

Sunday, 11th October 2026

Jonah 1

1. Have you ever been to on a cruise? What were the best and worse bits of 'life on the open waves'?
2. If you could be a fish or ocean mammal, which one would you be and why?

Read Jonah 1: 1-3

1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: ² 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.'
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.

Over the last couple of weeks, we have focussed on our frontlines – the locations God places us during the week. In our reading today, we find that God asks Jonah to, '*Go to the great city of Ninevah*'. But Jonah's response is to '*run away*'.

3. On a scale of 1 to 10 how like Jonah are you when God asks you speak to someone / go somewhere?

Unlike

Like

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. God tells Jonah to go East towards Ninevah, but he goes West to Tarshish and Joppa – the opposite direction. How far have you run away from God:
 - a. Physically?
 - b. Socially?
 - c. Spiritually?
5. God wants Jonah to preach against the wickedness of Nineveh – the great Pagan city of Assyria, who on many occasions had invaded and plundered Israel. He didn't like them. However, God was still concerned for them.
 - a. Are there people/groups of people that we don't like, that God calls us to talk to?
 - b. Is there anyone who is beyond the love of God?

6. In Genesis 12: 1-3 we read:

The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

² 'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'

- a. Is this promise true today?
- b. **'and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'** God loves all people and wants them to be blessed. How easy do we find it to love all people?
- c. Is being 'active' on our frontlines part of the process of making 'a great nation' of believers – even people from our 'Nineveh'?

Read Jonah 1:4-6

⁴ Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. 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.

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.'

- 7. It has been written that the act of disobedience is always a journey away from God. Jonah tried to escape God's plan for his life by journeying in the opposite direction. Have you ever tried to escape God's plan for your life? How? In what ways? Read Psalm 139: 7-12**

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

¹¹ If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Can we ever escape from God?

- 8. In verse 5 we read that the sailors were afraid. We are also told they were afraid in verse 10 (this terrified them) and vs 16 (the men greatly feared the Lord). What are we fearful of and why?**

9. *⁵ All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god.*
- For those without faith, what do they do / where do they go when they are afraid?
 - Where do they find solace?
 - Who are their gods?
 - How do we help them in their 'fear'?
10. What do you do / where do you go when you are afraid? Where do you find solace?
11. What did Jonah do?
12. The sailors jettisoned the cargo to make the ship lighter. Are there things in our lives we should jettison to make us lighter and more adaptable to difficult situations?

Read Jonah 1: 7-13

⁷ Then the sailors said to each other, 'Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.' 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? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?'

⁹ He answered, 'I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.'

¹⁰ This terrified them and they asked, 'What have you done?' (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)

¹¹ The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, 'What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?'

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 they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before.

13. Vs 10 – *'What have you done?'* Is there anything that you have done to cause a 'storm' around you? Is there a situation you need to calm today?
14. Jonah identifies himself as *'a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.'*
- When challenged, do we identify ourselves as Christians?
 - How easy is it to do this?
 - What stops us?

15. Even though they were skilled sailors, there was nothing that they could do to battle the storm. However, rather than 'throw' Jonah overboard, they still try to row back to land.
- a. On the news we hear lots of negative stories, but do you think that most people try to do the right thing when faced with difficulties (one commentator describes the sailors as, 'fundamentally decent human beings')?
 - b. Are we sometimes put to shame by the commitment of people who do not express faith?
16. Do we sometimes struggle with the storm, when we should let go and let God?

Read Jonah 1: 14-17

¹⁴ Then they cried out to the Lord, 'Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.' 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. ¹⁷ Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

17. The sailors come to faith through fear. Should we be preaching fear (hell and damnation) or love to bring people to faith?
18. Do we make promises to God when we face difficult life situations, which we later forget when life is more peaceful and calm? Can you think of a time when you have forgotten the promises you made to God in a storm?
19. The start of verse 17 reads, '*now the Lord provided*'. Whilst the Lord might not provide us with a 'huge fish', we should be prepared for God to provide us with an unexpected and unconventional answer to our 'storms'. Are you prepared for an unexpected or unconventional answer to your 'storm'?
20. Jonah experienced an 'enforced' period of reflection (three days and three nights).
- a. When faced with a difficult situation, should we take some time out to reflect?
 - b. Is there a situation that you need to take time out of today, to seek God's help with?
 - c. At the end of today's group, spend some time in reflection.