





**Katelyn and Pat**



# Kiernan



# August and Mb



# Mairin and Sofia





# Roger the Schnoodle



# To God Alone on High Be Glory by J.S. Bach

Bach made many settings for organ of this hymn, based on a well-known passage of the liturgy echoing the praise of the angels when they appeared to the shepherds at the first Christmas. This particular setting is jaunty and concise.



Prelude:  
To God Alone on High Be Glory  
by J.S. Bach







- Call to Worship
- Confession and Assurance of Pardon
- Passing the Peace
- Prayer for Illumination
- Psalm 145



“Psalm 23” -- Set to music and sung by  
Christopher Wicks, baritone  
with pianist Debra Huddleston

For a composer, it can be a challenge to find the freshness behind the layers of saccharine familiarity which have accrued to this Psalm, one of the best-known passages in Scripture, or indeed any writing. I felt that I did find the freshness, and I hope that I succeeded in conveying it.



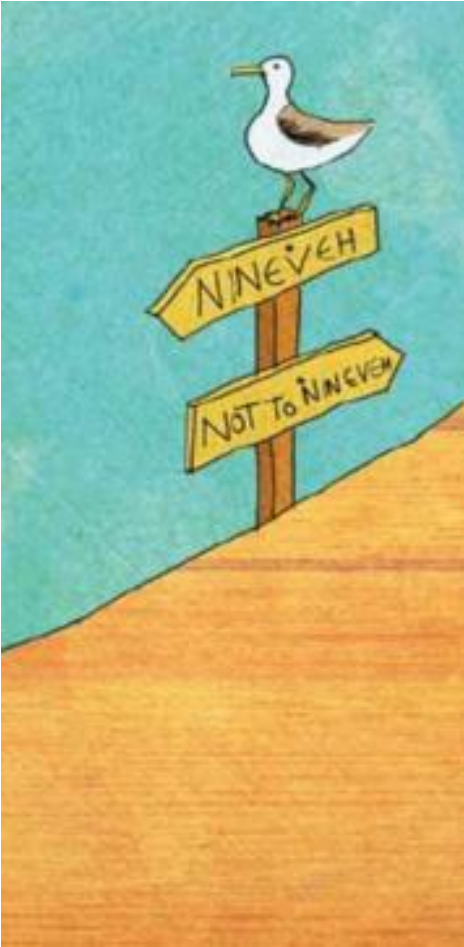
## “Psalm 23”

set to music and sung by Christopher Wicks, baritone  
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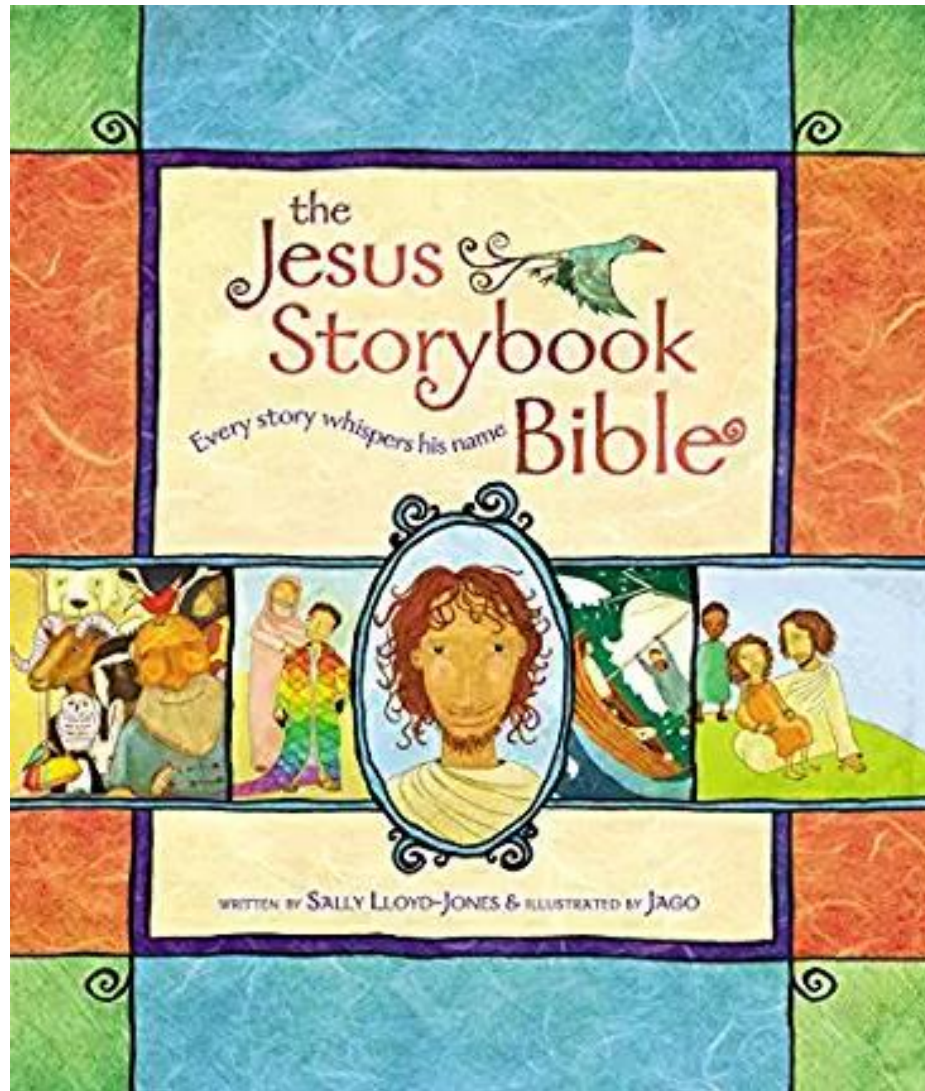
# JONAH



Tabloid headline: JONAH AND THE WHALE!

Accurate headlines:

- Jonah, the Reluctant Prophet
- Ninevah, the Repentant City
- God, the Persistent Pursuer



**Sally Lloyd-Jones, author**  
**Jago, illustrator**



God had a job for Jonah. But Jonah didn't want it.



“Go to Ninevah,” God said, “and tell your worst enemies that I love them. They have run far away from me. But I can't stop loving them. I will give them a new start. I will forgive them.”

“No!” said Jonah. “They don’t deserve it.”  
*I’ll run away!* Jonah said to himself, *Far away — so far away that God won’t be able to find me. Then I won’t have to do what God says! It’s a good plan!* he said, because, as far as he knew, it was a good plan.



But, of course, it wasn't a good plan at all. It was a silly plan. (Because you can run away from God, but God will always come and find you.)



Jonah went ahead with his not-very-good-plan. "One ticket to NOT Ninevah please! He said and boarded a boat sailing in the very opposite direction of Ninevah.



Well, it wasn't long before a fierce wind blew, and the boat started to lurch and pitch and roll—and everyone turned green.

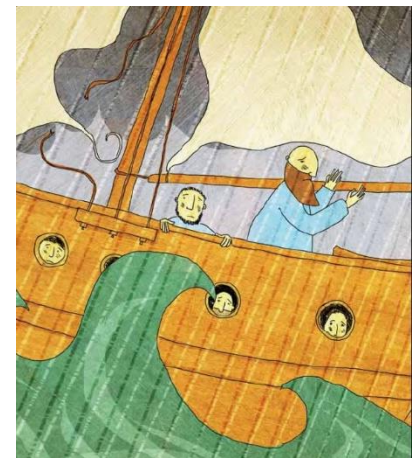
Jonah sat bolt upright in his bed. You see, the first thing that went wrong with Jonah's not-very-good plan was that God sent a big storm after him.

The sailors couldn't sail their ship properly. "We're sinking!" they screamed, and started throwing everything overboard—suitcases, food, whatever they could find.

By now, Jonah knew that the storm was his fault. "Throw me in, instead!" he shouted to the sailors. "The storm will stop!"

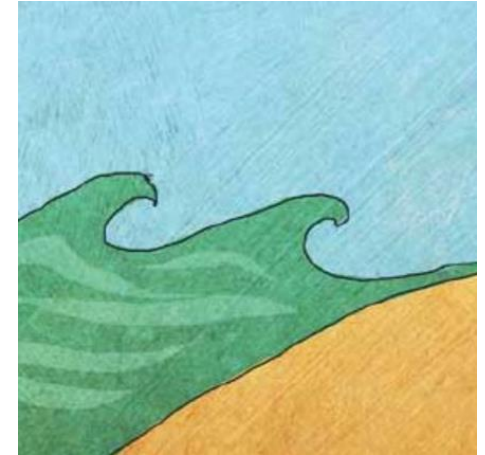
The sailors weren't sure.

"It's the only way you can be saved!" Jonah cried.



So,

1...2....3....

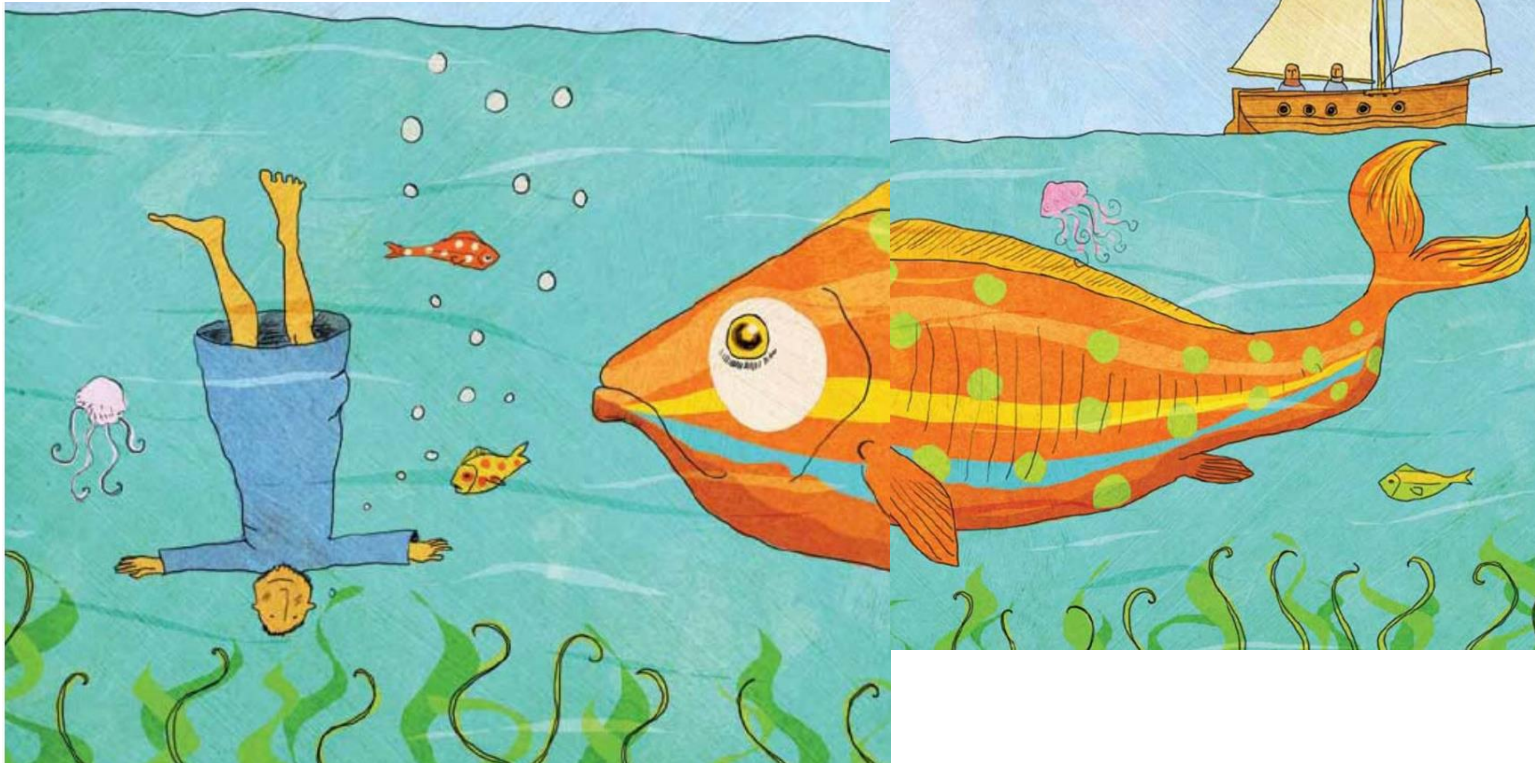


SPLASH!

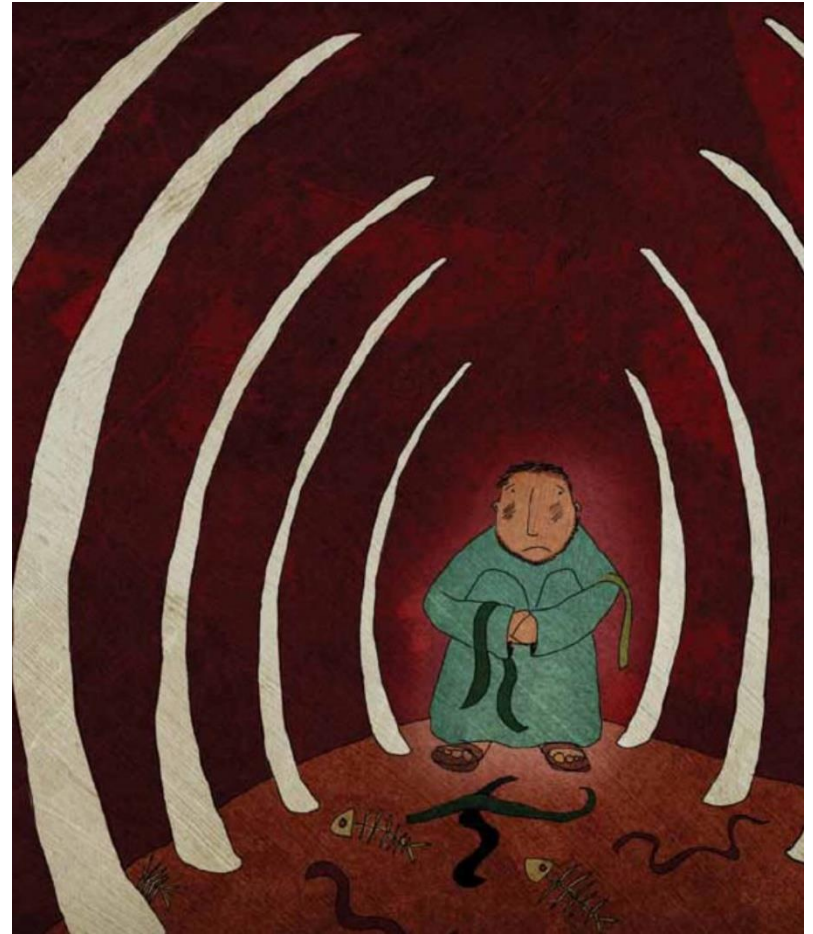
No sooner had Jonah hit the water than the waves grew calm, the wind died down, and the storm stopped.



Just then, when Jonah thought it was all over, when he was sure he was going to drown, God sent a big fish to rescue him. The fish swallowed Jonah whole —with one big gulp.



Jonah must have thought he'd died, it was so dark in there, like a tomb. But then he smelled the rotting food and felt the slimy seaweed and knew he wasn't dead. He was in the belly of the fish!

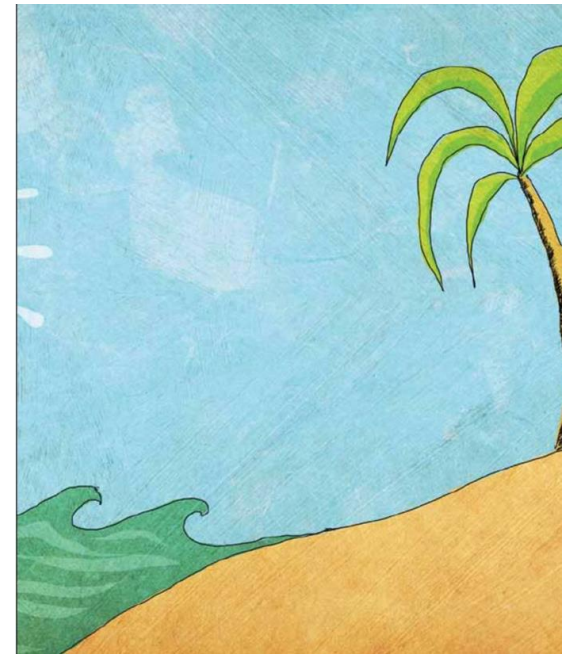


Sitting there in the darkness for three whole days, Jonah had plenty of time to think. Pretty soon he realized his plan was, well...a very silly plan indeed. He was sorry for running away. He prayed to God from inside the great fish and asked God to forgive him.





After three days,  
the fish spat Jonah  
safely out onto a  
sandy beach.



Just then, Jonah heard someone calling his name. “Go to Ninevah,” God said.

And this time? Jonah said, “YES!” He went straight to Ninevah and told everyone God’s wonderful message.

“Even though you’ve run far from God, God can’t stop loving you,” Jonah told them. “Run to God!”



The people of Ninevah listened to Jonah, and they started loving God. They learned to do what God said and to stop running away—just like Jonah.

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Only hear of Jonah once outside of his own narrative, in **2 Kings 14:25**, where we learn that he works during the reign of King Jereboam, 793-753 BCE.

“(Jereboam) restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant **Jonah** son of Amittai, the prophet.

Unusual success!

- Positive prophesy. Borders restored!
- Came to pass within the prophet’s lifetime.

Now, the popular prophet is given a much more unpleasant assignment:

“Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Ninevah! Preach to them! They’re in a bad way and I can’t ignore it any longer.”

“Go to your worst enemies and tell them God loves them.”

(The Message)

# Unusual assignment!

Ninevah is the capital city of Assyria, far from Jerusalem in every way.

- Current day ruins are across from Mosul in northern Iraq, which makes it 560 miles east and slightly north as the crow flies. A distance about like West Linn to Reno.
- It is a harsh, desert journey.
- Assyria is Israel's most feared enemy, an enormous and still growing military power.

No wonder Jonah runs the opposite direction!

- He chooses Tarshish which is thought to be somewhere near the south of Spain, perhaps near the Bay of Gibraltar.
- It is a sea voyage, not a desert trek.
- Tarshish is a trade destination where fabulous riches are found King Solomon made a round trip every three years, returning with a cargo of gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. (1 Kings 10:22, 2 Chron 9:21).
- Ninevah is brutal.

*Who wouldn't rather sail to an exotic beach community open to friendly trade rather than hop a camel for a journey through the desert into the hands of their worst enemy? Absolutely makes sense to me!!!*

But not to God. For some reason, God has his heart set on Jonah going to Nineveh. When Jonah declines, God creates a great deal of drama to redirect him. There's a storm, and some sailors and a big fish. We'll look at them next week.



For this week, our question is **why??**

- Why was God sending a prophet outside of Israel at all?
- And why was God so adamant that Jonah be to *Nineveh*?
- And why NOW, not when Jonah got back from his Mediterranean cruise?

The simplest reason God sent a Jewish prophet to Nineveh?

Because God loved the Ninevites. Because they didn't know God and needed God for all the same reasons that everyone needs God.

God created Israel to reach the rest of the world (Genesis 12), and that's what Jonah is sent to do.

But the timing, the urgency, the drama all point to something more.

**General rule in Scripture:** When God has just one thing for a person to do, one place for them to be, it is at a pivotal juncture in salvation history. Moses, burning bush. Mary and Joseph, angels. Paul, struck blind. Rare occurrences, no missing God's intent.

Most of the time in the Bible, people are simply living lives of faith wherever they are, being good to whoever is around them.

God seldom has just one right place for a person to be, or one right thing for them to do. Obedience has far more to do with **who** we are than where we are.

So, **why** wasn't it just as good for Jonah to hang out with the Tarshishians??

**Could this be a pivotal juncture in salvation history?** You have to dig for the answer with Jonah, because it all depends on paying attention to his dates.

He appeared as a prophet during the reign of King Jereboam, c. 793- 753 BCE.

Just **32** years later, in 722 BCE, Israel will be conquered by Assyria and taken into captivity. According to common ancient practice, they will be removed from their home land and dispersed throughout the Assyrian empire. Many will be exiled to Nineveh, the Assyrian capital!

The most important message of Jonah? God went to Ninevah ahead of Israel, preparing the way.



God reached out to Nineveh for their own sakes, yes. That would have been reason enough to send a prophet.

But God was also going ahead of Israel into the land of their future captivity and preparing a place for them before they ever got there!

The great fish is just a dramatic prop.



This is the central message of Jonah:

God doesn't just hear us when we call. **God is already at work before we ever enter a situation.**

God knows what we will need and has gotten there ahead of us.

God knows what others need and invites us to be part of providing for *them*.



Our chances of being swallowed and spat out by a great fish are slim. The fish is just a great prop in this story.

The chance we will find ourselves somewhere new, frightening, or demanding? Near 100%. Look for God.

The chance that we will run into someone else who is new, frightened, or overwhelmed? Near 100%. Look for God with them.



## Hymn #76 “Do Not Be Afraid”

This may be an unfamiliar hymn. Please enjoy the richness of they lyrics if the tune is difficult.

- Prayers of Thanksgiving and Concern  
For what and for whom  
do the people of God pray?
- The Lord's Prayer
- Benediction

