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He opened fire on a crowd of concert-goers and killed 58 and wounded 489. He's notorious. And the investigators are trying to figure out his motive. They're thinking that if they can understand what drove him to do this, we'll be better prepared to stop it the next time around. What if there isn't a motive? What if he did it just because he felt like it? In an America with no god and no creed, with god pushed out not just by unbelievers, but by the groups that call themselves churches, what ultimate truth is left? And in the places that call themselves "churches" but which are largely Christ-less, what hope is being offered? Sure, there are competing ideas about what we should be doing about such tragedies, and some of those arguments get surprisingly violent, but underneath the sound and the fury, what's driving most of it? What if the prevailing notion in our land and in our time is nihilism—literally, a belief in nothing? No God, no good, no evil, no purpose, just nothing, nothing but simple hate and anger. Since when has rage or hate been a rational thing? Why does anger have to have a reason? Today, we will answer the question: **ANGER; WHERE DOES IT COME FROM (Jonah 4:5-11)?** 1) Seeking happiness here guarantees anger. 2) So where does happiness come from?

Remember Jonah? That guy who was eaten by some big sea creature. Whatever that thing was, eventually it spit him out. God then sent Jonah to the godless people of Nineveh. There were over one hundred thousand people in that city. Jonah preached one sermon. Want to know what the theme of his sermon was? "In forty days, you, in this city, will be killed." Boy, that's a fun theme for a sermon isn't it? And you know what happened. Nobody listened, nobody cared. Why would they?

But actually they did listen. All of them. Even the king. He put on sackcloth and ashes and commanded that everyone worship the true God and repent of their sin. This repentance is unique. This is the bible's single greatest conversion ever; the most people to come to faith at one time. Jonah chapter 3 tells us all of the city turned from their ways and listened. Awesome right? High fives all around. Ballgame; mission accomplished.

But Jonah was seething with anger and just about to blow up his entire ministry as well as his relationship with the God who called him to it. We can well imagine what he was thinking: "These Ninevites are the enemy of Israel. They don't care about your commands. They repent in the eleventh hour, and now everything's cool between you and them." Anger—it comes from us. It exists because of us. Anger does not think rationally. Anger doesn't care. It doesn't care how much money you have. It cares about that thing your neighbor has that you don't. Anger doesn't care how many friends text you, but why you think so many others never do. It doesn't care if you've had a job for twenty years, but it does care about the promotion that should have, by now, been given to you. Anger. Most people believe they can handle it—until they can't, but by then it's too late; damage is done.

Look at Jonah's life. Understand this: anger is dangerous, and our anger is always, ultimately, pointed squarely at God. Our lesson says, "Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine." What do you love? What makes you happy? This is very important because you will always find reasons to be angry, and if you do not counter that with something that makes you happy, your anger will take over your life. So, what can't you live without? What would you save from your burning house? Do your children give you a happy balance in your life? Grandchildren? Spouse? Is it your job? Income? Electronics? Your hobbies? Any one of these can be an escape from life's troubles and tragedies, can't they? But how would you feel if, all of the sudden, it's taken away? Just because God knows what makes you happy and promises to always take care of you doesn't mean that you can't lose those things or lose those people that are most valuable to you. Job lost his children, his stuff, his health, his land, and all he owned in one day.

In our lesson, Jonah loses the vine that gave him joy. I know, maybe you think that getting attached to a vine is kind of nuts. Well, take up

residence inside a sea creature for a couple days, and maybe you'll become a bit more sympathetic toward Jonah. Regardless, the feeling he had when the vine was taken away is very recognizable to us.

We read, "But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die."

Who made all this happen to Jonah? In verse six, it says that God provided the vine that made Jonah feel fine. In verse seven, it says that God provided the worm that chewed the vine and made Jonah squirm. In verse eight, it says that God provided the wind from the east that didn't help him in the least. And earlier in the book, we all know (and it also says) that God is the one who provided the sea creature that swallowed Jonah alive. Can you imagine the darkness and sounds inside that creature? We don't know what Jonah looked like after his encounter with that monster of the deep. But we do know that God provided it. Apparently, God is not off the hook for the pain in your life. At times, like he did with Jonah, God causes it. The God who can stop the winds and stop demons with but a thought allows pain in you, in your life.

How do you feel about this? Well, how would you feel to know that it is your Father's will to suffer, to bleed, to heave, and hang; to be treated like a whipping boy instead of eternity's King? Are you supposed to just zip it while they whip you; keep your mouth shut as they mock you? Are you supposed to just lift your eyes to heaven, knowing that the people who hate you most are wracking their brains to think of all sorts of ways they can keep on sinning. Meanwhile, the God who says, "I love you," has decided to allow all these things to hurt you.

And you're supposed to look up to him and say, "Father, not my will, but yours be done," even if this will includes you dying for them, you

being labeled God's enemy instead of them, looking at the people who nailed you to a cross and pleading for God to forgive them? Ask Jesus, and he will tell you that, that he was not happy with the thought of what he would lose if he would throw in the towel, and get angry, and just go away. He would lose you. So Jesus embraced God's will.

What was Jonah losing? He was losing a gift God had provided. He was losing a gift, which is no different from you losing your gifts from God: a plate of sausage or sushi, a house, your job, your time, your best friend, your sweet kids, either parent, whatever.

When God asked Moses, "Who gave man his mouth and his sight?" the answer was: God. When God asked Job, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?" the answer was: nowhere. He didn't exist. And neither did I. Neither did you. We existed in God's imagination before he formed us out of nothing, considered who exactly you would be with all of eternity's wisdom, and, as Paul reminded the Athenians, "determined the times set before [you] and the exact places that you should live" all so that he could reveal his love to you, and so you, in turn, would be set free from your anger, and would use the abilities he loans you, the time he grants you, and family and resources with which he decides to bless you, that you would use them to know Him, and make him known.

Think like God. When we lose anything or anyone on earth, we lose something that never belonged to us in the first place. Think like God. Want to know a secret? It's a secret of contentment. Jonah's anger had pushed, had rammed this secret out of his mind. Here's the secret: no person can make another person happy. No thing can make a person less angry or more happy. They can distract us from the big questions of life, but make us happy? No. As Christians we love each other, but we never can make another person happy. Happiness only comes from God and his Word, and once that Word has done its work, that happiness comes from within—not from a person or thing outside of you. Want proof?

This, our lesson, takes place during the age of the Assyrian Empire. Biblical history makes it clear from its description of the spiritual

condition of Israel at this time that the clear majority of Jonah's fellow Israelites would be rejecting, refusing most of his preaching. That's what it was like when he got back home. To make matters worse, in the years following Jonah's famous sermon in Nineveh, the Ninevites repented—it didn't last! In fact, they waged war with Israel. The Ninevites would soon kill many Israelite soldiers and civilians. Do you see? For Jonah, for us, happiness can't come from people or things. It comes from God. But with God, we can enjoy people and things without looking to them as the source of our joy.

All right, time for a pop quiz. Someday we are going to lose all of this. Not everybody we know or love is going to make it into heaven. So there's no such thing as happiness; there's no end to our anger? Don't believe that for a second. God knows, and now you know, that the end of anger, true joy, is to be with him—in every way, body, soul and mind. Learn from Jonah. Don't be like him. Look to God; learn from Jesus, and let go of your anger. Amen.