people die than see them turn to God and be saved from their evil ways. And Jonah, because his view of the world and of God was so twisted by this idolatry, he actually becomes angry at God for saving the city.

If you look at his response in verse 2 here, he prays to the Lord and he says, Oh Lord, isn't this what I said would happen when I was still in my country? That's why I ran away to Tarshish.

Because I knew that you're a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and relenting from disaster. You would think after God uses Jonah to save an entire city, Jonah would be like, Okay, God, you're right.

Should have listened to you the first time, but that's not what happened. Jonah looks at God and he says, See, this is why I ran away in the first place. I knew you'd do this. I knew you would save these guys and I didn't want that to happen.

That's why I ran. He says, Look, I knew that you're this gracious God, that you're merciful, that you're slow to anger, that you're abounding in steadfast love, that you relent from disaster.

[ 4 : 26 ] I knew these things about you and that's why I didn't want to go in the first place. But here's how twisted Jonah's view of the world has become by his idolatry. The only reason Jonah is alive right now and able to have this conversation with God is because God is a gracious God.

Because God is merciful. Because God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and relenting from disaster. Because you know what? Jonah deserved destruction just like the Ninevites did.

When Jonah ran away from God, he deserved destruction. When Jonah was thrown into the sea, he deserved to drown. And yet, God was merciful.

God was gracious. God relented from disaster. God showed Jonah steadfast love. And God saved Jonah's life. These traits of God that Jonah lists off here that he knows so well are the reason that he's alive.

And yet, he despises God because of them. Jonah has this excellent theological understanding of God, but this terrible application of it to his life. Jonah is a good idea. The Bible again and again tells us that God's forgiveness of us, that God's love for us, is meant to inspire us to love him and love others.

[ 5 : 41 ] Jonah understands the fact that God is loving and forgiving. But he hates the world around him despite that fact. Jonah's entire view of reality and understanding of the world is completely twisted by idols.

And what we see from this is that when we take desires, even if they're good ones, and we let them take God's place in our lives, we set ourselves up for disappointment, failure, and anger, especially at God.

Right? Jonah here, he's not just upset that Nineveh has been saved. He's directly upset with God for having saved Nineveh. It's not just, oh, I'm angry. It's, God, I am angry at you.

How could you do this? Jonah's lost all perspective of the world and what's right and wrong. And the thing is, this is so easy for us to do in our lives too.

It's so easy to take something, a good thing, other than God, and set it up in our lives as the ultimate thing. And here's one way I've seen it play out in the church. People take the idea of having a spouse and they set it up as the ultimate thing in life.

[ 6 : 51 ] I want to get married. When I get married, life will be perfect. And they've been fed this idea that there's this perfect soulmate out there for them.

And so they spend their lives looking for this person. And one of two things can happen. One, they believe, oh, there's this perfect person out there for me. And they set their standards so high searching for perfection because they need a spouse and they need it to be the perfect person that they look for someone continually who doesn't exist.

And then they reach this age where they're like, God, I should have been married by now. What are you doing? And they get angry at God because they feel that God's robbing them of this spouse that's actually essential to their identity.

When in reality, they've built their identity around the wrong thing. Or maybe they go out there and they find someone and they're like, this is the perfect person for me. And then they get married and realize that person's not actually perfect.

And life gets difficult having to deal with the imperfections of each other. And then they look at God and they're like, God, this was supposed to be the perfect person for me. What are you doing? And again, it's something where they've taken this expectation, this idea of a spouse, and they've put it above their desire for God and expected that God owes them this perfect marriage, this perfect spouse.

[ 8 : 12 ] And when they don't get it, when their idol fails them, they get angry and disappointed with God. Another thing that I see in the church sometimes is people want career success.

It's a good thing. It's good to be successful at your career, to be good at your job, and to be recognized for that. But I've seen so many people who they spend their lives investing in their career over and over and over.

They put it above their relationship with God. They put it above involvement in church. We've got to work the extra hours. Got to get that extra project finished. Got to have the boss recognize me.

And the day comes when they're in line for the big promotion, and they don't get it. Or the day comes where they're laid off. And all of a sudden, this thing that they've built their identity around for years and years and years is gone.

Their idol has failed them. And when we put our hopes in things other than God, when we set our hopes in idols, we set ourselves up for disappointment, for failure, for anger, especially at God.

[ 9 : 20 ] And you can fill in the blank with any other good thing that we make ultimate in our lives. When we take something other than God and expect it to give us ultimate joy, ultimate peace, ultimate fulfillment, we set ourselves up for disappointment, failure, and anger.

With Jonah, his anger is extreme. Jonah looks at God, and he says, Actually, God, because you saved Nineveh, it's better for me to die than to live.

He jumps from, I'm angry at you, to kill me now, God. Which is really ironic, because just two chapters earlier, he had been praying to God, save me, I'm about to die.

And now he says, God, just kill me. I'm tired of living. Right? And God has every right right here to step in and say, Jonah, who are you? What are you doing? You have no right to talk to me this way.

But that's not what God does. God, like a friend, just steps in and says, Jonah, is it right for you to be angry right now? Take a step back. Look at it from the proper perspective.

[ 10 : 20 ] Is it right for you to be angry? We get no response from Jonah. All that happens is Jonah leaves the city, goes outside, and waits to watch what's going to happen to the city. I don't know, maybe he thinks God's going to change his mind again and say, Actually, I'm going to wipe him out.

He goes outside the city. He builds this little hut for himself outside the city, probably out of leafy branches. He was in the middle of the hot desert. He wanted a little shade from the sun. And right now, we're about to see Jonah's misplaced love develop.

Because as he sits out there in the sun, God decides to send a plant. A big plant that grows overnight and gives Jonah shade.

Peace from the sun. Comfort. And something interesting happens here. When the plant grows, it's the first time in the entire book of Jonah that we see that Jonah is actually glad about something.

He was thrown overboard, on the verge of drowning. God saved his life, and he was thankful, but it doesn't say anything about him being glad. He got a second chance at obedience to God, and he obeyed God, but he was not glad.

[ 11 : 31 ] God used him to convert an entire city and get them to turn away from their evil and repent. And he was actually exceedingly angry, the exact opposite emotion that he feels when this plant grows.

And this plant is the first thing in the entire book of Jonah that causes Jonah to actually be happy or glad. And disaster is around the corner, and Jonah does not know it.

But the next morning, a worm comes. It eats the plant. And the plant dies. And to make matters worse, this strong east wind comes up.

Now, this strong east wind apparently is something that will raise temperatures by 11 or 12 degrees Celsius. So Jonah's in the middle of the hot desert, and then it gets hotter and drier.

And he's out there in the sun with no plant over him anymore. Life is difficult. Yesterday, we went on a hike for the Love HK summer activities, and it was awesome.

[ 12 : 32 ] If you haven't done any of the Love HK activities, I recommend you check them out after service. They're a great way to get to know other people in the church. We went on a hike out in Saikong. It was hot. We were walking, and we were trying to stay in the shade as much as we could.

We were stopping and rinsing ourselves off in cold water to cool ourselves down as much as we could. I did something that I really judged myself for. Remember, I walked with an umbrella in the sun to protect myself from it because it was so hot.

And I wanted protection from the sun because I was exhausted, and it was hot, and the sun was just making me more exhausted. Jonah's out here in the desert. He's got no cold water to rinse himself off in.

He's got no restaurants to swing by on the hike to grab a cold drink. He's got no umbrella to hold over him to keep himself cool. He's in the exposed sun in the middle of the desert.

His shade has been torn away from him, and he's stranded. He is not happy. But what we see is that this destruction of the plant and this sending of the wind is actually a work of God's mercy on Jonah's life.

[ 13 : 43 ] It's interesting. At this point with the plant, we see a transition in the book of Jonah. In the Hebrew scriptures, there's actually two different words that will be used to refer to God.

One is translated Lord in our English translation. One is translated God. Lord is the covenant name that the Israelites had with God, and it was usually used for the Israelites with their interactions with God, where God was used for more general use of God, maybe interaction with the Gentiles.

And you see this over and over again in the book of Jonah up to this point. At the start of the book, the Lord calls Jonah to go to Nineveh. Jonah runs away from the Lord. The Lord sends a storm. Jonah tells the sailors that he's running away from the Lord.

The Lord appoints a fish to swallow Jonah. Again, the Lord calls Jonah to go to Nineveh. The Lord tells the fish to vomit Jonah onto the land. At all of Jonah's interactions with God up to this point, it says the Lord is doing these things.

And the word God is used primarily up to this point in the book of Jonah for God's interactions with Nineveh. Nineveh believes God. Nineveh repents and calls out to God.

[ 14 : 55 ] God hears the Ninevites when they repent. And God decides to save the city of Nineveh. And as the plant grows, we see a transition happen here. Where God's interaction with Jonah begins to be marked by the use of the word God instead of Lord.

Basically, what's happening here is Jonah is being put into the Ninevites' shoes. Jonah is being treated as a pagan because of his constant rebellion and complaining against God. God's taking a chance for Jonah to see what's going on in the world around him.

He's getting a chance to experience the destruction that was foretold for the Ninevites. It's a plant for him, not a city. But he's experiencing this destruction because of his rebellion against God.

And it's interesting to see that Jonah has lost out, missed out on his relationship with God, despite a lifetime of service and obedience to God.

Jonah has spent his entire life sending messages from God to the people. Jonah has spent his entire life working for God.

[ 16 : 05 ] And yet Jonah's missed out on the most important thing, his own personal relationship with God. He's sort of like the older brother in the story of the prodigal son, who constantly obeys the father, constantly does everything perfectly right, but not for a love of the father just because he wants the inheritance once the father's gone.

And so Jonah's stranded in the middle of the desert. He feels that God owes it to him to destroy the city of Nineveh because he has been obedient and finally delivered the message, and they're his enemies.

And again, Jonah shows us the danger of loving things other than God as ultimate in our lives. Jonah loved the plant more than anything else in his life at that point.

He had turned the plant into an idol. But there's multiple levels of idolatry going on in Jonah's heart right now. Because I think there are ways that God could have taken away the plant that wouldn't have led to Jonah being angry.

I think if God had taken away the plant and sent a cloud over the sun to cool things down, and Jonah was still comfortable, he wouldn't have complained about the plant. But there's a deeper thing going on in Jonah's heart right here.

[ 17 : 21 ] A deeper idol controlling his love for the plant. If we think about it, it's sort of like, we could call them surface-level idols and deep idols. There's this deep desire in Jonah's heart for comfort.

There's this deep desire in Jonah's heart for him to have his own way. And at that moment, he's receiving comfort from the plant. Once the plant is gone, his comfort is gone.

But if God took away the plant and put something else in its place that still kept Jonah comfortable, if God sent a car with an air conditioner that Jonah could sit inside of and chill in hundreds BC and relax in the middle of the desert, he would have been okay with that, I think.

Because his deep idol still would have been satisfied. And it's the same way in our lives. There's multiple levels of idolatry in our lives. There's things that we can see and everyone around us can see.

Things like money. Things like sex. Things like grades. That people take and make as idols. And we can see those idols, and everyone around us can see those idols in our lives.

[ 18 : 29 ] But there's a deeper level. There's something in all of our hearts that motivates us and drives us to go for those things. Maybe it's this deep desire for acceptance.

I want to be accepted and loved, and I think this is my way to get acceptance and love. Maybe it's power. I want to be in control of everything. And if I have enough money, I think I can be in control.

Maybe it's success. We just want to be successful. And grades are where I know I can be successful. So I'm going to focus on those. Here's an example of what that could look like in someone's life.

Let's say there's this guy and a girl. They both say they're Christians. They go out to a bar one night, and they hook up and have a one-night stand and sleep together. Now, obviously, for both of them, sex is an idol in their lives.

But the reason that sex has become an idol for them could be totally different for each of them. Maybe for the girl, she has a deep idol of acceptance.

[ 19 : 32 ] She wants to be loved and accepted and thinks, the way to be loved and accepted is to give my body to this guy because he'll give me a place to love, to be loved and be accepted and to belong for the night.

Maybe for the guy, it's a deep idol of power. He wants to be in control of the world around him, and he thinks that if he can go to the bar and pick up a girl and get her to do what he wants for the night, he has power.

They have different underlying deep idols that are manifesting themselves in the same way on the surface. But now let's say that the guy is in a men's accountability group, and they find out that he's been sleeping around, and they come and talk to him, and they're like, dude, the Bible says we're not supposed to have sex unless we're married.

And he's like, oh no, I'm going to stop that. This deep idol of power in his life is still going to continue manifesting itself, just in a different way.

Because you haven't dealt with the deep problem in his heart. Maybe it means that instead of going and picking up girls at the bar, he's going to become more domineering at the office. Because God says it's wrong for me to control the girls at the bar and get them to sleep with me, but I can control the people who work for me at the office and get them to do what I want.

[ 20 : 41 ] For the girl, maybe if she, if you deal with the surface level idol, but don't deal with this deep longing and need for acceptance, maybe she goes out and finds a man and enters into this codependent marriage relationship and just has this horrible codependent relationship because she wants to find her identity in this relationship so badly.

And the Bible teaches us that the only way to deal with the deep idols in our hearts is to identify them and replace them with the gospel. If we're talking to this girl, we need to, we need to say to the girl, look, we understand you have a desire and a need to be accepted.

And that's, that's normal. That's a good thing. But in Christ, you're already loved. You're already accepted. You already have a place where you belong. You don't need to find that through one night stands.

With the man, maybe we can look at him and we can say, look, we understand your desire for power. We understand, understand your desire to be in control, but we're human. We're finite. We can't be in control, but there's one who is.

There's a God who is in control. And more than that, who loves us, who's working for us, who's working all things together for good if we're his children.

[ 21 : 54 ] And so we don't need to be in control because God already is in control for us. With idolatry in our lives, it's not just about the, it's not just about the simple surface level things that we see.

It's not just about the plant. It's about the deeper idol behind the plant that's driving us to love the plant. And so I want us to think about what are our idols.

You know, this is Hong Kong. Money, success, power. Those are the obvious ones that everyone would look at and think about. But why do we want those things? Is it because we want to be comfortable?

We think, if I just have enough money, I'll be comfortable. Is it because we want to be accepted and we think, I need to be successful for people to accept me?

There's a couple questions that we can think about to help us, to help guide us in that, in that thought. You know, with Jonah, he became angry when his idol was taken away.

[ 22 : 57 ] What is it that when it's taken away, it makes us angry? With Jonah, when, when his idol was taken away, he lost his desire to live.

He said, God, just kill me now. That's better than living. What's that thing in our lives that if God took it away from us, we'd say, God, just kill me now. It's better for me to die than to keep on living.

With Jonah, when his idol was taken away, he lost his desire to follow God. He said, God, if you're going to send me to Nineveh, if you're going to love my enemies, it's not worth it to follow you anymore.

What's that one thing in our lives that if God took it away, we would say, it's not worth it to follow you anymore. I think the answers to those questions are going to, are going to guide us and show us what it is in our lives that we're setting up as higher than God.

There was a man back in the 1500s named John Calvin. He said, our hearts are idol factories. Our hearts have this way of just finding things other than God and setting them up as ultimate in our lives.

[ 24 : 06 ] And it's our natural state as humans to search for something to define ourselves by. But Jonah shows us that everything we define ourselves by other than God is going to fail us.

It's going to leave us empty. And that we need to identify those idols and deal with them and replace them with a love for God if we want to truly live lives that aren't going to be marked by continual failure and disappointment and anger at God.

And now we have God step in to the story. And he takes Jonah's misplaced anger and he takes Jonah's misplaced love and he contrasts them with his perfect love.

Jonah, you know, he again says, God, kill me now, please. And God, again, doesn't rebuke him. He just says, Jonah, is it right for you to be angry about the plant?

And this time we actually get a response from Jonah. He says, yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die. God steps in, again, not rebuking, like a friend, just trying to give Jonah perspective.

[ 25 : 14 ] And Jonah has reverted to childish behavior. I can't have my way, kill me now. I can't have my way, I want to die. It's what you'd expect from a four-year-old, right?

If I can't get that toy, I don't want to live anymore. That's what Jonah's doing. And God steps in to give Jonah some perspective.

God says, Jonah, 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. Here's what God's saying.

Jonah, it's a plant. And not even just a plant. Like, it's a plant that you did nothing to get. If you were a gardener and you had planted it and taken care of it and watched it grow, maybe I could a little bit understand you being upset about it.

But you went to bed and you woke up the next morning and it was there. You did nothing to make it grow. You had no role in its coming into existence.

[ 26 : 18 ] And yet you treat it as the most important thing in existence. But it's just a plant, Jonah. It's just a plant. You love a plant. Then God continues, God says, look at you, Jonah.

I can't understand how you can love this plant so much and ignore this city. You love this plant. You did nothing to make it grow. There's a city here full of over 120,000 people that I made in my image.

If you love this plant so much, how can you expect me not to love them so much more? Your plant, it doesn't have a soul. Every single person in that city has a soul.

Your plant, you did nothing to make it be there. But this city is full of people that I made, that I sustain on a day-to-day basis. There was one plant.

There are over 120,000 people in this city, Jonah. How can you have such terrible perspective on life? And even if you hate the people in the city so badly that you think they all deserve to die, there's a bunch of cows in this city that are also more valuable than your plant that would be wiped out with the city if the city was destroyed.

[ 27 : 48 ] You should care about the cows more than you care about your plant, Jonah, because they are more valuable than the plant. God says, Jonah, you have got the worst perspective ever on value, on the world, on anything.

You love a plant more than a city full of people. And God challenges Jonah to reexamine his priorities by revealing to us God's love for cities.

There's a pastor in New York named Tim Keller. He says, in cities, there's more image of God per square foot than anywhere else on earth. I'll repeat that.

In cities, there's more image of God per square foot than anywhere else on earth. The Bible again and again tells us that God loves people. And cities are where people are.

So God loves cities. And right here, we see that. We see God calling Jonah to love the city just like he does. And what's more than that, Tim Keller says, cities are still places that will not let you sit back and be indifferent, comfortable, and blind to temptation.

[ 28 : 57 ] Cities drive you to sell your soul to something. They always create spiritual turmoil. People are always spiritually searching in cities. It was true for Nineveh.

Jonah came in and all he had to do is say, your city is being destroyed in 40 days. And the people cried out and clothed themselves in like terrible, uncomfortable clothing and repented and said, God, forgive us.

All it took was one guy walking through the streets. And today, it's still true. People come to cities and what they thought about the world is turned upside down. And they search because everything that they thought was normal, everything that they thought was the way things are supposed to be is so different here.

They can't live in this protective bubble where they believe that everything is going to be the same because everything is constantly changing. And they want to know, where is that place that's constant?

What is that thing that's going to hold firm? Cities are an incredibly strategic place for reaching people with the gospel because when people come into cities, they're searching.



[ 30 : 01 ] And God knows that. God designed it that way. God designed cities as a tool that we can use to help point people towards him. And with every single person here today, he strategically placed us in this city at this time to be a tool that he can use to help reach people who are going through that time of searching, that time of wondering, what's life really all about?

Why am I here? And he challenges Jonah to see this love for cities and he challenges us today to see this love for cities. And I think like Jonah, a lot of us don't love our cities like we're supposed to.

Maybe we come here for two years to get ahead on our careers, make our fortune and then leave. Get what we can from the city and get out. Maybe we set up a business and employ, exploit migrant workers so we can pay very low wages so we can maximize our profits.

Maybe we just come to the city and we do our thing. We ignore everyone around us. All of this hurting, all of the brokenness, all of the needs that the people around us have because we're so focused on ourselves being comfortable, having what we want.

But just like Jonah, God wants each of us here today to love our city, to spend our lives investing in the good of our city, to take his heart for our city and for the people in it and make that our heart for the city and the people in it.

[ 31 : 31 ] And then God closes the book of Jonah by revealing his great love for people to Jonah, which is a love greater than Jonah or us is capable of.

And it's a love that for us to understand it fully, we need to look to someone who we could call a second Jonah. You know, the first Jonah, God called him to go to the wicked city and Jonah ran away.

But with the second Jonah, Jesus, God sent him to a broken and sinful earth and he came obediently. With the first Jonah, he feared that maybe if he went to share God's message with this city, he might be attacked.

The second Jonah, Jesus, the greater Jonah, knew that if he came to the world, he would be killed. Yet he came willingly. The first Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of a fish because of his rebellion against God.

But Jesus, our greater Jonah, spent three days and three nights in the earth, dead for our sin and our rebellion against God. The first Jonah, when he had come back from the fish, he hesitantly went to Nineveh and reluctantly shared with them this message that could lead to their salvation.

[ 32 : 59 ] But the second and greater Jonah, after conquering over sin and death, came and proclaimed salvation to all who would believe on him. A sure thing, a promise that he will forgive us, that he will save us.

The story of Jonah only makes sense for us if we see it through the lens of Jesus. The only way that God can love cities so much, the only way that God can love us so much is through this second and greater Jonah, through Jesus.

And as the book ends, it doesn't really tell us how Jonah responds to God's challenge for his life. Personally, I think Jonah got the message. And here's why I think that.

If you read through the story of Jonah, everywhere in the story of Jonah, Jonah is shown as an evil fool. He is the bad guy again and again and again.

He's the guy who should have gotten it and didn't over and over and over. And for us to have this story with such intimate details of things like what he prayed while he was inside the fish, there's no way we could have gotten that story unless he told it to someone.

[ 34 : 11 ] And there's no way that he would tell this story to someone where he was the bad guy over and over and over again unless he had come to recognize that fact and he had been transformed by God's grace and he could see, yeah, the way that I was then was wrong.

I need to change my life. I need to love people the way that God does. But the book doesn't tell us that. That's just speculation. But what happens at the end of the book is that God asks Jonah a question.

And as God asks Jonah this question, Jonah's taken out of the way. And the question gets aimed straight at us today. God says, Jonah, you love this plant so much.

But the city is so much more valuable. Which one should you love? Which one should I love? for us today? I think it's the same question.

We have things in our lives that we look at and we love. Maybe it's money. Maybe it's comfort. Maybe it's success. Maybe it's our career or our family.

[ 35 : 26 ] Good things. But God says, examine yourself. what is your plant? What is your plant? What is your plant? Which is more valuable? your bank account or the city and the people in it?

Which is more valuable? Your comfort or your neighbors? God says, examine yourself.

What is your plant? What is that thing that you hold on to more than anything else that could be gone in an instant that you look at and say, if I can just have that, the city of Hong Kong can burn?

And ask yourself, is that a right love? And what is the love that God is calling you to have for your city? Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your love. We thank you for the story of Jonah and the ways that it challenges us and points us towards you. We thank you for the fact that your grace did not let go of Jonah, that you chased him down when he was in rebellion again and again and again, that you didn't accept his excuses, that you didn't give in to his idolatrous desires, that you pointed him constantly back to you, to your heart, to your love, that you challenged him to join you in loving the city as you love the city.

[ 36 : 57 ] God, I pray that for each of us here today that we would love our city, that we would identify the idols in our hearts that keep us from you and that keep us from loving our neighbors around us, that we would repent of the ways that we have trusted in idols for our fulfillment rather than for you, and that we would obediently serve you and love our city.

We thank you for Jesus, the true, greater, second Jonah, who makes your love of us and of cities possible. And in Jesus' name, amen.