

"Is it right for you to be angry?." Jonah chapter 4 verse 4

You know the story of Jonah. God tells him to go and preach in the evil city of Nineveh. Jonah rebels and boards a ship to Tarshish. There's a storm and Jonah admits that he's to blame because he's running from God. He gets thrown overboard, where he gets swallowed by an enormous fish. In it's belly, he repents, and is delivered. He goes to Nineveh, where he preaches and the people repent.

At this, "Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious. He prayed to the Lord. "Please Lord, isn't this what I thought while I was still in my own country? That's why I fled to Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster. And now, Lord, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

"Is it right for you to be angry?" God replies.

In a sulk, Jonah goes out into the desert, where he sits down under a bush to shelter from the sun. A worm eats the bush, and Jonah becomes so uncomfortable, frustrated and angry that he wants to die. Then he hears from God again. "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

Why is God talking about the plant? Surely there's far more to Jonah's anger than that. Why did he run away in the first place? He ran because he didn't want to do what God had told him to do. Why not? Because he didn't agree with God that the people of Nineveh deserved the chance to repent, and when they did he wasn't joyful, but resentful. His nationalistic prejudice coloured everything he did, and his misplaced anger drove him.

Lots of things can make us angry. Anger is a part of human life. But does our anger agree with God's anger? And what does our anger make us do? Anger is a strong driver. It can come from our preconditioned attitudes, assumptions and dispositions, and because it seems so natural and compelling, we act on it without ever actually questioning the anger itself.

There are things that make God angry, but those are things that it is right to be angry about. And when God is angry about something, his anger is actually a function of his love, and the action he takes is right and good. We need to be careful that we know where our anger comes from, because if it only comes from the dark places within us, rather than from God, then it will only cause terrible harm.

Prayer

Father, I acknowledge that anger has its place. I know that you are angry with wickedness, because of the hurt and harm it causes to people, and its violation of your holiness and righteousness. But my anger so often comes from within me and is misplaced. Please help me to be properly angry about the things that you are angry about, and to act accordingly in love and obedience to you. In Jesus name, amen.

*All these devotionals can be found on our website [inghamitechurch.org](http://inghamitechurch.org) on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.*