

Good evening. Open your Bibles to Jonah chapter 4. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Paul Matthies. I'm the membership pastor here at the Village Church. Matt is enjoying a weekend off, and he will be back next week to continue his Ecclesiastes series. For those of you who are familiar with me, I have a growing concern that you have a different impression on stage than if you were to know me off stage. Last week, I was at the gym working out on the treadmill, and the lady beside me and I struck up a very cordial conversation. And about five minutes in, we engaged in the formalities and I asked her what she did for a living and then she returned the favor and asked what I did for a living. And I told her I'm a pastor at the Village Church and she said, "Wait a second. What's your name again?" I said, "Paul Matthies." She said, "Oh yes. As a matter of fact, I have heard your sermon series about being lonely, and then I went on to download your two-part series on being single." And she stopped awkwardly and goes, "You know, you're different than I thought you would be."

And I, thinking she was questioning my integrity, I said, "Well, why is that?" And she said, "Well honestly, after hearing you talk about being single and being lonely, I thought you'd come across as a lot more needy." You've got to love honest people....when they aren't talking. And she's really going to think I'm needy tonight because the topic we're going to be discussing is actually anger at God, and you can actually see the natural progression there from single to lonely to downright angry.

If you would, join me in a word of prayer, "Father, I stand before You today joking about being needy, but in a very real sense tonight, we are all needy. Lord, we need You. And we need to hear from You tonight. And we need Your loving touch, and we need Your presence with us. And we need to be emptied of ourselves and filled with Your Holy Spirit. And Father, I pray tonight that You would reveal to us our poverty in spirit, and in doing so, also reveal to us the depth of the riches of Your son, Jesus Christ. Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to You, oh Lord, my rock and my redeemer. And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Jonah 4:1, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry." Have you ever been angry with God? Have you ever witnessed something or experienced something or heard something or realized something that displeased you so exceedingly that you found yourself angry at God? Maybe it was the loss of a loved one. Perhaps it was or is an illness. Maybe it was something you heard or saw on television, on the evening news. Maybe it was the coworker, who you feel was promoted unfairly over you. Regardless of the circumstance, have you ever found yourself not just frustrated, not just disappointed, not just questioning God, but angry at Him? You know, the book of Jonah is a story that we often tell within the setting of a children's ministry. And some of you may be familiar with its content from attending a Vacation Bible School or through the thematic genius of the Veggie Tales movie. But in reality, this short book is about a prophet who, in 760B.C., during the reign of Jeroboam II, received a clear call from God to leave his nation of Israel and to go to Nineveh and preach to them about their pending judgment by God. Now, Nineveh was one of the largest known cities at the time.

It was the capitol of Assyria, and it was known for its aggressive military tactics as well as for its pagan worship of the fish-god, Dagon and the fish-god, Isnanshi. But Jonah, for reasons of his own, decided not to go to Nineveh, which was located 550 miles northeast of Israel and decided that he was instead going to go to Joppa and board a boat there and head to Tarshish, which was a port city in Spain about 2,500 miles west. So to put this in modern day terms, it was like

a prophet from Dallas receiving a call to Shreveport, Louisiana and buying a one way ticket to San Diego, California and getting as far away as possible. But you probably know the story from here. Jonah boards a boat in Joppa and about mid sea on the Mediterranean, the Lord sends a great storm. And about halfway through this process, the captain and the crew realize that Jonah's disobedience is the cause of this storm and they are forced to throw him overboard in order to calm the sea. At this time, a great fish swallows Jonah, and for three days and three nights, Jonah is within the belly of this great fish until Jonah repents. And upon repenting, Jonah is spit back up on the dry land right back where he started, and he finally travels to Nineveh. And he goes to Nineveh, and he proclaims to them that in forty days unless they repent, God is going to overturn their city. And the king and his people hear about this coming judgment and they decide that they're going to proclaim a fast and they're going to repent that perhaps God might have mercy. So from the greatest to the least of them, they decide to repent and God indeed relents from His anger, and the people are spared. And we find Jonah in chapter 4 angry at God. Now, isn't that interesting that we find this a children's story. Because in its brevity and in its simplicity, the book of Jonah contains some complex and difficult themes, such as the futility of running from God, as well as the call to love and forgive our enemies. Those are difficult topics. And if I had the opportunity tonight, if I had the time, I would take you chapter by chapter, verse by verse to show you the verse of this small book. But I only have one week, and I want to focus on one particular aspect of the book of Jonah tonight. And that is that this book, at its heart, is about a man who is angry at God. And this is not just a light-hearted children's story, this may be the reality for some of you today who find yourselves very much angry at the God and creator of this universe. And I believe that Jonah chapter 4 has much to tell us about how to identify anger at God and confront anger at God.

But in order to start this journey, I think we need to ask the question, "Who was angry?" And the answer to that's quite simple. Jonah, right? But Jonah was what? A prophet and servant of God. Why is that important for us? Well, because some of you may be thinking anger at God is something that the world deals with. That's for the lost. Or maybe you're thinking that's for immature believers, people who are new at their faith. But mature believers, they don't have to deal with anger at God, right? But I believe that Jonah was actually a very mature person of faith. In fact, I think he was more mature than most of us in this room. How could I make that assumption? Well, let's look at several verses and see how Jonah was a prime candidate for ministry. Look at Jonah 1:1, "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." Now, don't miss the importance of this verse. Do you realize that Jonah hears from God? He is able to hear God's voice and respond to God's voice. He has discernment. How many of you are still trying to hear from God and still trying to figure out God's voice for your life? And you may have heard people say things like, "Well, God told me to do this." And you hear pastors say, "When you pray, expect God to speak to you." And some of you are thinking, "I want to hear from God," but you're confused which voice is which, "Is it God, the world, the devil or my voice?" Anybody know what I'm talking about? But Jonah had discernment. He knew how to hear from God.

And not only did he know how to hear from God but in Jonah 3:1-3, it says, "Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD." Did you hear that? Jonah was a man of great courage. And did you notice something? Jonah got it the first time. He learned his lesson the first time, because it says the word of the Lord came to him when? The second time. So Jonah learned his lesson at the second time. How many of us are still trying to learn lessons and God has to teach it over and over and over again? Jonah got his lesson at the second time. And of course you're probably thinking, "Well, Jonah had a great storm and a great fish that kind of helped him get the point. But how many of us have great storms in our life but we still live in denial that God's trying to get our attention through them?"

But Jonah had great courage because he was going to preach to a place that was known for its violence and hatred towards the Israelites. As a matter of fact, if a Jewish man were to enter city, Nineveh was often known for cutting off

their heads and throwing it over the wall. How many of us are afraid to witness to our next door neighbor? I have yet to have a next door neighbor threaten to cut off my head and throw it over the gate. But Jonah faced great danger, and he went to a strange land that was not his own and he proclaimed the message that he was asked to proclaim. He did not have the same fears that some of us are paralyzed by. He was a man of courage.

And not only was he a man of courage, but look in verse 5 of chapter 3, "And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them." Did you hear that? At Jonah's preaching, the entire city repented. He bore great evangelistic fruit. Not only did he have discernment, not only did he have courage, he bore fruit. How many of us are still praying for that one friend to come to Christ? It may be 7, 8, 9, 10 years that we're still praying for an individual and they still haven't come. But Jonah, with message, sees an entire city saved.

And look in Jonah 4:2, "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." Jonah had an accurate knowledge of God's character as revealed in the Scriptures. Jonah had a true knowledge of God. How many of us are in five Bible studies a week trying to comprehend God's character?

So, Jonah was a man of discernment, he was a man of courage, he was a man who bore fruit and he was a man who had a knowledge of the true God. And let me ask you a rhetorical question. If you met somebody who heard God's voice and responded, who courageously proclaimed the truth in difficult circumstances, who bore great evangelistic fruit and had a great knowledge of the character of God as revealed in the Scriptures, what would you do with that person? You would hire him to be your lead pastor. And you would say, "Would you come and teach us the things that you know?" Wouldn't you? So, Jonah is not some laughable character, he is a mature servant of God. Why is this so important that I'm hammering this point? Because we have to understand that regardless of our spiritual maturity, anger at God is something that can reside in any of us. Regardless of where we are, none of us should think that we are too spiritual or above finding ourselves angry at God. Anybody, whether the lost, whether an immature believer, whether a strong believer, even a pastor is subject to falling angry at God. And anger at God is something that we must all safeguard ourselves against, watch for and confront on a regular basis unless we, as servants of God, find ourselves angry at God.

But I think it's important not just to know who was angry at God; it's important to know why Jonah was angry at God. And in Jonah 3:10, we find the answer to why Jonah was angry at God or at least the external circumstance that that left Jonah angry at God. It says this, "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry." It was the repentance of the Ninevites that left Jonah angry. And some of us are thinking, "How could someone be upset at the salvation of an entire city? This is a seemingly good thing that he's upset over. I mean, I have bad circumstances that I'm upset about, but he has a good circumstance. Why is he so upset about the Ninevites repenting?" Well, historians and theologians have tried to offer several surface reasons why Jonah may have been angry at the repentance of the Ninevites, and some people say that he was just flat afraid, that Jonah began with a self-centered fear that ended in selfish anger. That is, he was angry at God for putting his life in danger when he felt that the only lives that should be in danger are the lives of the Ninevites. And so, he was angry at God because it began with fear, he didn't want to go, he rationalized to himself, "I can't go there. They will cut off my head. I am a prophet of Israel. They are a non-prophet organization. They will kill me if I go there." And what began with a self-centered fear resulted in a selfish anger that Jonah's sitting on the bank going, "How could God do that to me? How could He put my life in danger?" But the main problem with this is that nowhere in the text does it say that Jonah was a victim of fear. Jonah was not a fearful man. If anything, if you remember in Jonah chapter 2, the storm is coming on the boat in the sea, and he's asleep in the

boat in the middle of the storm. This is not a guy who walks in much fear. If anything, he's arrogant, he's boastful, he thinks, "I'm God's man for the job. I'm invincible." This man is not someone that wrestled with fear based off the text.

But other people say, "Well, it's not because he was afraid. He was angry at the Ninevites repenting because he was a racist. Jonah was a Jewish supremacist. He believed that the Jewish people were supreme over all other nations, over all other races, and therefore he was upset that they repented because he was racist towards them." And that may be very well true that Jonah had not yet dealt with his racism.

But other people say, "No, Jonah wasn't a racist. He was a patriot. Meaning that at this time, Jeroboam II had re-expanded the borders to the days of Solomon. Because Assyria had just endured a famine and an earthquake. And so, Jonah rationalized to himself, 'If I go and preach to Assyria and they repent, then God might bless them and restore them to political dominance. And I don't want to be known as the traitor who brought about the blessing of God while my own people suffered.'" And so, some people say he was just a patriot.

Other people say, "No, he wasn't afraid, he wasn't a racist, he wasn't a patriot, he ran out of shame. He didn't want to do what he did because of shame. And the reason why is because during this time, Hosea and Amos were also preaching a message of repentance, but they were preaching this message to Israel. And so, Jonah rationalized to himself, 'Well, what would happen if Hosea and Amos preached to Israel but they don't repent but I preach to Assyria and they do repent? How would that really look?' And he, out of shame, could not imagine God trying to teach the Israelis a lesson through the repentance of the Assyrians."

So, people squabble back and forth, "Was it because Jonah was afraid? Because he was a racist? A patriot? Out of shame?" And you know, all of those are sins that need to be confronted in our lives, but I believe that those are merely surface reasons. And I would like to posit tonight that Jonah had a very internal reason. His true anger was rooted in an internal cause, which we find deep with in his heart in Jonah 4:2-3. So, let's read that together, "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.'" Did you hear what Jonah just said? Jonah did not bring up a horizontal relationship with the Ninevites as his main problem or as the main cause of his anger. He brought up that he had a vertical heart relationship with God that went something like this: "I am angry because You are God and I am not. Why can't I be God for once?" He's saying, "God, I know who You are, but I don't like who You are right now. And I know You're a God who is all-knowing and all-loving and compassionate and sovereign, but I don't like the fact that You are God and I am not. And I want to be God for once. And in fact, I would rather die in my anger than to continue living in the truth of who You are." Jonah was angry at God for being God. Have you ever reached a point in your life where you had a sudden realization that God is God, you are not and it left you angry? And that's where we find Jonah, angry at God for being God.

So, that begs the question, "How does a servant of God become angry at God for being God? How does someone who serves God faithfully reach a point where they're upset at God because He is God and they are not?" And I would like to say that, based off the textual observations so far, Jonah's anger at God for being God was not rooted in unbelief. He knew who God was. He had a covenant relationship with Him. Nor was his anger at God for being God rooted in the fact that he was unequipped. Because Jonah had everything he needed to do ministry well, right? He had everything he needed. God had never failed to provide for Jonah. God had never failed Jonah in any way whatsoever. So, the question begs itself, "How then does a servant of God become angry at God for being God?" And I believe that Jonah chapter 4 is going to reveal the real heart issues here. So, let's read the whole chapter and see what those issues are:

*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?"*

Notice how Jonah, in this passage, became angry at God for being God not because of unbelief, not because he was unequipped for ministry but because Jonah was still unrepentant over his selfishness, his pride and his need for control. He had not fully repented of his need to control things, to be selfish and to walk in a spirit of pride. How do I know that Jonah was unrepentant over his selfishness, pride and need for control? Well, let's look at this passage more closely, and let's focus on verses 2-3. And I'm going to read it in a different way to reveal to you Jonah's selfishness. "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." Did you just notice that within the scope of two verses, this brother used eight personal pronouns that centered around himself? Jonah had a sense that God had to make things about him. He had a selfish attitude that said, "God must do things my way." He had incurred a sense of entitlement. He had an attitude that said, "Life is about me, and I would rather die than to live in a world that I am not the center of." And that's called selfishness. And did you notice his "I told you so" attitude in that, his pride in those verses? "I knew it would go this way, God." Have you ever been the type of person that's just waiting for the shoe to drop so you can tell God, "I told you so?" "I knew it was going to turn out like this. I told You, God, that if You would just do my thing, do things my way for once, they wouldn't go so bad all the time." And Jonah had this sense that he knew better than God does. His pride told him that "I think I know better than God." And look in verse 5 to see Jonah's pride. "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." What?!? God has already spared the city, and Jonah, in his pouting anger, sits on the side of the city and thinks, "Well, maybe if I sit here long enough pouting, God will come to His senses and suddenly God will conform His will to my will and conform His desires to my desires." Are any of you sitting around tonight, waiting for God to change His mind and make His desires your desires? Or have we forgotten, as God's people, that the call is to conform our will to His will, not vice versa and that we have been made in the image of God, but some of us are waiting for God to image us. And that's called pride. And Jonah was walking in this attitude that, "Well, maybe God will just one day realize that I know better than He does." Can I tell you something? If tonight you were sitting around, angry at God, waiting for Him to conform His will to your will and waiting for God to forfeit his right to be God, the harsh reality of this text is you're going to die angry, because that's not the way it works.

And Jonah also had a very real sense of control. He had this attitude in verses 6-11 that "I can do things better than God can. Anything God can do, I can do better." And did you notice his strange emotional relationship he has with the plant?

Jonah suddenly starts taking control of this plant. And he says, "This is my life, I left my country and this is my plant. This is my plant. I'm in charge of this plant. I came up with this brilliant idea to petition this plant over my head, so now I'm responsible for this plant. I'm in control of this plant. Have any of you ever reached a point where you felt you could no longer trust God with a certain area of your life, so you fool yourself into thinking that you're taking back control of that? And Jonah has a real control issue tonight because he's thinking, "This is my plant," and God has to come and thump him on the ear and say, "Jonah, you were never in control of it. Why and where did you start believing that you took back control of your life?" But notice Jonah here is pleading his rights. God asks, "Do you do well to be angry?" If you translate the Hebrew, it can also be translated, "Jonah, do you have a right to be angry?" And Jonah says, "I have rights, God. And I have a right to be angry." So sometimes we are those people who, in God's presence, we like to plead our rights and say, "I have God given rights that You can't take away from me, God." But God confronts Jonah in the middle of his control problems, and He asks him a question that can be summed up like this, "Jonah, what about My rights to be God? Don't I have a fundamental and necessary right to be God over the universe? What about your rights? I have a right to be God, and you have a right to worship and obey Me, the God of this universe, who controls all things and cares for all things. So, if you're going to assert anybody's rights, why don't you start talking about My right to be God?" But Jonah failed to be what the Bible calls "a man after God's own heart." That is, he failed to be someone whose desires were conforming to God's desires and who understood that the call of the believer is to conform our will to God's will, not vice versa. And he leaves himself angry.

Now, have you noticed tonight that the book of Jonah just kind of ends? It just kind of stops. And some of us are asking ourselves, "What happens? What's the moral of the story? Does it keep going? Does Jonah repent?" And you know what? I think God, in His wisdom and in His humor, has ended the book really roughly so that we would quit looking at Jonah and then turn attention to ourselves. You see, we don't see what happens to Jonah because now the question is turned toward us. How are we going to respond to the book of Jonah? How are we going to respond to this message of a gracious God? How are we going to respond to the message that we need to repent of our pride, of our selfishness and of our control? And I would like to posit tonight that some of you, unbeliever, mature believer, regardless of where you're at in your spiritual journey, tonight some of you are harboring anger at God for being God. And regardless of the external circumstance that brought this about, I believe and even dare to say that much of that anger is rooted in the fact that you have realized that God is God and you are not, and you want to hold on to your pride and your selfishness and your need for control. And tonight, the message of Jonah is if that's you, you need to repent. And you need to recognize and honor God's fundamental right to be God, and you need to surrender to Him tonight. And I want us to consider this quote from C.S. Lewis from "Mere Christianity" to help us as we think about repenting. And it says this:

*Now what was the sort of "hole" man had got himself into? He had tried to set up on his own, to behave as if he belonged to himself. In other words, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor—that is the only way out of a "hole." This process of surrender—this movement full speed astern is what Christians call repentance. Now repentance is no fun at all. It is something much harder than merely eating humble pie. It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death. In fact, it needs a good man to repent. And here comes the catch. Only a bad person needs to repent; only a good person can repent perfectly. The worse you are the more you need it and the less you can do it. The only person who could do it perfectly would be a perfect person, and he would not need it.*

And I want to note two things from this quote that are very important. Did you notice that he said, "this process of surrender is called repentance?" Repentance is a process. Surrender is a process. And some of you tonight, I believe, need to start to start that process of repentance. Some of you have never heard, like the Ninevites, that you are in danger

of eternal judgment. And tonight, you need to respond to the gracious saving message of God. But then there are others of you tonight that I believe are mature believers that are harboring anger towards God, and you need to continue the process of repenting of your pride and your selfishness and your need for control. And tonight I believe that the Holy Spirit is revealing to you areas of your heart that you have not yet surrendered. And you need to not harden your hearts to this, but you need to ask the Lord to help you repent.

And here's a second observation. Surrender is not something you can do on your own. We all need help. Repentance is not something we do ourselves, but we must ask God's help and we must cling to the work of Christ within our hearts. And I want us to consider this next quote from C.S. Lewis, again from "Mere Christianity:"

*But supposing God became a man. Suppose our human nature which can suffer and die was amalgamated with God's nature in one person. Then that person could help us. He could surrender His will, and suffer and die, because He was man; and He could do it perfectly because He was God. You and I can go through this process only if God does it in us; but God can do it only if He becomes man. Our attempts at this dying will succeed only if we men share in God's dying, just as our thinking can succeed only because it is a drop out of the ocean of His intelligence: but we cannot share God's dying unless God dies; and He cannot die except by being a man. That is the sense in which He pays our debt, and suffers for us what He Himself need not suffer at all.*

And tonight, I believe that God is a God of grace, God is a loving God and God has sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to do that which we cannot do ourselves and that's live a perfectly surrendered life to God. And I believe tonight that God wants to extend His grace to two different distinct audiences. The first of which are you, who are like the Ninevites, who have never before encountered God's love, and God wants to save you tonight. And like Nineveh, you've never heard about God's plan of repentance and trust in Jesus Christ. And right now, the Scriptures are going to tell you that if that's you, you never knew you were in danger of eternal judgment, the Scriptures say very clearly that if you're not in right standing with God through Jesus Christ, you are in danger of eternal punishment. And you need to repent, and you need to turn towards God and believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. And you like the Ninevites need the peace that comes from being in right standing with God. You see, God's Son has absorbed the punishment for our sins. The punishment that belongs to you, He takes upon Himself whenever you place your trust in Him. And tonight, God wants to extend His saving grace and help you to place your trust in Jesus Christ. And that you may agree with Romans 5:1 that says, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And again in Ephesians 2:13 that says, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." And tonight, you, if you place your trust in Jesus Christ, are like those Ninevites who were afar off from God but upon repenting, became part of His family. And tonight, you have the opportunity to become part of the family of God.

But there's another audience tonight that I believe needs an extension of Grace, and that's those of you who are believers in Christ yet find yourselves angry at God for being God, and like Jonah, you have failed to recognize and worship God for His right to be God. And you are in need of what the Bible would call "sanctifying grace" to conform your will to God's will. But you know, sometimes as American Christians, we like to talk about our rights. We like to go before God and say, "I have a right to vote, I have a right to bear arms and I have a right to free speech." Well guess what? The kingdom of God is not a democracy. And sometimes when relating to God, we don't have the right to free speech, we don't have the right to bear arms and we don't have the right to vote. All we have the right to do is to lay down our weapons, remain silent and surrender to our king. Because the kingdom of God is not a democracy, it's a monarchy that's run by our king, Jesus, and America is not the only nation that God desires to bless. And tonight, God is telling you, "Put down your weapons, remain silent and you don't get a vote, because I'm God and you're not." And I would encourage you to pray over Romans 12:2 that says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

And tonight, you need to continue or begin the process of, as Lewis said, “unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will” that has been trained within you. And tonight, you need to consider how you need to change your desires and conform your desires, with God’s help, to His desires and His will, and you need to repent of your selfishness and your pride and your need for control. Church, tonight we might all believe in God, we might all be equipped for ministry and we may be serving here every weekend, but the question at the end of the day is, “So what? Are you a person after God’s own heart?” And if you find yourself being convicted that your desires, your waiting for God to conform His will to your will, then I would pray that you would also pray according to Ezekiel 11:19 that says, “And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.” Tonight, is your heart hardened? Are you still unrepentant? I pray that tonight it would be said of you by the end of the day what is said of David in Acts 13:22, “After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’” Are you that type of person tonight, and if not, why not? And the question is, “At the end of the book of Jonah, we leave Jonah angry. Will you be left angry?”

Let us pray, “Father, I am grateful that, according to Hebrews 4:16, it says that we can approach the throne of grace and ask for grace and mercy in our time of need. And Father, tonight there are two audiences, two types of people tonight who need Your grace. And the first of which, Lord, are those in this room tonight who need to experience Your saving grace. Maybe they have not realized that they’re in danger of eternal judgment, and maybe they’ve never heard about Your plan of forgiveness and how Your Son has absorbed the punishment that belongs to us. And Father, I pray tonight that they would encounter Your saving grace. Father, remove their hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh to be at right standing with You, to be at peace with You through the blood of Jesus Christ. Lord, save Your children tonight. And Father, the other group tonight is those of us who find ourselves angry at You, and we are in need of sanctifying grace. And Lord, we are asking You tonight to conform our will to Your will. Father, we are tired of doing things our own way. And Father, we are sorry that somewhere along the way, we started believing the lies that You have to do things our way, that we know better than You and that we think we can do things better than You. But Father, we’re here tonight to ask You to sanctify our hearts through Your grace that we might honor and recognize and worship Your fundamental right to be God of this universe. And so Lord, sanctify Your people in the truth tonight. Father, thank You this isn’t something we can do on our own, but that You have not left us on our own but through Christ Jesus, You can work in us that which is most pleasing to You. And Father, we ask this tonight and believe for this in the name of Jesus. Amen.”