

**Minor League Announcers**  
**God Loves the Lost**  
**Jonah 1-4**

**Intro:** Jonah is the most reluctant prophet of all—even more reluctant than Moses! When God calls Jonah, he does not hesitate or cogitate. He immediately takes off in the opposite direction.

Why is Jonah so ready to run from God?

As it turns out, Jonah is not fond of the people who live in Ninevah. God wants him to go and preach to the wicked people of Ninevah, seeking their repentance, and Jonah just wants them all to die and go to hell.

When the people of Ninevah hear the message of Jonah, they believe God and repent from the king on down. They experience an amazing revival in this wicked city.

Jonah, God's prophet, is even more upset now than he was before. He is so angry he just wants to die.

The Book of Jonah is about God's love for all people including people that we consider hopeless, wicked, and fit only for burning.

It is also about God's people who do not see other people like God sees them.

We are always glad when the grace of God proves to be greater than our personal failure. We may not be so glad when God's grace proves to be greater than the terrible sins of disgusting foreigners, and he chooses to show them mercy.

God's vision is broader than ours—and it is keener. He sees the people who remain outside the field of our vision. And he sees them more accurately than we do.

God also sees people through a lens of love while we see people through the lens of our own self-centeredness. God is superior to all, but he doesn't let that keep him from loving. We feel superior to all, and the lie of our own preeminence cuts us off from everyone we ought to love.

**I. We run away where God runs toward.** Jonah ran away from the Lord (Jonah 1:3).

A. Jonah is running in the opposite direction. He is using enormous energy and precious time to get away from what God wants him to do. He is not only running away from God, he is running away from Israel, the people of God, and he is running away from Ninevah, that chief city of the Assyrian Empire.

B. God is running toward Ninevah. He wants to get to them before they self-destruct in their sin. He is running toward Jonah. He wants his prophet to join him in the rescue attempt. And he is running toward Israel. He wants his chosen people to be the MISSIONARY PEOPLE he called them to be.

C. It would not be unusual for someone in this group today to be heading in the opposite direction from where God has called you. We are just as willful, foolish, and stubborn as Jonah. We want our way no matter what. Sometimes we are willing to die rather than do it God's way.

Do I hear the sound of panting, great big heaving breaths? Do I see exhaustion on some of our faces? Are we running away from what we know God wants us to do?

**II. We plan nothing where God plans elaborately.** The Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God (Jonah 1:17-2:1).

A. Jonah has no particular plan as he heads out on a ship for Tarshish. He just wants to get away from God who is calling him to a very particular task. We do not know anything that Jonah intends other than NOT DOING what God has asked him to do. He would rather run away to a different foreign country than go to Ninevah. He is not adverse to international travel. He is adverse to the proclamation of God's message of love to the wicked Ninevites.

B. God makes elaborate plans for the salvation of the Ninevites. He wants more than anything to save the Ninevites. They are not part of the covenant with Abraham as of yet, but they are in the circle of his attention and plan.

God is not shooting from the hip. He is not simply responding from one crisis to another. God knows the end from the beginning. God chooses when, where, by whom, and to whom his message will be sent.

C. Your prayers today should be offered to God in full awareness that his grace and deliverance are available to you. You should also remember the promises you have made to God. He remembers these promises. Like Jonah, you should say to God, "What I have vowed I will make good" (Jonah 2:9).

**III. We feel disdain where God feels compassion.** Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: "God to the great city of Ninevah and proclaim to it the message I give you" (Jonah 3:1-2).

I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity (Jonah 4:2).

A. Jonah does not respect or love the Ninevites. He only holds them in contempt. This may be true in part because they are a rising force in the Middle East in his day. Ninevah stands as the greatest threat to his own people.

B. God feels compassion and love for the Ninevites despite their sinfulness. He displays this first in that he has visited them and is well-acquainted with their plight. He comes to Jonah having already done all the investigation necessary.

This is an Old Testament book about God's love for Gentiles. The Ninevites are not Jews. They are foreigners. They are outside of the covenant of promise. They are not in the physical lineage of Abraham. Yet God loves them. Jonah knows this about God.

C. God's love for Gentiles is not simply a New Testament phenomenon. In fact, God's love for sinners is not simply a New Testament truth. God loved Rahab the Harlot in Jericho, saved her family from destruction, and made her part of the physical lineage of Jesus the Savior. God loved Ruth the Moabitess, drew her to the Promised Land, and gave her a family and a home and a place in his plan of redemption for all people. God loved David the shepherd boy even after his scandalous sins. And God loves the sinners of Ninevah.

D. And God loves you. You are one of these Ninevites. You have either already been rescued from your sins, or you are the object of God's special attention today. He is drawing you to himself on this day. He has drawn you to the house of worship. He has prepared your heart to receive this message.

**IV. We check out where God checks in.** Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city (Jonah 4:5).

A. Jonah checks out of the city in disgust and wants to die. This seems to be the mode of the prophet.

B. God checks in to the dilemma of his prophet and follows him to his place of self-pity. He initiates another conversation with this difficult prophet. He does so through three provisions: 1) God provided a vine, 2) God provided a worm, and 3) God provided a scorching east wind.

C. Every time you have checked out, God has checked in. Every time you have left in disgust, God followed you. Every time you have become angry and bitter, God has dogged your tracks.

Some of you have come angry today. You are upset at the world and at people and at God. You shake your head in disgust everywhere you turn. You feel yourself surrounded by people who make you angry and disappoint you.

God is teaching you a new way to live in your world. He is running after you, pursuing you for his own purposes. You may already be able to count two or three of the provisions of God for you that have turned your head his way.

**Conclusion:** Think of all the lengths to which God is going to bring you into the circle of his love. Think of the people he has worked through, the patience he has displayed, and the love he has lavished upon you in the effort to bring you to himself.