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Daily Devotions
from the United Reformed Church

Jonah



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Wednesday 1st July – Saturday 11th July 2020

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The point is; why do we feel compassion towards small things for which we have no responsibility? God, on the other hand, brought everything into being; therefore we should expect God to have equal compassion towards everything. Nineveh's way of life was the result of ignorance, not culpability. Jonah had completely misunderstood his commission from God. He wasn't being sent to Nineveh in order to condemn it but to let its people know about God and of God's love for them. His message was intended to be a call for Nineveh to repent and receive the good news.

In the story Nineveh has repented but sadly the people still haven't heard anything about the true God because Jonah hasn't told them. They remain in ignorance.

So where does this leave you? – and me? Do people still live in ignorance? May we be ready to go among them with an invitation to discover new life in Christ.

Prayer

Amazing God, your compassion reaches to the ends of the earth and you invite us to show that same compassion towards all that has existence. Help us to respond with joy to your invitation and send us out to the people and places that still need to hear about your love for them. Challenge us to catch the vision of your kingdom come on earth; and in this hope to go in the name of Christ. Amen

Help us to discern your loving purposes at work in our lives when things go well and when they don't.

Teach us to look beyond the blessings we receive that we might praise you for all the experiences that help us grow into the likeness of Christ, who gave his life, so we might live. Amen.

Saturday 11th July Jonah 10

Jonah 4:9-11

But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.' Then the LORD said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?'

Reflection

Having heard Jonah's repeated request to die, God again responds with a question asking Jonah to reflect. The question presumably refers to the demise of the bush and this time Jonah answers God but only to insist that he is justified to feel as he does.

The covenant God then poses a final question to Jonah, which of course is really directed at us, the readers of this story. A contrast is drawn between a wild plant that has a fleeting existence and the inhabitants of Nineveh - not forgetting the animals. It's a rhetorical question that prompts us to think about God's relationship with everything in creation - from a fairly insignificant plant to a huge populated area - and what that reveals about God's nature. It also challenges us to reflect on what is expected of us, as God's people, in our attitudes.

Introduction

I am writing these devotions at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic while we remain in lockdown across Britain. Nonetheless I am approaching the book of Jonah in a way that I hope will highlight its humour; and also its challenge to us, as the people of God, to see the bigger picture of God's grace and mercy from God's perspective, rather than our own.

Jonah appears in one other place in the Old Testament, in 2 Kings 14:25 as a faithful, true, prophet to King Jeroboam II of Israel, which would make him a near contemporary of the prophets Amos and Hosea. However, the book of Jonah was probably written at a much later time (after the Exile, during Persian rule over Judah) as a fictional story built around that otherwise little known prophet. It is often described as a didactic story - intended to teach - and it conveys God's living word to each and every generation that listens to, or reads, it with open hearts and minds.

It is a book full of exaggeration and comic features that verge on absurdity. The author caricatures the prophet, who represents the inward looking, narrow nationalism, attributed to the long-lost Northern Kingdom of Israel. It speaks to a small community of God's people, after exile, who were struggling to establish a new sense of identity and to work out what their role was in a world of empires under a fairly benign government that had no interest in the Jewish faith. The book challenges any mistaken understanding of being chosen by God in terms of 'favouritism', while emphasising the extraordinary length, breadth and depth of God's love towards the recalcitrant prophet - and to all the other inhabitants of earth, both human and animal.

Enjoy the story; but be prepared to learn some things about yourself and God as it unfolds over the next 10 days.

The Revd Dr Janet E Tollington

Wednesday 1st July Jonah 1

Jonah 1:1-3

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, 'Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.' But Jonah set out 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 his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

Reflection

A prophet might expect a word from God with a new commission; but a command to go 'at once' to an enemy nation is unprecedented in scripture. Nineveh became symbolic for the barbaric behaviour of the Assyrians who wiped out the northern kingdom of Israel in the 8th century BCE. It represents the most wicked place imaginable on earth.

How would you respond if God called you to go and confront a regime such as the Khmer Rouge, or the perpetrators of the holocausts at the height of their powers? To call out their wickedness in the name of God?

I suspect I might react somewhat like Jonah and flee in the opposite direction. Nineveh lay far to the east, while Tarshish was possibly in southern Spain, in the far west, each at the end of the known world in the story's context. But Jonah doesn't just renounce his commission, he tries to flee from God.

The open sea was associated with the waters of Chaos by ancient Israelites; a deadly, godless, environment that threatened to overwhelm God's created lands. Sailors were *de facto* foreigners, at best worshippers of other gods and idols. When Jonah buys a passage on a ship he's fleeing to a realm which he believes is beyond God's reach and entrusting himself

further east, sets up camp as though anticipating that God would nonetheless act in some dramatic way against Nineveh. He's behaving somewhat like a sulky, defiant, child who refuses to admit they may have got things wrong.

However, God goes after Jonah and recognises how inadequate Jonah's attempts to shelter himself actually are. God initially provides additional comfort for Jonah against the heat of the day, which delights him. God then removes the protective canopy the following day that prompts a totally opposite response from Jonah; he repeats his request to die. Jonah's reactions are out of all proportion to the situation and his *volte face* is extreme.

This bit of the story reminds us that the natural world is under God's control. Plants flourish, tiny creatures play their part in the cycle of life and death, the weather changes, all through God's creative power. As humans we experience these wonders; and perhaps simply take them for granted all too often without acknowledging that they reveal God's glory. We do well to reflect how little we understand the intricate complexity of the world around us; and how little control over it we really have.

The story also tells us that God's love towards Jonah, who represents God's chosen people, never falters. However much Jonah fails, wherever he goes in an attempt to escape God's presence, he discovers that God is still with him, watching over him, providing for his needs. But God also challenges Jonah to look at things differently and discover more of God.

Am I guilty of imagining I can look after myself or of ignoring God's challenge? God save me from my folly!

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for your presence with us, through the risen Christ, and for the constancy of your love.

finds no place in his heart for forgiveness and reconciliation, even when repentance is shown. Do I?

Prayer

Gracious God, forgive us when we get things out of perspective and focus our prayers on what we want, on what satisfies our desire to see wrongdoing punished.

Forgive us when we imagine that our concepts of justice are the same as yours.

Help us to remember that it is not by merit but by grace that we are accepted as your children.

Renewed by your love may we share it abundantly with the world. Amen.

Friday 10th July Jonah 9

Jonah 4:4-8

And the LORD said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'

Reflection

God's response challenges Jonah to reflect on his behaviour. This isn't what Jonah expected and he turns tail and goes right through the city

to powers and agents he would normally regard fearfully. He is fleeing 'out of the frying pan into the fire'; but also abandoning his covenant relationship with God.

Fear can cause us to make irrational decisions and to forget Christ's promise to be with us always. It can cause us to say 'no' to God's call before stopping to consider how God intends to equip and sustain us for any task. Thankfully, as we will discover from Jonah's story, God never abandons us.

Prayer

Faithful God, forgive us when we run from you and your call to service because we're fearful and feel inadequate for the task.

Forgive us when we seek security from the powers of this world instead of entrusting ourselves to your loving embrace.

Help us to recognise our foolishness and strengthen our faith in you.

Fill us with a desire to serve and a readiness to go wherever you send, that Christ's kingdom might come. Amen.

Thursday 2nd July Jonah 2

Jonah 1:4-6

But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. The captain came and said to him, 'What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.'

Reflection

Jonah was trying to get as far away from God as possible. He had gone *down* to Joppa and now goes *down* to the ship's hold and lays *down*; but God is still present and active, high up in the heavens, controlling both winds and waves. The sailors are frightened, the ship is portrayed as trying to decide how to respond to God's power; but Jonah is fast asleep. I wonder, do we ever turn our backs on the turmoil in the world and hope to sleep through it?

In contrast to Jonah, the ship's crew are all praying to their own gods for help. As the wind is hurled at them, they hurl the cargo overboard; saving their lives is more important than material goods being traded for profit. Jonah sleeps on until the captain wakes him and urges him to call on his god too; but interestingly the text is silent as to whether Jonah responds or not.

All the sailors demonstrate faith in divine power. They believe the gods are in control of the forces of nature; and the gods are the ones who can save them from death. The captain also reveals a deep understanding that a true God has freedom to choose how divine power is wielded. May we always have the humility to realise that people of other faiths have things to teach us, as Christians, about faithful prayer and trust in God.

In any time of trouble it is important that we turn to God in prayer seeking divine help; but we should remember that God already knows our needs and doesn't need to be nudged into action. Our prayers should express our faith and trust in God's eternal love and mercy and our readiness to say, 'Your will be done.'

Prayer

God of power, reveal yourself to us in mighty acts when we hide away and pretend that we can manage life without you.

said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.'

Reflection

Here the depth and extent of God's love is revealed to Nineveh. The people in that city change their minds and renounce their wickedness and there is a divine change of mind in response. Nineveh is not destroyed.

In the Hebrew the same noun (*ra'ah*) is used to describe Nineveh as 'evil' and for the 'calamity' God had intended to inflict on them. The author is making a claim that if God destroyed the Ninevites, who lived in ignorance about the nature of the true God, then God would be acting as wickedly as their behaviour had been. The force of this is lost in most English translations - it is strong stuff! The same noun is used again in 4:1 where it is translated as 'displeasing' with regard to Jonah's reaction. A point is being made: Jonah's anger, Nineveh's wickedness and even destructive action by God are equally 'evil' and contrary to God's nature, which is to love unconditionally.

Jonah prays once more, but in protest to God. In the text Jonah said none of the things he claims to have declared as his reason for fleeing. He dislikes the fact that God is showing kindness to Nineveh. He cites Exodus 34:6, expressing God's covenant commitment towards Israel; an eighth-century Jonah believed this applied solely to the chosen people.

Jonah effectively says to God, 'If you're going to behave like this to other people – especially towards Israel's enemies – then I want no part of it, let me die'. He is throwing the gift of his life back at God.

Jonah wants God to punish Nineveh for its violence towards Israel. He understands justice from his own perspective, in terms of retribution, and

automatically result in divine mercy. God has the freedom and power to enact the divine will irrespective of our prayers.

The way Jonah and Nineveh have been contrasted in yesterday's and today's texts prompts me to wonder whether I am actually rather more like Jonah than I would care to admit. Do I really acknowledge God's supreme authority over all things? Have I really turned towards God in total commitment and done so publically, like Nineveh's king?

I hope I'm more ready than Jonah to say sorry to God when I get things wrong but I pray that I will never presume on God's forgiveness being granted to me as though it is mine by right.

Prayer

Holy God, we rejoice that you reveal yourself in ways beyond our comprehension.

We rejoice that you can touch the hearts of people even when the good news has not yet been proclaimed to them.

We pray for those who still live in ignorance of your loving purposes across the world today and we recommit ourselves to 'walking the way' of Jesus in joyful obedience to your call.

In the name of Christ, Amen.

Thursday 9th July Jonah 8

Jonah 3:10 – 4:3

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD and said, 'O LORD! Is not this what I

Lift us up by the working of your Holy Spirit so that we can play our part in resolving the troubles of this world alongside all whom you give us to be our brothers and sisters.

Let us become beacons of hope as we live the life of Christ, confidently, through faith. Amen.

Friday 3rd July Jonah 3

Jonah 1:7-10

The sailors said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, 'Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?' 'I am a Hebrew,' he replied. 'I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.' Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, 'What is this that you have done!' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them so.

Reflection

This part of the story tells of the sailors trying to discern the divine will and purpose by casting lots. This practice was also part of Israel's religious tradition right down to New Testament times (see Acts 2:26). The lot falls on Jonah, identifying him as the cause of their predicament. We see the innate humanity of the sailors who don't immediately respond with anger (or worse) but ask Jonah to explain who he is and question him about what's going on.

Jonah's replies are extraordinary and he fails to answer most of their questions. He identifies as a 'Hebrew', the term used of the community enslaved in Egypt before God's people encountered the covenant God at Sinai and were formed into Israel. His words about the nature of that God,

whom he names as the one he worships, belie what he apparently believed when fleeing the land of Israel (God's realm of influence according to the polytheistic worldview of 8th century Israel) to escape the presence of the LORD.

The last sentence of our passage doesn't correspond with any words attributed to Jonah in his dialogue with the crew. Nonetheless, what he does say affects the sailors deeply; they realise that defying the will of this God is not a very good idea! They are really scared now.

Jonah has spoken the truth about the creative power and presence of God; but his behaviour thus far hasn't demonstrated such belief. Nor have we had any words of contrition from Jonah. Jonah is the only one who hasn't prayed.

I wonder whether we are ever guilty of proclaiming the truth about Christ but failing to live as though we believe it. And I know that my prayer life needs to improve, in good times and bad – what about yours?

Prayer

Creator God, we often struggle to recognise your ongoing work in our world and to discern what you are saying to us today.

Open our hearts and minds, our eyes and ears, to the promptings of your Spirit; and help us to recognise Christ active in the lives of those around us.

Help us to be people of prayer at all times, because only through our relationship with you do we become our true selves. Amen.

Wednesday 8th July Jonah 7

Jonah 3:6-9

When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.'

Reflection

The king hears the news via Nineveh's version of the grapevine. Tyrants usually react badly when they've been by-passed over minor matters, let alone threats of destruction; but here the king responds with abject humility. He issues a decree that retrospectively confirms the action of the populace but makes the fast total; and extends it to the animals. Have you ever tried preventing sheep and goats from eating the pasture on which they stand?! It suggests a farcical scenario.

He instructs everyone – and the animals – to cry out to God; and we should note that the Ninevites do not call on God by name. How could they? Jonah hasn't uttered God's name yet, or told them anything about God's nature and purposes. The king also commands repentance from evil and violence. If only it was possible to order people to be good! Transforming human hearts is a much more complex and costly process, which is why Jesus came into the world.

However the king displays one profound insight (akin to that of the ship's captain in 1:6), as he acknowledges that human repentance doesn't

where is he speaking out? Who is his audience? Why doesn't he announce himself as a prophet of God? Are his words the message he received from God? - or his personal opinion of what should happen to this wicked city? Jonah says nothing about God, nor gives any indication why, or how, this destruction will come.

Irrationally the Ninevites believe God, who hasn't been mentioned; and the population at large proclaim a fast - a traditional response to a national emergency - and embark on a public show of mourning.

It's easy to miss all the unexpected or unexplained aspects of this short narrative; but then we miss its powerful message for us.

First, God's call on our lives will be repeated until we respond appropriately, so we may as well stop prevaricating and say 'yes'.

Secondly, God has ways of communicating with humanity that don't depend on us being faithful messengers; but chooses us to be witnesses to the gospel in Christ's name.

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for continuing to love me and to trust me as your spokesperson in the world, especially when I've failed to fulfil your expectations.

Forgive me when I'm half-hearted in my service, or if I distort your message of love for the world, preferring to condemn what offends me. Work your miracle of grace in me and wherever hearts are hardened, that your kingdom may come. Amen.

Saturday 4th July Jonah 4

Jonah 1:11-16

Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quieten down for us?' For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. He said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quieten down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.' Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. Then they cried out to the LORD, 'Please, O LORD, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man's life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.' So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the LORD even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

Reflection

The sailors ask Jonah what they should do to resolve the situation, which was getting worse. Jonah admits he's the problem and seems willing to bear the consequences; he tells them to hurl him into the sea. However this response leaves the responsibility for throwing Jonah to his death, firmly on their shoulders. Jonah could have taken responsibility himself and acted to save the ship and its crew by jumping overboard!

The sailors, though, respond by risking their own lives and going to great lengths trying to reach shore and save Jonah too; but to no avail. Then, remarkably, they (not Jonah!) cry out in prayer to Jonah's God, by name, asking that God won't hold them guilty of taking an innocent man's life, if they do as Jonah suggests. Declaring this as God's will, they hurl Jonah into the sea and the storm ceases. The sailors immediately worship the God of Israel wholeheartedly. Have they converted from their own faiths to Yahwism? Or have they added Israel's God alongside whichever gods they previously worshipped? The text doesn't say - but either way, unbeknown

to Jonah and contrary to his intentions, he has brought pagan sailors into a meaningful relationship with the one true God. Where that relationship goes is left to God and them.

God saw an opportunity to reach out and touch the hearts of people who hadn't heard the gospel. Jonah simply revealed God's name and referred briefly to the power of God; and that opened the way for a relationship to begin.

This encourages me to believe that God can use my inadequate (and at times, reluctant) efforts at sharing the good news of Christ with others, to draw them into faith. It doesn't matter *what* we say, as long as we say *something* about God and Christ as we engage with others.

Prayer

Almighty God, thank you for reaching out in love to all the peoples on earth.

Thank you for coming in Jesus to reveal yourself more fully, that we might know you and be drawn into relationship with you.

Forgive us when we keep silent about our faith because we don't know what to say.

Help us speak of you as a natural part of every conversation with others, trusting your Spirit to complete your work. Amen

We rejoice that you hear our prayers and discern our heartfelt need of you, even if we pretend otherwise.

We rejoice that your love is stronger than the powers of death; and that in Christ you lift us up from seemingly hopeless situations and set us back on the pathway to life. Amen.

Tuesday 7th July Jonah 6

Jonah 3:1-5

The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, 'Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.' So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

Reflection

So, with Jonah, we're back where the story began – almost. The narrator tells us that God makes a second attempt at commissioning Jonah but there are subtle differences in God's words. In both 1:2 and 3:2 the Hebrew reads, 'Get up, go...', so the urgency of the mission conveyed in 1:2 was introduced by the translator, who omits it here. That decision emphasises the contrary nature of Jonah who, of course, complies immediately this time! Here, though, the text indicates that God is giving Jonah an actual message to convey to Nineveh; but we are not told what it is.

Off goes Jonah obediently; or does he? Nineveh's size is greatly exaggerated but Jonah only begins to enter it. When he's less than half way to its centre, he proclaims the impending destruction of the city. But

Reflection

Now the comedy really begins. Jonah is drowning in the waters of Chaos and God appoints one of the monsters of the deep to eat him. Three days elapse (in Hebrew thought meaning Jonah's on the point of death: 1 Sam.30:12, cf. John 11:39); and then for the first time Jonah prays to God. But his prayer is unexpectedly one of thanksgiving, not a prayer for help!

In the narrative context, Jonah has gone down as far as humanly possible from the presence of God; but his prayer is full of phrases reflecting a close dependence on God, an acceptance of God's will and gratitude to God for listening to him and rescuing him. None of these phrases correspond to anything Jonah has said or done in the text; and they are strangely confusing when read carefully. They imply that Jonah is in the water, not a creature's belly; and at one moment suggest he is at the surface (waves), then near the shore (reeds), then at the bottom of the sea (roots of mountains, the Pit). He accuses God of driving him away (v.4) but Jonah was fleeing; he claims to have prayed for help (v.2) when he hasn't; and concludes with a declaration of faith and a promise about future sacrifices (v.9) which sound ludicrous in his current situation.

The story ends as God instructs the sea-creature to vomit (the meaning of the Hebrew) Jonah back onto dry land, without specifying a location.

Most of the phrases in Jonah's prayer are drawn from the Psalms and would have been recognised by the first hearers of this story. Perhaps the author is conveying a universal human truth, that anyone in a desperate situation tends to cry out for divine help, often incoherently, drawing on any remembered traditions. Praise God that the Spirit intercedes on our behalf to turn groaning into prayer.

Prayer

Sovereign God, we rejoice that you never abandon us but watch over us, even in what we might consider the darkest, most god-forsaken, places.

Sunday 5th July Psalm 4

The Rev'd George Watt, Minister, Reigate Park URC

1 O God, defender of the poor,
have mercy when I pray:
you listened to my prayer before
Lord, hear my prayer today!

2 How long will people
choose vain things,
love empty words and wrong?
They scorn to serve the King of kings
O living God, how long?

3 The saints, O Lord, you set apart
by grace to be your own:
let sinners tremble,
search their hearts,
and bow before your throne.

4 While many pray that you will bless
and bring them all they need,
unless they long for holiness
their prayers are vain indeed.

5 Your light, O Lord, let us receive,
your face within us shine:
for richer is the joy you give
than all their corn and wine.

6 And even when I turn to sleep
your blessings still increase,
for you alone, O Lord, will keep
your child in perfect peace.

Christopher Idle from Psalm 4 © Christopher Idle/Jubilate Hymns Ltd

Tune Brother James' Air

Reflection

I doubt I will ever have an audience with the Queen. I am not anyone of any consequence and haven't achieved any great accolade. Although I did once have lunch with Prince Charles when I was 15.....along with 20 or 30 others! What a privilege then to be able to come into the presence of King of kings, or as other translations put it "the one who deserves all the glory", and converse with God! The Psalmist is under no illusion that they or we deserve to do so. We are able to come to God because we are poor and God looks to defend us in our poverty (which is as much about lack of

power as it is about wealth). We come because we know we are sinners and God is merciful.

The Psalmist has learnt that they need to seek God and His truth rather than false gods, delusions and making wrong choices. Over recent months we have come to see what is important and valuable is not possessions but relationships and that important commodity - love. As we emerge from this crisis there are important decisions to be made as to whether we should return to striving after material things or rather seek spiritual riches, expressed here as holiness. And it is not just our own personal decisions that are important it is also about what our national and world leaders invest in. God's light and glory which we are called to reflect brings joy and is more important than building bigger barns and larger wine presses.

As we rest in God we can know peace and protection. In whom or what will we trust?

Prayer

Dear Lord, as we look at our world, your world, help us to see beyond what it has been and look instead to see what it might be. Open our eyes and ears to hear you speaking and leading as we offer you ourselves and our prayers for the world and its leaders. May your glory shine even in the darkest corners through your faithful servants.

[Monday 6th July Jonah 5](#)

Jonah 1:17 – 2:10

But the LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying,

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

You cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.

Then I said, "I am driven away
from your sight;
how shall I look again
upon your holy temple?"

The waters closed in over me;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped around my head
at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me for ever;
yet you brought up my life from the Pit,
O LORD my God.

As my life was ebbing away,
I remembered the LORD;
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.

Those who worship vain idols
forsake their true loyalty.
But I with the voice of thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Deliverance belongs to the LORD!

Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.