



# the Source

*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...*

Are you disgusted daily by the news of racism and hatred? If you were to dispense sentence on the unjust, what judgement would you inflict? We tend to think that punishment of evil will dispel evil. But God's ways are higher than our ways. Though God is saddened by the cruelty in this world, God does not wish destruction of these evil-doers. Rather God longs for their repentance.

How are we then to fit into God's higher plan for the redemption of the world? What is our task as we face attitudes and actions that are antithetical to our own? We are told by Jesus that we are to pray for our enemies and turn the other cheek when confronted with violence. Because these responses are hard, only by relying on the strength of God can we obey God and offer compassion. God loves *all* people—good and bad. And God calls on us to love all as well.

**Consider  
the Source  
Jonah 4: 1-11**

But what are we to do with our long-held hatreds if the object of our hate repents and turns to God? Jonah didn't want to take God's message of repentance to Nineveh because he hated the Assyrians. If they repented, then Jonah would have to change his mind about them and all Jonah had believed about them would be wrong. How tragic that our egos and long-held prejudices can keep us from wanting God's mercy for those we dislike. But God's love is not for us believers alone. God's love is for all the world and its people.

When we see injustice, we must pray for the unjust to know God. When we see cruelty, we must pray for the cruel to turn to God. When we see racism, we must pray that God blesses the perpetrators with mercy as they turn to God and repent. This is not an easy prayer, but one that we are called to pray. Lord, hear our prayer!

*Paula Holmes, First Church member*

## A Family Affair

Think of a time you have been wronged by a sibling or friend. When the bad behavior was discovered by a parent, were you secretly happy? Did you think they were going to get what they deserved? Now, imagine that right as your sibling or friend was about to receive their punishment, your parent (or teacher) simply forgave the wrong behavior, without punishing them? How did it make you feel?

This week's scripture is from the short book of *Jonah*. You might enjoy reading the entire book together this week. Today we will focus on Jonah 4:1-11. Remember how you felt in the situation you thought of earlier? Jonah felt similar when God decided to forgive the people of Nineveh, rather than destroy them. Jonah had a long history of hatred for the Ninevites. They were Assyrians, the people who had attacked his homeland and sent his people into exile. Jonah expressed his frustration to God. Jonah did not want God's gracious mercy, slowness to anger and steadfast love to apply to those he hated. It can be a challenge to realize God's love and forgiveness is for all people, even those we dislike. God's desire is to live in relationship with all people.

*Dear God, thank you for your love and forgiveness. As we begin a new school year, be with us in difficult situations and help us to show your love and forgiveness to all others, even when it is difficult. Amen.*  
— Jennifer Hall, Director of Children's Ministry

## Monday: Jonah 1

The NIV Life Application Study Bible says the purpose of the Book of Jonah is to show "the extent of God's grace—the message of salvation is for all people." Read Jonah, Chapter 1 where Jonah tries to run away from God.

- How does the story of Jonah illustrate the truth that God can use unbelievers to further God's purposes on earth?
- How do the unbelievers show more love and concern than Jonah did?
- What does Jonah's attempt to run away tell us about God?
- What can be the results of admitting our mistakes openly?

## Tuesday: Jonah 2

In Chapter 2 of Jonah, the prophet prays to God from inside the great fish; notice that his prayer is one of thanksgiving.

- What does Jonah's experience tell us about how God hears our prayers?
- What change of heart do we see in Jonah in verse 9?
- How should we respond when we know God wants us to do something?

## Wednesday: Jonah 3

In Chapter 3, after Jonah is delivered from the belly of the fish, he goes to Nineveh to preach repentance to the people of this important city.

- Is there some mission in your own life that God may be giving you a second chance to complete?
- Are there unpopular truths that you may need to share with people in your life?
- Have you ever been surprised by the results of obeying God in the midst of social pressure?
- What does God's compassion toward Nineveh show us about God's character?

## Thursday: Jonah 4

In Chapter 4, Jonah reacts to God's compassion with anger, pouting and pridefulness. But again God teaches him a lesson, this time more gently.

- Why was Jonah so upset with God?
- What truth about salvation does this story illustrate?
- Are there times when you have been more concerned about your own reputation than about giving glory to God?
- Though we are naturally self-centered, how can we adjust our attitudes to better glorify God?

## Friday: Matthew 12:39-41

The stories of the Old Testament are often used in the New Testament to remind us that God's plan all along was for the redemption of mankind. Read Matthew 12:39-41.

- How does Jesus use the story of Jonah to illustrate His own death and resurrection?
- How are the men of Nineveh a good example of the proper response to a warning?
- Who is the one greater than Jonah?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, forgive us when we do not quickly obey you. Help us to live holy lives so that we can be a source of light to those around us, reflecting Christ's love to all mankind. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.