**Jonah 4:6-11 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. 7But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it *so* damaged the plant that it withered. 8And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah’s head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, “*It is* better for me to die than to live.” 9Then God said to Jonah, “*Is it* right for you to be angry about the plant?” And he said, “*It is right* for me to be angry, even to death!” 10But the Lord said, “You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. 11And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?”**

We’re back with Jonah tonight and we’re finishing this wonderful book of God’s word. We left Jonah back on December 13th, sulking. Remember in verse 4 that God asks – Doest thou well to be angry? Is it right Jonah that you are angry? Should you be angry Jonah? Has God ever had to ask such a question with you? I know He has with me. When I get mad and stomp my foot, fold my arms over my chest, and sulk. I must admit – Lord, I don’t doeth well to be angry… I doest better when I forgive and go beyond my self and seek your Spirit.

Recall with me that we left Jonah sitting in the shade of a plant God caused to grow. 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, the God that Jonah was judging – causes a plant to come up and cast merciful shade for Jonah’s head – to deliver Jonah from his misery. Even as God is showing mercy on the people of Nineveh – who, we will later hear don’t know their right hand from their left – are ignorant - He is also showing mercy for Jonah. It says, *So Jonah was very grateful for the plant*. Jonah was not grateful that God delivered thousands from death, but he sure did appreciate that gourd plant that cast shade on his head.

We too get caught up in self. Jesus says in Luke 6:27-28 - *“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.* In Luke 6:35-36 Jesus continues - *But love your enemies, do good, and lend hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.* Jonah witnessed this. I’d doest well to remember this better.

Verse 7 *But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered.*The next morning, God sent a worm – a maggot the Hebrew says that it was a maggot used to in crimson dye – a scarlet worm – and it smote the plant – it damaged it do that it died. Like Jonah expected God to smite Nineveh, so that it would die, the worm smote the plant. Sometimes, God takes our comfort because it’s blocking our view of Him. We must be careful of comfort that we not allow it to block out the Light Christ is shining. We would do well to never allow the shade of our comfort to block the Light of our Savior.

Verse 8 *And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah’s head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”* The plant, that in verse 6, we read shaded Jonah’s head to deliver him from his misery is withered… and the heat of the sun beat down upon Jonah’s head and he is miserable – so much so that he wishes for death for himself. This isn’t the first time that Jonah wished this – In verse 3 he said - *Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!”* God and His child. God and His tired, angry child. How like a loving parent this scene.

In verse 3 Jonah wished for death and in verse 4 God responded, *Then the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?”* But, we never see Jonah answer God. Now in verse 8, Jonah wishes for death again because something has happened that he doesn’t agree with. Listen with me to verse 9… this should not be lost on us… this should sound very, very familiar… *Then God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”* Jonah didn’t complete the lesson in verses 3 & 4. God gives him another chance. Just as God gave Jonah a second chance when he cried from the belly of the fish. Our God is such a patient, loving Teacher… filled with kindness and mercy.

Listen to Jonah’s response - *And he said, “It is right for me to be angry, even to death!”* Any of us that have raised children understand. This is Jonah’s version of “I don’t love you anymore!” to His Father in heaven.

And now, God the loving, merciful Father gives the lesson to His blurry eyed child – the lesson that was available in verses 3 & 4. Verse 10 *But the Lord said, “You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night.*God says – you have compassion for the gourd plant but not for the people. In our world today, God is saying – you have compassion for the puppies, but not for the babies. God is saying – your priorities are messed up! You worship treasure on earth and not treasure in heaven! I give you everything and it becomes the focus rather than the Giver of everything becoming the focus.

God tells us – get your eyes off the gourd and get your eyes on God! See what is important. The things of this world are withering and dying. Don’t invest in that. Invest in the lost – invest in that person who can’t discern the right hand from the left. Listen to verse 11 *And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?”* God gives us an object lesson that Jesus will hammer home in Luke 6:19*-*21 *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal (that’s the gourd); but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal(saving lost souls, serving God). For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* God expected, demanded that Jonah value people over that silly plant. God demands we value people over the distractions of this world.

In 2021, our Merciful Father is preparing the soil of hearts. He’s searching for those who will go and sow the seed. He’s seeking those who will water the seed. He wants to send laborers into the fields that are white unto the harvest. The question is – are we enjoying the shade or are we seeking His Light? Let’s pray that the God of Light never finds us worshipping the shade.