

Sermon—June 21st-22nd, 1997
Major Lessons from the Minor Prophets
Jonah 3 & 4

Rich Nathan

The Problems We Have With God

Over the last several weeks we've been going through the minor prophets in a series that I've called "Major Lessons from the Minor Prophets." For those of you who haven't been here I need to tell you that the reason that certain books in the Old Testament are called minor, as in the minor prophets, is not because they are messages insignificant or not worth considering. The prophets are called minor because the book length is shorter than the major prophets. The major prophets in the Old Testament are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Now, I have frequently commented here at church about one of the reasons why I so appreciate, in fact, I love the Bible, is because of its brutal honesty, its extraordinary realism. People who are not acquainted with the Bible expect to find a heavy dose of sentimentality, and syrupy, simplistic answers for all of life's problems. They expect everything to be like a situation comedy in which all the problems are neatly tied up in a half hour. But the first thing someone notices when they actually begin reading the Bible is how real, how authentic, how absolutely genuine the folks are. They are so candid in their emotions, so frank in their relationships, so much like us. One of the places we do not expect to find genuineness and reality is in people's relationships with God. Oh, maybe we'll find some authentic expression as people relate to their children or as they relate to their work. But surely, everyone in the Bible is going to have this wonderful, faith-filled, consistent relationship with God without anger, without frustration, without doubts. After

all, the Bible is called God's Word and surely God is going to sanitize it. Get rid of all the messy parts so He always looks good and all of His people look good.

The thing that I have grown to love about the Bible is that there is no effort at covering-up or sanitizing, there's no revisionist history, no pretending that a person's motives were other than they were. We've been looking at the story of Jonah for the last several weeks and what you see in Jonah's relationship with God is wonderfully constructive and illustrative of our own relationship with God because there is just so much confusion and frustration and emotional contradiction in the way that Jonah relates to God. He starts off running from God. God commissions him to preach to Nineveh and Jonah runs away. Then, Jonah is caught and he begs for mercy and God shows him mercy. So he celebrates that and praises God, and then for a while he obeys God and does what God wants. And then he becomes angry with God and discouraged. Ever know anyone who has a set of conflicting and contradictory emotions toward God? Ever meet somebody who relates one way and then switches gears and relates totally opposite, as it pertains to God?

Frederick Beuchner tells a story of a boy who, at least according to newspaper reports, was about 12 or 13 years old and who in a fit of anger and depression got hold of a gun somewhere and fired it at his own father several times. His father did not die right away but did die shortly after he was shot by his son. When the police asked the boy why he had done it, he said it was because he could not stand his father, because his father always demanded too much of him, because his father was always on him and after him, because he hated his father. That night, after the boy was placed in a juvenile detention home, a guard was walking down the corridor late in the evening and he heard sounds from the boy's room. As he stopped to listen by the door, what the guard heard from the door is this boy crying and saying, "I want my father! I want my father!"

This story is a parable of life in this world. Modern society is like that boy. We've tried everything we can to get rid of God. We no longer talk about Him in school. God is no longer a serious subject of discussion in any university. He's no longer seen as the answer to the philosopher's questions in philosophy class or the basis of the origin of the universe in biology class. Television shows and movies pretend God is absent. He's treated as an anachronism, some throw-back to the Middle Ages. People who take God seriously are all Neanderthals, bigots, right-wing fanatics. Like that boy with the gun, the modern world has announced, loud and clear, that we hate our Father's restrictions and His rules. We hate, especially, His rules about sexual morality. But at night, when we're in the detention center and we're all alone, there is this wild, aching, empty cry inside our hearts, "I want my Father! I want my Father!"

You can hear those cries when you listen to a lot of rock music. You can see the sobs when you walk through a modern art gallery, in most modern literature and poetry, in theatre: "I want my Daddy!" Bertrand Russell, the great philosopher and mathematician, who, in this century, has written so much in defense of atheism, wrote a book called, *Why I am not a Christian*. In one of his really honest moments he said, "In the center of me is always an eternally terrible pain, a curious, wild pain, a searching for something beyond what the world contains." The atheist philosopher misses his Father. There is this incredible set of contradictory emotions and actions as each one of us tries to come to grips with God. This morning we're going to look at our conflicting feelings through the eyes of Jonah. I've called today's talk, very simply, "The Problems We Have With God". Let's Pray.

Now, some of you might be saying, "Well, I don't have any problems with God. I mean, I don't have these conflicting emotions. I don't bounce all over." I think there are some things that I would call symptoms of underlying difficulties you might have with God.

The first symptom that reveals an underlying problem you might have with God is that you sometimes see situations or people as hopeless. I want you to look with me at Jonah 3:3. It says, “Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city; a visit required three days. On the first day Jonah started into the city, he proclaimed: ‘Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned’.”

Now at this point I think that it would be very easy to say the situation in Nineveh is hopeless. The prophet has come to announce God’s judgement on a very wicked city. I described to you from historical records, a few weeks ago, the qualities in the city of Nineveh. It was a very violent place. Nineveh was known for its ruthless treatment of slaves that they captured in battle from other nations. The king of Nineveh, for sport, used to cut people up. You might compare Nineveh to a violent city in the United States these days where all the infrastructure is collapsing, crime rates are very high, where the majority of kids are being raised without their fathers, the education is substandard, a significant percentage of people are unemployed and on welfare and have no job skills, heroes are people like Dennis Rodman and Howard Stern and gangster rap singers. We look at situations in this country saying, “They’re hopeless, nothing can really turn around these places.”

You can have those same feelings as you look at other countries - Islamic countries that prohibit Christian conversion and witnessing at the price of death; Iran, much of the middle east, and Asian countries where there is extraordinary oppression of women; great poverty that exists in much of the world; or the seemingly eternal conflicts that exist between ethnic groups in certain areas, in Israel, in the former Yugoslavia, in parts of Africa, in Northern Ireland - you can look at these places and say they are hopeless. Certainly, spiritually we frequently come upon people that seem so far from God. We’ve talked with

that person, we've prayed, we've tried to share our faith, sometimes over years. We've invited or maybe they've been to church and they've heard incredible sermons, they've listened to great speakers—maybe they've even been dragged down to Billy Graham, and yet there is no real change. Do you look at the conversion of a country or a city or a person as hopeless? Then you have a problem with God!

Maybe it's not a city or country, but a person's conversion in your life that makes you say, "This person is hopeless!" They'll never change – in our marriage, in their show of affection, in their work habits. One of our fundamental problems as it concerns God is that we don't believe He is as powerful and as much in control as the Bible says He is. We don't believe that in a moment He can take a seemingly hopeless situation or hopeless person and inject hope.

Look at verse 5. It says, "The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.'"

What you see in these verses is the big miracle in the book of Jonah. The great miracle in Jonah is not Jonah's escape from a big fish. It is the rapid, almost instantaneous, mass conversion of a huge city. You may not realize this, but Nineveh, in its day, was one of the largest cities in the ancient world. It was a city of about 600,000-700,000 people. It was about the size of Columbus. And it says, "The whole city, from the greatest to the least, put

on sackcloth.” Think about that. Imagine a whole city, the size of Columbus, every single person getting on their faces before God and repenting. This is one of the things that Bible scholars find to be impossible to believe in the book of Jonah. A lot of the difficulty with the truth of the historicity of the book of Jonah is not the fish, but the notion that this many people would turn to God. I would have the same problem except I’ve read the history of miraculous, spontaneous revivals breaking out. We find the same thing happening all over the world that we read here that took place in Nineveh. Let me give you just one example.

There are probably not many of you who are familiar with what’s been called The Layman’s Prayer Revival that took place in 1857-58 here in the United States and then a couple years later spread to Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England. Right before the Civil War was a time of church decline. Lots of people were leaving the churches. Things seemed spiritually dead throughout the country. There was a rise of occult practices. People were practicing spiritualism and seances. Gambling was spreading, as was alcoholism. There was an enormous amount of political corruption, bribes, grafts. Illegal business practices were the common course of dealing in the United States. Of course, the country still had legalized slavery. One writer said that atheism, apathy, and indifference to God characterized the United States.

A business man decided to sponsor a little prayer meeting down on Wall Street in New York City. The YMCA had previously tried to start a prayer meeting in the same area, but they cancelled it due to lack of participation. Anyway, at the end of September in 1857, three men met for prayer. The next week 20 men showed up. The following week, at the beginning of October, 40 came. They decided to meet daily. Now listen to this, within two months the building they were meeting in, all three floors, became packed daily with prayers. Over 3,000 people showed up everyday to pray, to ask God for revival. They started to rent

out theatres across New York. Soon they had 20 theatres packed out for daily prayer. The same spontaneous prayer revival took place in Philadelphia and Boston. Throughout the whole Northeast churches were packed day after day. Church historians estimate that between a half million and a million new converts were swept into the church between the end of 1857 and the summer of 1858. What's even more amazing was there were no great preachers attached to this great revival—no Billy Grahams, no Billy Sundays, no Dwight Moodys. Just some lay people praying and sharing their testimonies. Now, I could multiply this example in both this country and overseas by the dozens looking back over history. My point is that the miracle that took place in Nineveh has been repeated over and over again.

Every time we look at a situation that we deem hopeless, we are revealing our lack of faith in God's power and God's control. Do you know that God frequently prepares a nation or a person for conversion? He sets things up through certain non-miraculous events in order to bring about conversion at just the right moment. Let me explain what I mean. In 765 B.C., a plague struck the city of Nineveh. Thousands of people died. Two years later, in 763, Nineveh experienced a total eclipse of the sun, which in the ancient world was considered a dangerous omen. A few years after that another plague hit the city. Then, after all this stress and pressure put on the society, after God had shaken it a few times, He sends His prophet, Jonah. Do you think the people, after being shaken so hard, might be open to what Jonah had to say? God has a way of blasting people and blasting situations and blasting cities and nations out of their ruts.

I told you about The Layman's Prayer Revival that swept in a million people, but do you know that God prepared the ground before this revival hit? What I didn't tell you was that right before this little prayer meeting was called on Wall Street, there had been a terrible economic collapse. Thousands of businessmen all over the Northeast were forced to sell

everything. Banks failed, railroads went into bankruptcy, factories shut down, tens of thousands of people were unemployed. New York City alone was said to have as many as 30,000-50,000 suddenly unemployed men. In just the course of a few weeks, they were all thrown out of work. European investors pulled their money out of our treasury notes; there was a crop failure in the West. God was shaking America out of its spiritual apathy! And even in the last fifteen years we can point to country after country on the globe that has been shaken by Sovereign God and in a moment He has completely reversed a spiritually hopeless situation.

Argentina, after the Falklands War and the humiliating defeat of the British, has experienced one of the greatest revivals in modern history. The church there has added millions of new converts. Uganda, after Idi Amin. Guatemala, after the terrible earthquake 15 years ago. What we see at a national level, I would suggest to you, is often seen on an individual and personal level. The hardest person, the biggest agnostic and atheist can be shaken by Sovereign God. There is no nut too hard for God to crack. He might allow an illness, financial failure, a divorce and suddenly, after years of hardness, a person is prepared to receive Christ. It is absolutely the case, friends, that most people turn to God because they've run out of their own resources. What situation do you consider hopeless? What person? Remember this: there is no nut too hard for God to crack. Trust in God's power and mercy.

The second symptom that I see that points out problems that we might have with God is passivity. As we look at situations and people, our own marriages, our health, our relationships, our careers, many people lay down and die, revealing that they don't believe in God's commitment to interact with us and actually change His actions based on what we do. This pagan king believed in God better than many Christians believe in God. In verse 9 the

pagan king says, “Who knows? God may yet relent [literally, may yet repent] and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” And in verse 10 it says, “When God had seen what they had done He had compassion on them.” The New International Version is really weak here, again, it is better translated “God repented of the evil He had planned”. The word repent is used many times, not to describe us, but to describe God. God, of course, never sins, so he is not repenting of a sin, but he does choose to change his announced actions.

A biblical scholar, Abraham Heschel, in his book titled *The Prophets*, said, “No word of God is a final word. Judgment far from being absolute is conditional. A change in man’s conduct brings about a change in God’s conduct.” We need to understand that God in His person is not changeable. James 1:17 says, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” Malachi 3:6 says, “I the Lord do not change.”

Concerning God’s person, He never changes. Concerning God’s purposes, they never change. Ephesians 1:9 says, “And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” God’s purpose to save, God’s purpose to set people free, God’s purpose to rescue never changes. God never changes His person. He never changes His purpose. He never changes His mind.

We change our minds all the time. We change our mind because we find out we’re wrong. Some new information comes across our radar screen and we say, “Oops! Boy, I blew that idea. I blew that decision. I had better change my mind!” We change our minds because we meet resistance. We’re planning to do something and we get some opposition--

we're going to punish our kids and they start to whine, so we say, "Well, I don't really want them to not like me. I want to be seen as a nice parent. I'm afraid of my kid pouting, so I better back down." We change our minds because we don't have enough resource. We have big plans to add onto our house, to buy a new car, to expand our business, to hire someone, and then we find our cash predictions were widely optimistic and we need to scale back. We're going to have a simpler family vacation this year or none at all.

We change our minds because we just chicken out. Big talk when we're away from a person that we are going to challenge or confront – a roommate or a coworker - but when we're in the person's presence, we're big chickens. Do you understand that God never has any of the problems that we have? God never chickens out. He is never without sufficient resource to pull off His plans. He never learns some new bit of information that causes Him to change course. God is always the same and He is always the same toward sin.

Whatever else you think about God you need to underline this in your mind: God never gets used to your sin or my sin—He always hates it, He is always opposed to it, He is always unalterably and unchangeably against our sin! He hates what our sin does to us. He always wants to set us free. He always wants to release us from bondage and guilt and death that sin brings. God always judges sin and whenever a nation or a person repeatedly, grossly, unrepentantly sins over a period of time God announces judgement. But if the nation repents, if the city repents, if the individual repents, God in His mercy lifts His sentence of judgement. Read Jeremiah 18:7-10.

Let me try to pull this together for you in your mind. One of the problems we have with God is that we misunderstand the effect we have on God's actions. We don't change God's person. We can't change God's purposes. We can't get God to change His mind, but we can cause God to change His actions depending on what we do.

The repentance of God means the change of God from His announced actions to a different set of actions because of some change in us. So many people have a problem with God because they say, “God is so much above us, so much beyond us. How can someone as insignificant and small as me have any effect on someone as big and powerful as God?” There is nothing more defeating, more designed to produce apathy and passivity than the view that it doesn’t really matter what you do—it doesn’t really matter if you pray or not, it doesn’t really matter if you repent or not, it doesn’t really matter if you witness or not. God will do the same thing He was planning to do anyway.

If the Bible teaches us anything, it teaches us that what we do matters to God. The Bible reveals a God who condescends to interact with human beings so that what we do has a real effect on His activity. The Bible shows us that God does what He, otherwise, would not have done because somebody prayed or somebody preached or somebody repented. God saved Lot from Sodom because Abraham prayed. God saved Israel because Moses prayed. I want you to see this, because I think one of the biggest problems people have with God is that they misunderstand the effect they have on God’s actions—“Oh, it doesn’t matter if I read the paper in the morning or pray, doesn’t matter if I share the Gospel or not, doesn’t matter if I get rid of this particular sin or not, it doesn’t matter if I tithe or buy some new clothes with my paycheck.

Turn with me real quickly to Isaiah 38. It says, “In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, ‘This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.’” You got the scene? Hezekiah is sick. He is deathly ill. He is flat on his back. The prophet who has never missed a word, never been wrong, a true prophet of God says, “Put your house in order, you’re going to die, you’ll never recover.” What would you do?

Make sure your legal affairs are in order? Make sure your life insurance premiums are paid up? And wait to die.

Look at what Hezekiah did. It says, “Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, ‘Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly.” And here is God’s response to Hezekiah’s action: “Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: ‘Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life.’” He prayed, God heard him and added fifteen years to his life.

There are people in this congregation who are alive today because they didn’t take the doctor’s word as the final word, but they prayed and God spared them. You know, your prayer is the biggest way you affect the activity of God on this planet. There are some people who are not healed because you and I walk away from the opportunity to pray. God is moved by every prayer you pray for your kids, for the salvation of someone you love, for the church, for this country, for your school, for your workplace, for missionaries. Don’t get me wrong, there is a time to die. There is a time to accept God’s answer of “no.” There comes a point of acquiescence, where you feel like you’ve heard a divine “no,” but before that time any passivity that you have towards God reveals that you don’t believe in Him as you should and you don’t understand the way He has designed this universe.

Here’s a third and last symptom of problems we have with God, that is, anger toward the Lord. You really see the biblical realism come out in Jonah 4:1-4. It says, “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? That is why I was so quick to flee 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.’ But the Lord replied, ‘Have you any right to be angry?’” Now I want you to think about this for a moment as you think about problems you might have with God.

A lot of times we don’t discern any anger towards God in our relationship with him. You see, Jonah obeyed God. He did what God told him to do. He went and preached in Nineveh. He stopped running. Not only did he obey God, not only did he stop sinning, but his ministry really had fruit. He has the signs of success all around him. Yet, despite his obedience, despite his repentance, despite the success from his ministry, when all is said and done, Jonah still has a real problem with God. He is still raging at the Lord. One of the Hebrew words for anger literally means to be hot—we would say that he is burned up. And the fact is, you can have a lot of signs in your life of conformity to the will of God and still inwardly be raging at the Lord, and be really angry toward God about a certain area of your life or a certain circumstance or situation that God has allowed and has not removed.

The fact is that we often don’t allow ourselves to even admit that the rage inside is really toward God. We find that so horrible to think; that we might be angry at the Lord, that at all cost we mask that anger. And it will show up in other ways. It shows up in our explosive anger toward other people, toward a spouse or child or lover. It may show up in mass form in depression. Our anger toward God may show up in an escapist sin like drinking or eating or working or sleeping. The bottom line is that we’re angry.

Jonah, fortunately, was honest enough. He is such an authentic character that he is honest enough and clear-headed enough to see that his emotions are directed toward God. “I see my problem, Lord. I see that I am angry and I am angry about You. Now take away my life, it is better for me to die than to live.” You say, “Rich, where would I be angry with

the Lord? You're making a pretty broad sweeping generalization that certain kinds of behaviors may be masks for anger toward God. Where would I be angry toward the Lord?" In any place where you have not peacefully accepted and reconciled yourself to God's will, any place you have not accepted and peacefully reconciled yourself to what life has dealt you, any place that you find yourself continually complaining—what the Bible calls grumbling—over the hand you've been dealt. You scratch at that complaining, that grumbling for a little while, that frustration, that lack of acceptance of God's will, and underneath you will find anger toward the Lord.

Perhaps you are angry because God has allowed you to remain single. You have not peacefully reconciled yourself to your state of life at this time. You're angry because there is no prospect on the horizon. But in your life, heretofore, there has been no surrender to the Lord. Maybe you're angry because there are limits or there have been limits on your ministry opportunities—no doors have opened up for you in the way you feel they should have opened. You put yourself on the line and there wasn't any blessing. Maybe you're angry because God didn't protect you from your own stupidity. He allowed certain consequences to flow toward you, and while maybe you deserved it, you feel He should have stepped in and intervened.

Maybe you're angry because of the way you look. You're frustrated because of your body. You're not tall and thin like a model, you're not healthy. Maybe you're angry because of your continual need to battle with a temptation. You don't understand why God allows you to continue to struggle the way you do even though you've prayed for deliverance. Maybe you struggle with homosexual temptation or an eating disorder. You're angry because of a sin God allowed to be committed against you. Maybe your father abandoned you or you experienced abuse or you experienced betrayal from a spouse.

If you dig away at your inner lack of peace, if you sweep away the layer of dust over your grumbling and complaining, it won't be too long before you discover the real problem is anger toward God. Of course, the question God will ask you is the question he asked Jonah: Have you any right to be angry? Not just with a circumstance, not just toward a person, not just toward a sin, but do you have any right to be angry with God?

The answer is, no matter what life has dealt you, you have no right and I have no right to be angry with God. A wise person once said that one of the most important things he learned is that life is not God. Life, in this fallen world, is broken. Life is often unfair. Life is often incomprehensible. Life doesn't deal out benefits the way it should. Sometimes bad people get ahead. Sometimes good people fall behind. But God is still good. God is still giving. God is always merciful, always intends your best, always loves. So one of the things you never need to do is forgive God for anything. God has never done anything wrong. You never are His judge. A very few counselors will lead their clients in a prayer to forgive God, when they discover that their clients are angry with God. This is a completely and thoroughly unbiblical practice. We don't and can't release God from anything or for anything.

You say, "How do I come to peaceful acceptance of something I don't like? How do I get rid of any anger that maybe I have buried toward God? How do I deal with it if I don't practice this unbiblical practice of forgiving God?" Here's how we cultivate peace when we're angry—First of all, become honest with God. Stop masking your anger and start telling God the truth. You're frustrated because you're single, or you're frustrated because you're sick, or you're frustrated because of the career opportunities that have been denied you. You're angry because of what was done in your life. Instead of burying, instead

of masking it, you do what Jonah did. You speak it to the Lord and then you confess certain sins that really feed your anger.

Anger toward God is like a weed that is being fed by an extensive root system. It is fed by dishonesty as we mask our bitterness toward God. We cut that root by being honest. It is being fed by ingratitude where we focus on what is wrong with our lives rather than what is right. We can cut that root of ingratitude and thanklessness by being thankful. The only thing that is going on in our lives is not that we are not married or unhappily married or ill. We can defeat that grumbling spirit by counting our blessings and being thankful, communicating to God gratitude over the good things He has given us—perhaps our job, our gifts, our friends, our parents, whatever.

We need to cut the root of faithlessness. Whenever we say to God, “God, we’re really upset and angry over a situation in our life,” what we are really saying is, “God, we don’t believe You could use this circumstance for our good.” Perhaps the circumstance in your life is bad. But faith means you believe that God can and will work this circumstance for good.

You may not know how, or God may not reveal to you how. You may not learn how God can work this circumstance for good this side of the grave. But Romans 8:28 is nevertheless true in your life that “In all things God works for the good for those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” While not everything that comes into your life is good, nor is everything understandable, yet God promises to work good out of everything.

Unfortunately, there is a fourth root that gets in the way of us really coming to a peaceful resolution over what life has dealt us, and that is our stubbornness. Jonah would rather die than surrender his ideas and his prejudices and his anger toward God. He is like a

child throwing a temper tantrum—“If you don’t give me what I want then I am just going to hold my breath; if I can’t get to be the captain of the team then I am going to take my ball and leave; I don’t like this game and so if you don’t play it that way I think it ought to be played then I am just going to quit.”

At the bottom of so much anger toward God is our stubbornness. We want our way. We think we know the way life should go and what hand we should be dealt. After a while it just becomes a matter of pride—“If you don’t give me what I want in my marriage, then I don’t care, I just won’t play this game with you anymore, God, and I am just going to walk away from my marriage. If you don’t give me the role I covet in this church, I’m leaving the church. If you don’t give me the recognition I want or the job I demand or the parents I should have had, then forget it. I quit.” You know, suicide is the ultimate act of stubborn anger toward God. “I refuse to accept life on the terms you dealt it to me. I quit.”

You were not designed to carry anger toward God. Sure, you can shoot at God the way that boy at the beginning of my message shot at his father. You can keep shooting at God through complaining, through withdrawal, through running from church, through running from involvement. You can keep being angry toward the Lord for what you got in life. But in the end, you are going to be like that 12 year old boy. You are going to feel all locked up. And you’re going to be crying out “I miss you, Dad. I miss you, Dad.”

If you cultivate honesty toward God and gratitude over the good things you do have in your life; if you cultivate faith, believing that out of anything God can still work good; if you surrender your right to be angry; if you yield where you’ve been stubborn, you may find that you’ll stop being so knotted up. You may find that you’ve resolved your problems with God.

Sermon—June 21st–22nd, 1997
Jonah 3 – 4:4

Rich Nathan

The Problems We Have With God

I. Hopelessness (Jonah 3:3-9)

II. Passivity (Jonah 3:9-10, Is. 38)

III. Anger (Jonah 4:1-4)