**Jonah 4:1-6 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2So he prayed to the Lord, and said, “Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for *it is* better for me to die than to live!” 4Then the Lord said, “*Is it* right for you to be angry?” 5So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. 6And the Lord God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.**

We’re in Jonah 4 tonight. As we left Jonah last week, recall that the people of Nineveh had repented. Jonah 3:10 says *Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.* The people truly repented, turned from their evil ways. No one fools God. We can say what we want to say and we might even act a certain way for a little while, but God is not mocked – Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.* Remember with me what God told Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7 *But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* God had seen hearts change, works that reflected that change and we know that He relented, but only after the people repented.

In verse 1, we read - *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.*This verse must be read that Jonah was enraged! Not that he was miffed or exasperated, but he was enraged – the Hebrew word used for angry means incensed, burning with rage! God just showed mercy to a city of thousands and Jonah is enraged. Many years ago, I had a professor for The Philosophy in English Literature. He’d stir us up and get everyone to arguing but, if someone stepped over the line and became disrespectful, he’d say, “You forget yourself sir!” or “You forget yourself madam!” It occurred to me that Jonah forgot himself. I’ve forgotten myself sometimes when I let things of this world get beside me and under my skin. I say things without thinking or make little inconveniences into mountains. I know you all never do that, but I must admit… I have been Jonah in my lifetime.

Verse 2 *So he prayed to the Lord, and said, “Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.*The word prayed has the idea of judging God. Jonah is taking up a position of judging God’s actions against what his expectations were. He is not praying in reverent prayer. Remember, he is enraged - “I knew this was how it would all happen! That’s why I disobeyed You in the first place God.” We hear him making excuses for his disobedience – wondering why God brought him all this way just to have this happen. Several theologians used the comparison of a petulant child talking to a parent. Yet, he knows that the God he is talking to is slow to anger, merciful, gracious, abundant in loving kindness. The very God that has the power to destroy this city, trouble the ocean, command great fish is hearing from an enraged child… who has indeed forgotten himself.

Verse 3 *Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!”*Jonah prays that God will literally take the breath out of him, thinking it better to die than to live. But we still hear the child here. When Patrick was in second grade, he picked up a saying from his mother. When something went wrong, she’d say, “Oh, somebody just kill me now.” One afternoon in school, he got back a bad grade. The teacher overheard him say – Oh, somebody just kill me now. She called the house and asked if I thought he should see a counselor. Children sometimes say things – tired children say things – distraught children say things – God knows that. Elijah in 1 Kings 19:4 says *But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!”* After defeating the Baals, after ending the drought, Elijah journey’s into the wilderness after Jezebel says she’ll kill him. God sent angels to minister to His tired, irksome child. God knows what we need.

Verse 4 *Then the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?”*In the KJV, it reads – Doest thou well to be angry? The loving Father is teaching His child. This is what parenting gurus and business experts call – a teachable moment. God is getting ready to provide a lesson to Jonah on what is truly valuable. God provides us with teachable moments all the time. Someone calls and says something we don’t like, someone doesn’t respond the way we think they ought to, someone doesn’t rearrange life based on our expectations and we become angry – God asks, “Doest thou well to be angry?” Didn’t I tell you to forgive? Didn’t I instruct against judgement? Doest thou well?

Verse 5 *So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.*Nineveh, being between two rivers in Mesopotamia, would have been very hot and humid in the summers. It was located in modern day Iraq. Desert nights would be very cold. We don’t know how long all this took. Likely, it didn’t happen overnight. So Jonah built himself a shelter… a little hut… on the east side and settled down to see if God might yet destroy the city.

Recall that Jonah, in verse 2 said, “*Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country?”* I found it an interesting exercise to see that Jonah claimed he knew just exactly what God would do from the comfort of his own city in verse 2, but now settles in to wait and see in verse 5 what will become of the city. We never know how God will work things out for His glory. We can make that claim, but God is infinite. What seems like the worst thing that could possibly happen often works out for our very best. Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* All things work together, even the seemingly not good things, even the things that make us mad, all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Jonah is a man called to God’s purpose. Romans 8:28 doesn’t say everything will work for our good and make us happy… they will work for good. Nineveh eventually becomes the capitol city of the Assyrian empire that God uses to reach His people

Verse 6 *And the Lord God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.* Our God, the God that Jonah was enraged at, judging His actions – causes a plant to come up and cast shade for Jonah’s head. As God is showing mercy on the people of Nineveh, He is showing mercy for Jonah. Look at that last line there – So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. Jonah was not grateful that God delivered thousands from death, but he sure did appreciate the plant that cast shade on his head.

Many times, we are like that too. Grateful for things and stuff, while people around us are heading to hell. Let’s be reminded tonight what is valuable. Luke 15:7 *I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.* Heaven rejoices when a sinner is saved. For a sinner to be saved, the Seed of God’s word must take root. For the Seed to take root, the soil must be prepared. Let’s pray that God will prepare the soil of people’s hearts so the Seed may take root and the fruit of Christ’s salvation will come to America like it did to Nineveh all those years ago.