

Worship From Home

Darn It, God, I Knew You'd Do That!

24 January 2021

Welcome & Centring Time

Take a moment now and centre yourself deeply in the love of God. Plant your feet firmly on the ground; feel your body and how you are sitting (can you open yourself a little more to your breathing?); open your hands to give and receive God's presence. Let your in-breath bring awareness, let your out-breath help you to rest in God's arms. Come into God's presence, let God be present in you.

Centring Words

Psalm 62.5-6

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

Chant & Candle Lighting

Kindle a Flame to Lighten the dark and take all fear away.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

by Ruth Burgess

Creator God, who made the sea and sky,
who measured the waters in the hollow your hand, you are a God of justice.
Great God, who weighed the mountains in a scale
and the hills in a balance, you are a God of justice.
Righteous God, who accounts the power of nations as dust,
and brings corrupt rulers to nothing, you are a God of justice.
Loving God, in whose sight all people
are precious and valued, honoured and redeemed, you are a God of justice.
God, who calls us each by name, you come among us and give us understanding.
You teach us the way of justice.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil,
for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

One day long ago, God's Word came to Jonah, Amittai's son: "Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Nineveh! Preach to them. They're in a bad way and I can't ignore it any longer."

But Jonah got up and went the other direction to Tarshish, running away from God. He went down to the port of Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went on board, joining those going to Tarshish—as far away from God as he could get.

But God sent a huge storm at sea, the waves towering.

The ship was about to break into pieces. The sailors were terrified. They called out in desperation to their gods. They threw everything they were carrying overboard to lighten the ship. Meanwhile, Jonah had gone down into the hold of the ship to take a nap. He was sound asleep. The captain came to him and said, "What's this? Sleeping! Get up! Pray to your god! Maybe your god will see we're in trouble and rescue us."

Then the sailors said to one another, "Let's get to the bottom of this. Let's draw straws to identify the culprit on this ship who's responsible for this disaster."

So they drew straws. Jonah got the short straw.

Then they grilled him: "Confess. Why this disaster? What is your work? Where do you come from? What country? What family?"

He told them, "I'm a Hebrew. I worship God, the God of heaven who made sea and land."

At that, the men were frightened, really frightened, and said, "What on earth have you done!" As Jonah talked, the sailors realized that he was running away from God.

They said to him, "What are we going to do with you—to get rid of this storm?" By this time the sea was wild, totally out of control.

Jonah said, "Throw me overboard, into the sea. Then the storm will stop. It's all my fault. I'm the cause of the storm. Get rid of me and you'll get rid of the storm."

But no. The men tried rowing back to shore. They made no headway. The storm only got worse and worse, wild and raging.

Then they prayed to God, "O God! Don't let us drown because of this man's life, and don't blame us for his death. You are God. Do what you think is best."

They took Jonah and threw him overboard. Immediately the sea was quieted down.

The sailors were impressed, no longer terrified by the sea, but in awe of God. They worshiped God, offered a sacrifice, and made vows.

Then God assigned a huge fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the fish's belly three days and nights.

Reflecting Song

Abide With Me VU436 vv1&4

Jonah 2 - The Big Fish

The Message ©1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson

Then Jonah prayed to his God from the belly of the fish.

He prayed:

“In trouble, deep trouble, I prayed to God. He answered me.
From the belly of the grave I cried, ‘Help!’ You heard my cry.
You threw me into ocean’s depths, into a watery grave,
with ocean waves, ocean breakers crashing over me.

I said, ‘I’ve been thrown away, thrown out, out of your sight.
I’ll never again lay eyes on your Holy Temple.’

Ocean gripped me by the throat.

The ancient Abyss grabbed me and held tight.

My head was all tangled in seaweed

at the bottom of the sea where the mountains take root.

I was as far down as a body can go,

and the gates were slamming shut behind me forever—

Yet you pulled me up from that grave alive, O God, my God!

When my life was slipping away, I remembered God,

And my prayer got through to you, made it all the way to your Holy Temple.

Those who worship hollow gods, god-frauds,

walk away from their only true love.

But I’m worshiping you, God, calling out in thanksgiving!

And I’ll do what I promised I’d do!

Salvation belongs to God!”

Then God spoke to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah on the seashore.

Reflecting Song

O Day Of God, Draw Nigh VU688

Jonah 3 - The Great Turn Around

The Message ©1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson

Next, God spoke to Jonah a second time: “Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Nineveh! Preach to them. They’re in a bad way and I can’t ignore it any longer.”

This time Jonah started off straight for Nineveh, obeying God’s orders to the letter.

Nineveh was a big city, very big—it took three days to walk across it.

Jonah entered the city, went one day's walk and preached, "In forty days Nineveh will be smashed."

The people of Nineveh listened, and trusted God. They proclaimed a citywide fast and dressed in burlap to show their repentance. Everyone did it—rich and poor, famous and obscure, leaders and followers.

When the message reached the king of Nineveh, he got up off his throne, threw down his royal robes, dressed in burlap, and sat down in the dirt. Then he issued a public proclamation throughout Nineveh, authorized by him and his leaders: "Not one drop of water, not one bite of food for man, woman, or animal, including your herds and flocks! Dress them all, both people and animals, in burlap, and send up a cry for help to God. Everyone must turn around, turn back from an evil life and the violent ways that stain their hands. Who knows? Maybe God will turn around and change his mind about us, quit being angry with us and let us live!"

God saw what they had done, that they had turned away from their evil lives. He did change his mind about them. What he said he would do to them he didn't do.

Reflecting Song

There Is Room For All MV62

Jonah 4 - The Big Baby

The Message ©1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson

Jonah was furious. He lost his temper. He yelled at God, "God! I knew it—when I was back home, I knew this was going to happen! That's why I ran off to Tarshish! I knew you were sheer grace and mercy, not easily angered, rich in love, and ready at the drop of a hat to turn your plans of punishment into a program of forgiveness!

"So, God, if you won't kill them, kill me! I'm better off dead!"

God said, "What do you have to be angry about?"

But Jonah just left. He went out of the city to the east and sat down in a sulk. He put together a makeshift shelter of leafy branches and sat there in the shade to see what would happen to the city.

God arranged for a broad-leafed tree to spring up. It grew over Jonah to cool him off and get him out of his angry sulk. Jonah was pleased and enjoyed the shade. Life was looking up.

But then God sent a worm. By dawn of the next day, the worm had bored into the shade tree and it withered away. The sun came up and God sent a hot, blistering wind from the east. The sun beat down on Jonah's head and he started to faint. He prayed to die: "I'm better off dead!"

Then God said to Jonah, "What right do you have to get angry about this shade tree?"

Jonah said, "Plenty of right. It's made me angry enough to die!"

God said, "What's this? How is it that you can change your feelings from pleasure to anger overnight about a mere shade tree that you did nothing to get? You neither planted nor watered it. It grew up one night and died the next night. So, why can't I likewise change what I feel about Nineveh from anger to pleasure, this big city of more than 120,000 childlike people who don't yet know right from wrong, to say nothing of all the innocent animals?"

Minister's Reflection

Offering Time

God has given us many gifts; in giving, we symbolize God's generosity.
We acknowledge the gifts given and those we have received in our lives,
especially those we love, those who have taught us,
the earth and all its goodness; life and its abundance.
God continues to bless us and makes us a blessing to others.

Offering Prayer

We are thankful, God, for all that we have in our lives.
We have been blessed; make us a blessing to others

Meditation

Blessing

Christ has no hands but our hands; to do God's work in the world.
Christ has no lips but our lips; to proclaim the Good News.
Christ has no love but our love;
to share with the imprisoned, the silenced, the persecuted, the marginalized.
So, be the body of Christ; the sacred dwelling of God's presence in the world.

Closing Song

God Beyond Knowledge *words by Pat Bennett, music SLANE, Irish Traditional*