Sunday 6th April – Connect Group Notes

‘The Characteristics of Compassion’

**Read Jonah 4: 4-11**

1. Expectations (v5)

a) Imagine you have just preached and seen the results that Jonah had (3:10). What would be your next step? Why do you think Jonah left the city as he did?

b) When you tell people about your faith what are your expectations? How much are they governed by what you know (or think you know) about them?

1. God provides and God takes away (vv6-8)

a) Can you give examples where you think God has provided things for you at a time of need. And others where you think He has taken away things you thought you needed?

b) Was your reaction the same as Jonah’s? How did you feel about this at the time and looking back later on? Was there a point to what happened?

1. What sort of man was Jonah? (v9)

This is the second time Jonah is so angry he’s begged to have his life taken away. His behaviour here could be called petulant but do you think this is a fair description of Jonah overall? What sympathy do you have for Jonah? (You might wish to compare Jonah’s wish to die with a similar wish by the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19)).

1. Where is the focus of our concern? (vv 10,11)

God uses the whole incident to contrast the focus of his own compassion with Jonah’s. We aren’t told whether Jonah accepted he was wrong and decides to change but has this passage changed the way you look at situations? Particularly those people/situations where you haven’t yet felt a burden of concern.

1. Jonah found it difficult to see how God’s justice and holiness could be reconciled with his love and compassion, particularly with regard to enemies such as the Nineties. As we approach Easter how does the cross make it easier for us to do so?
2. Are you the type of person who likes all the loose ends tied up in TV drama or film? What do you make of the way that the book of Jonah ends?
3. Looking back at the whole of Jonah what have you learnt or been reminded of? As you share these thoughts within your group perhaps use them as a basis for praise and prayer. You may find the following framework helpful in exploring the main themes.

|  | Chapters 1 and 2 | Chapters 3 and 4 |
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| Jonah and God’s Word | Jonah’s 1st call to Nineveh (1:1-3) | Jonah’s 2nd call to Nineveh (3:1-3) |
| Jonah and God’s World | Pagan sailors (1:4-16) | Pagan Ninevites (3:4-10) |
| Jonah and God’s Grace | Big fish (2:1-10) | Shady plant (4:6-11) |

(Based on a similar outline in Jonah the Prodigal Prophet by Timothy Keller, 2018)