

Haunting

Long Beach Alliance Church • August 15th, 2010 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Then the LORD said, “You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”
~Jonah 4:10-11 (NASB)

1) Haunting Questions

- A) When Jonah witnesses God’s compassion and graciousness (Jonah 4:2), he is deeply troubled and angered (4:1). This leads God to ask Jonah three probing questions.
- B) God first asks Jonah if his anger is justified (4:4). Jonah is silent in response to God, choosing to set up camp outside of Nineveh in the hope God will destroy the city (4:5).
- C) God then provides Jonah with an object lesson provided by a plant, a hungry worm, and baking heat (4:6-8).

- D) In the process of both happiness and despondency, Jonah again becomes irrationally angry (4:9), prompting God to ask him a second time if his anger is justified. Jonah answers this time, stating that his anger is justified, begging God to kill him for a second time (4:3 & 4:9).
- E) Rather than kill Jonah, God notes that Jonah looked at a plant with more compassion than on a city full of people, not to mention all the livestock (4:10-11)! These things are certainly more important than the plant!
- F) This leads to God’s final question. Shouldn’t God have compassion on the people (or at least the livestock) of a city who are helpless and do not know God (4:11)?
- G) Suddenly, the story is over, as the book of Jonah stops abruptly with God’s question haunting the reader with its powerful probing of Jonah’s heart.

2) God’s Missional Heart

- A) The final haunting question of Jonah is left hanging so that each of us consider our own answer! In some sense, the question is rhetorical. Should God have compassion? Yes!
- B) But the rub is whether we have God’s heart to reach those who are lost and heading for certain destruction! Are we willing to speak up and proclaim both the bad news of destruction because of sin (Romans 3:23), and the Good News of Jesus Christ’s deliverance (Romans 6:23)?
- C) God’s heart is to reach all people (Genesis 12:3; Matthew 28:19) and receive glory from His people amongst all the nations (Revelation 7:9-10)! The central question of Jonah is whether you and I have that heart! Do we? Do you?!