

We are starting a new series on Jonah:

Jonah Flees from the Lord - Chapter 1

[Click to Slide 1](#)

Jonah and the Big Fish – Gulp [Click to Slide](#)

Jonah was feeling glum

No, no, no

'I won't do what God said' he sulked.

'I won't help the people of Ninevah.

'I shall run away'

Stomp, stomp, stomp [Click to Slide](#)

Jonah went to a town by the sea.

He paid for a boat trip to far away.

All aboard [Click to Slide](#)

Out at sea, the wind began to blow

The waves began to roll

The boat began to toss.

Uh oh, splash, whoosh, whoosh. [Click to Slide](#)

Into the sea went Jonah

Plop, gurgle, gurgle!

We tend to think that we all know the story of Jonah and that there is a message about not shirking our duty to be evangelists. This is a good message, particularly the day before we start our online Alpha Course.

So, maybe this is the moment to text that friend and ask them to join you tomorrow night on the Zoom channel that has been set up by our WKURC Alpha Team. In fact, if you all get your phones out and do that right now I will not be insulted or put off at all!

But that is not what this talk is focussing on today.

I am going to be thinking about conduct, attitude and respect. Well, something like that anyway!

You see, Jonah was being asked by God to do something that seemed to him to be a very bad idea – [Click to Slide 6: 2](#) *"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."* ...to go to the Assyrian capital and warn them of God's coming wrath.

1. They were his enemies and very nasty enemies at that
2. Jonah wanted them to be destroyed
3. He totally doubted that God was right and then probably also doubted that he had indeed heard correctly

4. He did not fancy being tortured to death – which with the Assyrian regime was the only likely outcome ... and they had invented some pretty awful ways to kill people.

So, I don't really blame Jonah.

I am sort of on his side.

But then he shows us his heart – and that is the nasty bit of the story, you see.

He despises the Ninevites – why should they be saved from the coming wrath, the heathen scum. [Click to Slide](#)

3 But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. ... [Click to Slide](#)

Then came the storm ...*Verse 5 All the sailors were afraid, and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.*

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep

He does not have much respect initially for the needs of the seamen with whom he travels. When the storm comes this 'great prophet' skulks down into the bowels of the ship and we are told that he falls asleep! Come on! He does not even help the sailors to offload all their goods.

This was no ordinary storm, I suspect. These tough sailors would have known about storms. This was a STORM in capital letters – and they had only one thought – to save their own lives! Quite rightly.

And Jonah is pretending that it is not happening!

Not until the captain challenges him and asks him to Pray to His God. [Click to Slide 9](#)

6 The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish."

In this story we can sadly see the story of the Church at times. All around us are good pagan folk doing all the right things and living to the highest standards that they understand and we in the Church look down on them, call them the 'unsaved' and forget to even pray for them. We do not play our part and feel that we should not get involved in the messy and dangerous task of throwing stuff overboard. We just stand by and despise the politics, the suffering, the hopelessness and the death (particularly of the unborn).

We, the Church, have even been known to protect our members from Justice when they have done wrong in the sight of the Law – even to extreme of hiding abuse within the congregation of God's people.

If there is baggage to be thrown overboard then we need to be participants and not have Jonah's despicable attitude.

And he does not even own up to being the cause of the storm until the 'lot' falls to him. Then he confesses! [Click to Slide](#)

7b They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? ...

Verse 9 He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."... [Click to Slide](#)

Verse 12 "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

13 Instead, the men did their best to row back to land.

But these lovely pagan sailors still don't throw him overboard [Click to Slide 12](#) – they do everything that they can to save him. There are so many selfless people today working in the schools, the NHS, our shops, clearing our bins or whatever and only now in the middle of this dreadful storm of a pandemic are we giving them the respect that they are due.

They may believe different things. They may be superstitious. They may be all the things that the Church despises – from homosexuals to drug addicts!

But God loves them. He wants them in His Kingdom and he is reaching out to them.

Eventually Jonah does the right thing:

Heave ho, over the side you go! [Click to Slide13](#)

God does not call us to abandon ship – quite the opposite! He calls us to be participants.

Where does your passion lie? What do you want to see changed for good in this world? How are you going to expend some of your Godly energy into changing our society so that it is fairer, safer, more hope filled and, in the end, more God centred?

This morning Louise quoted Ghandi – be the change that you wish to see in the world ... and Amanda Gorman's 'For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.'

This reflects Jesus' call to be the Light of the World!

We need to be participants and not just hiding in our Holy huddle as the ship goes down!

So where are your passions? For me it is: [Click to Slide](#)

Save the planet from Climate Change – and protect the poorest in our world from the effects of it. [Click](#)

Save the unborn from premature death [Click](#)

Reform education so that it works for children who have different needs and skills – consequently empty the prisons! [Click](#)

...and Banish homelessness.

Those are my personal highest priority concerns – so what are yours?

What are the things that you write to your MP about most regularly?

Jonah showed himself to be xenophobic.

We must do much better than that. [Click to Slide 15](#)

When we come out of our storm, will we have learnt our lessons? Or like Jonah, will we need to learn them all over again?

When we come out of this storm will we go back to being the same as we were before or will we actually make every possible effort [Click to Slide 16](#) to welcome all into a Church Fellowship that does not in any way discriminate - to make everyone utterly welcome!

God invites all into His Kingdom. That is clear.

Romans 5 [Click to Slide](#)

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 2:2 [Click to Slide](#)

I write this, dear children, to guide you out of sin. But if anyone does sin, we have a Priest-Friend in the presence of the Father: Jesus Christ, righteous Jesus. When he served as a sacrifice for our sins, he solved the sin problem for good—not only ours, but the sin of the whole world.

Alongside all that I've just said, this story is about the imperative of Evangelism - So, maybe this is the moment to text that friend and ask them to join you tomorrow night on the Zoom channel that has been set up by our WKURC Alpha Team.

The sailors found faith in the Living God that day – let us give our friends that opportunity also. [Click to Slide](#)

[15 Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 16 At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.] [Click to Slide 20](#)

They saw God's power ... and they believed.

Let us pray to this awesome God.