

A quick tempered prophet and the slow to anger God

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning and a special welcome to those who are visiting with us. I see at least one or two and it's good to have you with us this morning. There's tea and coffee at the end of the service and please stay if you're able to stay for the time of fellowship. The evening service will be at 6 this evening and we'll be conducted by myself, God willing. There'll be a meeting of the church session tomorrow evening at half past seven at the Man's and this will be followed by a meeting of the deacon's court at half past eight at the Man's. I know there was a question mark over where the meeting would happen but I think we'll just have it in Cairo. The ladies' Bible study meets at eight tomorrow as usual in the First Group Fellowship at half past seven on Tuesday, Church of Scotland Hall. Road to Recovery meets on Tuesday at eight in the Community Centre and the prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past seven in Kilda Cruz as usual. Discipleship

Explored continues in the Restaurant of Hotel Hebrides on Thursday at eight and then on Friday night this week there'll be a congregational meeting at half past seven here in the Community Centre. The purpose of the meeting will be to give an update on property issues and to ask the congregation for approval in principle to apply for a loan from the Free Church trustees. I could probably say more about that but I think all I'll say is just put it in your diary and it's really important that as many of the congregation as possible will come along and be informed and be able to have an input and help us to make decisions about the way at night with the opportunities that are before us. And a prayer in advance of the meeting please and a prayer for the deacons and the elders for tomorrow night as well as we meet in advance of the meeting as well. The Lever Borough communion services are over the course of next weekend and they'll be from Thursday through over the course of the weekend.

Visiting ministers Reverend Alistair MacLeod from Gairloch who was in Crossboss previously and the Reverend Murdo Campbell from Barberts. The service times are available at the door you can see the times of the services and if there are those who would like to go but would struggle with transport there will be the chance to put your name down in the sheet there and transport will be arranged for those who wish to go.

So morning service next Sunday 28th February 11 and will be conducted by myself God willing and there's no evening service next Sunday to allow the those who wish to go to the service and the fellowship in Lever Borough to go to that and again transport available for those who wish to go but I want to or struggle to find a way to get there. One more information I was given and that is that there will be a soup and pudding lunch in the Tarbot Community Centre on Saturday 5th March from 11 till 3 today's Vines for Women for Mission projects. If you can help out with baking food preparation or with serving on the day please add your name to the list on the table at the door there will be also craft and baking tables for donations with baked items knitting items or any other craft items are welcome also.

[3 : 46] These I think are all the intimations so let's begin our service and worship God by singing to his praise from mission phase 52. Mission phase 52 the words also on the screen a great reminder of why we are gathered here today on the Lord's Day. God sent his son they called him Jesus he came to love heal and forgive he lived and died to buy my pardon an empty grave is there to truth my saviour lives. Let's unite our hearts in prayer let's pray together Our Heavenly Father we thank you and we praise you this morning for these wonderful words that we have sung We thank you that no matter what kind of weeks we have sung we thank you that no matter what kind of weeks we've had no matter what is going on in our lives which may trouble us and may perplex us

we thank you that we can without qualification sin this morning because he lives I can face tomorrow because he lives all fear is gone because I know he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives

Heavenly Father we thank you for the truth of these words we thank you that we stand here this morning in the name of Jesus and with our confidence and all that Jesus has done for us we praise you for the love for the healing and for the pardon for from sin that is given to us in Christ and Lord we praise you again for the empty grave that is there to show to us that in Christ in Christ we are safe in Christ we are safe in Christ we are secure in Christ we are forgiven in Christ we have a hope which is unshakable which is irreversible and which is eternal and so Lord we pray that every one of us this morning would be able to leave this place saying that we know that we are in Christ we don't stand in Christ we don't stand in Christ we don't stand in Christ we don't stand in our own strength we don't try to save ourselves we don't put our hope in ourselves or anyone else but we thank you that we put our hope in Jesus and we ask Lord that that would be the the profession and the conviction within every heart and upon every lips in this place in this place so we thank you for the gospel and for the confidence and the courage that that gives us we pray Lord for all that we even look ahead to in this week before us and as intimations are read out and as we think about the various opportunities that we have to come together and worship we pray that we would use them that we would use our lives for your glory and that we would take every opportunity to take every opportunity to make use of the means of grace that you have provided for us we thank you for the freedom and for the safety that we have to be able to come together in the name of Jesus and we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who meet today even though they have no such assurances of safety bless them we pray where they are and Lord as we pray and Lord as we pray and they are and Lord as we think about meetings also where we are charged to make decisions about the future we thank you that you are the God who holds the future and Lord as you have guided us thus far we know that you will guide us in the road ahead and so we trust you and we ask Lord that you would give wisdom to the elders and the deacons and all those who will meet in the forthcoming week that you would enable us to know and to follow your will and Lord as you lead us we pray that you would provide for us in the temporal transient things of life as well as you have provided for us Lord in the eternal things in sending your son we pray that our focus throughout this service and throughout each day you give us would be on Jesus and we ask Lord that he would be our guide that he would be our vision we thank you Lord for the the young voices that we hear and even as we give you thanks for newborn babies in our presence and those who are at home we ask Lord that you would bless them and Lord as we hear them we thank you for them and we pray that you would lay your hand of blessing upon them and we thank you that we can have confidence and assurance about their future as well as our own because our Savior lives so enable us we pray to be in worship on the Lord's Day bless us as we meet together in this place and we pray also for those who would desire to be here but who can't be and we pray that you would draw near to them as they recover from operations as they struggle with infirmity we ask Lord that you would bless them and for any Lord who have mobility and who have opportunity but who have no desire we ask that you would touch them and awaken and revive so hear our prayers cleanse us from sin we pray we acknowledge it we confess it we grieve over it Lord and we ask that you would forgive us and sacrifice and we pray all these things in Jesus name Amen Boys and girls would you like to come forward please How's everyone this week?

Has it been a good week? Yes? Tell you what I was thinking about for this morning when I was thinking about this yesterday I was thinking about how maybe Monday of last week it might have been one of the busiest days of the whole year for James Was it James?

Valentine's Day was last Sunday He shakes his head in absolute bluelessness Valentine's Day was last weekend and so Maybe Saturday maybe Monday would have been a busy post day But what's Valentine's Day all about?

[11 : 08] Pardon? It's all about love So says Alistair It's all about love isn't it? So what happens on Valentine's Day?

Dangerous question to ask What do you exchange in Valentine's Day? I knew you wouldn't be giving me answers Put your hand up Not just you But also all you as well Put your hand up if you've got a Valentine's Day card One Two Three Four Five Six Seven Dunda Eight Nine Ten Eleven There's a bit of romance in this congregation after all Or flowers Any flowers?

Oh Some got doubles Chocolates Oh Chocolates there as well Now then Next question Put up your hand Remember Truth The whole truth And nothing but the truth Put up your hand Have you sent A Valentine's Day card Okay I'm not going to press you I'm just going to leave that with your own conscience I got a Valentine's Day Time's Day card as well There it is there It says to David I quite like you Even though your socks stink And I wish you'd pick them up And put them in the laundry basket yourself Doesn't really say that But that was the card that Mary would love to write So on Valentine's Day It's all about love And If we want to show our love We do things like We send cards We buy flowers We buy chocolate We maybe Go out for dinner Did anyone go out for dinner? Oh Maria Price was well looked after These are the kind of things that we do On Valentine's Day The main thing is We send cards And it's just to show that That we love the person that we're Sending the card to It's a good thing to do isn't it?

[13:54] Who loves this more than anyone? God God And what did he do? We just sang it God loved us so much That he didn't send a card But God sent his His son Yes God sent his son And they called him Jesus God So loved the world See if you can say the verse back to me Because I know you all know it Because you all sing it John 3 16 For God so A bit louder For God so Loved That he That whoever Shall not Brilliant

Ailey come out of here please You've got the loudest voice Not too close to the microphone before you No you're okay You come right here You read us And the rest of all try For God He loved the world He sent his Love His only Son So that If we ever believe in him He'll not die Let's have eternal life Brilliant And see when you felt a wee bit nervous at the beginning That's how I feel every time I stand here Pray for me One more verse Now we're going to pray 1 John chapter 4 Says This is how God showed his love among us He sent his one and only son

Into the world That we might live through him This is love Not that we loved God But that he loved us And sent his son As an atoning sacrifice For our sins As the one who would forgive our sins And that is love So we're going to pray now Lord God we thank you that you are love You're the one from whom all love flows And we thank you that you have showed us How much you have loved us By sending not a card But your son Jesus Into the world So that all who will look in faith to him All who will believe in him Shall not die But shall have eternal life And so we pray That whether we are young Or whether we are old Every one of us We believe in Jesus And know that we have that Everlasting life And we pray all this in Jesus name Amen We're going to sing now And we're going to sing from Mission Praise 988 And the words that are on The screen And we're going to think Now about The Father's love for us And all That Jesus did In going to the cross To take away our sin How deep the Father's love for us How vast beyond all measure That he should give his only son To make a wretch his treasure We're going to read now From God's word And we read from Jonah And chapter 4 Jonah chapter 4 As we Carry on through this study We're not going to finish it today Probably one more Sunday after this one Jonah chapter 4 We'll read in from Verse 10 Of chapter 3 The message of judgment Goes out from Jonah As God gives him That warning message And the people Repent We see in chapter 3 And it says in verse 10 Of chapter 3 When God saw What they did And how they turned From their evil ways He had compassion And did not bring about Them the destruction He had threatened But Jonah was greatly Displeased And became angry He prayed to the Lord O Lord Is this not what I said When I was still at home?

[18:43] This is why I was so quick To flee to Tarshish I knew that you were A gracious and compassionate God Slow to anger And abounding in love A God who relents From sending calamity Now O Lord Take away my life For it is better For me to die Than to live But the Lord replied Have you any right To be angry?

Jonah went out And sat down on At a place East of the city There he made himself A shelter Sacked in its shade And waited to see What would happen To the city Then the Lord Provided a vine And made it grow up Over Jonah To give shade For his head To ease his discomfort And Jonah was very happy About the vine But at dawn The next day God provided a worm Which chewed the vine So that it withered When the sun rose God provided a scorching East wind And the sun Blazed on Jonah's head So that he grew faint He wanted to die And said It will be better For me to die Than to live But God said to Jonah Do you have a right To be angry About the vine?

I do He said I am angry Enough to die But the Lord said You have been concerned About this vine Though you did not Tend it Or make it grow It sprang up Overnight And died overnight But Nineveh Has more than 120,000 people Who cannot tell Their right hand From their left And many cattle As well Should I not be concerned About that great city?

[34 : 04] And Jonah reluctantly was obedient. And through the word that Jonah shared, revival, awakening comes to the city.

There is mass convergence. So as the camera zooms in on the face of Jonah, what expression do you expect to find on his face?

I mean, if God used you and your sermon or your testimony on a fellowship evening of the communion, not just to bring one person to faith in Tarbert, but the whole of the lost cries of Tarbert, if they were all touched and brought to salvation through your testimony, how would you feel?

I think we all expect to find Jonah rejoicing. Well, if we didn't know the story we read, we would think that Jonah would be in awe of the wonder of God's salvation and the privilege that God imparted to him as being an instrument to bring about such revival.

There's nothing that is more joyful in the experience of a preacher than hearing that just one person comes to faith.

[35 : 32] I couldn't care too much if you think my sermons are good or bad. But nothing gives me more joy than to know that God has spoken through something that I've said.

And there is no greater joy than seeing someone come from darkness to light, from sin to salvation through the word that is shared.

And so we would expect that we didn't know Jonah to see joy and to hear rejoicing from his lips, and yet that's not what we see. Chapter 4, verse 1.

But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. And so the first point, there's two points today. The first point is Jonah's anger. And the second point is Jesus' application of how this whole passage impacts on us in the here and now.

But the first point is Jonah's anger. And I want to spend a wee bit of time analysing and thinking through Jonah's anger. What is it that made Jonah angry? Why is he angry?

[36 : 42] Why is he not rejoicing? Why are we finding him on the side of a hill in a deep sulk, raging, looking for a thunderbolt to hit Nineveh? Well, we're given an insight into Jonah's anger in the prayer that he prays.

And we see that in verse 2. So let's look at verse 2. Jonah prayed to the Lord. O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home?

That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.

Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live. Why is Jonah angry? Jonah is angry because of who God is.

And Jonah is angry because of what God has done. Jonah is angry at the character of God. That's the heart of it. Sometimes you'll hear a story about an ex-con, someone who's done awful things in the past and they have been caught and they've been convicted and they've been thrown into prison quite justifiably.

[38 : 08] And when you're in prison after a few years, somebody comes to the prison and they share the gospel with this depraved character who has done so many wrong things. And this sinful character, he hears the gospel and he sees his sin and he's brought to his knees under that weight of conviction.

He then sees Jesus and the opportunity to be saved and cries out in faith and wonderfully is saved and converted.

And there's no shortage of these kind of stories. I know one such man. So that's what happens in the prison. And then the news comes from the prison into the outside world.

And people hear, have you heard about such and such? He's been converted. He's been saved. He's a Christian. And when that news breaks, there'll be two responses.

One response will be to say, praise the Lord. What a wonderful act of grace that the Lord in his grace and love and wonder would reach out and take hold of the likes of him and save him and lift him from the pit of the sin and seek him on the rock of Christ's salvation.

[39 : 25] What a wonderful God. What a blessed story. It's one response. And the second response from some will be, how could the Lord have anything to do with such a sinful man?

Never mind saving. Why would the Lord not just let him rot in prison and then rot in hell? That's the two responses.

And sadly, the second response is the one that we hear from Jonah. Jonah was not praising the Lord for saving wicked Ninole.

Jonah was outraged that God would save and not punish wicked Nineveh. There's four elements to Jonah's anger.

And it's just as the verse flows. Jonah is angry because God is gracious, firstly. What is grace? Grace. Well, grace is when God gives us the blessings that we don't deserve.

[40 : 35] And already we've noted and on our journey through this book we've, on a couple of occasions, looked into other prophets that give us a window into the wickedness of Nineveh and the people of Nineveh.

Nineveh was an evil city. There's no denying it. It was full of pagan people. It was full of violence. It was full of idolatry. What did they deserve? They deserved punishment.

They deserved to be overturned, chapter 3 and verse 1, by God's wrath.

But as Jonah preached about the Lord's coming judgment, the people of Nineveh realized their sin, they saw their wickedness and they repented.

And God showed them grace. God did not destroy this wicked city, but as they turned from their wickedness and looked to him, he saved them.

[41 : 38] He showed them grace. And that made Jonah very angry. Second element to Jonah's anger is God's compassion.

Jonah is angry because God is compassionate. Now what's compassion? Well, compassion is when God comes alongside us in order to rescue us.

Some people confuse compassion with empathy or sympathy. Now sometimes we may see something on the news. A horrific situation in a faraway country and we see the people and we see their struggle and in our hearts we're stirred and we're moved and we're touched by what we see.

We feel empathy. We feel sympathy. We feel for these people. That's empathy. It's not compassion. Compassion is not just to feel, but it's to say I am going to pack my bags and there's something I can do to help and I'm getting on that flight and I'm going to go out there and help.

That's compassion. Compassion is to see the predicament, to see the need and to reach out to those who are in need and that's what God did to Nineveh.

[42 : 52] He saw their sin that came up before him. He saw their wickedness. He saw their lostness and he took hold of Jonah and he used Jonah to not just send a message but go into the heart of that wicked city to come alongside the people to share a message in order that they will be saved and not dying and that brought joy to the streets of Nineveh.

But it brought anger to the heart of Jonah. Jonah is angry because God is compassionate. Jonah is angry because God is gracious.

Jonah is angry because God is slow to anger. Now when we think of anger we tend to think of our own anger don't we? And when we are conscious of our own anger our own anger is something that bubbles up from inside us.

We tend to experience our own anger as a kind of explosive volcanic force. Something happens that we see may happen to us or to someone else and we see it and we're outraged by it and we think upon it and the more we think upon it the more we get a knot in the stomach and it starts to churn and our anger starts to rise we start to stew and as we nurse our anger the more we nurse it the bigger it gets and it gets to a point when it's no longer in there it explodes out everywhere.

That's our fallen anger. But that's not God's anger. God's anger God's wrath to use the word that we have in scripture it is righteous never mistaken because it's all seeing.

[44 : 48] It's just absolutely purely just because God sees not just the situation but he sees the heart and the motivation and God's anger is slow burning if I can put it that way.

it's not explosive and impulsive it's slow burning it's settled and that gives those who are in sin and whose behaviour is the object of God's anger that gives them that gives us the opportunity to repent because God's anger is slow burning.

that gives us the opportunity to seek forgiveness for the sin that God shows us in our own hearts and that's what's going on in the living the anger of God is kindled as he sees all the injustice and the violence and the wickedness that's going on in that city but God's anger is slow burning he sends Jonah Jonah speaks they hear they turn and they are saved and the slowness of God to anger gave Nineveh and it gave heaven such reason to rejoice as hundreds of thousands come into the kingdom but it just made Jonah feliz and we get this ugly picture of Jonah developing as the passage goes on we can just see Jonah fleeing out of the city we've had accounts of when God is at work in a mighty way in revival some of you have experienced something of it what a wonder

what a privilege it would be to be in the heart of a place where God is doing such an amazing work you would never want to leave and yet here we see Jonah in the middle of revival city as the people turn to God through the word that he has been given and he cannot get out fast enough he flees the city fingers in his ears blocking out the hymns blocking out the rejoicing thinking to himself doesn't God see doesn't God see the Ninevites they're not his kind of people doesn't God understand how wicked these people have been for so long doesn't God see a thunderbolt is required for this city I think if Jonah had been commissioned to press the button that sends the nuclear missile into Nineveh he'd have been quite happy to do that but after 40 days the thunderbolt still hasn't come and there's Jonah separate from the city on the side of the hill out to the east increasingly furious because he realises

God had relented in sending calamity and God's slowness to anger frustrated Jonah beyond anything he could bear and yet the irony is it's only because of the slowness of God to anger and the patience of God that he would endure such a sinful ugly prophet it's only because of God's slowness to anger that he would even listen to such a contrary prayer Jonah's angry finally because God is abounding in love and this is just building as these different points stack up one on top of another the grace the compassion the slowness to anger the readiness to relent all of this is testimony to the searching and saving love of God for an undeserving people and all that was just way too much for

[49 : 08] Jonah and so he prays now oh Lord take away my life for it's better for me to die than to live so there's Jonah and there's Jonah's anger in all its ugliness and its bitterness and where does it leave him it leaves him isolated immobilised from service it leaves him sulking out of communion with God and in a bog of self pity wishing he was dead and it's such a tragic picture Jonah 4 is such a sad chapter in many ways it's a tragic picture and yet it's a warning for me and for all of

God's people we may have walked close with God once as Jonah the prophet did we may be used in the most blessed acts of service and ministry as Jonah was and yet we are so vulnerable and the second we let pride in and we think that we are worthy of God's love and there are other retribates in the community who certainly are not how far and how fast we can fall how ugly we can become also the warning here which just occurred to me before we headed out this morning verse 2 chapter 4 which is what we've just been going through what is it it's a confession of faith it's what it is and Jonah is so quick he is so ready with his tongue to confess an orthodox correct sound evangelical faith everything he says is true everything he says about the God he professes to follow is correct and yet it seems here that his heart is utterly disconnected from the

God he professes to know so there's a real warning there for me and for everyone who is a Christian we don't touch at Jonah and point at him and say how awful and horrible it is awful it is horrible but it's possible in us so let us take this as a word of warning in order that we will not slip into the same state so that's the first point Jonah's anger and the second point is Jesus application two weeks ago we noted that Jesus referred to Jonah and one thing that I didn't say last week or two weeks ago is that even in Jesus reference to Jonah he doesn't speak of him as a mythological character he speaks of him as a historical character it's another evidence that we have another reason that we have to believe this is history that's been recorded here yes there's much to learn in spiritual lessons but

Jonah was a real character all that happened to him was really in history and we noted two weeks ago that as Jesus referred to Jonah we are given a warning for those who will not repent on that last day on the day of judgment if we have not repented then the men of Nineveh will stand up and look at us and ask why so there is that warning of judgment but there's also a powerful invitation in this whole passage to receive the amazing grace of God God's grace is amazing and we may be deep in the Old Testament here but this is such a powerful passage about the amazing grace of God we see that in Nineveh but we see that all the more powerfully not in Nineveh but in Calvary and that's where we get propelled forward to as we think about this we see the grace of God at Calvary we see the grace of God not just in the people of Nineveh but we see the grace of God in the mirror if we are

Christians as we consider how God has dealt with us and how God will deal with us so we turn to him today in the light of that cross Jonah says I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God slow to anger and abounding in love have you realised that yet and has it touched your heart and mine I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God slow to anger and abounding in love let's think that one through God is a gracious God the psalm that we sang in psalm 103 and

verse 10 we're we're given a we're given an insight into that it says in psalm 103 verse 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities so let's leave [55 : 28] Nineveh for a second and let's look in the mirror let's look into our own hearts let's think about this God who not only dealt with Nineveh but who is dealing with us as individuals in this place just now what is he saying to us he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities so how does he treat us well he offers forgiveness God offers redemption he offers us peace he offers us joy he offers us eternal life he offers us salvation from sin and hell that's what we're deserving of and he offers to save us from that and to save us into that relationship with him where there is no perishing but there's eternal life and he offers it freely do we deserve it no can we earn it no never and yet it is still offered to us in Christ

God did not treat Nineveh as their sins deserve and God does not treat us as our sins deserve because he treated Jesus as our sins deserve do we see that God does not treat us as our sins deserve because he treated Jesus as our sins deserve God does not repay us according to our iniquities because he repaid Jesus according to our iniquities and that's grace God's riches at Christ's expense Jesus has paid the price

Jesus has taken the punishment Jesus has met the demands of the just God who must see sin punished by standing in the place of punishment for us I read it this morning 2 Corinthians 8 9 you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor that you through his poverty might be rich why because God is gracious and God is compassion I saw a couple of articles recently online about messages that I've washed up on beaches in Harris amazing stories a message that's put in a bottle in the Bahamas and it floats across the oceans and it comes on shore on a beach in

Harris and there's a message that goes across the world across the years and it's picked up and it's opened and it's red it's an amazing story whenever we read of it but there's never any close contact between the one who sends the message and the one who receives it it's very remote it's very distant and that's not how the Lord dealt with Nunavut is it he didn't send a message or a letter but he sent his prophet Jonah personally and that's not how the Lord has dealt with us he didn't send some encrypted message from another realm delivered by a nameless angelic being but we sang it God sent his son they called him Jesus he came to love heal and forgive he lived and died to buy my pardon does that not blow your mind does that not cause us to wake up does that not fill our souls what God has done

I'll always remember the quote I was reminded of it in the course of this week again when Ian D was here and he spoke on that Christmas service about the fact that at one time in a manger in Bethlehem there lay one who was greater than the universe that's beyond our comprehension and yet that's what he did why was he here well he was here on the most breathtaking mission of compassion sometimes we see a situation we see someone who's in need but we hesitate to get involved because we think well if I get involved it's going to get messy it's going to get complicated it's going to be unpleasant so rather than getting involved we withdraw remember the parable of the good Samaritan man is bloodied and he's battered at the side of the road along comes the priest along comes the

[60 : 58] Levite they see the need they see the situation they understand the cost and the unpleasantness and the mess that's involved in reaching out so they walk on along comes the Samaritan he sees the need he understands the cost he understands the implications of it but he has compassion and so he gets on his knees and he picks him up and puts him on his donkey and he attends to his wound soon he shows compassion God sent his son the son came into a world that was sin saturated God himself who cannot bear to look upon sin he came knowingly into that putrid repulsive world of sin he himself who knew no sin became sin for us so that we could become righteous in him why because God is compassion he is gracious he is slow to anger how do we know he's slow to anger simply because we have today and we sit here with breath in our lungs

Jesus could have come back already in all his glory he could have taken already all his people to be with him for all eternity and sent all those who are in rebellion against him or who are detached from him dismissing him and thinking I'll deal with him later he could have come back already and sent all these people who are not taking him and his gospel seriously all those who are resisting him already he could have come and sent him to eternal punishment but he hasn't yet because he is slow to anger Jonah 1 and verse 1 the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it why because it's wickedness has come up before me

still

God sees everything and just as the wickedness of Nineveh came up before God on that day the wickedness of our world our nation our hearts day by day it's coming up before the most holy God we only have to pick up any newspaper any day of the week to see how much as a nation and as a world and as individuals we must grieve God what loving patience causes him to hold back to hold back he's slow to anger like the father in the parable of the prodigal son I'd love to have gone into that and looked at the comparisons today but there's no time father of the prodigal and he's scanning the horizon looking for souls that will come to turn to him looking for his son who was wayward will he come back that's our

God scanning the horizon for those who today will come back to him and how much like the elder brother of Jonah who thought about that who would not receive or rejoice over those whom the father accepted every day our world is given every breath we are granted is another evidence of how slow God is to anger and finally God is abounding in love and we've talked about it with the children Valentine's Day is past the flowers the chocolates they're all tokens of love but they're so pale in comparison to the love that God shows to us in Christ it's an abounding love it's an astonishing love as the

ESV puts it it's a it's a abounding steadfast love not fickle not changeable but steadfast that's the love that God showed to Nineveh and that's the love that God shows to us even more clearly in Christ John 15 13 greater love has no one than this that he laid down his life for his friends you know there's many stories of those who have sacrificed their lives for others and they shouldn't be forgotten and they shouldn't be belittled they're precious they are powerful you know every human being has to die sometime let's thought about that every one of us has to die sometime

[67 : 11] Jesus didn't ever have to die Jesus didn't ever have to die he chose to die and he did it all because God is a bounding in steadfast love and so in any way find salvation in this God and so can you and I so simply come to him the one who shows grace the one who reaches out in compassion the one who is slow to anger and the one who is abounding instead fast love come to him let's pray our heavenly father we do thank you that we are here this morning and you have given us life and you have given us breath and you have given us opportunity to hear the old old story of Jesus and his love we pray that if for any of us this is a familiar story that has lost its impact that by your spirit you would shake us and that you would open our eyes that we would see and with eyes that are open and hearts that are stirred if there are any here this morning who have seen afresh the wonder of the gospel of

Jesus us and hear afresh the call to trust him we pray that today we may hear maybe even of one who will come and who will be saved and we pray this in Jesus name Amen Mission Praise 33 to finish I can imagine the wicked men of Nineveh singing this with great gusto I can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood died he for me who caused his pain for me to him to death pursued amazing love how can it be that thou my God should die for me and I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forever more Amen