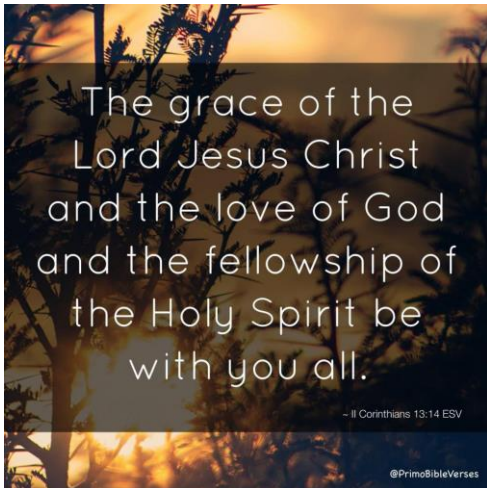


Guided by a cloud 21 (Exodus 13:21-22)

I don't know which news stories have caught your eye this week, I was taken by the one of the small boy who survived being swept out to sea. Apparently he remembered watching Saving Lives at Sea which showed the "Float to Live" technique of lying on your back, staying calm and spreading out like a starfish. The boy was very good at listening to and acting on the advice he had heard. It reminded me of a biblical character who found himself at sea but perhaps did not act in such an obedient, calm and collected manner. It was of course Jonah. I'm sure you remember the story but it's only a short book so you might want to read again.



Worship time

[Jesus take me as I am](#)

[Here I stand forgiven](#)

[Oceans \(where feet may fail\)](#)

The beginning 1:1-3 Jonah was asked to "Get up and go" to Ninevah. Instead he decided not to obey God's instruction and boarded a ship bound for Tarshish, in the opposite direction from Ninevah. But Jonah could not flee from God's presence. Psalm 139 also reminds us "Where can I go from your Spirit?"

The chase 1:4-16 – As Jonah slept in the ship, God sent a violent storm. Jonah doesn't join in the praying, even when asked to by the captain. However, he eventually owns up to being responsible and shares his faith with the sailors. It's clear what God wants him to do but Jonah is in blatant rebellion against God. He is not praying to God, he would rather die than obey God and teaches false theology by saying the sailors will appease God if they perform human sacrifice by throwing Jonah into the sea.

The prayer chapter 2- Jonah is rescued from drowning by the most unlikely of methods. God's provision is not always what we expect. From inside the belly of a fish, a place of hopelessness, Jonah prays.

The acceptance chapter 3- Throughout the story God is working behind the scenes, creating storms and commissioning whales. As Jonah eventually shares the message, God works so the king hears and Nineveh repents. God gives Jonah a second chance. This is a reminder of God's grace.

The book of Jonah helps us reflect on Jesus. Like Jonah, Jesus was called by God to go to a people upon whom judgement was coming. But unlike Jonah Jesus obeyed. That is why he came to earth. To bring light to those who are blind. To bring salvation to those living under condemnation. Jonah did not care if he lived or died in the storm. Jesus said peace, be still. Jonah hated his enemies, Jesus loved them. Jonah tried to escape going to Ninevah but Jesus willingly went to Jerusalem knowing the cross lay in store. Jonah was in the belly of a fish for three days and nights. Jesus was in the grave before rising again.

Even once we have accepted God's love, we all continue to do things our way rather than his way. We sometimes find it hard to keep our eyes fixed on God and head off in another direction. As you take communion this morning be reminded of God's grace poured out for you.

"Cast all your anxiety on Him because he cares for you" 1Peter 5:7