

# Jonah

## *Jonah runs away*

<sup>1</sup> This message from the LORD came to Jonah, the son of Amittai:

<sup>2</sup> ‘Arise, go to that great city, Nineveh, and preach against it; for their wickedness is known to me.’

<sup>3</sup> But Jonah started to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went aboard to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

<sup>4</sup> But the LORD made a furious wind blow over the sea, and there was such a great storm that the ship was in danger of breaking to pieces.

<sup>5</sup> The sailors were terrified and each cried for help to his own god. They threw the ship’s cargo into the sea to make the ship lighter. Meanwhile Jonah had gone down into the bottom of the ship and lay fast asleep.

<sup>6</sup> The captain of the ship went and said to him, ‘How can you sleep? Call on your god; perhaps that god will think of us, so that we may not be lost.’

<sup>7</sup> The sailors said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots to discover on whose account this evil has come upon us.’ So they cast lots, and the lot indicated Jonah.

<sup>8</sup> So they said to him, ‘Are you to blame for this? Tell us, what is your business, and where do you

come from? What is your country and to what people do you belong?’

<sup>9</sup> He replied, ‘I am a Hebrew, and a worshipper of the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’

<sup>10</sup> Then the men were greatly frightened and said to him, ‘What have you done?’ For they knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

<sup>11</sup> Then they said to him, ‘What should we do to you, to make the sea calm for us?’ For the sea grew more and more stormy.

<sup>12</sup> He said to them, ‘Take me up and throw me into the sea, and the sea will be calm for you, for I know that it is because of me this fierce storm has overtaken you.’

<sup>13</sup> But instead the men rowed hard to get back to the land; they could not, however, for the sea grew more and more stormy ahead.

<sup>14</sup> So they cried to the LORD and said, ‘We beg you, LORD, we beg you, don’t let us die for this man’s life, and don’t let us be guilty of shedding innocent blood, for you are the LORD; you have done as it pleases you.’

<sup>15</sup> And they took up Jonah, and threw him into the sea; and the sea became calm.

<sup>16</sup> Then the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice and made vows to him.

<sup>17</sup> But the LORD arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

*Jonah’s song*

**2**

<sup>1</sup> Jonah prayed to the LORD his God, out of the belly of the fish,

<sup>2</sup> and said:

I cried out of my distress, to the LORD  
and he answered me;  
out of the midst of Sheol I cried aloud,  
and you heard my voice.

<sup>3</sup> For you cast me into the deep,  
into heart of the seas,  
and the great flood rolled about me;  
all your breakers and your waves  
passed over me.

<sup>4</sup> Then I said, I am driven out,  
away from your sight;  
How will I ever again  
look towards your holy temple?

<sup>5</sup> The waters surrounded me,  
the great deep engulfed me,  
the sea weeds were wrapped about my head.

<sup>6</sup> I went down to the roots of the mountains;  
the prison of the earth closed over me forever.

Yet you brought up my life from destruction,  
O LORD my God.

<sup>7</sup> As my life slipped away,  
I remembered the LORD;  
and my prayer reached you,  
in your holy temple.

<sup>8</sup> Those who worship worthless idols

abandon their own mercy,  
<sup>9</sup> but I will sacrifice to you  
with loud thanksgiving!  
I will pay that which I have vowed.  
Salvation is the LORD's.  
<sup>10</sup> And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it threw  
up Jonah upon the dry land.

### 3

#### *The message to Nineveh*

<sup>1</sup> This message from the LORD came to Jonah the second time,

<sup>2</sup> 'Arise, go to that great city, Nineveh, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.'

<sup>3</sup> So Jonah started for Nineveh, as the LORD commanded. Now Nineveh was so large a city that it took three days' journey to cross it.

<sup>4</sup> Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, and he proclaimed, 'Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown.'

<sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they ordered a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

<sup>6</sup> And when word came to the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his robe, dressed in sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

<sup>7</sup> And he made this proclamation and published it in Nineveh: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: People, beast, herd, and flock shall not taste anything; let them not eat nor drink water.'

<sup>8</sup> Let both people and animals put on sackcloth and let them cry earnestly to God; let them each

turn from their evil ways and from the deeds of violence which they are doing.

<sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may relent and avert his fierce anger, so that we may not die.'

<sup>10</sup> When God saw that they turned from their evil course, he relented the evil which he said he would do to them, and did not do it.

## 4

### *Jonah sulks*

<sup>1</sup> But this seemed very wrong to Jonah and he became angry.

<sup>2</sup> He prayed to the LORD and said, 'Ah, LORD, wasn't this what I said when I was still in my own country? That was why I fled at once to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, patient, and loving and ready to forgive.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore, LORD, I beg you, take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live!'

<sup>4</sup> But the LORD said, 'Are you doing right in being angry?'

<sup>5</sup> Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down on the east side, and there made a hut for himself and sat under it, waiting to see what would become of the city.

<sup>6</sup> And the LORD arranged for a bush to grow up over Jonah as a shade for his head to make him comfortable. The bush gave Jonah great pleasure;

<sup>7</sup> but at dawn the next day God arranged for a worm which attacked the bush, so that it wilted.

<sup>8</sup> And when the sun rose, God arranged a hot east wind. And the sun beat upon Jonah's head,

so that he was faint and begged that he might die, saying, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'

<sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, 'Are you doing right in being angry about the bush?' He replied, 'I have every right to be as angry as I could possibly be!'

*Jonah is rebuked*

<sup>10</sup> The LORD said, 'You care about a bush which has cost you no trouble and which you have not made grow, which came up in a night and wilted in a night.'

<sup>11</sup> Should I not care for the great city Nineveh, in which there are one hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left; and many cattle too?'

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2024-08-08

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PDF generated using Haiola and XeLaTeX on 26 Aug 2024 from source files  
dated 25 Aug 2024

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