

The prophets of the Old Testament were not simply heralds of the future, but messengers who challenged the people and social structures of their time. The prophets show us a divine vision that breaks human patterns and that confronts the religious, political, and social systems that oppress and divide.

Unlike other prophets, the prophet Jonah did not fight against an empire or idolatry. Jonah's conflict was between the mercy of God and the nationalism of the human heart, between grace that includes and racism that excludes. Through his story, God invites us to look at our own hearts and ask ourselves, **“Is there anything in me that still rejects God’s love for others?”**

The story of Jonah is one of the best-known narratives in the Bible. However, we often reduce it to an anecdote about a big fish and the disobedience of the prophet. But behind that story lies a much deeper message: the confrontation between God's boundless mercy and the racism of the human heart. Jonah did not run away because he was afraid of failing or being rejected; he fled because he could not bear the idea that God could extend his love, grace, and mercy to the enemies of Israel.

Racism and discrimination are not simply human errors or cultural differences; they are sins that God abhors because they negate the value He has placed in every human being made in His image. Therefore, when a believer belittles another because of his race, color, language, or culture, he not only offends his brother but also directly offends the Creator.

The book of Jonah thus becomes a mirror that confronts us with a key question: **Will we accept God's universal love or will we continue to build walls of hatred and exclusion?**

The gospel of Jesus is not exclusion but inclusion. It is reconciliation. It is forgiveness of sin.

Something important to note is that the Bible does not use the word “racism,” but it does denounce the sin of partiality, that is, those unjust preferences of contempt and division between peoples and cultures. God is a just, impartial, and merciful God; therefore, when his people act with prejudice or inequality, it offends God's character. Throughout Scripture, the Lord raises his voice in defense of the oppressed, the stranger, and the persecuted, reminding us that honoring God means treating everyone with justice, dignity, and love.

Discrimination is a visible behavior, but racism is a disease of the heart. Racism is an internal corruption of the soul that destroys the image of God in one's neighbor and distorts a person's inner character. Both are expressions of injustice and pride. God hates racism because it contradicts his character, his gospel, and his eternal kingdom.

In Jonah 1:2, Jonah receives a clear command from God: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." The prophet's reaction was immediate and revealing: he fled in the opposite direction. Instead of heading east to Nineveh, Jonah headed west toward Tarshish. For Jonah, the Ninevites were political, cultural, and religious enemies. They were cruel, violent, and pagan. Behind his rejection of God's call was something deeper: a heart that had limited God's love only to his own people. Jonah felt indignation at a God who loves without borders.

But the truth is this: You cannot love God and hate your neighbor (1 John 4:20): "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." Racism contradicts the Gospel because the Gospel is the good news of reconciliation.

During his flight away from God's call, the big fish swallowed Jonah after he was tossed into the sea. The big fish wasn't punishment, but grace. God rescued Jonah and returned him to his mission. And when he preached in Nineveh, the impossible happened: "The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth" (Jonah 3:5).

Lo God's love knows no boundaries, language, or race. God's grace has no passport or skin color. **If God tears down walls, how dare we put them up?**

Jonah prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to 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" (Jonah 4:2).

Jonah's problem was not ignorance, but resistance to God's love. He knew that God is compassionate, patient and merciful, but he did not want that grace to reach the Ninevites.

The book ends with an open question from God to Jonah: "And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left and also many animals?" (Jonah 4:11). This question is for us today.

Racism and the gospel can never coexist. The cross of Christ is the final demolition of every wall of hatred, pride, and prejudice. **Do we reflect Jesus' love in our hearts, or do we continue to cling to our prejudices?**

Anyone who looks down on another because of their race or social status has not understood the gospel of grace. For Christ has broken down every wall of separation, so it says (Ephesians 2:14). "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."

The church should be a foretaste of heaven: a community where every nation, tribe, people, and language gathers to worship the Lamb. In Revelation 7:9, we see “a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” The church of Jesus Christ in heaven and on earth is not a MONOCULTURAL church, it is a MULTICULTURAL church.

In Christ we see God's true mission: to save the world and reconcile humanity to Him. Racism, prejudice, and human divisions are the shadows of a heart that has not yet understood the Father's love. Because when the love of God enters the soul, hatred cannot remain.

May the love of God enter our souls, that we may experience the grace and reconciliation of Jesus Christ and in the Kingdom of God. May Christ be our peace, uniting us in himself.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the story of Jonah about? What sin was God confronting?
2. What language does the Bible use instead of the word “racism”? What does the Bible say about foreigners, orphans, and widows? About Jews and Gentiles? About the nations?
3. How does Jesus' death bring about reconciliation? What about the cross makes reconciliation possible? (See Acts 10, 1 John 4, Ephesians 2)
4. Is there anything in you that rejects God's love for others? Is there someone you need to reconcile with? If you are feeling hardness of heart toward someone or a group of people, what should you do?