

# Jonah – Philipp Bußkamp

|          |                                                |
|----------|------------------------------------------------|
| SPEAKER  | Philipp Bußkamp                                |
| DATE     | Sunday, January 12, 2025                       |
| PASSAGES | Jonah 1; Jonah 3; Jonah 4; Matthew 12; Luke 19 |
| MESSAGE  | Begins at 1:24:53 in the service               |

## THE BIG IDEA

God sent his most reluctant prophet, carrying the least gracious sermon in the Bible, to the capital of a terror state — and spared it when it turned. The Book of Jonah is not mainly about Nineveh's evil. It is about the heart of the man who did not want Nineveh saved, and about a God patient enough to keep working on him.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Jonah did not run because the Assyrians were frightening. He ran because he knew God was merciful and was afraid it would work.
- ◆ Jonah's entire sermon is five words in Hebrew, with no grace in it at all — and a city repented. God's word carries power the messenger does not supply.
- ◆ The book is more interested in the prophet than in his message. God pursues Jonah with a storm, a fish, a plant and a worm, and never abandons him.
- ◆ Every one of us sorts people into savable and unsavable. That sorting is the sin the book is exposing.
- ◆ Eastern Germany may be the most secular place on earth; under 1% of Leipzig has a relationship with Jesus. People are born, live and die there without ever meeting a believer.
- ◆ Jesus is the greater Jonah: three days in the earth, but obedient, and weeping over the city that rejected him instead of hoping for its ruin.

- ◆ The test is not whether you love your city in the abstract. It is what you feel about the neighbors on the other side of your politics.

► 1:24:53

Philipp and Sarah Bußkamp pastor and plant churches in Leipzig, Germany, and they spent the first part of the morning making the congregation love a city most of the room will never visit — Bach's city, a city with more bridges than Venice, the city where Monday prayer meetings swelled into the marches that helped bring down the Iron Curtain. And then the number: 84.5% of Leipzig actively declares itself non-religious, and by Philipp's own count with fellow pastors, fewer than one person in a hundred has a relationship with Jesus. "People get born, live and die in Leipzig without ever having a chance of hearing the gospel," he said, "let alone knowing a believer personally."

## 1. Why Jonah ran

► 1:29:45

Jonah prophesied in Israel under Jeroboam II. God sent him to Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian empire — modern-day Mosul, in northern Iraq. Philipp was blunt about what the Assyrians were: a terror state that impaled and flayed prisoners alive and wrote it down themselves, because terror only works if everyone knows.

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me."

JONAH 1:2 ↗

The common assumption is that Jonah fled because the Assyrians were cruel. The book says otherwise, and Philipp insisted on letting it say so.

► 1:34:31

"Is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster."

JONAH 4:2 ↗

Jonah's fear was that it would work. If he stayed home, God would flatten his nation's worst enemy. "In these verses we see Jonah's heart for that city, and we see God's heart for that city," Philipp said. "And there's a difference. Can you tell? He preached, they turned, he wants to die."

---

## 2. The worst sermon ever preached, and it worked

► 1:32:17

Philipp put every verse of Jonah's message on one slide, because there are almost none. Two of them are God speaking to Jonah rather than Jonah speaking to Nineveh ([Jonah 3:1-2](#)). What the prophet actually said to the city is one line:

"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

JONAH 3:4 ↗

Five words in Hebrew. "End of sermon," Philipp said. "So if you look for brevity in a sermon, Jonah is your guy." The point underneath the joke is serious: God's lesson in this book is plainly not preaching technique or seeker-sensitive method. Jonah preached judgment with the grace left out — arguably on purpose, so it would not land — and the city [believed God, fasted and turned from its violence](#) anyway.

---

## 3. A God who keeps working on his prophet

► 1:36:08

It took a storm and a three-day fish retreat — "no smartphone, no social media to distract him" — to get Jonah moving. Even then he delivered his line and left, then sat on a hill east of the city hoping the forty days would run out badly. God grew a plant for shade, then sent a worm to kill it, and Jonah asked to die a second time.

"You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

JONAH 4:10-11 ↗

Philipp lingered on the cattle, which he finds comical and also telling — the animals had been made to fast along with the city, so of course they were making themselves heard. God counts them too.

► 1:38:42

The book ends without telling us what Jonah did with that question. People have theories; Philipp declined all of them. “If the Bible leaves it open, let’s just leave it open.” What is not open is God’s patience: a commission, a rescue, a second commission, an object lesson, and at no point an abandoned prophet. “Would you not have abandoned that useless prophet with that message without any grace, trying even when he’s proclaiming the gospel to make it so that the people won’t accept it? But God walks with him.”

*“God is prepared to go to extreme lengths to give Jonah the option of getting God’s heart for Nineveh. That’s what he’s prepared to do with me and with you.”*

---

## 4. Leipzig, and a neighbor who would rather be crucified

► 1:23:10

Forty years of socialist dictatorship in the GDR left Leipzig with a deep distrust of authority and organized religion, and a suppression of Christianity that plainly worked. Sarah told the story of a neighbor who slammed the door on her first delivery of Christmas cookies — “you can’t give things away for free, people will take advantage of you” — and who later told her, to her face, “I would rather be crucified on a cross than come to your church.” Sarah’s reply was that at least she was not lukewarm. Eight years of conversations, prayer and small gifts later, that woman had learned to give gifts herself and was leaving little things at Sarah’s door. The kingdom of God grows like yeast.

Then a wealthy, well-educated friend at a grill party: “I have everything, so I don’t understand why I’m not happy.” He said it, drank his beer, and turned back to the grill.

---

## 5. How is your heart toward Austin?

► 1:44:11

Philipp was candid that he does not have God’s heart for his own city either. He named the Leipzigers he struggles to love: voters at both political extremes, people who expect to be owed a living, the gangs, and — very specifically — whoever stole Sarah’s bicycle in broad daylight outside the hospital. “But God loves even Nineveh.”

Then he turned the question on the room, and did it evenhandedly. If you are conservative and afraid of what the progressive left is doing to the city and the nation — how much do you care about people on the far left being saved? What do you think God’s heart is for your woke neighbors? If you are liberal and afraid of what a simplistic conservatism is doing — standards for the character of leaders lowered,

the ends justifying any means — how much do you care about people on the far right being saved? What is God’s heart for your MAGA neighbors?

► 1:46:06

He confessed the underlying habit plainly: some people seem so close that a little Bible would finish the job, and others seem so busy or so hostile that he finds them “not just unsavory but unsavable.” That is the category the whole book demolishes. A city of cruel, violent people turned because of the most incomplete message of God’s word ever delivered.

*“God’s word has power even for the most unsavable people in our lives.”*

## 6. Something greater than Jonah

► 1:50:19

“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”

MATTHEW 12:39–41 ↗

The comparison runs in every direction. Jonah was obedient in fits; Jesus obeyed every command. Jonah withheld the grace; Jesus gave the message in full and lived the character of God in full — whoever has seen him has seen the Father. And the three days are not parallel at all: “Jonah had to go into the fish’s belly because he was rebelling against God. Jesus had to go into the earth’s heart because we rebelled against him.”

The sharpest contrast is the posture. Jonah watched Nineveh from a hill hoping it would burn. Jesus came over the ridge and looked at Jerusalem:

“And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!’”

LUKE 19:41–42 ↗

They rejected him, and he had every right to strike, and he wept instead. Philipp landed the message there: “I need the one who wept for Jerusalem to share his heart of mercy, so that I will start weeping over my city.”

---

## 7. Holy and merciful, both

► 1:53:04

We hold these badly, Philipp said, and we hold them badly in the same direction. We do not hate the sin in our lives or our neighbors’ lives nearly as much as God does, because we have no idea how destructive it is — “whenever you get a deep glimpse in your heart and you’re sometimes a little frightened, God sees way deeper than that.” He hates sin because he knows it. And he is merciful enough to save Nineveh. Both, at full strength, at once. That is the God who still sends people out — to Nineveh, to Leipzig, to Austin — with the news that the holy God loves this city and is calling it home.

► 2:01:04

Afterward the Bußkamps asked for prayer rather than for anything else, and were specific about why: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” Their church plant’s three leaders have all had serious health trouble in their families over five years. Workers are thin on the ground. Maintaining a church draws little opposition; spreading the gospel draws plenty, and they asked to be prayed for as people who intend to keep doing the second thing. They are in Austin for about a month, with a Q&A lunch in two weeks.

---

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

### SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- [Jonah 1:2](#)
- [Jonah 4:2](#)
- [Jonah 3:1–2](#)
- [Jonah 3:4](#)
- [Jonah 3:5–9](#)
- [Jonah 4:10–11](#)
- [Matthew 12:39–41](#)
- [John 14:9](#)
- [Luke 19:41–42](#)
- [John 10:10](#)

### FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Jonah ran because he was afraid God's mercy would reach people he wanted judged. Where have you quietly hoped God would deal with someone rather than save them?
2. Nineveh turned on a five-word sermon with no grace in it. What does that say about the pressure you put on yourself to get the words right before you say anything?
3. Philipp asked both halves of the room the same question. Name the political neighbors you find hardest to picture as brothers and sisters — what is God's heart toward them?
4. Who have you filed as unsavable — too busy, too hostile, too far gone? What made you close that file?
5. God spent a storm, a fish, a plant and a worm on one prophet's heart. What is he using on yours right now, and what will you do differently this week because of it?

### ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Philipp Bußkamp pastors a church in Leipzig, Germany, and co-founded a church plant out of it; he trains young leaders and works on theological writing within his denomination. He met Hope Chapel's Cessi and Mark Hawthorne at Floyd McClung's church planting school in Cape Town in 2012, married Sarah Hawthorne, who grew up at Hope, and moved to Leipzig in 2015. He preached this message on Jonah as a guest, in his second language, while visiting Austin.

---

**Watch the full message:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32oQr5QgYGI&t=5093s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.