

Missing Out

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Thanksgiving Day

Jonah 2:7-9 ⁷ "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went *up* to You, Into Your holy temple. ⁸ "Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy. ⁹ But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. *Salvation is of the LORD.*"

What if our Thanksgiving table looked different this year? Suppose there was no turkey, no pie, no potatoes—perhaps just a simple meal, maybe even frozen pizza. Some might welcome the change, but many would feel something is missing.

Jonah reminds us that those who forgo a thanksgiving of the heart miss out on more than a meal—they miss out on the steadfast love, the *chesed*, of God. This is the love that gave God's only Son for our salvation, the mercy that forgives even the deepest wounds and the gravest mistakes. It is a mercy that reaches us, even when we feel lost in the depths.

Consider the story of the ten lepers whom Jesus healed. Only one returned to give thanks. Jesus did not rebuke the others because he needed their praise, but because they settled for a lesser gift. They received healing for their bodies but missed the greater blessing: the cleansing of their souls. The one who returned received both. They missed out on the mercy of God.

Jonah, too, found himself in the depths—physically submerged beneath the waves, spiritually overwhelmed by guilt and despair. He had run from God, forsaken the Lord, and felt the consequences. Yet, even then, Jonah remembered the mercy of God. He cried out, "*I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me.*" God rescued Jonah not only from the sea, but from the despair of his own heart.

Like the prodigal son, Jonah returned to the Lord, and the Lord welcomed him with forgiveness and joy. Whatever Jonah had done was washed away by God's mercy. This is what we miss when we turn away from God—an unending, faithful love.

Idols come in many forms. In ancient times, they were called Asherah, Baal, Zeus, Thor. Today, our idols may be anger, pride, resentment, or anything that draws our hearts away from God. Jonah's idol was his anger toward the Ninevites; he wanted judgment, not mercy. By holding onto anger, he missed out on the love and forgiveness God offers.

What idols do we hold in our hearts? What keeps us from rejoicing in thanksgiving to the Lord? Whether it is anger, pride, or something else, know this: God's mercy is always waiting. Like the prodigal father, God longs for us to return.

This *chesed*, this everlasting mercy of God is something we can always trust in.

In suffering, Job chose to trust in God's love and give thanks, saying:

"Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10)

"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21)

David, when faced with punishment, chose to fall into the hands of the Lord, trusting in God's great mercy:

"Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great." (2 Samuel 24:14)

Moses, too, appealed to God's promises and mercy when Israel sinned.

This is the mercy of God, who sent his Son to be the sacrifice for our sins. This is the mercy for which we give thanks today. This is the mercy we miss if we run away from God.

So today, as we gather—whether with family, friends, or in quiet solitude—we join Jonah, David, Job, the grateful Samaritan, and countless others in receiving with joyful thanksgiving the *chesed*, the unending, faithful mercy of our God.

Psalm 118:

"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."

Let Israel now say, "His mercy endures forever."

Let the house of Aaron now say, "His mercy endures forever."

Let those who fear the LORD now say, "His mercy endures forever."