

Call to Worship

O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.

**Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wonderful works.**

Glory in his holy name;

let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

**Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually.**

Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgements he has uttered,

**O offspring of his servant Abraham,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.**

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Almighty and loving God,
We come before you with thankful hearts,
rejoicing in your goodness and grace.
You are the Creator of heaven and earth,
the source of all life, and the giver of every good gift.
Your love is steadfast, your mercy is unending,
and your faithfulness reaches from generation to generation.

We praise you for your wisdom that guides us,
your power that sustains us,
and your compassion that never fails.
In Jesus Christ, you have shown us the depth of your love,
seeking the lost, healing the broken, and offering hope to all who trust in you.

When we are weak, you are our strength.
When we are afraid, you are our refuge.
When we wander, you remain faithful.
Therefore, with all your people in every time and place,
we lift our voices in praise and worship,
giving you glory, honour, and thanksgiving.
For you alone are worthy of our praise, now and forever. Amen.

Confession

Lord, you know us completely and love us perfectly.
We come before you to confess our sins and seek your forgiveness.
We confess that we have not loved you with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
We have allowed other priorities to take your place
and have neglected the life of prayer and worship to which you call us.
We confess that we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
We have been impatient and unkind, quick to judge and slow to forgive.
We have missed opportunities to show compassion,
to speak words of encouragement, and to serve those in need.

Forgive us for the things we have done that we should not have done,
and for the good things we have failed to do.
Cleanse our hearts, renew our minds, and restore us by your Holy Spirit.
Grant us the grace to walk more closely with Christ,
to live in the light of your love, and to serve you faithfully each day.
In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

Gracious God, as we come to listen to your Word found in Jonah.
May these words challenge us,
may these words comfort us,
may these words, and our reflecting upon them together,
make us more like Christ, the one in whom we trust and place our lives.
May we hear your voice through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reading

Jonah 3:10 - 4:11

All Age Activity

I want us to think for a moment about fairness and unfairness:

- is it fair if I get one biscuit but my sister gets three biscuits?
is it fair if my brother, sister, and I all get the same length of time playing on the family iPad?
- is it fair if my Mum tidies my bedroom and my brother has to tidy his own room?
- is it fair if my sister and I have to go to bed at the same time as each other?
- is it fair if I get paid more than a woman for doing the same job?
- is it fair if I play football and my team has eleven players and my friend's team only had six?

In our story from the Bible earlier we heard of Jonah being asked by God to go and do something God wanted him to do. But Jonah disobeyed God and was then annoyed at God as Jonah didn't feel it was fair that the people of a big City called Nineveh could be nasty people one minute and then very sorry for what they had done the next minute and receiving God's grace and forgiveness. But, what God wanted Jonah to understand was that God loves people and wants the best for them and that includes us, too, when we run from God, he always allows us to come back and he welcomes us when we say sorry too. Let us pray:

Loving God, we thank you that you are a forgiving God.
That when we are truly sorry and say so to you, you forgive us.
May we learn from Jonah that we can trust you
and that you know what is best for us and all people. Amen.

Sermon Notes

Richard's suggested themes for a sermon:

1. *Obedience and disobedience of Jonah and Nineveh*

One of the striking features of this story is that Nineveh responds more faithfully to God's Word than God's prophet, Jonah. When Jonah delivers God's warning, the people of Nineveh listen, take on board what is said, believe, and repent. In contrast Jonah initially runs away from God's call and obeys somewhat reluctantly.

Key Points:

- God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah fled.
- God pursued Jonah and gave him a second opportunity.
- The Ninevites listened, believed, and repented.
- Even the hardest hearts can be transformed by God's Word.
- God's patience extends both to the prophet and to the city.

2. *Neat Theological categories don't confine God*

Jonah believed that God's mercy belonged to Israel and not to Nineveh. He saw Nineveh as an enemy deserving judgment, not forgiveness. Yet God's compassion extends beyond any limitations we, as humans, might try to place on it. The story challenges narrow views of who deserves and who doesn't deserve God's grace and forgiveness. God's concern is broader than Jonah's, embracing those who the world can often neglect.

Key points:

- Jonah wanted judgement: God saw a bigger picture and always desires repentance and restoration.
- God's mercy reaches further than the limitations we try to put on it.

- No one is beyond God's mercy and forgiveness when they turn, repent, and believe.
- God sees a bigger picture than we see. God knows the heart far more than we do.
- Grace is undeserved and available to all who repent.

3. *Avoiding spiritual pride*

Jonah's main problem was not Nineveh and their sin but his own attitude. He became angry when God showed mercy to the people of Nineveh. Yes, they were a heinous people who did dreadful things. But at this point in their story they turned and repented. Jonah's attitude was one of self-centeredness and showed spiritual pride.

Key points:

- Jonah valued his own comfort more than the salvation of others.
- He was upset by God's mercy rather than rejoicing in it.
- Spiritual pride can make us resent grace shown to others.
- God teaches Jonah that people matter more than comforts.
- We should celebrate, not resent, God's mercy and grace shown to people.

And from an ecological perspective, Andy comments:

If you wish to keep all of September as a season of Creation you might want to explore some of the following themes with the Jonah reading...

Liz Vauadi Vibila notes on [this page](#) from the World Council of Churches that Jonah has a rather selective environmental concern. There's a lot of climatic events in Jonah the storm and it's calming (1:15), God making a plant grow (4:6) and sending a worm (4:7) all playing a part in God's plan in the story. They are used in the text as emissaries of God and yet, in the story, it is only humans who disobey God – especially Jonah who stands for God's faithful people. Might it be that the changing climate patterns we see are also signs from God which we still resist?

Baptist minister, the Revd Dr Simon Woodman, on [this page](#), explores the idea that God's concern with Nineveh included the animals and natural world (see 4.11) If we start with the idea that God's concern included the animals and read back we see the natural world playing a prominent part in the story. The article is worth reading and gives some ideas of where one might go with this text from an ecological perspective.

Offertory

As a part of our worship, we now take up our offertory for the work of God in and through this local church.

(the offertory is taken)

Loving God, we come with these offerings today.
May they be used to further your kingdom here on earth.
Along with these financial offerings we also offer
ourselves, our time, and the gifts you have blessed us with.
We offer them all as part of our worship and praise.
Use them and use us to transform lives.
In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Intercessions

Loving God,
we pray for our nation and for all who lead and serve within it.
At a time when public debate is often marked by division and anger,
we pray for wisdom, integrity, and compassion
among politicians, community leaders, and all who shape public life.
Help us to seek understanding rather than hostility,
and truth rather than fear.
We remember those affected by crime and violence,
and pray for justice, healing, and reconciliation in communities across our land.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are anxious about the economy, rising costs,
employment, and financial security.
Give wisdom to those making economic decisions
and grant hope to those who struggle to provide for themselves and their families.
Strengthen charities, churches, foodbanks, and community organisations
that support those in need.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the National Health Service, for doctors, nurses, carers,
and all who work to bring healing and comfort.
Sustain those who are weary, encourage those facing difficult decisions,
and bless all who care for the sick, the elderly, and the vulnerable.
We remember especially those waiting for treatment
and those living with long-term illness.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all affected by extreme weather and environmental change.
We pray for those living in parts of the world where flooding is an everyday reality,
and where homes could be submerged in the not-too-distant future.
Give us wisdom to care faithfully for your creation

and courage to act for the good of future generations.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for refugees, migrants, and all seeking safety, opportunity, and a place to belong.

Grant wisdom to governments as they shape immigration policies, and help us to welcome one another with dignity, fairness, and compassion, recognising in every person the image of God.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the nations of the world, especially where there is conflict, instability, disease, or humanitarian crisis. Guide world leaders in the ways of peace and strengthen all who work for justice, reconciliation, and human flourishing.

May your Church, Lord, speak up for those often silenced in our world.

May there be a fair sharing of the world's resources so people don't go hungry and thirsty.

Where diseases easily cured in parts of our world and not in others, may see fairness.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Church across the world.

We pray that it would be a place of welcome, restoration, worship, and outreach.

Help us to continue reflecting upon the themes in Jonah.

May the message of the Gospel, the Good News, be shared in word and action in and through our churches and the mission that takes place in them.

May we recognise your call on our lives and may we be faithful in following when you, Lord, lead us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Finally, we remember those known personally to us who are in need of comfort, healing, or support...*(names from a church prayer book could be included)*

Silence may be kept.

Into your loving hands, O God, we commend them, trusting in your unfailing mercy and grace.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Blessing

May God the Father,
whose mercy is wider than our understanding
and whose compassion reaches to all people,
fill you with wonder at the depth of his love.

May God the Son,
who calls us from disobedience into faithful service,
teach you to walk in his ways with humility, grace, and joy.

May God the Holy Spirit,
who softens hard hearts and leads us into repentance and renewal,
help you to rejoice in God's mercy for others as well as for yourselves.

And the blessing of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
God has spoken by his prophets			157	831
Speak, O Lord, as we come to you			161	1350
The Lord's my Shepherd	679	14	480	660
The Lord's my Shepherd (Townend)			481	1008
Be still and know		755	18	48
Change my heart O God				69
I, the Lord of sea and sky		251	663	857
Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy			784	429
Father, I place into your hands	518		519	133
There's a wideness in God's mercy	353	187	416	694
Amazing grace	92	555	440	31
Just as I am without one plea	364	553	556	396

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*