

Pastor Spencer Martin
Dealing With Anger

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Series: Jonah
Jonah 4

BIG IDEA – GOD WANTS TO DEAL WITH YOUR ANGER

One of the things we say here all the time is "You were made for mission and adventure, not safety and comfort." Every summer, once these students get home from being overseas, they always say the exact same things. You just heard in the video. They say, "It completely rocked my world" or, "My entire view of the world has changed" or, "These last six weeks were six of the most meaningful weeks of my life."

Whenever students say these things to me, I always respond with the exact same answer. "I am 0 percent surprised that you feel that way, because you were created for risk. You were created for mission. You were created to take steps of faith. So whenever you do those things, I am not surprised at all that you find it to be very rewarding."

So, if you are in college, let me just say we want to invest in you. One of the main ways we do that is through the Acts 1:8 Project. What we understand here is that many college students come to our city to leave it. We understand this. We embrace this. Just a few weeks ago, a few of us went to a wedding where two of our college students who just graduated...

These students started to date in our college ministry, they got engaged in our college ministry, and they just got married. Now they've moved to Boston. One of them is going to start working at Harvard. The other one is going to start at Harvard Law School. The moral of this story is if you get involved in our college ministry, it might increase your chances of getting into Harvard Law School, and it might increase your chances of getting a ring before spring. No promises.

Truly, college students, we want to encourage you. Would you prayerfully consider giving half of one of your summers to the Acts 1:8 Project? We think that now is the

time to do this, because once you get out into the real world, you're not going to be able to take six weeks off like you're able to now.

If you're here and you're not in college, which is most of you, we want to help *you* take steps of faith as well. Next year, in 2025, we already have trips planned to over 12 different countries. If you call Two Cities home, we want to ask you to prayerfully consider going on one short-term mission trip at some point over the next three years. So, I want to take a moment to pray that we would be a missional church, and then we're going to dive into Jonah, chapter 4. Let's pray together.

Father, truly, I pray that we would be a church that is marked by mission and adventure and not just safety and comfort. Lord, I pray for our college students that you would give them wisdom when it comes to what their role is going to be in fulfilling the Great Commission, both this semester but also this summer. Lord, I pray for everyone in our church that we would all, at an individual level, take personal risks to bring Christ to every relationship. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Would you consider yourself an angry person? Do you get angry, and what makes you angry? Now, I don't know if you know this, but Christians don't get angry. Christians get frustrated. Christians get irritated or agitated, but certainly not angry. Well, how do you know if you're an angry person? You might be an angry person if you find yourself yelling at the refs at your 9-year-old's YMCA basketball games.

You might be an angry person if you are ashamed to put one of our new Two Cities magnets on your car because of how you handle other drivers or your lack of generosity toward them. (I see some wives patting their husbands right now.) Well, what we're going to see here in Jonah, chapter 4, is that Jonah is angry, which is really interesting.

If you were here last week, you saw that Jonah goes to Nineveh, he preaches a sermon, the city repents, and then God decides not to destroy the city. So, if we were to end at chapter 3, this would be a very happy ending. If this were up to us, we would probably be totally fine with this ending. We would love for Jonah to marry a sweet Ninevite girl, get a nice three-bed/two-bath house, and buy a Goldendoodle. That, unfortunately, is not reality. That's not what happens, because Jonah is angry.

For this entire chapter, God and Jonah are going to have a counseling session about his anger. Here's the main idea of this chapter: *God wants to deal with your anger.* You have to deal with it. There is too much at stake for you to not deal with your anger. There are too many lost people, as we're going to see, for your anger to not be dealt with. There's too much at stake in your relationships with your kids and with your wife for you to not deal with your anger.

Now, I know some of you may hear me talk about anger and say, "Well, you know, I don't really think I'm that much of an angry person. I don't get angry. I just get hangry every once in a while, but certainly not angry." What we're going to see in just a moment is that anger is often disguised as other things, like pessimism or a critical spirit. We'll get to it.

Regardless of where you are in this room, you need to know there is hope for you in your anger. So, in chapter 3, God speaks *through* Jonah. In chapter 4, he's going to speak *to* Jonah. We're going to pick up at the end of chapter 3 in verse 10, because that's where we left off last week. What happens here is an entire city repents. Look with me at verse 10.

"When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way..." Which is basically the definition of *repentance*, turning from evil. **"...God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it."** Now here's how chapter 4 starts. This is unbelievable. Verse 1: **"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry."** Jonah is angry that God is saving people.

So, let's start with this. *What is anger?* The late, great Tim Keller has the best definition of anger I've ever heard. He says *anger* is love in motion to protect what you love the most. Think about the last time you were angry. You probably loved something you were ultimately trying to protect.

Just this past week, I got home from work at about 5:15. My wife Olivia knows I get home almost every day at about 5:15, so sometimes she'll graciously unlock the door for me so I don't have to get my keys out of my pocket when I go in. Well, I got home on Monday afternoon or so, walked up to the door, and it was locked. My immediate reaction was anger.

It took me two or three seconds of anger to realize, "What is wrong with me? Why am I so easily angered? Why is that my initial impulse?" What had happened was I love my comfort, I love my convenience, and my anger was love in motion to protect what I love the most. Let's keep going. Verse 2:

"And he prayed to the LORD and said, 'O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.'"

We see a few things here. The first thing we see is that Jonah has good theology but a bad heart. Or you could say he has a right head but a wrong heart. Jonah has good theology when it comes to his understanding of whether or not God is angry. He says he is slow to anger.

Many people in our culture get this wrong. A lot of people in our culture will say that God is either *always* angry or he's *never* angry. The person who thinks God is *never* angry will say, "Well, as long as I'm not harming anyone, and as long as I'm living out my truth, God is not going to be angry with me. Why would he be angry?" If you look throughout Scripture, you see it's a pretty silly idea that God would never be angry.

Then there are also people who think God is *always* angry. When I was at UNC Chapel Hill, I took a philosophy class, because I had to in order to graduate. It was called "Making Sense of Ourselves." I can remember that professor taught us that the God of the Bible is always angry, and especially, the God of the Old Testament is always angry.

I didn't say this back then, but I wish I had asked him, "Have you read the Old Testament?" The entire book of Jonah is evidence that God is not always angry, he's not never angry, but he is slow to anger. So, Jonah has good theology. He understands God is slow to anger. But Jonah has a bad heart. Jonah is complaining to God about how good he is.

Here's what Jonah wants, and here's what you and I want all the time. Jonah wants grace for himself and justice for them. You see, Jonah had received the mercy of God himself. He was happy to have received it. God had been gracious to Jonah, and he was very happy, but when it came to the Ninevites and their wickedness, he wanted them to pay for it.

Did you know that 30 percent of United States adults have gotten a speeding ticket at some point in their life? What that means is one-third of you have gotten pulled over and gotten a ticket. Great. Now, when you're driving down the interstate and you get pulled over, what do you want? You want grace. You want just a warning ticket. "Oh, I'm so sorry, Officer. I didn't know it dropped from a 70 to a 55." You want grace for yourself.

Now, what happens when you're driving down the interstate, going the speed limit, and somebody speeds past you? "I hope a state trooper gets them." That's what you want. Funny how that works. You wanted grace for yourself, but when it came to what *they* get, you wanted them to get justice.

You see, Jonah has a good theology but a bad heart. He has developed a religious spirit. We've said here before that there are multiple ways you can run from God, but two common ways are *rebellion* or *religion*. The way Jonah runs from God in chapter 1 is rebellion. He's running away from God. Then in chapter 4 he's religious. The religious person is fixating on other people's sins and other people's wickedness, and they are not thinking about their own sin.

Something really interesting about the book of Jonah is that most all commentators will say Jonah is actually the prodigal son story of the Old Testament. If you think about it, it makes a lot of sense. In Jonah, chapter 1, he's running from God, which is like the younger brother who's running from the father. Then in Jonah, chapter 4, he is the religious older brother who is outside of the house, or as we're about to see in a second, he's outside of the city.

Jonah has a good theology but a bad heart. Let's keep going. Verse 3: "***Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.***"

Jonah thinks it would be better if he would just die. We're going to come back to this in a minute. "***And the LORD said, 'Do you do well to be angry?'***"

Basically, God is asking Jonah, "How is your anger working out for you?" If you're here and would identify as someone who struggles with anger, I would ask you the same question. How is that anger working out for you? Is anything at all in your life made better because of your anger?

So, if anger is love in motion to protect what you love the most, we need to ask the question...*Why do you get angry?* The answer to that question is "It depends on what you love the most." Here's the root of most of our anger: *selfishness*. The reason we often get angry is because what we love the most is ourselves. We are only thinking about ourselves, and that is why we get angry.

Why do you get angry when you're at the drive-through and they're taking longer than you think they should? It's because you're selfish. My wife Olivia and I don't have a teenager, but we do have a "threenager" at home. Her name is Emma. She's 3. If Emma does not get what she wants, she gets angry.

If her little brother takes her stuffed pig that she loves to sleep with, she will lose it. She will just go wild. Why? It's because she loves that thing. If her little brother takes it away from her, she is having love in action to protect what she loves the most, which is that pig. So, selfishness is often at the root of anger or underlying anger.

Now we need to talk about what anger actually looks like. How does anger often manifest itself? The reason this is important is I'm sure some of you may be thinking to yourselves, "Well, I don't even remember the last time I had a temper-tantrum" or "I can't even remember the last time I screamed at my spouse or slammed a car door." Then others of you are thinking, "Well, all that actually happened this morning on the way to church." We're glad you're here for this message.

Anger is often disguised as other things. I'll give you a handful. Anger is often disguised as *pessimism*. Pessimism is a passive form of anger. Jonah is clearly a

pessimist. Jonah is complaining to God about how good he is. He is the most "glass half empty" person there has ever been.

If you are in here, and you would say you're fairly pessimistic, I would ask you this question: Do you feel like your pessimism is rooted in some undealt-with anger? Maybe the reason your glass is always half empty is because you haven't dealt with some anger or you haven't had a conversation you might need to have. So, pessimism is often at the root of anger.

I tell our college student leaders this all the time. Every good leader, especially every Christian leader, ought to have an optimistic, hope-filled attitude, because who wants to follow a pessimist? I know the answer: nobody. The tension every good leader walks in is "How can I be optimistic but also realistic?" Pessimism is a passive form of anger.

Another way anger often disguises itself is as *sarcasm*. Sarcasm is a sophisticated form of anger. As you know, sarcasm is when you use words that are the exact opposite of what you're trying to say. What's really interesting about sarcasm is there is a correlation between intelligence and the use of sarcasm. Basically, the smarter you are the more likely you are to use sarcasm, because it takes an increased amount of cognitive complexity in order to be sarcastic.

Now, don't nudge your wife and say, "See, baby? That's why I'm so sarcastic." Well, maybe. There are a lot of different reasons people use sarcasm. Sometimes people use it for coping. Sometimes people use it to just be playful, but here's the problem. My fear is that many of us use sarcasm to indirectly express our anger. The person who is sarcastic all the time is probably also the person who is not having a lot of the conversations he really needs to have.

So, if you're someone who identifies as sarcastic, do you need to have a conversation? You might. Sarcasm is often at the root of anger. You know how they say there's a little bit of truth in every joke? I think it's worth considering whether or not there's a little bit of anger in every sarcastic remark.

Anger is also disguised as a *critical spirit*. The critical spirit person is an expert in all that is wrong. One of the things we say here is we want to have critical minds, but we do not want to have critical hearts. Anger can also be disguised as *gossip*. As Pastor Kyle likes to say, gossip is confessing other people's sins.

So, if selfishness is at the root of anger and anger often looks like a lot of different things, we also need to cover the question...*Is it a sin to be angry?* The short answer to that question is *no*. It is not inherently sinful to be angry. We know from Scripture that there is righteous anger and there is unrighteous anger. So let's talk about them.

Righteous anger is love in motion to protect what God loves. Righteous anger is when you are angry about the same things God is angry about. Some of you probably need to hear this. You should be angry about more things than you are. You should be angry about any kind of injustice you see. You should be angry at the fact that there are corrupt governments around the world that lead to kids starving.

You should be angry when you see a kid in your class get bullied. That should make you angry. If you're on the college campus and see guys mistreat women, it should absolutely make you angry. If you're at work and see unethical behavior, it should make you angry. The reality that there are people around the world who don't know Jesus should make you angry. That should be totally intolerable to us.

We also know from the New Testament that Jesus himself got angry, but there are only two times (this is helpful to know) in the New Testament where we are explicitly told that Jesus is angry, and both times it was for good reasons. So, anger is not necessarily a sin. Not *all* anger is a sin, but *most* of your anger is a sin. *Unrighteous anger* is not healthy, and it's not helpful. Unrighteous anger is fueled by sin, and it's focused on self.

So, there's righteous anger and unrighteous anger. Let's keep going. Let's go to verse 5 and see what Jonah does next. ***"Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city."*** What's happening here is he is having a prophet pity party. He goes outside of the city, and he is hoping God changes his mind and lights the city up.

Verse 6: ***"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."*** This is so interesting. This is the first time in the entire book of Jonah that we are told he's happy. We see here that he is exceedingly glad because of a plant.

The thing we need to understand here is Jonah is looking to the wrong things to make him happy. He is looking to the wrong things for joy. I don't think it's an accident that what Jonah is looking at here to make him happy is something that is temporary, brief, and is just going to provide him with a small amount of relief. We do the same thing all the time. Let's keep going. Verse 7:

"But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. 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.'"

So, God first sends a whale. Now he sends a worm. Then he sends a wind. God is appointing these things to actively bring discomfort to Jonah. He's trying to get Jonah's attention. I don't know if you know this, but God has a lot of different ways to get your attention. Usually, the way God will try to get your attention is often times of trouble or transition. This is exactly what he's doing in the life of Jonah.

Jonah has a season of trouble. You know, first the whale, then the worm, then the wind. But Jonah is also in a season of transition. He had to leave Israel to go to Nineveh. So, if you would say you are in a season of trouble or transition, what might the Lord be trying to teach you right now? What might he be trying to wake you up to? Because he often uses times of trouble and transition.

Another thing we see in these verses is that Jonah is an absolute emotional roller coaster. Did you notice that in verse 3 Jonah is asking to die, and then in verse 6 it says he's exceedingly happy, and then two verses later, in verse 8, it says he's asking to die again? Here's what has happened. Jonah's anger has made him erratic. This is what anger does to us.

Did you know that anger is a dominant emotion? When you are angry, it is almost impossible to feel any other good emotion. Have you ever been very angry but also very compassionate at the same time? Have you ever felt full of anger but also full of love at the same time? Probably not, because anger is a dominant emotion.

There was a study done at Harvard in 1999 that actually proved this. They found that when the portion of your brain, the amygdala, that is responsible for anger is active, essentially what happens is it overrides all other parts of your brain so your ability to make decisions is impaired. I'm sure you've seen this. I've seen this in my own life.

When I was back at UNC, the best player on our baseball team... His name was Colin...preseason all-American, future first-round draft pick. Colin got upset during one of the games, and he punched a door and broke his hand. I can remember, when this happened, all of us were like, "What's going on here? Why is this happening? You're the best player in the country. Your hand is literally worth millions of dollars."

It actually worked out for him because he did end up being a first-round draft pick and made millions of dollars, but what happened was his anger had made him erratic, just like Jonah. Anger is a dominant emotion. It will make you erratic.

So, we need to talk about other things anger does. There are two main categories. Anger *discloses* and anger *damages*. Anger will disclose or reveal a lot about what is going on in your heart. Anger will reveal the things you love the most. Jonah's anger revealed that he was self-righteous, had forgotten about lost people, and was prideful. What would you say your anger discloses about *you*?

When I was working as a PA in gastroenterology, about once every three or four months I would have almost the exact same thing happen. I would have a patient come in. It was normally a man between the ages of 40 and 65, and his wife would always be with him. He'd show up, and I'd ask, "So, what brings you in to see me today, Bob?" and Bob was like, "Oh, nothing is wrong with me. Barbara is just overreacting. She wants me to come in."

Barbara was like, "Bob, you tell him what's wrong," and Bob was like, "Oh, it's fine." Then you'd get Bob up on the table and press Bob's belly, and Bob almost jumps off the table in pain. I was like, "Oh, okay. This is starting to make a little bit more sense. What is inside of you is disclosing to me that you actually have something pretty serious going on."

I would say that undealt-with anger is very similar to an infection in your abdomen that has not healed. If it *has* healed and somebody bumps into you, you're fine, but if it has *not* healed, if it has not been dealt with, when you are bumped by life, people are going to know it. You are going to have a reaction.

Anger discloses, and anger also damages. Anger damages you and those you love the most. I wish I had more time to talk about this, but anger will certainly damage you. There's a lot of research to show that if you have undealt-with anger, you are more likely to be lonely, more likely to have depression, and more likely to have significant health problems.

Anger certainly damages you, but maybe even worse, it damages those you love the most. I want to take a moment to talk to both men and women, but a lot of these things apply in both directions. To men I would ask this question: Do your wife and kids walk on eggshells around you because they don't want to be on the receiving end of your anger?

Here's what an angry man does, and some of you, unfortunately, have experienced this. An angry man creates an anxious environment, which is the exact opposite kind of environment a man should bring into a room. When a man walks into a room, he should provide safety and security, certainly not an anxious environment.

But for so many of us, that's our story. You know, "Dad was always angry" or "Granddad was always angry" or "Older brother was always angry." A man should provide safety and security. If a man does not deal with his anger, it has significant effects. If a man doesn't deal with his anger, it makes almost any kind of intimacy with his wife impossible.

A man who is angry will lead to his daughters not knowing how they are supposed to be treated by men. It will lead to sons being wounded and insecure. An angry man

harms himself. What about women? There's actually a lot of data that shows men let out their aggression physically more often, and women let out their aggression socially. The way women often let out their anger is through two things: exclusion and reputation destruction.

In the book *The Coddling of the American Mind* that Pastor Kyle has recommended before, they say if you were to put a handgun in the pocket of every adolescent, which gender would be hurt the most? The answer to that is *young men*. Why? Because young men tend to settle their disputes with violence or physically.

Then they say this. What would happen if you put a cell phone in the pocket of every adolescent and put social media on it? Who would be harmed the most? It would be young women. Then they say this is exactly what we've done over the last 15 years. Because women tend to settle their disputes socially. I've seen this on the college campus.

You have a girl who's pretty popular, a girl who has a lot of influence, but she, for some reason, gets mad at another girl, so she'll say, "Okay. Well, I'm going to have a beach weekend, and I'm not going to invite you on this beach weekend. And what I'm going to do is all weekend I'm going to be posting on my Instagram story pictures of myself with my friends because I know you're going to see it." You see, anger harms you and it harms those you love the most.

Let's look back one more time at verse 8. I want us to see one more thing here. "***And he asked that he might die and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'***" This is the second time in this chapter that Jonah has asked to die or has said he thinks it may be better if he were to just die. So, I need to take a moment to talk about a sensitive and delicate topic, which is suicide.

Why is this a relevant topic? Well, Jonathan Haidt, who's a social psychologist, says that over the last 15 years we have seen a surge of suffering. He goes on to give you all this research about how, basically, every research study that's done says the number of people who feel persistently sad and hopeless has gone up. The suicide rate has gone up. So many mental health struggles have gone up.

I'm not here exactly to explain *why* those things have gone up. That's a long and complex conversation. I just want to offer a brief encouragement to those of you (which is probably most of you) who have or will have an opportunity to care for those with suicidal ideation.

So, what do you do? It's complex. What do you do if someone you love or know is struggling? I normally tell people you're probably going to need multiple strategies.

You might need to go to that person's family and ask, "How can I best love on this person in this season?"

Depending on your relationship, you might need to ask them directly, "What would you really benefit from me doing in this season? How can I love on you in this season?" You certainly are going to need to pray for your friend. You might need to make sure your friend is seeking appropriate counseling. Maybe you need to encourage your friend to get appropriate medical care.

What I normally tell people is when you are caring for someone with suicidal ideation, you have to understand you are probably not going to be the one solution in this situation. What you need to ask yourself is "What can I do with the limited amount of capacity I have to care for this person, to step toward this person?"

A few years ago, a friend of mine tried to take his own life. Fortunately, he was unsuccessful. He lived. I was talking with him about this, and he said something really interesting to me. He said, "I did not try to take my own life because I was sad; I tried to take it because I was tired of not feeling happy."

I asked him, "What do you wish someone had said to you when you were at your lowest point?" He said, "Nothing. I didn't want anyone to say anything to me. I just wanted someone to be with me. I just wish someone had been there with me and someone had been wanting to spend time with me."

This is a very biblical idea. In Acts, chapter 16, we're told that the Philippian jailer has taken out his sword and is about to take his own life when the apostle Paul sees him and says, "Do not harm yourself, because we are all here." I understand this may be a very small number of you, but if you're in this room and you are thinking of harming yourself, you need to hear me say, "Do not harm yourself. We are all here." We, Two Cities Church, love you. We care about you. We want to walk alongside you and be as much help as we can, and I can say with confidence that harming yourself is not God's plan for you.

For others of you in this room, maybe you don't struggle with that urge yourself, but maybe you're caring for those who are. I would encourage you... What would it look like for you to take a step toward someone in this season? Or who do you know in your life right now who is struggling, who you may need to reach out to, who you may need to spend some time with?

This is what the church does. We see situations of brokenness, situations that are complex, and we take steps toward them in faith. We don't run away from them. Just because we don't know what to do, we don't run away and just say, "We'll leave it to the professionals." We practice ministry of presence, we do our best, and we step

toward the person in faith. This is what we're called to do. Let's keep going. Let's go to verse 9.

"But God said to Jonah, 'Do you do well to be angry for the plant?' And he said, 'Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.' And the LORD said, '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. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?'"

End of book. This is the least dramatic ending to the book of Jonah you can imagine. At the end of this book, we are left to wonder. We don't know. How is Jonah going to respond to the grace of God? God says, "Jonah, your problem is you care more about plants than people." You see, not only was Jonah angry; Jonah was also apathetic. Because Jonah had not dealt with his anger, he did not care about lost people. Here's what happened. Jonah had received the mercy of God, but he was resistant to the mission of God.

Since this story ends on a cliffhanger, I think it makes a lot of sense for me to ask the same question God asked Jonah, which is...*What do you care more about, plants or people?* Here's another way to say it: What do you care more about, temporary things or eternal souls? You see, when God says there are 120,000 people in Nineveh, that means he counts every person in every city, and he cares about every person in every city.

Recently, I saw a powerful picture of what it looks like to have a huge heart for lostness. One of our missionaries is named Luke. Luke is a missionary in Mexico City, which is the fifth largest city in the world. There are over 22 million people in the city and the surrounding areas.

A couple of us went to go visit Luke a couple of months ago, and what he wanted us to do on the first day was to go to the tallest building in the city and pray over the city. I can remember listening to Luke pray on top of that building and being moved by his heart for the overwhelming amount of lostness around him.

I wonder what would happen in the life of our church if we became a church that is more and more fixated on eternal things and much less concerned with things that are temporary, things that are not going to last. The story of Jonah, in many ways, is supposed to be a counter-vision for us. Because Jonah didn't deal with his anger, he didn't care about lost people. Because Jonah didn't deal with his anger, he missed out on the good things God had for him.

So, Jonah is meant to be a counter-vision, but Jesus, as always, is meant to give us a vision of what our lives ought to look like. As our church steps forward into what God has for us next, starting next weekend, I think we need to end this series by being reminded of the fact that we are Jonah and we need Jesus. We are Jonah. All of us in this room struggle with anger. All of us struggle with feeling self-focused, so what we need is Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate solution.

In Matthew 12, Jesus said the entire story of Jonah was ultimately pointing to him. You see, Jonah went to the city of Nineveh unwillingly; Jesus would come to earth willingly to live the life you and I are unable to live. Jonah only cared about *his* nation; Jesus cared about *every* nation. Jonah's heart was full of anger; Jesus' heart was full of love. Jonah wanted his enemies to be punished; the good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ was punished for his enemies.

So, if selfishness is the root of anger, if thinking about yourself is the reason so many of you get angry and why I get angry, then the solution to anger is to deny yourself, self-denial. With the help of God, would you deny yourself? To deny yourself means the idea of not getting what you want no longer surprises you, doesn't offend you, and does not control you.

I wonder what would happen in your family if instead of thinking about yourself you were to deal with your anger and serve those around you. Philippians, chapter 2, says, "Let each of us look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others." What might happen if you decided this morning, "You know what? I'm going to need help doing this, but by the grace of God, I'm going to only allow myself to be angry at the things God is angry about"?

Others of you in this room probably think about the last year, the last decade of your life, and you would say your anger has harmed you and those you love the most. What would it look like if you would go to those your anger has wounded and ask for forgiveness? Say, "I understand my anger has had some terrible consequences, so I just want to apologize." And repent. Say, "I'm sorry." I've heard it said before that the closest distance between you and someone you've wronged is repentance.

What would happen if we, as a church, all at an individual level, denied ourselves and dealt with our anger so we do not miss out on the good things God has to offer us? What's so interesting and what's really sad about this story is that Jonah, because he was outside of the city, having a prophet pity party, was not able to celebrate inside of the city.

Can you imagine what would have happened if he had not been so focused on himself? He would have been partying with 120,000 people who had just come to faith. He would be celebrating. He would be rejoicing. So, what would it look like for

you to deal with your anger so you can enjoy the good gifts God has given to you, to your family, and those you love? Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for the truths about you that we see in this passage. Father, you are gracious and merciful. You're slow to anger. You're abounding in steadfast love. Lord, I pray that we would be a people that is much slower to anger, that's not always angry, that's not never angry, but we are slow to anger. Lord, help us. We need your help. Would you help us to replace the anger in our lives with good things? Instead of being angry, would we be full of joy, love, peace, patience, and kindness.

Father, I pray that you would empower us in this room to see the brokenness around us, and help us to care about it. Help us to care about the lostness both in our city and around the world. Help us to care for the brokenness that we see in our families and our friends. We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.