

# JONAH'S GREAT COMPLAINT

## LOVE YOUR ENEMIES SERIES - Part 3

### Ben Rudolph

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Good morning Church family. I hope you are doing well today. Please turn in your Bibles to Jonah Chapter 4. Now let me just say this, I know we are going to be in the last chapter of Jonah today but there is still one more week to our Jonah series. So you are probably wondering what that means but just hold on. The first sermon on Jonah we did a big overview. Last week we talked mostly on Jonah Chapters 1 and 2. Today we are going to spend most of our time in Jonah Chapter 4. And then next week we are going to take a look backwards to find some things we haven't seen yet in this story.

Today we are going to be talking about 'Jonah's Great Complaint.' I don't know about you but I have had some good bosses and some bad bosses in my life. I don't want to go into why I had bad bosses, but let me just say many of us are probably familiar with having a bad boss. Anyone here who has had a bad boss in their life? Okay, I see several of you have. And what do you like to do if you have a bad boss? We like to complain. When things aren't the way they should be we complain. If we have a boss that is supposed to know how to lead and know what to do and yet they do the opposite of that, it is so easy to complain.

And I know for the most part when we have someone whether it is a co-worker or a boss that you don't like, most of us never complain to their face. Right? We might go through HR, or just complain to ourselves, to our co-workers or our spouses, but very rarely do we ever have that one on one interaction with the person who we really have a complaint with.

Today when we look at Jonah Chapter 4, let's give Jonah some grace because Jonah complains to God. And I think there are some things that we can learn from 'Jonah's Great Complaint' this morning. When we read through the book of Jonah we would think that at the end of Chapter 3 the book would end there. God calls Jonah, '*Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh and preach to them because I am going to judge them and destroy their city unless they repent.*' And Jonah goes the opposite direction and gets on a boat going to Tarshish. God sends a storm and Jonah tells the sailors to throw him overboard. They do throw him overboard and a giant fish swallows him and he is in there for three days and three nights. The fish finally spits Jonah out on the land. Then Jonah tells God he will do what he wants him to do and he finally obeys.

Chapter 3 is about Jonah going and preaching in Nineveh. He tells the Ninevites that God is going to judge them for their wickedness. And what happens? The entire city repents. It says from the greatest to the least they repent. And when God saw that the Ninevites repented from their evil ways, He relented of the disaster that He said He would do to them and He did not do it.

So that is a great story, and that should be the end of the story. If we are writing a movie about the story of Jonah you would think that should be the end of the movie. But we talk about this every week, let's address the lullaby effect, let's learn how to ask the Bible questions. Why is there a Chapter 4 of Jonah? If the main point of the story was

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Jonah doing his job and the people of Nineveh turning around and repenting of their sins, so that God did not destroy them it would make a great Christian movie. Right? But then there is a Chapter 4 of Jonah. Why is there a Chapter 4? Chapter 4 is there to confront us. Chapter 4 is there because we can do all the right things yet not have our heart behind it. And so let's read Jonah's response to God's mercy in Chapter 4 beginning in verse 1.

***“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 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. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” And the Lord said, “Do you do well to be angry?”***

***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. 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. 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.”***

***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?”***

So let's break this conversation down. Jonah has some issues with God. Notice in verses 1 through 4 Jonah is watching the city of Nineveh. Can you picture Jonah being in the city? He has seen people putting on the sackcloth and ashes and they are crying out to God. ‘*Oh God, forgive us.*’ Jonah sees this happening all across the city. Now imagine going to downtown Charlotte tomorrow and there are tens of thousands of people in the city streets on their knees crying out to God for forgiveness. How would that make you feel? ‘*Awesome. This is great.*’

But this is not great to Jonah. Remember we talked about this a couple of weeks ago how Jonah does not like the Ninevites. He believes they are so wicked and so evil that they must be punished. And for God to relent, for God to pull back His judgment and to give them mercy and compassion does not feel right to Jonah. And he is walking through the city seeing all this. Verse 1 says: ***“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and***

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*he was angry.* “ Literally it means that it was a great evil to Jonah. He believed that what God had done was evil. Remember evil (Hebrew *Ra*) is the key word in this book. So to Jonah this should not be happening, and he lets God know it.

Here is Jonah's first complaint which is part one of this story. *'I don't want to live in a world without justice.'* Two times Jonah says he wants to die. One time Jonah asked God to let him die, and in another place he says, ***“Please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”*** I can't imagine asking God to kill me. But this is where the conversation happens.

Why does Jonah want to die so badly? I think he wants to die because he does not want to live in a world where there are no consequences to evil. He believes that if God were to totally take into account all the evil the Ninevites had done for centuries He would destroy them. He does not think it is good for God to let them off the hook. *'So you are going to tell me, God, after they have ravaged, raped, tortured, mutilated and killed tens of thousands of people, and then they say a few words to you and now you are okay with them?'* Do you get that? *'You just have to say a few words and everything is supposed to be okay.'*

I don't know about you, but I can understand Jonah here. So God has this conversation with Jonah. And here is what I think is really good that Jonah does. A lot of times we just read the Bible story of Jonah and we think, *'Oh don't be like Jonah because he is so bad here.'* Instead we need to look at what Jonah does do well. What Jonah does do that is good is that he is honest with God. He is honest with Him. *'God, I am angry with you.'*

Now I don't know where you are in your relationship with God right now, but if you follow God long enough and walk with Jesus long enough, God will do something to make you angry. He will. Maybe you think that God has never ticked you off, but maybe you just haven't walked with Him long enough. God loves doing things that really frustrate us sometimes even when it is for our good.

So you see this reaction from Jonah and the question that God asks Jonah gives us a clue to where Jonah is at spiritually. Look at verse 4 where it says: ***“But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry?”*** Now I know we don't see this in the English but if we were a good Jew knowing Hebrew we would know that question in the Hebrew text should bring up a story to us from the very beginning of Scripture. ***“Do you do well to be angry?”*** That question here is the same verbiage in a question and statement to Cain in Genesis Chapter 4.

Remember God asked Cain why was he angry? And then He said, ***“If you do well.”*** And in Jonah He flips the order by saying, ***“Do you do well to be angry?”*** Those two statements are combined, and the point is God is asking Jonah the same question He was directing to Cain. And that is not a coincidence because look at verse 5:

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*“Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city.”* Now you may wonder what is east of the city, what detail about that is important. But here is what you need to understand, in the book of Genesis anytime you see someone, or a group of people, moving east they are moving away from God. So not only is God’s question to Jonah very similar to God’s question to Cain, but where did Cain go after he got kicked out? He went to the east. So God is making some parallels with Jonah and Cain. Why? What is unique about Jonah and Cain? What is their issue? What is their problem?

Here I think is the parallel, Cain is someone who took justice into his own hands. He felt wronged by God, he felt wronged by Abel, and he decided to do something about it. Jonah is carrying that same attitude. He is carrying the same issue. What Jonah is doing is literally setting up shop. He goes to the east of Nineveh. Why is he going there? Verse 5 says: *“He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.”* Jonah is watching to see what would happen and he hopes it is what he wants to see happen. Jonah is thinking maybe all that revival stuff he saw in the city was not real. *‘Man, it would be so awesome if God really did judge the city.’* So Jonah goes east of the city and he sets up a little tent (which is called a booth) for shade.

Where Nineveh was at that time is where the city of Mosul in Iraq is today. And it is hot there, people. Jonah sets up his own tent to shade him from the sun and he is wishing, wanting and waiting for there to be the smallest percentage of a chance that he could have the front row seat to see God send fire rain down from heaven on Nineveh. That is what Jonah was doing. He is thinking, *‘Perhaps there is a small sliver of chance that God will still judge this city.’* This is Jonah and this is what he is doing.

He is so firm in his belief in truth and consequences he will stand on that rock, on that belief, and he will not be moved. *‘God, we must live in a world where consequences must take place for evil. And I will not be moved.’* And what does God do? He gives Jonah an experience. Now God is brilliant. He knows not to have a conversation with Jonah while he is angry. How does that go usually? When you are angry with someone or someone is angry with you, and you try to have a conversation, how does that conversation usually go? They usually don’t go too well.

Instead God gives Jonah an experience. Don’t you love it when God gives you an experience? Here is the problem with Jonah’s first complaint - we don’t know how to apply justice perfectly. You and I, as much as we can understand at a certain level truth and consequences, evil and justice, we don’t really understand it perfectly like God does. That is the problem we need to acknowledge just like Jonah. Jonah believed he had the right sense of justice and that God didn’t. And so he was confronted with that. Therefore we have to be confronted with that. We have to look at ourselves and say, *‘I may not fully understand how to apply justice the way God wants to apply justice.’* So are we okay with that?

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That leads us to the second part when God give Jonah this experience. This experience is going to teach Jonah something about his heart. If God said, *'Jonah, this is what you are like. This is what you are thinking,'* Jonah could not have understood it in that moment; God had to give Jonah an experience.

Listen, when God give us an experience there is nothing like it. I remember when I used to sell shoes in college trying to save up money for an engagement ring for my now wife, Liz. And I had a great job selling shoes at Sears in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Scranton Pennsylvania has zero economy and there are no good paying jobs in Scranton Pennsylvania. But there was this job selling shoes where I made 10 percent commission on women's shoes and 7 percent commission on men's shoes. That sounds sexist to me, but I am just telling you that was the rule. And I could make fifteen to twenty dollars an hour doing that back in the mid-nineties which was good money. So I was working and saving and every day I went to work it was to make money so I could buy that ring. There was a mission involved in my selling shoes.

And I remember this one time when this older lady came in to look at shoes. She sat down and she wanted the comfort tech. So she wanted to try this shoe on and that shoe on and I just kept going back and forth, back and forth to the back room to get more shoes. I spent an hour with this woman and she finally said, *'I just don't like any of them. I will just have to come back another time.'* And during this entire time I am watching other employees around me just ringing up shoe sales while I am with this woman. I am like, *'Just buy the shoes.'*

And when she walked out of the store that day I went to the back literally carrying about eight boxes of shoes to put away, and I am mad. I am fuming. I am putting away shoes and I am thinking, *'God, I am trying to make some money here. I want to get married.'* And God just had this moment with me in the back room of the Sears shoe department. *'Ben, you don't think ministry is going to be like this? You will spend all your time with people pouring yourself out. And if you think that everyone is going to do what you want them to do, it isn't going to happen. Sometimes you will pour your life into people and they will still just walk away.'* That was something a seminary class could never teach me.

You see when God gives you an experience, when God gives you something to go through; He is showing you your heart. He is trying to show something in you that you wouldn't be able to recognize if He just said, *'Hey, you have this problem.'* So God gives Jonah this experience through a plant. Now we know that Jonah already has shade because it says he built a booth for himself. But look at 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 what is going on now? The plant grows for shade for Jonah and then a worm comes and kills the plant. Here is part two, and Jonah's second complaint is rooted in

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this. He doesn't want to live in a world without grace and compassion. We just talked about Jonah not wanting to live in a world without truth and consequences. And now Jonah is saying he doesn't want to live in a world without grace and compassion. Yes, this is what Jonah realizes because this is where God leads him through this experience.

God allows this plant to grow and I am going to show you a picture of what most people think this plant was. And it is a giant plant that is native to the Middle East. It is a very big plant. Now what do you notice about that plant? The leaves are big and it is a perfect plant for providing shade. Now what if you were camping out one night, you go into your tent, and the next morning when you walk out of your tent there is this huge bush outside of your tent. What would you think? You would probably think someone dropped some Miracle Gro.

No, this was supernatural. We have to look at this from Jonah's perspective and when he sees this he honestly believes this plant was from God. It could not have grown that much overnight. So Jonah is experiencing this believing that God provided it for him. And it says: "***So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.***" Do you know what is good in 130 degree weather? It is when you have shade. And now Jonah has two sources of shade. This was before air conditioning, people, and it is one thing to have a tent over you and it is another thing to have a giant plant too. It is double the protection from the sun. And Jonah is exceedingly glad. There is that word 'exceedingly' which is *gadol* in Hebrew meaning 'great.' All throughout this story of Jonah is this word 'great.'

And there is something I want you to see in verse 6. It says: "***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.***" The plant was to save him from his discomfort. Circle that word 'discomfort' in your Bibles because it is a very important word. What is the key word in the book of Jonah? It is 'evil,' the Hebrew word *Ra*. In this passage 'to save him from discomfort' the Hebrew literally means 'to save him from his *Ra*.' So there is a word play going on here. There is a word play about this plant.

Yes, God saved him from his discomfort, but this plant is literally going to be used by God to save Jonah from his evil. See God used a fish, a giant fish, to save Jonah physically and now He is going to use a plant to save him spiritually, to help him. And what is Jonah's evil? That is the question. If you are reading this 'to save him from his *Ra*' what is Jonah's *Ra*? What is Jonah's evil? Now Jonah thinks that what God is doing is evil in saving the Ninevites, so what is Jonah's evil?

Jonah's evil is if there is an evil in withholding justice according to Jonah, there is also an evil in withholding grace and compassion. Jonah has a double standard about himself. God did something great for Jonah in providing him a plant for shade but Jonah did not deserve that plant. He was the one moving away from God. He is the one going east, moving away from God, and yet God gives him grace. God gives him extra shade by providing this giant plant to grow up over Jonah making him incredibly happy.

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But then what does God do? He sends a worm to eat the plant. What does this worm represent? The worm represents Jonah's worldview. The worm thinks, '*that plant doesn't belong here.*' I know this much about growing things and that is in order to get a plant you first have to have a seed, and there would have been no root system to this plant. And what God does is give Jonah a taste of his own worldview. '*I really wanted that plant for shade, but we should not be giving compassion to people who are not doing right, God.*' God showed Jonah compassion for his wrong by sending the plant. And then God sends this worm to represent Jonah's worldview and the worm kills this plant.

God also sends a wind, a scorching east wind, and the plant is gone. Verse 8 says: "***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.***" Let's put ourselves in Jonah's shoes. I know we are in the south and summer is coming. We try to stay out of the blazing hot sun when it is in the mid 90's with high humidity and we prefer to stay in our air conditioning. Jonah is in the area of Iraq where it can get up to 130 degrees. Can you imagine not just the sun beating down but also the wind blowing this 130 degree hot air on you?

Jonah is not happy. He was exceedingly glad before and now he is miserable. And now he wants to die. Why does he want to die? "***And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live. But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?"***" Jonah was angry before that God was not giving justice to the Ninevites, and now he is mad because his own act of grace was taken away from him. Do you see the double standard Jonah had?

And that can be our problem also. We have a double standard when applying grace. We love for people to show grace to us, but we don't want to show grace to other people. And that was the hard part when it came to Jonah. God confronts Jonah and what does Jonah say? "***And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die."***" This was Jonah's complaint; he didn't want to live in a world without compassion and grace.

So we have part one where Jonah does not want to live in a world where there are no consequences, no justice. And then there is part two when God took Jonah through an experience and at the end Jonah doesn't want to live in a world without compassion and grace. Now all Jonah could think about was wishing that plant was still here. '*God, I loved that plant.*' I don't know about an emotional attachment to plants but Jonah had it. He loved that plant.

And that leads us to part three, God's 'mic drop.' Do you know what a mic drop is? Some of you over 50 may not get it. And now I have offended everyone over 50. I am not going to explain 'mic drop' then; I will just assume that everyone knows. But the whole point is that God gives His final statement and Jonah has nothing to say. God has put Jonah at a place where he is trapped. '*Jonah, do you see this? You were so mad at*

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*me. You were so angry with me that I was showing compassion and grace to these people. You thought it was evil. And then I take you through an experience where I confront your evil and how do I meet your evil, how do I meet where you are going east and you have the same attitude as Cain; I give you grace. And then when I took that grace away, when I gave you a taste of your own medicine, when I let you experience everything that you wanted for them, you tell me you don't want to live in that world either.'*

God has Jonah in a place where he has to do some correlation. This is how God ends it. **“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.”** God knew Jonah had feelings for this plant, and this is where the hard part comes. It is hard when we talk about feelings. Sometimes we talk about our minds and what we believe and that is important, but God also is the Lord of our emotions. We have to let Him into our emotions, and we have to let Him confront our emotions, because there are a lot of emotions going on in people. There is anger, there is gladness, and there is pity, and all are strong emotions that we feel as human beings.

And God has taken Jonah through these emotions and He is telling him that he had emotions for the plant, so should He not have the same level if not even greater for these children in the city of Nineveh. God mentions 120,000 people. We are not sure if that means the direct city of Nineveh or if it just means the Assyrian Empire, but He is saying that He sees all those children. Jonah may have been looking at the mean evil people like the king and his generals and all they have done, but God knows there were 120,000 children in that city. And He is asking Jonah if he can't have compassion for them.

If Jonah had compassion for a plant, was God not allowed to have compassion for these children? God makes this correlation, and He asks Jonah if he understands who He is. He asks Jonah if he understand the type of God that He is. Here is what we have to understand, we may have major problems, but we know that it is God alone who knows how to apply both truth and mercy perfectly. God is the only one who can do that. And if God is the only one who knows how to apply truth and mercy and grace perfectly then we must go to Him.

Why is God making a big deal out of compassion? I believe this is why, and I learned these from some commentators I was reading this week. What question does truth answer? Truth answers this question – what have you done? Isn't that what truth answers? When you have kids and you know they have done something wrong, what is your job as a parent? Your job as a parent when your child does something wrong is to have a conversation with them and it is not to just say, *'You did something wrong.'* As a parent we are to lead them so that they can see that they have done something wrong.

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And that is what God is doing to Jonah. He is saying that truth answers the question of what have you done with mercy and compassion. The Hebrew word for compassion is *rachum*. There are many different words for the word 'pity.' The word 'pity' in verses 10 and 11 is the word *chus*. These words are used interchangeably with pity and compassion and passing over judgment.

But here is what is so fascinating about the Hebrew language, because every word means something. And the same word for compassion which is *rachum* is the same Hebrew word for the womb of a woman. So if truth answers the question 'what have you done,' compassion answers this question 'what can you become.' What compassion does is give people another chance to be someone different.

Now what does that mean? We are in a series on loving our enemies. This is the story, this is the text, and this is what God is leading Jonah to do. And He is taking Jonah to a place where He is saying, '*Will you adopt my standard of mercy? Will you adopt my standard of compassion, my standard of truth and justice? Will you stop living by your own standard and live by my standard?*'

Here is what God is doing. He is leaving Jonah with a question. He ends with a question. "***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?***" This is the question God is leaving us. If God feels that way toward children and animals, what does God feel toward your enemy, what does God want for that person? Remember we have been talking about loving your enemies which is what this series is about, so what does God feel about your enemies?

God is a God who wants to show compassion to everyone. Remember He is a God who is merciful and compassionate, who wants to bring people close to Him. This is who God is; He wants to save every man, woman and child on the face of this planet. And what makes this very difficult for us to appreciate that is when someone has wronged us. How do we still love those people? How do we still love that person?

The main idea of what we have to do if we are to love our enemies is we must first understand and appreciate how God loves His enemies. If we are going to love our enemies it does not all begin with just treating them as a human being. It is not enough to just know the steps of forgiveness and to know we should forgive our enemies. We have heard lots of things like 'pray for that person,' or 'understand that they are a human being and they probably have been hurt so that is why they hurt others.' Those are right and good but what changes our ability to love our enemies has to be something greater. And the greater for us is to realize that God has loved us and God sent His Son to die for our sins.

God gave Jonah a plant to show him grace, and He has given us His only Son. He gave us Jesus. He gave us the cross. He gave us His righteousness. He gave us His

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truth. He gave us His love, abundant, gracious, amazing love. This is what God has given to us and we were His enemies by nature. Everything that we have said and done deserve God's wrath, deserve His judgment. Who on the fact of this planet has received the full measure of what they deserve? None of us, not one person in this room or one person out there has ever received the full measure of justice that is due to them. And praise be to God for that!

If we are going to love our enemies we have to understand how much God's love is for us. It is mind blowing, it is amazing how much greater God's grace and compassion is toward us. If we minimize our need for grace, if we forget that we were also once His enemies, our desire to show grace toward others will be small. We must always keep in mind the cross of Jesus Christ. We must always keep in mind that we are where we are today by the pure grace and mercy that He lavished upon us through His Son Jesus Christ. And we must come to that truth in a fresh way every single morning. We must come to the cross every single day and understand the depths of what we deserve and the heights of what He has given to us.

If we are not captivated by His compassion and mercy for us every single day we will not be able to show that to other people. That is the challenge. That is the hope that we must hold on to. We need to love our enemies, we need to love them well if we are going to show this world that there is a different way, if we are going to show this world there is something even greater than truth and consequences. Yes, it is important that consequences exist and it is important that truth exist, but what is even greater is the mercy of God. It is His compassion toward us. This is the nature of God and this is what we have to be confronted with.

I have a couple of questions I want to ask you this morning just like God asked some questions of Jonah. Question number one – do you want justice for the evil against you but grace and compassion for the evil you commit? I think every one of us if we are going to be honest would say, yes, I want grace and compassion. When someone zooms past me on the highway driving recklessly, I am like, *'I sure hope there is a cop up there.'* But when I am going fast, and I speed by a cop, I am like, *'Oh Lord, please. I didn't realize how fast I was going.'*

See it is so easy for us to see the bad driver and we want them to get caught. We want them to get a ticket. How many times have you seen that driver pulled over and you are like, *'Yeah, how do you like it now. There is justice in this world.'* But at the same time when you are pulled over you are like, *'Please God. I will never speed again.'* This is what we do. We have the double standard. Yes, show me all the grace and compassion all day long, but don't expect me to show it to others.

Question number two – how has God shown you grace and compassion? I think it would do our souls and our hearts so much good if we were able to every day begin our day thinking about and then expressing our gratitude for this day. Every day we need to

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begin our day thinking about the things that God has given us that we do not deserve. That can be a real game changer. It is a game changer when we start every day thinking about the goodness of God toward us that we do not deserve.

Question number three – How will you show that same grace to your enemies? See God shows His grace and His compassion toward us because He wants us to show our grace and compassion to others. What is the question that compassion answers? It is ‘What can you become?’ The reason why God shows us His mercy and compassion is because he believes we can become like Jesus. Do you believe your enemy can as well? Do you believe that the power of the gospel, the power of the blood of Jesus Christ the power of the resurrection is capable of changing that person, those people?

Our crisis of faith and our challenge to believe in God this morning is how will we love our enemies. How will we trust God to show us and help us in that way? All of us may think, ‘*I want to be like Jesus. Make me more like Jesus today.*’ But the moment of Jesus on the cross saying, ‘**Father, forgive them,**’ is not the moment we think about becoming like Jesus. And maybe that is the moment, maybe that is the conforming to the image of Jesus that He is doing in our lives right now. If we are going to be people that reflect the nature of Jesus we have to submit, we have to yield to God.

I don’t preach this lightly. I was reading an article this week about this young Nigerian girl by the name of Leah. She was kidnapped by Boko Haram along with 110 other girls from this private school. Five of the girls died, and a hundred and four were sent back after they converted to Islam, but this young lady who is now 18 years old has refused to convert. And that is why they still hold her as a slave, enduring conditions I cannot imagine. I read that article and the things I felt, the things I want done for justice in this world are strong. And I don’t understand why God doesn’t do things in my timing or in my way.

When I preach I do not take this command lightly. I do not take this situation lightly. The hardest thing to do is to love our enemies. But I know that is what the world needs to see, and this is our joy in representing Christ in this world. Will we do it? Will we do it? Let’s bow our heads and close our eyes. I don’t know what you are thinking, or what you are feeling this morning, but I will say that if you are sitting here and you don’t understand God’s grace for you, you don’t understand His compassion for you, you don’t understand the cross and what it means, then I want to invite you today to talk to someone about it. So you can know for sure that you have a relationship with Jesus that you can know for sure that you don’t have to face judgment from God, but that mercy and grace awaits.

As you leave here this morning there is a prayer room on the right and someone will be there to talk with you, they will answer any questions you might have, and they will pray with you. And maybe you are sitting here this morning and there is just a wrestling inside your heart of not knowing how to love your enemies, but you know this

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**Ben Rudolph**

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is what your call is. Ask Him to help you today to take that step to know what to do, to know what to say, to know what to believe, and to ask Him to give you His perspective and His heart. Ask Him to help you see the cross differently.

*God, we cry out to you that we would be a people that understand the fullness of your grace and your compassion and your mercy on us today, because if we are filled with that understanding it will flow out of us. And that is my hope, that is my prayer this morning, God that you would show us the greatness of your love, the pity and the compassion you gave to us when we were lost. When we were dead in our sins, when we were your enemies, we were sons and daughters of disobedience, instruments of unrighteousness, slaves to sin, mockers, liars and thieves, and adulterers and murderers, that is us in this room. Yet you call us sons and daughters by the blood of Jesus Christ. Fill our hearts with your love, help us to comprehend your love, and to share that love with others. We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*