



## **Worship at Home—6 September 2020**

**The Scripture Readings are taken from:**

**Jonah Chapters 3 and 4  
and  
Romans 13: 8-14**

### ***Call to Worship***

The Creator of the Universe calls us to leave the darkness behind and live in the light.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who lived and died and rose again, greets us this day.

The One who danced at Creation's birth calls us now into their presence.

So come, let us worship.

### ***Opening Prayer***

O God, You adorn the poor binding rulers in chains and causing people to rejoice.

Rise up, O God, anew, adorn Your creation, bind all that seeks to destroy it, that we may not perish, but live.

O God, we grieve those who have died from Covid-19, lives lost from all over our land; friend and relative, old and young, fit and frail, care-worker and bus driver, nurse and doctor.

As we grieve we have to accept failures to plan, failures to learn the lessons, our failures to care for our world, its people and creation,

Forgive us and help us good Lord, Help us to turn our sorrow into action, our frustrations into grace

God you are the source of all mercy and life You sent Jesus among us to know our humanity and suffer with us

And you have sent the Holy Spirit amongst us

To equip us as your saints, to forgive our failings, and to fine tune our hearts.

You are the one who can give us the energy to think, respond and proclaim hope.

And so send your Holy Spirit upon each one as we hear your Word this day

Enable, forgive, comfort and strengthen us

Bless each and all according to our need

That we may feel your light shining upon us

And lift our eyes to your glory

Hear our hearts as we share together your Son's Holy Prayer.

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

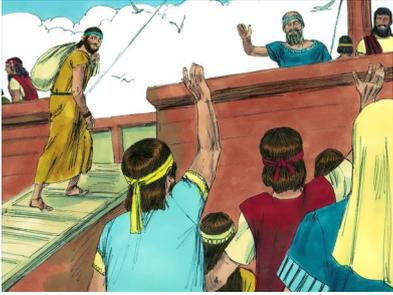
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever.

AMEN

## Scripture Readings

### Jonah Chapters 3 and 4



#### Chapter 3—Jonah Goes to Nineveh

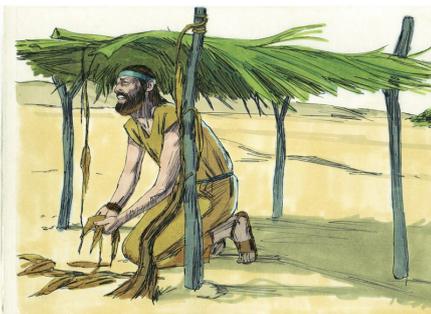
Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles:

Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.



#### Chapter 4—Jonah’s Anger at the Lord’s Compassion

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord, “Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

But the Lord replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, “It would be better for me to die than to live.”

But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”. “It is,” he said. “And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.”

But the Lord said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?” Should I not be concerned about that great city?

## Romans 13: 8-14

### Love Fulfills the Law

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

### The Day Is Near

And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.



It is with great sadness that we have to intimate the death of:

Mr James Gifford Nicolson,  
31 Muir Wood Crescent

Please pray for the family

## Sermon in Lockdown

We heard the story of the book of Jonah the prophet.

Normally when we think of prophets we think about people like Ezekiel, Isaiah, or John the Baptist; all sober, serious men who were so in tune with their life of prayer that the rest of the world saw them as odd, they did strange things like eating scrolls or locusts, they had strange visions, wore strange clothes like sackcloth or camel hair. They lived in solitude, without comforts and they obeyed the voice of God.

In the Hebrew scriptures, the prophets were God's voice to the masses. God used to cut covenants that he asked his people to keep.

Despite the free will that God gave to his people, God did not have a laissez faire policy. Through the prophets, God cajoled his people, reminded them, sent them signs to warn, to call them to repent. It was the prophets job to do all this reminding, cajoling, warning, and calling to repentance.

However Jonah is a prophet unlike all the others.

For one thing, while Ezekiel or Isaiah wrote verses and chapters of prose, poetry, and prophecy, Jonah's one sermon was only eight words long:

"Forty more days and Ninevah will be destroyed."

Not a very caring or loving sermon . . . a repetition of something he had been told to say like a child being punished, writing lines on the blackboard.

While we remark on the brevity of Jonah's sermon, it worked. One hundred and twenty thousand people in Ninevah repented as a result of that sermon. From the youngest to the oldest and even the King himself, the Ninevites turned their hearts to God. They received God's mercy and were restored into a right relationship with God.



Jonah's brief sermon saved Ninevah from destruction and damnation. Darren says to me, "Easter Maybe brevity is the way forward!"

But in the story, Jonah doesn't boast about his success, he resents it. Jonah goes in the huff.

From our Sunday School days, we recall that Jonah hadn't wanted this lousy job in the first place. Unlike prophets who went out of their way to obey God, Jonah literally went out of his way to try to disobey God.

God wanted Jonah to go far away to preach to a group of people he didn't even like. As far as Jonah was concerned, the Ninevites had it coming. Everyone knew the bad reputation of the Ninevites. They were scheming idol worshipping-heathens. They were untrustworthy scammers. Jonah didn't want to proclaim God's mercy to them—he didn't want God to give them a chance.

And so, as you remember, Jonah fled to Tarshish to avoid the job. He got on a ship and God sent a storm to disturb the boat. The sailors thought it was Jonah's fault and they were right, so they threw him off. Soon he was swallowed up by a whale. After three days of begging he was unceremoniously spewed onto shore. That's how Jonah had a "whale of a time!"

And so, Jonah reluctantly agreed to go to Nineva. In a theatrical sense this really is a very funny and entertaining story—as the author intended.

If there is anything to learn from Jonah, it's that not every story in the bible is supposed to be taken literally.

There was a little girl talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it is a large mammal, its throat is very small. The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. The teacher grew irritated and repeated that a whale cannot swallow a human, it is physically impossible. The little girl said, "When I get to heaven, I will ask Jonah." The teacher responded, "what if Jonah went to hell?" Well she said, "Then You can ask him." (George Morrison)

So many people think that because the bible is the word of God, then it can't be funny, but the bible is full of humour.

Jonah's story is in fact an allegory, a morality tale . . . not so much a true story as a 'caricature,' or a cartoon. Like the coyote in the road runner cartoons who falls off the cliff and bounces back. Jonah gets swallowed by a whale that spits him out again. The story is full of ludicrous contrasts: On the one hand, he's a public success; and on the other, he's a personal disaster.

The serious issue of Divine judgement and forgiveness is depicted along side the ill-temper of an unwilling prophet. And God's power over sea, fish and plants is contrasted with Jonah's self-centred, grumpy disobedient demeanour.

This short story may not be a source of factual truth, it is undoubtedly a story of spiritual truth.

In today's scripture we find him sitting and sulking under a big plant. Maybe we have seen our kids like that when they don't want to go to school with a mask or when they didn't get to see friends on their birthday. It doesn't seem fair.

I remember a story of a little boy in church. His mum gave him a pound to put in the offering plate. He wanted to keep the pound but his mum said to give it to Jesus. When the plate came around the boy looked in and shouted, "It's not fair, Jesus has enough money!"

Jonah is sad and mad because he thinks it isn't fair. He had gone all that way to deliver a message of condemnation to those people he hated so much and in the end, God didn't condemn, God forgave.

He complains to God, "That is why I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish.

I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."

Jonah really wanted God to show those Ninevites some hell fire, yet God had given them a chance and miraculously they all turned towards God! We develop affection for Jonah. He has to go around preaching doom but he knows that the doom isn't going to happen because God is merciful.

As Jonah sat sulking under the big plant, God tried to help him learn a lesson. God wanted him to see a different point of view. God sent a worm to get at the plant that was providing shade. That made Jonah even madder. But God says to him, “Jonah you don’t have a right to be in the huff. Did you create the plant? No, I created the plant.” God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” “It is,” he said in a stropy melodramatic way. “In fact, I’m so angry I might as well die! ”

Then God explained, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?”

Even though Jonah himself was forgiven by God, and released from a whale, he cares more about the plant than the people of Nineva.” The Ninevites turned from their evil ways yet, Jonah refused to share God’s joy. He is fuming.

This was the lesson Jonah needed to learn. God’s love exceeds our understanding. The bible is full of stories that show us that God loves sinners and saints alike. God sees the potential for good in us and gives everyone second chances.

We see this in the life and parables of Jesus. How much time did Jesus spend with sinners and tax collectors—freeing them from sin and shame. How the father in the parable rejoiced when the Prodigal Son came home. And yet, like Jonah the older brother struggled to rejoice. We wonder if he ever did join the welcome home party.

This is the vastness of God’s love; to send his Son to us, to allow him to die for us so that our sins can be forgiven and that we have a foot in eternity because our lives have been won over by everlasting divine love. That is how God’s love can be perfected in us—when we look to Jesus. The symbol of our hope, the symbol of our love is the cross.

To follow Jesus we have to love like God.

There was a story of a crooked lawyer who got into some trouble. He went to church and as he began reading the bible he made a miraculous decision. He decided to write to all his clients and cancel any debts they had owed for the last six months. He wrote seventeen official letters laying out his plan and he sent them off. But sixteen of the seventeen letters came back unopened and undelivered. His clients had refused to sign for the letters or open them because they feared he was suing them for the debts they owed. They didn’t realise it was already cancelled.

This is what Jonah didn’t quite understand—or maybe he just didn’t want to even though he knew God was generous. God loves us so much that he waits for us. He seeks us out and offers fresh starts and new chances. He cancels our debts and forgives our sins. He invites us into his love.

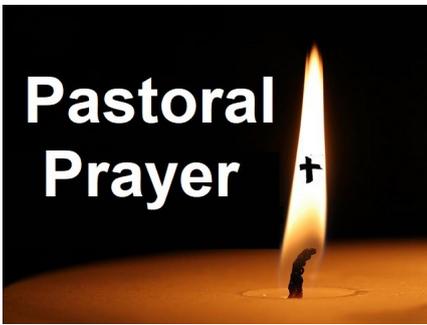
There is no scale of worthiness or unworthiness that can merit such generous love. We are all unworthy. Yet God wishes to love us generously and he wants us to love generously.

This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Roman Churches, saying,

*“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law”.*

The commandments are summed up in one simple rule:

*“Love your neighbour as you love yourself. Because God loves you and your neighbour.”*



## Prayer for Others

Lord God, fill your world with wonder at your creation  
And help us all to recognise our mutual human responsibility to care for it  
Help us to inspire others to believe in the possibilities of living at peace  
With one another and with You.

Fill our homes and community O God  
With the generosity and trust that allows space for difference  
But is always ready to encourage and support

We pray for all who are ill at home or in hospital or care homes  
We pray for those responding to emergencies or casualties  
For those who have just received news of diagnoses or illness.  
We pray for the work of all in the medical profession who can provide care  
We ask you to provide and bless all who are willing to listen  
For all who heal and comfort,  
Help us to be here for one another in these socially distanced times.

We pray for the dying and those who love them, and we pray that you sustain those who are making their  
journey through death to life in you. Comfort their loved ones and all those who are bereaved.

Fill our hearts O god  
With thankfulness and praise  
As we recall the love we have given and received,  
And as we recall your faithfulness and live in your love.

Accept our prayers  
For the sake of Jesus Christ who saves us from our worst and who promises always to be with us.  
Amen.



## Update from Currie Kirk

From **Tuesday 8th September** and throughout the month of September, Nina will be in the office from 9.30—12.30 (Tuesdays only) which will allow you to bring along your knitting.

The electronic doors will be open and two boxes will be placed on a table in front of the swing doors to accommodate any deliveries.

Hand Gels will be available. You must wear masks when entering and exiting the Hall. Entry beyond the swing doors is not allowed.

The hats will be stored on the stage until Meg is ready to pick them up in early October.

Also—if you have any milk bottle tops or stamps—there will be separate boxes for these in the corridor. Nina has visions of you opening a cupboard and all the milk bottle tops spilling out that you have been saving since lockdown!!



# FreshStart

helping people make a home for themselves

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## Virtual kiltwalk WEEKEND 11 - 13 SEPT 2020

### WHAT IS IT?

The Kilt Walk is taking place virtually this year in line with social distancing and making sure everyone stays safe! The beauty of this means YOU get to choose the distance and activity you would like to undertake to complete your Kilt Walk challenge. You might want to do the traditional walk, or you can run, swim, kayak, cycle – whatever takes your fancy!

### WHEN IS IT?

As the Kilt Walk is taking place virtually, it will take place across the weekend of **11TH - 13TH SEPTEMBER**.

### WHERE IS IT?

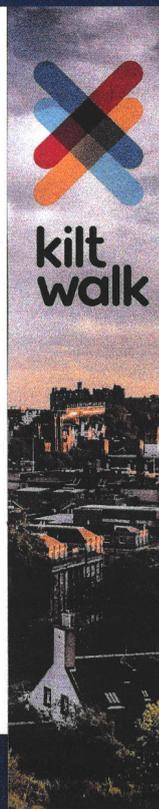
Anywhere you want! The excitement of the virtual walk allows you to plan your own route. You may want to carry out your Walk around the City and take in the sights, or you may want to head out East or West and explore the countryside and coastal trails.

### WHO CAN DO IT?

Everyone is welcome to take part and as you are planning your own activity and route, you can tailor this to your level of fitness or choose to challenge yourself! Fresh Start have several staff teams taking part with their family and friends, so if you don't feel up to it, you can always sponsor Team Fresh Start. Whatever you are choose to do, remember to bring plenty of water, wear sensible footwear and adhere to all social distancing guidelines.

### WHY DO IT?

This is a great opportunity to get some exercise and do something that you enjoy and raise some much needed funds for Fresh Start. This year, the Hunter Foundation will match fund all monies raised by an amazing 50% meaning that for every £100 raised, Fresh Start will receive £150!



## REGISTER INTEREST AND SPONSORSHIP FORM

### I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE PART IN:

The 2020 Virtual Kiltwalk:

### I WOULD LIKE TO SPONSOR:

Team Fresh Start for the 2020 Kilt Walk for the sum of:

£

Name:

Address:

Contact telephone number:

Email address:

I am a UK tax payer and would like this donation and future donations made to Fresh Start to be treated as Gift Aid:

*In order for Fresh Start to benefit from the 50% match funding, I confirm that I am happy for Fresh Start to hold my personal information for processing and to pass on my details to The Kilt Walk and will be processed accordingly under GDPR regulations*

Signed:

Date:

Please return this form to:  
Fresh Start, 22 - 24 Ferry Road Drive, Edinburgh EH4 4BR

PLEASE COMPLETE THE REVERSE OF THIS FORM TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST IN TAKING PART OR TO SPONSOR TEAM FRESH START



The Guild held its AGM by Zoom on Tuesday 1 September. At that meeting Louise Lamont was elected as the new President and Shona Moyes as Treasurer. Mary Thomson remaining as the Project Treasurer. The project which was voted on by members prior to the meeting is "The Boys' Brigade Scotland".

Those retiring from the Committee were presented earlier in the day with flowers.

We now wish Louise and her new Committee best wishes for the future in these very trying times and look forward to being together in person soon or by Zoom.

Louise can be contacted at [elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk): Tel: 0131 466 3472—watch this space for news of The Guild.



Dear Friends of Currie Kirk. Please get in touch with the Kirk Office (451 5141) if you need anything.

We have friends willing to listen, shop, walk a dog, fix a garden.

Website: <https://www.curriekirk.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/>