Introduction

Think of someone. Not someone who annoyed you. Someone who wronged you. Someone you despise. Someone who seems beyond forgiveness. Hold that face in mind. Do not say who it is. Do not tell the person beside you. Just see them. See what they did. Now keep them there.

This morning, I want to ask what happens when God's compassion reaches that person. Not reaches you. We love that. When we have failed, and mercy covers us. When we stand guilty, and the judge says, Go free. We call that grace, and we sing about it.

But what if the same mercy lands on them? What if the one who cheated you is forgiven? What if the one who broke your family is welcomed? What if God looks at the face you are holding, and says, Come home?

Be honest. Something in you just tightened. I know that feeling. I have been that man. More than once. Here is the uncomfortable truth. Most of us love compassion. Until it reaches our enemy.

And there is a man in Scripture who felt exactly that. A prophet. A preacher. A man who knew his Bible, and loved his God. He saw mercy fall on his enemies, and it did not move him to worship. It moved him to rage. His name is Jonah. And his story ends with a question that God asks him, and Jonah never answers.

So open your Bibles to Jonah, chapter 4. Why would a man of God burn at the mercy of God? What does that fire say about the human heart? Everyone loves compassion until it reaches their enemy.

Everyone loves compassion until it reaches their enemy

We all love being recipients of compassion. When we have failed, and mercy covers us. When we stand guilty, and the judge says, Go free. Compassion is a beautiful thing. When it's given to me.

But what about when it lands on someone else? What about when it lands on the very people we wanted judged?

That is where we find Jonah in chapter 4. And Jonah's response is not pretty. Remember where chapter 3 left us. Jonah preached one short sentence. In forty days Nineveh will be demolished! That was all. Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They fasted. They put on sackcloth. They turned from their evil ways. And God saw it. Listen to how chapter 3 ends. Verse 10. God

saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

P The city is spared. The destruction is cancelled. Surely Jonah rejoices?

O No. Look at chapter 4, verse 1. Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious.

R Furious. The word means to burn. Do you remember the king's hope in chapter 3? That God might turn from his burning anger? He did. God's anger cooled. And Jonah's anger caught fire.

R Now notice a word. Evil. In chapter 1. Verse 2. Nineveh's evil has come up before God. In chapter 3. Verse 10. Nineveh turned from their evil ways. And God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. In Hebrew, it is the same word each time. Evil. Or disaster. And now, chapter 4, verse 1. Jonah was greatly displeased. Literally, it was great evil to Jonah.

ơ Think about that. Nineveh turns from evil, and Jonah calls the rescue evil.

O Jonah had preached destruction. He wanted destruction. Destruction was the plan. And when God did not destroy, Jonah burned.

R Let's be fair. Assyria was cruel. God himself called their wickedness what it was. These were not gentle neighbours. But the question is not whether Nineveh deserved judgement. The question is this. Why was Jonah angry that God showed mercy? Is this anger over justice? Or over mercy?

ơ In chapter 1, we are told he fled, but not why. Here, at last, the reason is revealed. Verse 2. He prayed to the Lord, "Please, Lord, isn't this what I said while I was still in my own country? That's why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster.

ơ Did you catch that? He did not run because he feared Nineveh. He ran because he knew God. He knew God would forgive. And he could not stand it.

R These words were not new. They come from Exodus 34. This was after Israel worshipped the golden calf. God had threatened to destroy them, and relented when Moses interceded. Then he passed before Moses and proclaimed his name. Exodus 34. Verse 5. The Lord came down in a cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed his name, "the Lord." The Lord passed in front of him and proclaimed: The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin.

 Jonah quotes the Lord's proclamation of himself as a complaint. Jonah's creedal belief is perfect. His heart is not. He loves God's creed for Israel. He hates God's application for Nineveh.

R And now hear the irony. Jonah has spoken of God's mercy before. Chapter 2. Inside the fish. Sinking. Drowning. Out of options. And what did he cry? Verse 9. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

 Salvation belongs to the Lord. He meant it. When it was his neck. When it was his life. Salvation belongs to the Lord. But now? Not for them. Jonah wants mercy for Jonah, and judgement for Nineveh.

Å Then comes verse 3. And now, Lord, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

ó Take my life from me. Stop and think about that. This is the man God rescued. Chapter 2 again. He sank to the roots of the mountains. Verse 6. You raised my life from the Pit, Lord my God! God lifted him out. God gave him his life back. And now Jonah asks God to take it back.

 Why? Because Nineveh lives. That is bewildering. He would rather die than watch others be saved. What kind of heart says that? Not a slip. Not a bad mood. Not a passing temper. A heart that wants God's mercy for itself, and God's wrath for everyone else.

R And how does the Lord answer? Verse 4. The Lord asked, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

P No thunder. No lightning. No storm. No great fish. Just a question. A gentle one. Is it right? Is it right to burn over mercy? Is it right to want others destroyed? Is it right to resent the very compassion that rescued you? The answer is obvious. But Jonah doesn't give it. Not a word. Look at verse 5. He gets up, and he walks out of the city. The Lord asks a question, and the prophet walks straight past it. There is something almost amusing here. A prophet of the Lord. Sulking. Giving God the silent treatment. And the Lord still speaking to him. Still patient. Still asking.

Å Picture a man in Benoni. Call him Pieter. His business partner cheated him. Eight hundred thousand rand. Gone. The business. The house. Years of his life. And Pieter has been in church all his days. He knows his Bible. He knows that God is gracious and compassionate. He has taught it to his children.

O Then one day he hears the news. His old partner has come to Christ. Repented. Been baptised. Welcomed by a church across town. Pieter should

be glad. Instead, something burns. Not him, Lord. Not that guy. Not after what he did to me.

 Pieter would never say it out loud. He may not even say it to himself. But it is there. A fire. And it burns hottest because he knows God is gracious. That is the problem. He knows exactly who God is.

R Pieter's hurt is real. But the question remains, Is it right to be angry when God shows compassion to his enemy?

 Whoever's face you've been picturing, that's the fire Jonah feels. And I know what it feels like because I have been Pieter. More than once. Compassion is a wonderful thing. Until it walks through the wrong door.

R Jonah 4:1-4 shows us two things. How compassionate God is, and how angry Jonah is that it reached Nineveh. Don't be like Jonah. We all love being the recipient of compassion. As long as compassion doesn't reach our enemy.

R But the Lord has asked a question. And Jonah has not answered it. So what does God do with a prophet who will not answer? Where does Jonah go with his anger? And who does the Lord care about, that Jonah never would?

The Lord cares about the people you wouldn't

R Jonah walked out on God's question. He did not answer. He just walked. • So where does he go? • And what does God do with a man who will not answer? • God does the most patient thing. He keeps teaching him. ••

R Look at verse 5. • Jonah left the city and found a place east of it. He made himself a shelter there and sat in its shade to see what would happen to the city. 44.

R Jonah leaves. • The scene changes. • He is out on a hillside, with a little shelter, waiting. • Waiting for what? •• It seems Jonah hopes for fire and brimstone to fall from the sky. • A front-row seat for a disaster to come. ••

R And it is hot. • The sun is beating down, and his shelter is thin. • Shade is not a luxury here. It is a need. ••

R Now verse 6. • Then the Lord God appointed a plant, and it grew over Jonah to provide shade for his head to rescue him from his trouble. ••

P Who is this for? • A prophet who ran. A prophet who sulked. A prophet who just walked past God's question. • And what does God give him? • Not a rebuke. A plant. Shade. Relief. • The plant is an illustration of God's compassion. And just like Nineveh, Jonah has not earned a leaf of it. ••

P Then comes the next line. • Jonah was greatly pleased with the plant. ••

ơ Greatly pleased. • Do you remember verse 1? • Jonah was greatly displeased. A whole city saved, and Jonah burned. Now a single plant, and Jonah is delighted. • Same man. Same word, great. Very different heart. ••

Å And have you noticed the pattern? • Chapter 2. The fish swallows him, and then spits him out. And Jonah sings. Salvation belongs to the Lord. • Chapter 4. A plant shades his head, and Jonah is glad again. • When God gets Jonah out of a jam, Jonah rejoices. When God gets Nineveh out of a jam, Jonah is furious. • It would be funny, if it were not so sad. ••

R But God is not finished. Verse 7. • When dawn came the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, and it withered. ••

R Appointed. It has been used before. • In chapter 1, The Lord appointed a great fish. • In verse 6, The Lord God appointed a plant. • Now, a worm. • And in verse 8, God appointed a scorching east wind. • Everything does what the sovereign God says. God is in control of all of it. • The shade was his. The worm was his. The wind was his. • Nothing here is an accident. ••

Å Now Jonah. Verse 8. • As the sun was rising, God appointed a scorching east wind. The sun beat down on Jonah's head so much that he almost fainted, and he wanted to die. He said, "It's better for me to die than to live." ••

ơ Haven't we heard that before? • Verse 3. Lord, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. • Same words. Same man. ••

R In verse 3, Jonah wants to die because Nineveh lives. • In verse 8, Jonah wants to die because a plant dies. ••

 That is bewildering. A city of a hundred and twenty thousand is spared, and Jonah wants to die. A plant withers, and Jonah wants to die. • Great joy over a plant. Great despair over a plant. And not one tear for the city. ••

Å The heat was real. The wind was fierce. Jonah was suffering. • God does not deny it. • But look where Jonah's heart is. His shade. His head. His comfort. Jonah has one concern, and it is Jonah. ••

R So God asks again. Verse 9. • Then God asked Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" •• This is the same question as verse 4. • Is it right for you to be angry? But now it is about a plant. ••

O So this time, Jonah answers. He has plenty to say. • "Yes, it's right!" he replied. "I'm angry enough to die!" ••

 Last time, silence. This time, certainty. Jonah would not answer when it was about a city. He answers at once when it is about a plant. • Angry enough to die. Over shade. ••

R And now God makes his case. • Verse 10. And the Lord said, "You cared about the plant, which you did not labor over and did not grow. It appeared in a night and perished in a night. ••

R Jonah cared about the plant. He did not sow it. He did not water it. He did not make it. • The plant was here one night, and gone the next. Yet Jonah cared about that plant. ••

 Then verse 11. • So may I not care about the great city of Nineveh, which has more than a hundred twenty thousand people who cannot distinguish between their right and their left, as well as many animals?" ••

R God is reasoning. • If you care about a plant you did not make, should I not care about people I did make? • If you grieve over something that lasted a night, should I not care about a city of a hundred and twenty thousand? • People who cannot distinguish between their right and their left? • They do not know. • Ignorance doesn't erase their guilt. But it does move God to pity. ••

P Jonah looked at Nineveh and saw enemies. God looked at Nineveh and saw people who did not know. • And that is reassuring. God does not care only for the ones who know him. He cares for the ones who do not. He cares for the ones who cannot find their way. He even cares for the animals. Nothing in that city falls outside his notice. ••

ơ Now look at the book end. • There is no reply from Jonah. No last word. The book simply stops. • And God's question hangs. May I not care? ••

R What does it mean that God cares? • God's care has the same heart as God's compassion in verse 2. • It is not weakness. It is not softness. It does not pretend sin is not there. • Compassion sees someone in trouble, and moves toward them. ••

 God cares for the ignorant of Nineveh, and Jonah, who has just been shown that compassion himself, cannot see it. • Jonah sat in shade he didn't plant, watching a city he didn't make, and God asked him, Should I not care? • The Lord cares about the people you wouldn't. ••

Å Jonah sat outside the city and watched. • He would not go in. • So is there anyone who goes toward people? • Who will not wait on a hill, but walks into the very place of judgement for them? ••

Connect to the gospel

Ʀ Those who have experienced God's compassion must not be angry when he shows it to others. • God raised Jonah from the pit. Jonah sat in shade he did not grow. And still Jonah burned with anger towards others in need. ••

∂ Jonah's problem was not informational. He knew the creed. • Jonah's problem was a heart that wanted mercy for himself and fire for his enemies. No amount of resolve changes a Jonah heart. Without Jesus, this text condemns everyone who is happy enough to receive, but not willing to see mercy given. ••

Å Jonah sits outside the city on a hill. He watches. He waits for judgement to fall on people who cannot tell their right hand from their left. • Remember another hill. Outside another city. A man is lifted up there, and the people who put him there are his enemies. They mock him. They gamble for his clothes. • Yet he says, Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing. 44.

˜ Jonah wanted the city destroyed. Jesus walked into the destruction. Not as a spectator. As the substitute. • Peter writes, Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God. 4. The righteous one. For the unrighteous. • Not for the deserving. For the hostile. ••

Å And the judgement Jonah longed to see fall on Nineveh fell on Christ. ••

ơ But death could not hold Jesus in the tomb. The resurrection is the Father's Amen over him. • The prayer from the cross was not a wish. ••

˜ Here is where anger like Jonah's finally dies. Not by effort. At the cross. • Paul writes, I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief. 4. That is not only Paul's story. When Jesus came to us, he came with mercy. And he was not angry that mercy reached us. He was crucified so that it could. ••

Ʀ So how can we resent the mercy that reaches our enemy? • It comes by the same blood. It is bought at the same price. You and your enemy need the same compassion. ••

˜ Christ bled for sinners. • And if you have never received that mercy, what are you waiting for? ••

Application for non-Christians

Ʀ You need God's compassion. ••

∂ Nineveh heard a message of judgment. • Because the city's evil had come

up before the Lord, in forty days Nineveh would be demolished! • And what did they do? • They did not argue. They did not wait. They believed God. They turned. • And God saw it. Nineveh had no right to receive his mercy. They had done nothing in and of themselves to deserve his compassion. But God relented. God spared them. • Because that is who he is. • God is merciful. Compassion describes his heart. ••

So let me ask you. • Do you want mercy? • Then do not wait for a better day. Today is the day of your salvation. ••

Repent. Turn from your sins, and receive the free grace Christ offers. • He died for sinners. And rose from the grave. He is alive, and he stands at the ready to forgive you. To pour out his compassion upon you. ••

Here is what you must do. • Confess that you're a sinner. Say it plainly. Not to impress him. He knows already. Just be honest with him. • Tell him you have gone your own way. Ask for his forgiveness through Jesus. Not through your effort. Not through your goodness. Through Jesus Christ alone. ••

Do it right now. Right where you sit. Before you leave this room. ••

You need God's compassion. • God has demonstrated that he is willing to give it. • The God who spared Nineveh sent his Son for you. • His arms are wide open. Will you come and experience his compassion today? ••

Application for Christians

You and your enemy need the same compassion. ••

Jonah sat under a plant he had not grown, resenting a city he had not made. • And so do we. • Every day you stand forgiven, you stand under mercy you did not plant. ••

Now go back to the face you pictured at the start. • They need the same gospel grace you've experienced. The same compassion. Not a lesser mercy for them. Not a greater one for you. The same. ••

So stop. • Stop begrudging God's mercy to people you think do not deserve it. • And rejoice. • When you hear that the one who cheated you has come to Christ, rejoice. When the one who broke your family bows the knee, rejoice. Heaven does. ••

This week, pray for the person you pictured. By name. • Ask God to save them. Ask God to show them mercy. Ask him to do for them what he has done for you. ••

Å It may be hard. • Perhaps the first words will stick in your throat. Pray anyway. • Christ prayed for his enemies. Father, forgive them. He prayed it with nails through his hands. ••

Pray for the lost. Even one you may have called an enemy. By name. To God's praise and glory. ••

Conclusion

Å Go back to the face. • The one you pictured at the start. The one who wronged you. The one who seems beyond forgiveness. • You have held that face for a long time now. ••

℟ Jonah 4 speaks truly. First, everyone loves compassion until it reaches their enemy. Jonah burned at mercy he had himself been given. And so have I. • Second, the Lord cares about the people you wouldn't. A city of people who did not know their right hand from their left. A city Jonah would not enter. ••

℣ Then we saw another city. And a man who entered into the very place of judgement. Who prayed, Father, forgive them. He died for the ignorant. He died for the hostile. He died for me and for you. ••

℟ The argument this morning was, You and your enemy need the same compassion. ••

If you are not yet a Christian, put your faith and trust in the compassionate Jesus Christ. • If you are a Christian, stop begrudging mercy to others, and pray for that face by name this week. ••

Now notice how the book ends. • Jonah 4 closes with a question. God asks, May I not care? • No answer from Jonah. No last word from the prophet. The book just stops. • Why? • Because God is no longer asking Jonah. He is asking you. ••

℟ Amen. ••

Close in prayer

Benediction

Exodus 34:6-7.

Homiletic indicators

- The operative word in the sentence is underlined.
- Ʀ – Instruction
  - **Body:** Natural, one hand gestures.
  - **Voice:** measured, firm.
- ˜ – Unction
  - **Body:** Forward, expressive.
  - **Voice:** Raised, faster.
- ∂ – Fear
  - **Body:** Narrow eyes, still shoulders, lift your chin slightly (exposed posture).
  - **Voice:** Breathy, higher pitch, quick shallow breaths. Speak into the back of the throat.
- Oʾ – Anger
  - **Body:** Jaw forward, stable feet (no shifting weight), sharp hand strikes (karate chop motion).
  - **Voice:** Hard attack on consonants. Drop pitch slightly, but increase volume on key syllables. Staccato.
- Ƥ – Happiness
  - **Body:** Relax shoulders, soften the brow. Open palms, wider stance.
  - **Voice:** Rise in melody at the end of phrases. Bright, forward resonance (smile while speaking).
- Å – Sadness
  - **Body:** Heavy eyelids, slight forward slump, hands still or clasped low.
  - **Voice:** Lower volume, monotone descent (each phrase ends lower than it started). Use mostly single-syllable words.
- ⍰ – Disgust
  - **Body:** Wrinkle nose, pull back your head, sharp turning away from the pulpit.
  - **Voice:** Nasal, sharp, with a "negation cadence" (rising then falling sharply on the sin's name). Hard glottal stops.
- ơ – Surprise
  - **Body:** Eyebrows up, slight backward step or open-mouth inhale.
  - **Voice:** Bright, high onset. Use a sudden upward interval (a leap in pitch on the unexpected word).
- ● – Pause
  - **What it does:** Allows the last sentence to land, convict, or heal.
  - **Length:** 1 second (colon), 2 seconds (period), 3+ seconds (after a weighty statement or call to worship).
  - **Body:** Stop moving. Hold eye contact. Do not smile or nod. Let the silence be uncomfortable.
    - **Delivery note:** A pause feels longer to you than to them. Trust it. Hold one more beat than you think is comfortable.

1) Jonah's anger (Jonah 4:1-4)

Jonah is furious that God spared Nineveh. He prays, quotes God's character, and asks to die. The Lord asks, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

1 Jonah was greatly displeased [ḡə·ḏō·lāh rā·ʿāh] and
became furious. 2 He prayed to the Lord, "Please,
Lord, isn't this what I said while I was still in my
own country? That's why I fled toward Tarshish in
the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and
compassionate [wə·ra·ḥūm] God, slow to anger,
abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from
sending disaster [hā·rā·ʿāh] . 3 And now, Lord, take
my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to
live."
4 The Lord asked, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

Presumably, this is on, or shortly after, Jonah's first day of his walk (Jonah 3:4), after the city has repented (Jonah 3:5), but before the forty days had expired (Jonah 3:4; 4:5).

Presumably, Jonah is still walking in the city of Nineveh (Jonah 3:4). Jonah recounts his journey from his own country, to Tarshish, to declaring Salvation belongs to the Lord (Jonah 2:9).

Jonah is furious, and prays to the Lord, declaring his attributes (Exodus 34:6), and asking to die. The Lord asks if it's right for Jonah to be angry.

2) **The Lord's compassion** (Jonah 4:5-11)

Jonah leaves the city and builds a shelter. God appoints a plant, a worm, and a scorching east wind. Jonah again asks to die. God asks, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" Jonah answers yes. God's final question about Nineveh is left unanswered.

5 Jonah left the city and found a place east of it. He
made himself a shelter there and sat in its shade to see
what would happen to the city. 6 Then the Lord God
appointed [way·man] a plant, and it grew over Jonah
to provide shade for his head to rescue [lə·haṣ·ṣîl] him
from his trouble. Jonah was greatly pleased
[gə·ḏō·w·lāh śim·ḥāh] with the plant. 7 When dawn
came the next day, God appointed [way·man] a
worm that attacked the plant, and it withered.
8 As the sun was rising, God appointed [way·man] a
scorching east wind. The sun beat down on Jonah's
head so much that he almost fainted, and he wanted
to die. He said, "It's better for me to die than to live."
9 Then God asked Jonah, "Is it right for you to be
angry about the plant?"
"Yes, it's right!" he replied. "I'm angry enough to
die!"
10 And the Lord said, "You cared [ḥas·tā] about the
plant, which you did not labor over and did not
grow. It appeared in a night and perished in a night.
11 So may I not care ['ā·ḥūs] about the great city of
Nineveh [hag·gə·ḏō·w·lāh], which has more than a
hundred twenty thousand people who cannot
distinguish between their right and their left, as well
as many animals?"

When dawn came the next day God appointed a worm, and then as the sun was rising God appointed a scorching east wind, as object lessons for Jonah.

Jonah left the city, found a place east of it, built a shelter, and sat in its shade. Waiting to see what would happen to the city. The Lord asks if he should not have compassion for the city of Nineveh.

Jonah is waiting to see what would happen to the city, when the Lord God appoints an object lesson, making Jonah more mad, to which the Lord explains his care for the hundred twenty thousand people who cannot distinguish between their right and their left, as well as many animals in Nineveh.

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: Jonah 4:1-11 **Preaching Audience:** Benoni Baptist Church, a diverse congregation, with non Christians in attendance.

1. How has the author organised this passage? *a) Sections, b) Strategies, c) Emphasis.*

a) 1) Jonah's anger and the Lord's question (Jonah 4:1-4)
   i) Jonah is greatly displeased that the Lord relented from destroying Nineveh (Jonah 4:1)
   ii) Jonah professes that the reason he fled was he knew God's character, and asks to die (Jonah 4:2-3)
   iii) The Lord asks, "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4)
   2) Jonah's anger and the Lord's compassion (Jonah 4:5-11)
   i) Jonah left the city; and the Lord God appoints a plant which Jonah is greatly pleased with (Jonah 4:5-6)
   ii) God appoints a worm and a scorching wind, and Jonah asks to die again (Jonah 4:7-8)
   iii) God asks, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" and Jonah answers, "Yes" (Jonah 4:9)
   iv) The Lord then reasons from Jonah's care for the plant to his care for Nineveh (Jonah 4:10-11)

b) I identified the text type as narrative, with some dialogue which concludes both scenes. I read in a literal translation and marked repeated words, such as great (Jonah 4:1, 6, 11), appointed (Jonah 4:6-8), and care (Jonah 4:10-11). I noted Jonah's repeated desire to die (Jonah 4:3, 8), and the Lord's repeated question, Is it right for you to be angry? (Jonah 4:4, 9), which fell in the two parallel panels. The shift in location (Jonah 4:5) marked the scene change. In the first panel, Jonah stated his motive (Jonah 4:2), and in the second panel, the Lord stated his (Jonah 4:10-11).

c) The Lord's compassion confronts Jonah's anger at divine mercy.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? *a) Literary, b) Historical, c) Cultural, d) Biblical.*

a) In Jonah 1:3, we are told Jonah fled, but we're not told why. In Jonah 4:2, the reason is revealed, Jonah knew God would show mercy to Nineveh. This matters because in Jonah 4, Jonah's great anger juxtapositions the Lord's compassion. In Jonah 2:9, Jonah celebrated salvation. In Jonah 4:6, Jonah is greatly pleased by a personal rescue, yet in Jonah 4:1, Jonah resents the large-scale deliverance of Nineveh. This matters because in Jonah 4, Jonah's emotional response is ironic. In Jonah 1:2, Nineveh's evil (rā·ʿā·ṯām) came up before the Lord, and in Jonah 3:10, God relented from the disaster (rāʿāh) he threatened. In Jonah 4:1, this greatly displeased (rāʿāh) Jonah, and in Jonah 4:6, the plant is sent to rescue Jonah from his trouble (mê·rā·ʿā·ṯōw). This matters because in Jonah 4, the word play heightens Jonah's great anger and the Lord's relenting from disaster. In Jonah 1:17, God appointed the fish. In Jonah 4:6-8, God appoints a plant, a worm, and a wind. This matters because in Jonah 4, God's sovereignty, another attribute, moves the narative forward. The book ends on God's question without recording Jonah's reply. This matters because in Jonah the main point is God's turning from evil, supported by Jonah's consumption by it.

b) The book does not name its author or date, and so the first audience is uncertain, therefore no historical context informs the meaning.

c) In Jonah 4:5-8, Nineveh's hot climate meant shade was a need. The scorching east wind and beating sun make the plant's loss a genuine hardship, explaining Jonah's distress. In Jonah 4:11, the idiom not distinguishing between their right and their left, describes lack of moral or spiritual understanding. This matters because Nineveh lacks the knowledge of God's unmerited compassion that Jonah's has expressed.

d) Jonah 4:2 paraphrases Exodus 34:6-7. In Exodus 32-34, Israel worshiped the golden calf and God relented from the disaster he promised (32:12, 14), telling Moses he would show mercy (Exodus 33:19), then proclaiming his name (Exodus 34:6-7). This matters because the confession Israel positively lived by is what Jonah quotes as a negative grievance.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to *his audience*?

Those who have experienced God's compassion must not be angry when he shows it to others.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ? *a) Connection, b) Function, c) Significance.*

a) This passage connects to the gospel by analogy (similarity and contrast). In Jonah 4:5, Jonah waits outside the city to see what would happen to it, and God grounds his compassion in the people's ignorance, they cannot tell their right hand from their left (Jonah 4:11). On the cross, Jesus prays for those crucifying him, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17). In both texts, ignorance is the ground for compassion, not an excuse (Jonah 3:5-10; Acts 3:19). Jonah is angry that God relented from disaster toward those who do not know, but Jesus asks forgiveness for the ignorant and bears the judgment for them (1 Peter 2:24, 3:18).

b) This functions primarily as motivation. Those forgiven in their ignorance, at the cost of Christ's suffering, have no ground to be angry when God shows that mercy to others. Secondarily, Jesus is the example of the response the author asks of his audience.

c) For Christians, we were among the ignorant (1 Timothy 1:13), so we have no ground for withholding compassion. For unbelievers, ignorance is no excuse, but the prayer from the cross shows that mercy is offered to people like you, and the right response is to repent, as Nineveh did.

5. What is the main point you will argue to *your audience*?

You and your enemy need the same compassion.

6. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? *a) Title, b) Outline.*

a) Why was Jonah furious that God forgave Nineveh?

b) 1) Everyone loves compassion until it reaches their enemy (Jonah 4:1-4)
   2) The Lord cares about the people you wouldn't (Jonah 4:5-11)

7. What applications will you make? *a) Christians, b) non-Christians.*

a) Stop begrudging God's mercy to people you think don't deserve it, and rejoice when he shows it to them. Pray for the lost you may normally overlook because of a grudge this week, as Christ prayed for his enemies. After the gospel section, and again in the conclusion.

b) Repent and receive the mercy Christ offers, as Nineveh did. Tell God you have turned from him, ask forgiveness through Jesus, and speak to someone here today about taking that step. Straight after the gospel section.

On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:

1. **How has the author organised this passage?**
   a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
   b) Tools: Identify the text type (it might be the separation of the passage into stanzas), and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
   c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.
2. **How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?**
   a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
   b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
   c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
   d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.
3. **What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?**
   The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.
4. **How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?**
   What part of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) is in view? Every part of the Bible, every passage of Scripture, in some way relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What parts of the passage connect to the gospel? The connection must be legitimate and textually driven.
5. **What is the main point you will argue to your audience?**
6. **What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.**
7. **What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.**
   The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).

On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:

- 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- 4) must be found in the text.
- 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- 6) should flow from 5).
- 7) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5), and show relationship to 6).