

I. Introduction

- A. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. (John 3:16-17)*
 - 1. The Bible is full of sending. God sends everything from animals (Balaam's donkey) to servant girls and boys to astrologers from the East to prophets, even His own Son.
 - 2. From Genesis to Revelation, God has one plan and is constantly sending those whom He has redeemed to carry that plan out.
 - a. *As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you. (John 20:21)*
 - b. God first initiates an encounter with Himself through various means, He then invites us into His family, and finally sends us to inhabit our neighborhoods and the nations to initiate and invite them into God's family and send them to inhabit where He leads them.
 - c. *This is the activity of the Bride, the preparation for the coming of Christ and the process of purification she is called to.
 - 3. We are a sent people.
- B. Two critical things about being sent
 - 1. Obedience
 - 2. Compassion
- C. *Through January, we will be unpacking what it means to be sent. Every one of us who calls Jesus Lord and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit is sent. This is nothing new, we've been talking about this in various terms for a while now.
- D. *We live in a time in history where we have access to an overabundance of information, some accurate and some made up. We are some of the most informed people in human history yet that does not remotely translate into us being the most obedient people in human history. It even seems that the more information we get as a culture, the less compassion we have on others. I believe that we need to be reminded of what we already have heard more than we need to be informed of something new. And in that context, we need to obey.

II. Jonah and Jesus

- A. Both are famous in biblical history (and beyond).
 - 1. One because of obedience and compassion, one because of disobedience and callousness.
 - 2. God's ask: Go to an undeserving people and proclaim My glory, warn of My jealousy and judgment, and invite them into My family, to be My bride.
- B. Jonah and Israel
 - 1. 787-746BC: Israel had become so preoccupied with herself that she lost her desire and motivation to be God's kingdom of priests and be the conduit of blessing to all nations.

2. Jonah refused to visit Nineveh because he did not believe they deserved God's love and forgiveness

Now the Word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before Me." But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. (Jonah 1:1-3)

3. Everyone and everything but Jonah obeyed

- a. The storm

But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. ... So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. (Jonah 1:4,15)

- b. The lots

And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. (Jonah 1:7)

- c. The sailors

Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, "O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You." So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. (Jonah 1:11-16)

- d. The great fish

And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:17)

- e. The Ninevites

And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish." When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it. (Jonah 3:5-10)

- f. The vine
Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. (Jonah 4:6)
 - g. The worm
But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. (Jonah 4:7)
 - h. The wind
When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah 4:8)
 - i. *The only one in the book of Jonah that didn't obey God was the only one we would have assumed to unquestionably obey—his prophet.
4. Jonah shows that the greatest hindrance to the spread of the Kingdom message is not persecution or other religious paradigms, but it is the failure and disobedience of those whom God has redeemed and sent.
- C. Jesus
- 1. In common
 - a. Sent to a people who did not ask for or deserve the message
 - b. Sent to a people who would rather reject or even kill them than listen to anything they had to say
 - c. Obedience came at a cost for both of them (arguably very different).
 - d. Both were bringing a message that required a response. It initiated the knowledge of the one God, invited a relational response to that one God, and would result in those responding to inhabit the world on behalf of that one God.
 - 2. Jesus and His way of ministry was completely different than the way Jonah did ministry. Way too much to cover so let me just read one passage to sum up,
So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in Heaven and on Earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God Who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:1-13)

III. Jonah or Jesus?

A. Who is your father?

1. Remember the book, "Are you my mother?"
 - a. Baby bird went looking for its mother.
 - b. Asked a cat, hen, dog, cow, car, boat, airplane, and a construction crane if they were its mother.
 - c. Obviously none of them were because a bird is nothing like any of those in its form or nature
2. In our sent-ness, are you and I like Jonah or Jesus?
 - a. Obedience
 - 1) Our culture is about information more than it is about obedience - and that has defined the way we respond to God.
 - 2) What if ...
 - a) we didn't read the next verse or passage in the Bible until we obeyed what we read?
 - b) I preached the same exact sermon each week until we had a measurable 50% obedience of our church family? Too much, how about 25%. Ok, let's go Abraham route, 10%. I would get fired.
 - b. Compassion
 - 1) Compassion means that we love those who hate us, we pray for those who disagree with us, we meet the needs of those who would just as quickly take away all our freedoms.
 - 2) We live in a culture that hates compassion, yet Jesus was the most compassionate man who ever walked the Earth.
3. Jonah was disobedient and proud, Jesus was obedient and humble. Jonah preached because he had to, Jesus preached because He loved the world. Jonah brought the message with callousness and hatred, Jesus brought the message of the Kingdom with compassion and costly love.
4. *Jonah points us toward a longing for a true and better prophet who has compassion of undeserving sinners, which describes every single one of us.

B. The questions

1. Does my life look like the obedience of Jesus or the disobedience of Jonah?
2. In my behavior, speech, writing, private murmurings, do I resemble the callousness of Jonah or the compassion of Jesus?
3. *These are both things, if we were willing to be humble and vulnerable, that could easily be identified and quantified in one another's lives.

C. So what?

1. My commitment
 - a. I will always focus on pointing you toward Jesus reminding you of what He said about you and about this life.
 - b. I will always challenge you to obey those things that God has clearly and repeatedly revealed to us in His Word.

- c. I will compassionately ask hard questions of you when it looks like you are mixing your culture into the Kingdom that Jesus preaches and that God sent you to be priests on behalf of.
 - d. I will do all of this not out of duty or frustration or anger, but because I love Jesus more than anything else and I love you.
- 2. What that looks like
 - a. I care far less about who you vote for and far more about how you live out your sent-ness in obedience to Jesus and compassion toward others, the family of God, and those who are far from God.
 - b. I will not always be right in my assessment or in my delivery of the message. But I will be quick to repent when I see my sin and quick to listen when I do not.
 - c. Sometimes I will be right in my assessment but wrong in my delivery or posture. I won't excuse poor posture or delivery just because the message is right, and I don't expect you to either.

D. Invitation

- 1. January: Proverbs
- 2. Weekly for 2024: Jonah and Philippians 2:1-13

Closing prayer:

Thank You, Father, for Your faithfulness to me in 2023.

Lead me, Lord, to trust and obey You more in 2024.

Thank You, Jesus, for Your kindness to me in 2023,

Help me, Lord, to love You more and others in 2024.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for Your power in me in 2023,

Stretch me, Lord, to believe and live for more in 2024.