

Jonahs Cry

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 September 2026

Preacher: Gordon Macleod

[0:00] Well, for those who have good memories, you might remember that we, a long time ago, I think I was first here in 2024.

And we did a study in Jonah chapter 1. And then in May last year, we did a second study in Jonah chapter 1. And just to refresh your memories as to what we had looked at when we looked at Jonah chapter 1, verses 1 to 3, or only did we look at who Jonah was, that we had confirmation that Jonah was a prophet, as we read in 2 Kings 14, that he was the son of Amittai, that Jesus had spoken of him as a sign.

We then looked at what happened at the beginning of the book of Jonah. And in particular, we asked the questions that you see on the screen there.

What is the Word of God? And we saw that it's the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament, which were inspired by God, given to the prophets, and then through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. And we saw that God's Word was a lamp to our feet to guide us along life's journey. And we learned the importance of meditating upon God's Word.

[1:23] And again, as Christians, we have a duty and a command to go and make disciples, to teach God's Word. And the reminder of the promise that as we go, we don't go by ourselves, we don't go in our own strength.

We spoke of the Great Commission being a co-mission, and the promise that had been given, that Jesus would be with us to the end of the age. And then what was the Word that was given to Jonah?

Well, it was a message to go, a message to go and preach to the people of Nineveh, because their sin had come up before them. And we looked at the relevance of that for our own time and place here in Carlewy, when we looked at the figures of the number of people that have stopped coming to church, that say that they have no religion, and the importance of using the opportunities that God gives us to be living witnesses as we seek to go out with His Word.

Then we looked at the response of Jonah to the Word of God as it came to him. And we saw that the response of Jonah was to run. He tried to get away from the presence of God.

And we saw that that took him in a downward direction. He had originally risen up, as we read, that Jonah rose, but then he went to flee.

[2:49] And we looked at the fact that Jonah may actually have been in a posture of prayer as God spoke to him, reminding us of the importance of staying close to God and not letting the devil get a foothold, that we may be drawn away from God's Word.

And then finally, we asked the question, a question that we should be asking ourselves each and every time we come to church. What is our response to the Word of God as it comes to us?

Not just thinking about, you know, what was Jonah's response to get up and flee, but what's our response as we read God's Word, as we meditate upon it, as we come and we hear God's Word, what is our response to it, bearing in mind that God speaks to each one of us individually?

And then when we came back in May, we looked at the fear, the three fears that led to the salvation of the mariners that were on the boat with Jonah.

And we reflected on the fact that Jonah's sin and turning away from God didn't just impact Jonah, but it impacted the others that were on the boat.

[4:04] As God tried to capture Jonah and get Jonah to do what he wanted him to do, how the others were caught up in the storm that had been hurled upon the sea.

And the fear of the situation and the circumstances that the sailors found themselves in, they had left the harbour, there was no word of a storm, but as we said, God suddenly hurled a storm upon the water.

And the fear that they had that drove them, not to God, but to cry out to their own false gods. The fear of the situation that they were in.

They didn't cry out to God. And then there was the fear of the knowledge of God. They had quizzed Jonah. When the lot fell upon Jonah, they quizzed Jonah as to who he was. And Jonah explained to them, as he testified that he was a Hebrew, that he feared the God who had made the heavens and earth.

And all of a sudden, we read about the fear that the sailors had. But when they found out about who Jonah worshipped, it didn't actually cause them to turn around and worship God.

[5 : 15] They still relied on their own strength. If you remember, they tried to row as hard as they could to shore. And the storm only got worse for them. Relying on their own strength.

And then finally, when they listened to what Jonah had asked them to do, Jonah was thrown over the side of the boat. And the sea became calm. And all of a sudden, the sailors in the boat had witnessed the power of God for themselves.

And in reverent fear, they bowed down to worship him. And made sacrifice. And made vows to him. And that's where the story ended for us the last time that we were together.

So as we come this evening, we've read there that Jonah was thrown into the sea. And God provided a fish. A fish to swallow him.

Much has been said over the years about this fish. Was it a whale? How big was it? And people get caught up in thinking about what size of fish this was.

[6 : 23] How on earth did a fish swallow a man? Sinclair Ferguson warns us against losing sight of what's actually at the center of this story. And there's a quote there.

And I'm sorry, I couldn't remember which book I had taken the quote from. If there is a natural miracle to wonder at, it is essentially the miracle of Jonah's preservation over this extended period of time.

And all the time that Jonah had spent running away from God, God preserved him even when he was thrown into the sea. But the deeper work of grace took place, not in the belly of the fish, but in the heart of the prophet.

Not in the realm of nature, but in the realm of grace. The book of Jonah records a miracle characterized by restoration, not just by preservation.

And that's something for us to keep in mind as we look at Jonah this evening. And as we seek God's guidance in our study, it's recognized that as we come into this meeting this evening, as individuals, different needs, different experiences.

[7 : 37] We may have already come to Christ. We may have been running away from Christ for years. But we're here this evening. And we've come here tonight because God has laid it upon our hearts to be here.

And we rejoice to see you here. And as we meditate upon God's word, as we ask ourselves the questions, how do I come to God? Will God listen to me?

Will God accept me? Let's see how God answered Jonah's prayer as Jonah cried out to him from the belly of the fish.

And I pray that as we study this together, whatever questions you may have, that you'll find answer to them. But most of all, that you'll come to know the true restoration that's available if we come and we believe in Jesus.

We've spoken about the fish. Let's look at the prayer. Jonah's prayer. If we move the slide on, please.

[8 : 44] And we read that Jonah prayed. Sorry. I should say, after a long introduction, if you just wind back, sorry. one second. The verse to remember tonight from the passage that we've read, Jonah chapter 2, verse 9, But I, with the voice of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you what I have vowed I will pay.

Salvation belongs to the Lord. Now we'll come to that, but at the end of everything that Jonah had been through in the first two chapters. His cry at the end is salvation belongs to the Lord.

And that's what we need to hear tonight as we come and study. Supposing you hear nothing else that I say. Salvation belongs to the Lord. And we need to believe in that and we need to come to Him.

But we'll look at Jonah's cry. Jonah prays and we'll see that God hears him. We'll see the experiences that Jonah has as he goes down into the depths of the sea.

But then as he is awakened and as he cries out in prayer. And then the proclamation that we have in verse 9. We'll have a look at that and see what it means for us here tonight in Carliway.

[10:07] So Jonah's prayer. Then Jonah prayed to the Lord, his God, from the belly of the fish. If you're looking for reassurance that wherever you are, whatever situation that you find yourself in, can I pray to God?

Jonah prayed from the depths of the sea in the belly of a fish. He cried out to God. There is nowhere that we can go.

No depths that we can plummet that we cannot call out to God. And Jonah recognized that here. It's unclear as to whether this was a prayer that Jonah prayed every single day.

But we have his prayer recorded here. After three days in the belly of the fish, Jonah cried out to God. No longer is Jonah seeking to flee from the presence of God.

We find him praying. It's said, the first sign of restoration in the heart of the wanderer is that we hear of him praying. And where else do we see that in Scripture?

[11:25] Well, we can see it with the Apostle Paul. Apostle Paul had been persecuting the church and then on the road to Damascus, he had what's commonly known as the Damascus Road experience.

And we read there in Acts 9 verses 8 to 11, Saul got up from the ground but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus.

For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink. Where do we see a similarity with three days and three nights? Jonah was three days and he was blind.

And in Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias and the Lord called to him in a vision, Ananias! Yes, Lord, he answered. The Lord told him to go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul.

For he is praying. Paul, who had set out to persecute the church was now in a posture of prayer crying out to God and God sent Ananias to go and help him.

[12:45] Ananias was reluctant to go but as he was told there, there is Paul and he is praying. And where do we find Jonah? Jonah who had tried to run away from God.

Here he is in the belly of the fish and he is praying. As we turn to look at Jonah's prayer, you will notice even on the screen, but if you have your Bibles before you, you will notice that the normal straight narrative paragraphs that we have very quickly change.

I referred when I was going to ask Ian up to read that we would read the psalm. That is because I have been focusing on the fact that when you actually look at the layout of this in your Bible, it reflects that of a psalm.

The way that it is written, the prose that is used and the layout that the translators have decided to put it there. So as we step through this, you will see references to the psalm as Jonah prays.

But if we reflect back how often when we hear somebody pray, do we hear them quote the psalms and other parts of scripture? So why would Jonah be any different?

[14:04] Jonah, in verse two, I called out to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

We'd seen the sailors in chapter one, in their distress, they called out to their own gods initially. And we see Jonah, after being saved from certain death, having been thrown into the sea, rescued by the fish, there for three days.

We don't see him crying out to a false god. We see him crying out to the Lord God, the one true God. And as we see there, we can reflect on the psalm, how many of our psalms that we sing, that we read, have got very similar wording.

Psalms 18 in verse six, in my distress, I called upon the Lord. To my God, I cried for help, from his temple, he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

And we'll see that some of that reflected in later parts of Jonah's prayer. And then Psalm 120, in my distress, I called to the Lord. And the important part of that verse is, what does it say?

[15:24] And he answered me. Not only did he hear me, but he answered me. The psalmist recognized it, and now Jonah reflects on it.

We sang in Psalm 77, I cried out to God for help. I prayed that God would hear. When I was plunged in deep distress, I sought the Lord in prayer.

And if we were to read it, sorry, I sought the Lord in prayer, and if we were to read it in the ESV, it says, I cried aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. the importance of recognizing that no

matter what situation we might find ourselves in, no matter how far we may feel that we've run away from God, if we cry out to God, we cry out to God, believing in him, he will hear us, and he will answer us.

Psalm 77 is aptly termed, in the day of trouble, I seek the Lord. And we've looked at Psalm 77 before as we've gathered here, recognizing, and we sang it there, that in the day of trouble, the psalmist called out to God.

But what did he then do? He meditated on the wonders that God had done. He called to memory all the great things that God had done, and he praised God for them, and wanted to go on and speak of the wondrous deeds.

[16:57] Out of the belly of shale I cried, and you heard my voice. In the second part of the verse, Jonah tells us where he is when he makes this prayer.

And again, it's reminiscent of the words in Psalm 86 and verse 13. For great is your steadfast love towards me. You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

Words that the psalmist used, that we then see Jonah use. we should never be afraid to cry out to God and tell God exactly how we feel, how far away we may feel at times.

Life can be oppressive, life can be difficult, there are challenges that we face, our faith can be tested. The Psalms teach us that we can cry out to God and tell God how we feel and he will hear us.

but it also reminds us, so often we sing in Psalm 139 or read it, where can we go that we're cut off from God and the answer is given, if even I make my bed and Sheol, you're there.

[18:08] Even in the depths, the depths of the very earth, that God is there and he is only a prayer away for us. And that was Jonah's experience.

And we'll go on to learn that as God waited patiently for him and as he heard us cry, again he inclined his ear to him and we'll find out that God lifted him out of the sea.

So right at the beginning of this chapter, as we get a glimpse into the life of Jonah in the belly of the fish, down in the depths of the sea, we at once get confirmation that despite having tried to flee from the presence of God, Jonah gets the same answer as the psalmist again in Psalm 39, that there is nowhere that he can flee from the presence of God.

And secondly, and probably more importantly for us to hear, that no matter how far we may feel that we have drifted away from God, no matter how far we may have tried to run away from God, but if we are prepared to come and call upon him, he will hear us and he will answer.

We said at the beginning that we come with different situations, different circumstances, we may even be watching online, what we have to remember is that none of us can be too far away from God.

[19:41] If we come and we remember his mercy upon us and that be encouraged that if we do cry out to him, he hears us and he will answer.

Point two, Jonah's experience or Jonah's experiences. We can read in the psalm there, the first part from verses three to the first half of verse six, how Jonah was cast into the depths.

For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the sea, and the flood surrounded me. All your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, I am driven away from your sight, yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.

The waters closed in over me to take my life. The deep surrounded me, weeds were wrapped around about my head. At the roots of the mountain I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever.

As we read there, we read the first part of Jonah's experience as he was cast into the depths of the sea, an experience I'm sure that none of us would want to experience, would want to think, would ever happen to us.

[21:07] Jonah was hurled into the depths of the sea. Who was he cast into the sea by? If we go back into Jonah chapter 1, we see verse 15 there, after the sailors had cried out to God that they wouldn't perish for this man's life, that they wouldn't be found guilty of innocent blood, so they picked him up and hurled him into the sea.

Who does Jonah blame for being cast into the sea? Verse 3, for you cast me into the deep. Jonah tried to run away from God, he had told the sailors what they had to do, but here we see in his prayer that it was God that had cast him into the deep.

Is he reflecting on what the mariners had said at the end of verse 14 there? O Lord, you have done as it pleased you.

That God is in control. That Jonah was recognizing the sovereignty of God, that even while he had tried to take control of the situation, it was really God that was in control.

How direct are we when we speak to God? Do we recognize God's holiness? Do we recognize God's omnipotence? And do we recognize God's sovereignty in each and every situation?

[22:43] Do we ask God why he's teaching us what he's teaching us? Do we recognize that God is in control? Jonah teaches us that even in the darkest of moments we still have to show that God is in control.

And what was Jonah's experience be? we see that he had been thrown into the depths of the sea. We see that he had been cast down into the depths. We see that he even speaks about being barred in.

Barred in in the depths of the sea. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever. Can you imagine being swallowed by a large fish?

What would you see inside a large fish if you can imagine, if you can stretch your imagination to that? You would see the bones of the fish. And maybe it's just my previous career coming back to mind that it looks like the bars of a cell locking them in and whether that's what Jonah had in mind as he prayed this but he went down to the very depths and the bars closed him in forever.

But then we read in verse 6b Yet you brought me up you brought up my life from the pit O Lord my God when my life was fainting away I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to you into your holy temple.

[24:20] Up till now all that we had been aware of with Jonah was that he was going down he had gone down to Joppa down onto the ship he then went down into the ship and then at the end of chapter 1 and as we read here as part of his prayer he went down into the depths of the sea but in one action from God his life is brought up from the pit the pit that he was in his life was ebbing away and what do we read his prayer rose up and God inclined his ear and again we can think of Psalm 40 as we quoted it already there's something to note here as Jonah was lifted up Jonah had gone down Jonah had gone a long way down and what happened before he was lifted up he prayed and in answer to his prayer his prayer had to rise up to

God and God answered his prayer God knew that Jonah was in the belly of the fish God had sent the fish to swallow Jonah God knew that Jonah couldn't survive indefinitely in the belly of the fish but God waited for Jonah to call upon him and when Jonah called the Lord lifted him and the Lord lifted him out of the belly of the fish and as we read at the end of the passage Jonah was vomited back up onto dry land psalmist teaches us in psalm 139 I may be jumping ahead of the slides even before a word is on our tongue behold oh Lord you know it all together God knows what's on our heart he knows the words before we even form them what does

Peter teach us in 1 Peter 5 and 7 casting all your anxieties on him but he cares for you we have to come and cast our anxieties we have to come and speak to God God knows our every situation but we have to come and speak to God we have to come and ask him and what do we see about Jonah Jonah had been a proud man he had tried to run away from God before we come to 1 Peter 5 and 7 there's an important verse that we need to look at in 1 Peter 5 and 6 humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God why so at the proper time he may exalt you the proud Jonah who thought he could flee from God we find him here he's been humbled humbled by the experience and now we find them praying crying out to God crying out to God that he would be lifted up again I ask you the question what is your experience this evening do you feel your life is slipping away that you're losing control do you feel as

Jonah did that he was cast into the sea and went down into the depths Jonah had a solution he prayed to God do you feel that you need to cry out to God tonight that you've been running away you've been hearing him calling you but you've continued to run away from him don't wait until you hit the depths call out to him now and as the psalmist says he will lift you up when you call upon him don't keep running as we said before the quote from Spurgeon if the hound of heaven is sniffing you out he will find you God loves you he calls to you to come don't keep running and just in conclusion Jonah's proclamation when we were together in May last year we looked at how verses 8 and 9 those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love but I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you for I have vowed

I will pay salvation belongs to the Lord and we reflected on the fact that as Jonah prayed that prayer he had left the boat and those that were on the boat he had only witnessed them crying out to vain idols and as Jonah was praying on the bottom of the sea how the sailors having seen God's power had come in reverent fear and made vows and sacrificed before the Lord and we can see and it's something just in closing and we'll probably come back to this verse again and again as we continue through the book of Jonah salvation belongs to the Lord in all honesty if the book of Jonah was to finish right here in many respects we would have no qualms about what we've seen and what we've heard Jonah a prophet had tried to flee from the presence of God during this attempt a group of pagan sailors who endured a violent storm who then threw him into the sea came to faith in God salvation belongs to the Lord but then the prophet was saved from the depths of the sea by a great fish commanded by God to swallow and after reflecting on his position the prophet called out to God was restored and reconciled to God and recognised that salvation is of the [30:45] Lord in many respects we would say Amen and move on to read Micah but that's not the end of the story God has still got dealings with Jonah but let's not ignore the important statement from Jonah here at the end of verse 9 while Jonah may have been reflecting on his own salvation salvation from death as he went down into the depths we cannot ignore the truth of the statement that salvation belongs to the Lord we can't work out our own salvation salvation belongs or is of the Lord and we saw the cry of the captain in chapter 1 when he came to wake up Jonah remember Jonah had fallen asleep and all the storm was breaking round about them and in

Jonah 1 at verse 6 the captain came and he said to him what do you mean you sleeper arise call out to your God perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish I don't know if that's your cry tonight that you may not perish but the cry that went up and we'll see the exact same cry go up in chapter 3 from another leader to turn to call out to God that we may not perish and giving a recognition to a well known verse for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life Jonah we were told by Jesus was to be a sign he spent three days in the belly of the fish but there's other signs that point us to Jesus as we read through the book of Jonah we looked at the casting of lots but we can't ignore the plea of the captain and as Jonah tells us that salvation belongs to the Lord it looks as if even the pagan captain recognized that if they called out to God that they would not perish God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world as verse 17 goes on but in order that the world might be saved through him the God who inclined his ear to Jonah and lifted him up will incline his ear to any who call upon them even in their distress because not only is he the Lord from whom salvation comes but because he is a God of compassion and a God of mercy and he has showed compassion and mercy to Jonah he will show that same compassion and mercy to us or to any that call upon him even tonight if you're hearing God call upon you tonight answer his call by saying I come or I will go for you because we know that we have a God that desires that none of us would perish he rescued Jonah from the sea Jonah who had tried to run away from him and Jonah had to come and humble himself maybe know what it is to humble ourselves before God and call upon him that we would know his forgiveness let us pray to him him to him to him to him