

The Love of God – Jonah 3

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent*. ⁴And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day’s walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

⁵So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. ⁷And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. ⁸But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

¹⁰Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

Open: What do you think of when you think of the word “repentance”?

→What words in the passage need to be explained for you?

1. What does God tell Jonah to do? (v. 2)
2. How does Jonah respond? (v. 3)
3. What do we know about Nineveh? (v. 3)
4. How do the people of Nineveh respond to Jonah? (v. 5)
5. What did the king decree? (vv. 7-8)
6. What did the king hope would happen? (v. 9)
7. What was God’s reaction to the people of Nineveh? (v. 10)

Apply

- If you were in Nineveh, how would you have responded to Jonah’s message in v. 4?
- How does Jonah’s message show God’s love?
- How does God’s relenting in v. 10 show love for the people of Nineveh?

The need which the Christian faith answers is not so much that we are ignorant and need better information, but that we are lost and need someone to come and find us, stuck in the quicksand waiting to be rescued, dying and in need of new life.

N T Wright