

## The Fight for the Lost

Good morning church! And don't worry I am not planning on taking a nap! Little Lincoln is doing great. I am thankful for the opportunity to open the Word of God with you today. If you need a bible, ushers... Let's turn in that bible to the Book of Jonah, Chapter 1. And Let's pray...

One of the most powerful literary tools is irony — **the contrast between expectation and reality**. Irony is sometimes funny, like a dentist that gets a cavity. And sometimes, irony is tragic, like the love story of *Romeo and Juliet*.

But the irony in our secular culture is all too real. The culture preaches tolerance, diversity, and inclusion... yet isn't it ironic that we've never been more divided, angry, and tribal in America today? And it's not so peaceful. It becomes an all out war. A fight...

And here's the danger: As Christians, we easily get swept right into the division. Every hot topic issue is a line in the sand. Politics, sexuality, abortion, Israel - AND In fighting for what's right, we fight for truth—but forget to fight with love.

We should be passionate about godly causes — but sometimes that passion turns against people instead of for them.

We develop an “us vs. them” mindset.

Anger grows. Compassion fades.

And tragically, **we stop fighting for the lost... and start fighting against them.**

Is this really how God has called us to fight? How do we stand for God's truth without turning **people who disagree with us** into enemies?

We fight for the things that matter to us. What matters to you? **Are we only fighting for things that are temporary? For social issues?** OR are we concerned with the eternal? Because in the end, only two things last forever: **God's Word and people.**

The world around us is lost—people are dead in sin and blind to their need for Jesus. Just scroll your phone, go to work, sit at a ball game, talk with family—lost people are everywhere.

God isn't focused on us winning culture wars—He's focused on winning souls. God has called you and me to **Fight for the Lost. For their salvation. If you know Jesus, then you've been called to fight for those who don't.**

Do we love sinners the way Jesus loved us? He came on a mission to save the world—leaving heaven, taking on flesh, and dying on a cross for our sake. Luke 19:10 Jesus says that **the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”**

The question is—are we willing to follow His example? Or are we too focused on ourselves and the social issues at hand?

Let's take a look at Jonah: he was called to reach the lost, but his response shows a struggle we all face. He was one of the most reluctant—yet effective—evangelists in all history.

**Simple message today here answering two questions: 1) What does it mean to Fight for the Lost? 2) What stops us from fighting effectively?**

Let's jump into the Word of God, Jonah chapter 1, verse 1, **Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” 3 But Jonah arose 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 from the presence of the Lord.**

Nineveh was indeed a great city. Was the largest city in the ancient world - maybe 600,000 to a million people - the capital city of the pagan Empire of Assyria. Nineveh was a godless, anything goes kind of society!

Nahum 3:1-4 describes Nineveh, **Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs... There is a multitude of slain, A great number of bodies, Countless corpses...**

And God says I am going to destroy the city of Nineveh for their wickedness. But God comes to Jonah before and tells him to warn them of God's judgment and to repent.

Jonah was a prophet of God. He loved God. But Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh. WHO WOULD want to go to Nineveh? **The bloody city whose victim never departs...** Jonah didn't want to warn them—he wanted them wiped out by God. To him, it was “us vs. them.” They were Jonah's enemy, the Assyrians would pillage Israeli villages to collect their valuables and raping the women.

The Assyrians were brutal—mutilating enemies, piling up heads at city gates, and gouging out victims eyes to instill fear. They deported rebels, imposed their religion, and saw outsiders as inferior—executing, enslaving, or exiling anyone who resisted.

And Jonah say, “Uhh God you want me to go there? NO THANKS!” So, Jonah heads to Joppa, and finds a boat heading the opposite direction as far as possible, to Tarshish. He runs.

Ancient Nineveh was wicked, godless, and shockingly familiar. They were **materialistic**—driven by conquest, wealth, and status. **Hedonistic**—chasing pleasure as the highest good, with no boundaries but appetite. **Tribalistic**—dividing the world into “us vs. them,” crushing outsiders with pride and violence.

Sound familiar? Today we worship success, binge distraction, and cancel anyone who disagrees. Nineveh may be long gone, but its spirit is alive and well—we've just given it modern names: ambition, self-expression, identity politics, and personal truth.

The people of Nineveh were given over to their sin, and living for self. And what does sin always lead to? **Death**. There is a multitude of slain people today too! A great number of spiritually dead men and women walking today around you!

And Just as God tells Jonah to go and preach to Nineveh, He tells us to “Go and Fight for the Lost.”

**1) What does it mean to “Fight for the Lost?”** Listen closely here's what it means—if you're a Christian, **You are called to ministry**. To fight for the lost is to minister to others! Now I didn't say you are called to THE ministry, but you are called TO ministry. You are called to minister. Do you know what the word ministry means?

**It means SERVICE. To minister is to serve!** Jesus came to serve not to be served. And every Christian is called to be a servant! To serve God and to serve people. We were not saved by Jesus so we can just chill in our own cozy selfish Christian life.

And Jonah was called by God to serve God and serve the people of Nineveh, God gave Jonah a message “GO and PREACH to the lost. Fight for the lost Jonah!

Jesus gave us a message too, **Matthew 28:19: GO and MAKE DISCIPLES. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...**

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He left us here with a purpose: to glorify Him with our lives. And the world is full of hopelessness, and you and I have the ANSWER christian! Tell people about Jesus! You have the key to new life, hope, joy, because you have experienced the saving grace of Jesus!

Why would I not live every day proclaiming this truth? I mean it's called the Great Commission (command), not the Great Suggestion! This isn't a call for the spiritual elite, or for missionaries and pastors - it's for every Christian.

You have been called to fight. To minister, To serve others. And there's more at stake than winning an argument. Eternity, forever, heaven and hell are at stake. God is **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

But how do we live this out? Because if you're like me, and you are because you're a human, you've probably run from those opportunities to share the gospel. We don't feel equipped. We're afraid of rejection. We don't want to make it awkward. What if I mess up? What if they don't like me? Maybe somebody else will tell them about Jesus...

Or even worse, we decide NAH "look at them, I don't want to talk to someone like that!" "They are obviously lost and confused, and they probably won't hear me out. They'll probably just disagree and want to argue... why try?"

But honestly for me? The reason I've struggled to evangelize/reach others hasn't been lack of training. It's been a lack of **love for others**. Instead I get focused on ME. My comfort, my image, my reputation. 2) What stops us from fighting for the lost effectively?

(New slide) Selfishness.

A gentleman named Penn Jillete, a well-known atheist and magician, once shared a story that stuck with me. After one of his shows, a man came up to him and gave him a Bible. Just as a gift. It meant a lot to him that this man tried to reach out. And though Penn didn't convert, but here's what he said:

"I don't respect people who don't evangelize. 'How much do you have to hate someone to believe in hell and not tell them about it?' Just because it might be awkward for you?"

If I believe without any doubts, that a truck is coming at you to run you over, and you didn't believe it, there's a certain point where I tackle you out of the way..."

That hits hard. If I have the answer a person needs to be saved, and I don't share it, it reveals my lack of love for them, and selfishness. And this is exactly where the conflict lies every single day when I decide how to interact with people: Will I choose to love myself more OR others more?

As we all know, it's far easier to be selfish with our time and resources, rather than using our lives to love others! Jonah chose to love himself!... He was called to Go and Preach to Nineveh, and he said nah, I choose me! And he chooses himself time and time again throughout the book!

But then the storm came in chapter 1, verse 4. The sailors were afraid, began to cry out for their pagan gods to save them, and where is Jonah? He's asleep in the bottom of the boat! I choose me!

Jonah eventually confesses he's the problem and tells them to throw him overboard. They finally do—and the sea grows calm.

Jonah was lost at sea, rebelling against God's will for his life, but God is gracious. He's not done with Jonah yet, so He sends a great fish in verse 17 to be his rescue boat, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights...

I would've been so thankful because IDK about you, but #1 worst way to die for me, is drowning. I'd take sloshing around in fishy stomach juices any day over drowning at sea alone.

But God sent rescue for him. And Jonah in chapter 2 verse 1 said, "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice."

Jonah repents and declares his commitment to God while in that great fish. God had mercy on Jonah, and made the fish vomit him onto dry land. So at the start of chapter 3, the Word of the Lord comes to Jonah a second time, commissioning him to Go and preach to Nineveh. And Jonah goes this time.

Our God is a God of second chances, and third, and 4th, 8th, 20th, and 100th chances. And Jonah preaches repentance, for judgment is coming! He preached to a nation of savages, and wicked people. In Jonah 3:4 that Jonah cries out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

And what happens? Revival happens! A work of the Holy Spirit draws the entire nation to God in chapter 3! And the entire people repent, even the King. The king publicly orders the people to plea for the mercy of God.

You could say this was the greatest evangelistic campaign in all of history. The salvation of 600,000+ people. God withheld judgment. And God did this work through a dude who didn't even want to go Nineveh in the first place!

Chapter 3 closes everyone just filled with happiness, the joy of the Lord. Ninevites are happy, God is happy, there's an angelic party going on in heaven for all rejoicing over every saved soul!

After all that—after Jonah's obedience, after a nation repents, after revival breaks out—you'd think the story ends in celebration... But one person wasn't celebrating... chapter 4:1 reads, But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.

Wow, what a killjoy. Even after all God did, Jonah's heart wasn't in it. He still wanted judgment, not mercy. Chapter 4 exposes Jonah's true heart: "I choose me."

Let's read chapter 4:

Verse 1-11 - But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

4 Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

5 So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. 6 And the Lord God prepared a [a]plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah [b]was very grateful for the plant. 7 But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. 8 And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

9 Then God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”

And he said, “It is right for me to be angry, even to death!”

10 But the Lord said, “You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which [c]ame up in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?”

Jonah was really really angry with God. Notice his complaint in verse 2, *I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.*

He’s not praising God for His mercy, He’s complaining about it! Verse 2 gives us the real reason he fled from God’s call at the beginning: Jonah wasn’t afraid God would fail. He was afraid God would succeed! That God’s mercy would actually reach people Jonah hated.

But God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, one who relents from doing harm. And it’s as almost as if Jonah is saying, “SEE! I saw it coming! I knew you were this way God! You are such a victim of your nature God! And I tried to stop you, but you had to send me back still...

I wanted them to get destroyed! They deserve it! How could you do this God?

Jonah brings this as a complaint, but all it shows me is that *God has a soft spot for sinners. Doesn’t He? Praise God.* But Jonah even goes to the extreme of saying, God if you’re going to love sinners this way, why don’t you just kill me now because I can’t take watching it... talk about a loss of perspective on the heart of God for the world...

God said “is it right for you to be angry?” Did I not just show you the same grace, mercy, lovingkindness to give you a second chance Jonah? And Jonah just responds with silence...

He bolts out of the city, builds a shelter outside the walls, pops some popcorn and starts hoping that God will blow up the city anyways... But its not going to happen.

So God tried to get through to Jonah again, He gives him a plant for shade. Jonah finally gets happy... over a *plant*. Not over Nineveh’s repentance. Not over 600,000 people saved. But the selfish punk was happy when God gave him a shade plant.

*But here comes little wormy inching along on a mission from God to damage the plant and it dies...* shade is gone... and Jonah wished to die AGAIN!

You’d expect a prophet to say, “Give me Nineveh lest I die!”

But Jonah says, “Let them die—just give me my plant back.”

So God asks again: “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” And Jonah responds, “*It is right... even to death!*” Then God drives the point home: “You had compassion on a plant that lasted one day. Should I not have pity on Nineveh—a city with 120,000 children who can’t tell their right hand from their left?”

And the book ends...

Should I not pity Nineveh? That word pity is the foundation of God's heart for the lost. It means to have great compassion. God has great compassion for the lost.

But do we? Do we have a soft spot for sinners too? That's the question Jonah ends with. And it's the same question God is asking us. Jonah had all the right doctrine. He knew God's nature is mercy and grace. But his heart didn't reflect God's heart. Jonah pitied himself and his plant. God pities, is compassionate for the lost.

It's easy to judge Jonah here and be shocked at his prejudice against the Assyrians. How could you Jonah? What a loser... But not so fast, because I think we are more like Jonah sometimes than we'd like to admit... I know I am. When Jonah looked at a savage Assyrian, what did he see? a wicked low life who deserves to be judged and burn in hell... God saw sinners who needed saving.

When we look at lost people of today, do we see them like Jonah did—or like God does, with compassion? God showed me mercy and grace, who am I to limit God's mercy and grace towards them? How are you any different? Were you not once completely lost in your sin too?

But Christian love is not blind. Jesus never lowered the standard to make following Him easier. We must share His compassion for sinners while standing firmly on the truth of God's Word. If truth and love contradict, something is wrong.

But man it is so easy to lose perspective on the people around us! How quickly I can forget the value of an eternal soul of a man or woman when all I am thinking about is myself. We're so quick to judge based on appearances, and in the process, we toss compassion aside.

A while ago I was running an errand for the church at Sams Club, and I was in a rush. I was speeding through aisles trying to knock things out because I was short on time and needed to get to the next thing. BUT of course there was this one older lady who seemed to be following me around the store. Because every time I went down a new aisle she would be in my way! And I started to get annoyed!

And I was already judging her from the moment I saw her... because she was wearing long latex gloves, a face mask, and eye protection in 2025... So at this point I've sized her up as a crazy paranoid old lady who moved slow and had no awareness of her surroundings. And after doing the awkward "oops sorry excuse me we're in the same aisle again" chuckle a few times, I hear a voice from behind me say, "hello sir?" (Don't know how to do an old lady voice) "I noticed your shirt says Calvary Chapel. Is that your church you go to? I'm actually looking for a new church. No kidding she said, "I want to get to know Jesus more, what do you guys believe about Jesus?" And I got to invite her to church and tell her about Jesus's love for her...

And here I was judging her and she didn't even know it! I was immediately humbled and my sorry attitude quickly deflated. God checked me real quick there. Don't be in such a rush Andrew for yourself that you miss the people I want you to minister too! Often times I think we do this, when others come and want to take of our precious time, we think "well I'm more important right now than your little problems that you need help with" "don't people see I have too much on my plate to help others" "why are people always getting in MY way!" And we zoom past opportunities to show Christ love to people because of selfishness.

This mindset quickly pulls us back into the tribal divisions our culture feeds—where we fight *against* people instead of *for* them. How can we reach a broken world if we secretly feel superior to it?

But we often think we're doing great at loving people because we serve in big, noticeable ways. "Oh, I love the lost! Did you see how much money I raised for that mission trip?" "I went across the world to serve orphans!" And praise God for those things—but sometimes we use big gestures to cover for a heart that's missing the small ones. The ones that don't get posted on Instagram.



Because it's easy to love others in theory. It's a lot harder to love the actual human being sitting next to you. That is where the fight for the lost starts! We don't have to get our passports to start ministering and serving! I mean why would God call us to reach the lost people on the mission field if we can't even want to reach out to the people in our church, work, and circles of life?

What about that socially awkward person at church you try to avoid getting caught in a conversation with because they are going to talk your ear off, and you'd rather just spend your time at church talking to "your people"... don't you think that person needs a friend too? *Like that person starts walking towards you and your friends and you're thinking, "please don't talk to us, please don't join our conversation... oh hey.... Sure join us..." how selfish we can be, even with our brothers and sisters in Christ.*

Christian, **you are called to minister, to serve, everyone everywhere! You don't get to pick and choose who is worthy of your attention.** Jesus was always welcoming interruptions and unplanned conversations with outcast people! The people you come in contact with daily are God given opportunities to minister and serve.

It's very hard for us as Christians to remember the love of God for the world, especially when the world around us is like Nineveh growing more and more wicked and more and more violent every single day. We can find ourselves building our little shelter since we're saved and now we're just waiting around for God to judge the world. US vs THEM. AND we forget that He really loves people and is working to reach them.

That's the message of Jonah, that God loves the world. God is a missionary God. **For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

How do we grow to love others more? How we do grow in compassion for the lost? By drawing closer to God in relationship! Ask Him to show you His heart for the lost, and shape your heart to be the same. We will never be able to love others, if we don't first love God ourselves.

The love we need for ministry is not a natural ability, but it's a supernatural quality given to us by God.

And the more you draw close to Jesus, the more you'll be made to be like Him! You know Christian, you and I aren't still here on earth to just collect more stuff than the next guy. We're here still because God wants us to fight for the lost and bring more people to salvation. And one day soon He will return to take us home to heaven.

SO... **When should you start serving others? (BUILD) Now!** Realize that your life on earth is so incredibly short! You don't have much time... why waste it on just yourself...

One of my favorite illustrations on this starts with a rock. Let's just say, this little rock here represents your life on earth. Maybe 80 years if you make it that far. NOW, look around at this huge room... This room represents the rest of eternity after your life on earth.

Our time here is so short! Yet what do we do? We spend all our time focused on this (ROCK), making it more comfortable and collecting stuff and we lose sight of all of eternity to come (ROOM). Instead since our lives are so short here on earth, we should make the most of it to impact eternity to come!

So be ready to say "YES" when He calls you to serve. He wants to use you every single day.

And man let me tell you from my experience, the life of ministry, the life of service, is the most rewarding and fulfilling adventure you could ever go on! Better than anything this world has to offer. And who knows, there could be an even greater revival than Nineveh right around the corner! Amen? Let's pray...