

Call to Worship

Rob Henderson, Liturgist

This is the day that you have made, Lord.

Help us to rejoice in it and be glad!

Remind us of the privileges we enjoy as your people:

to come to you in these moments,

to confess our sins,

to receive forgiveness and give it,

to pray and sing and listen,

to renew our fainting spirits,

to rest in all your promises.

Open our eyes to see you, Lord.

Open our ears to hear your Word.

Visit us through your Holy Spirit,
and help us to celebrate our faith. Amen.

Call to Confession

In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength.
The LORD longs to be gracious to you;
he rises to show you compassion.

—from Isaiah 30

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Our God is quick to forgive, eager to redeem, and works with us to find a new and different good even when circumstances seem broken beyond repair.

We look for God's grace everywhere.

Passing the Peace

Please unmute yourself and say hello!
It will be chaos, yes, but delightful chaos!

Psalm 13

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I bear pain in my soul,

and have sorrow in my heart all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";

my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

But I trusted in your steadfast love;

my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord,

because he has dealt bountifully with me.

*"Give Me Jesus" -- arranged by Moses Hogan
Sung by Bennett Bailey*

In the morning, when I rise

In the morning, when I rise

In the morning, when I rise

Give me Jesus

Give me Jesus

Give me Jesus

You can have all this world

Just give me Jesus

When I am alone

When I am alone

Oh, when I am alone

Give me Jesus

Give me Jesus

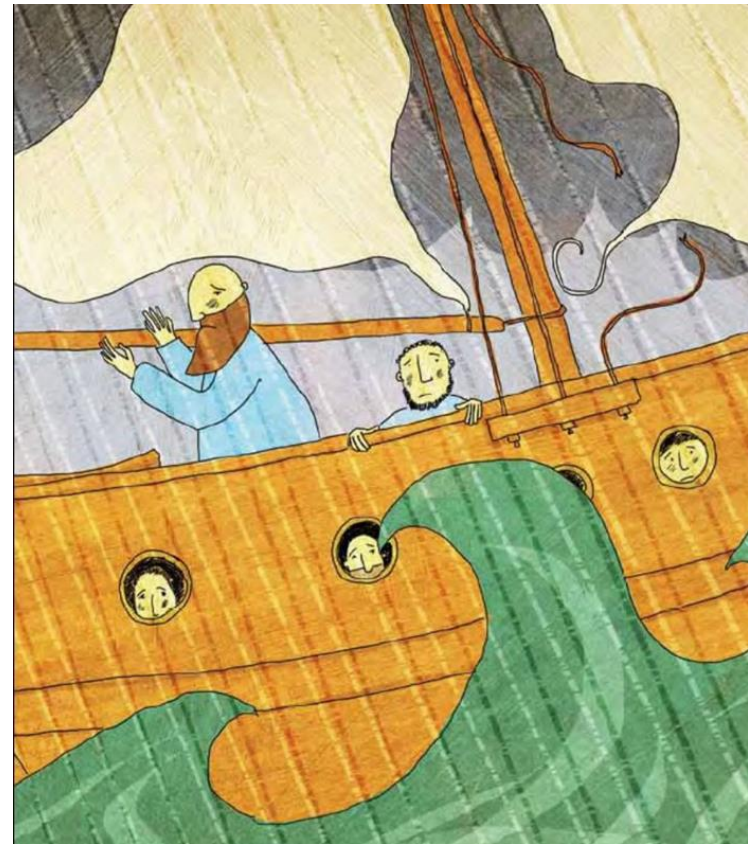
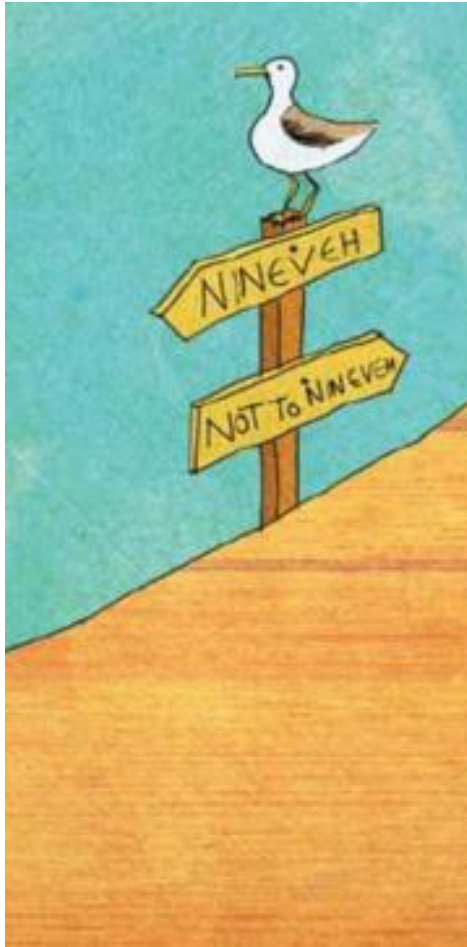
Give me Jesus

You can have all this world

Just give me Jesus

Give me Jesus--

JONAH: Saving the Spectators



Illustrations from The Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones and Jago, Zondervan, 2007.

As we saw last week, Jonah's dates have him speaking just one generation prior to the time Israel is conquered and carried off into captivity by the world power Assyria.

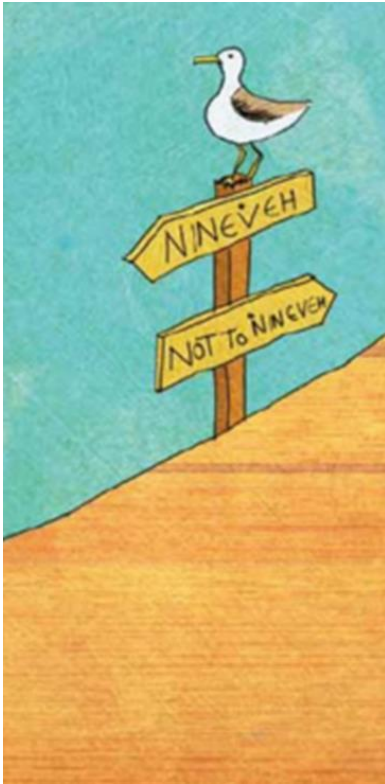
God sends Jonah to their capital city, Ninevah, to preemptively prepare a community of faith that will know the Hebrew God when the battered Israelites arrive in 722 BCE.



The journey to Nineveh was overland, NE through the desert, to the current city of Mosul in northern Iraq.

Nineveh was a brutal city, home to Israel's most feared enemy.





So Jonah decides to go to
Anywhere But Nineveh...

He opts instead for a Mediterranean cruise headed due NW to the city of Tarshish in southern Spain. Tarshish is a favored trading port with exotic riches readily available. It is obviously the preferred destination!

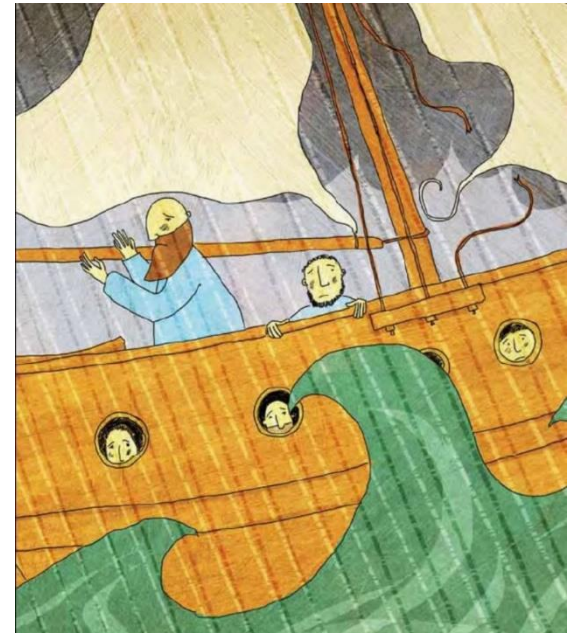


Except not for Jonah. Not now. This is one of those rare occasions where God has just one place for a person to be, and for Jonah, that is Nineveh. The mission to Nineveh is time sensitive, and vital.

We read from **Jonah 1:4-16.**

“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."

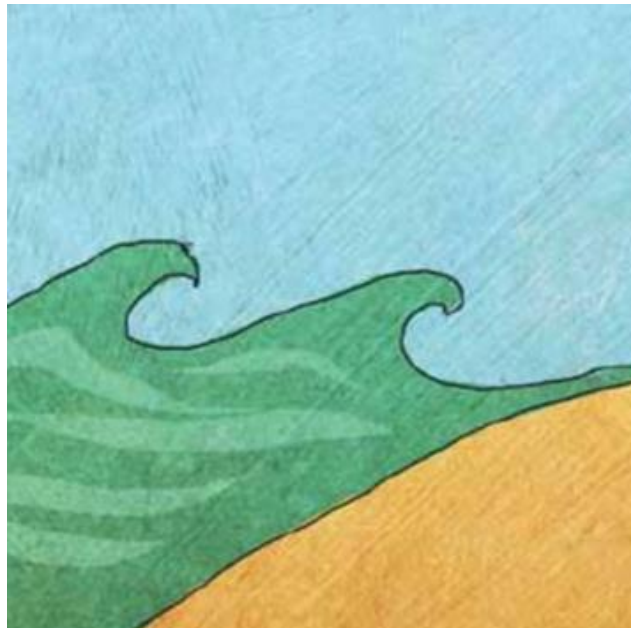
But no. The men tried rowing back to shore. They made no headway. The storm only got worse and worse, wild and raging.

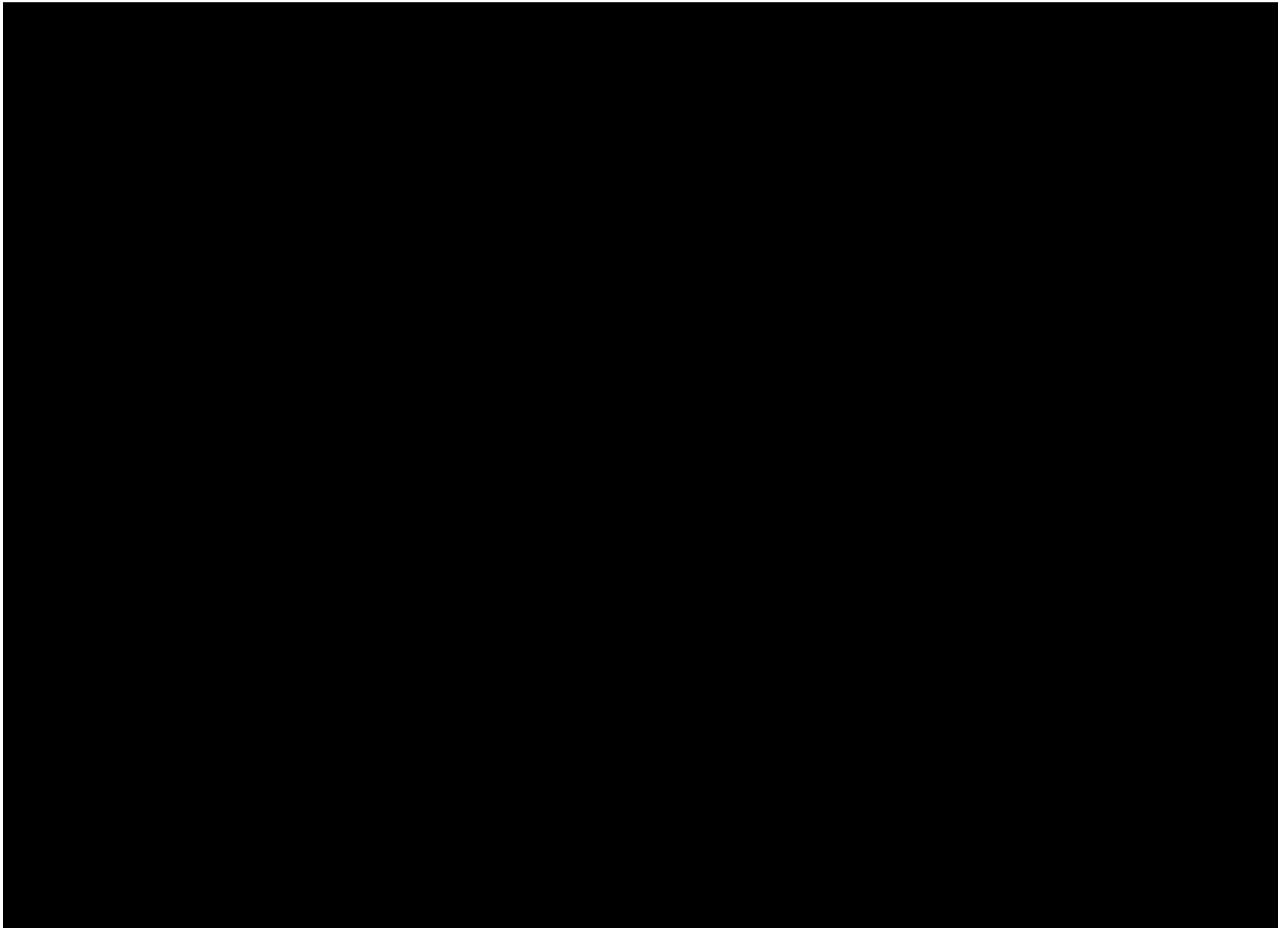


Then they prayed to God, "O God! Don't let us drown because of this man's life, and don't blame us for his death. You are God. Do what you think is best."

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.





A Point Worth Making:

This story is full of rare Scriptural moments such as this one, when God is said to intervene in the weather to get someone's attention.

Most of the time, in the Bible and in the world, weather is just weather. The sun shines on the just and the unjust, and the rain falls on us all. Every storm is not a judgment, every sunny day is not a reward.

God will let us know when the weather becomes personal!

The Main Point:

Sometimes chaotic weather just happens.

Sometimes we make poor choices that create chaos. (Jonah)

Sometimes we get caught up in chaos that others create by their poor choices. (Sailors)

God is always present and about the work of redemption.

It is the **sailors** I want us to get curious about this week. They are just bystanders in this story that is primarily about Jonah and the citizens of the Assyrian capital city Nineveh.

They have a surprising amount to teach us despite being anonymous, random and minor members of the cast!

They have just finished loading their cargo when a skinny little Hebrew guy comes running up to their captain.

“Where you heading?”

“Tarshish!”

“Got room for one more?”

“Welcome aboard.”

Jonah buys a ticket, settles into his stateroom, and they cast off.

Experienced sailors stayed in port during storm season, so they are caught off guard when they are suddenly engulfed by torrential rains and monumental waves.

First, they call out to their own gods. Nothing.

They throw everything that isn't built in overboard to lighten the load. No good.

They try to row to shore. Ridiculous.

It begins to dawn on them that maybe this is not their drama, but Jonah's. The panicked sailors are beyond irritated that Jonah is still asleep. He's apparently taken an inside cabin w/ no porthole out onto the weather and is one of those lucky souls who are lulled to sleep by waves rather than nauseated.

I think he's genuinely stunned when the whole crew piles into his stateroom begging him to try *his* god for help. "What? There's a storm??"

Waking up to the fact that you are in deep trouble is always difficult.

What an appalling moment it is when the crew draws straws, and the short stick singles him out.

Is this terrible storm really his fault?? God was THAT serious about Nineveh? Dear God in Heaven, what now? Is there any way to make things right?

I find it curious that Jonah doesn't just suggest that the sailors turn the boat around and head east. It wd have been worth a try any way, to start being obedient and see if it made a difference. I'm thinking the crew wd have been willing to try anything, but maybe the storm was so great they'd lost all sense of direction. Who knows? We do know they are extremely reluctant to pitch him overboard, but Jonah insists.

They try one more time to control their ship with the pitifully small oars bracketed to the walls of the hull, and then agree. Being in the open seas is only marginally less dangerous than remaining on the ship, so maybe it's worth a try.

I imagine it came down to allowing Jonah to be washed away more than forcing him to walk the plank, but it was a terrible, desperate moment for everyone involved.

How many times did the captain regret reaching out his hand to help Jonah on board in the first place?

How many nightmares did he have later about letting that hand slip away from him when Jonah plunged overboard? Did he see the fish rescue Jonah? Probably not.

He reminds us that it is not just we who suffer unintended consequences from our thoughtless choices.

The sailors were just spectators—until they were victims. How much did all that cargo cost that they had to pitch overboard? What was the repair bill on the ship? How battered and bruised did they get while the waves crashed over their boat?

What pain have *we* caused to bystanders in our lives when we've been crashing around in disobedience, or sound asleep in denial?

Does Jonah's story somehow wake us up to the wreckage littering our landscape? This can be a hard truth to come to grips with.

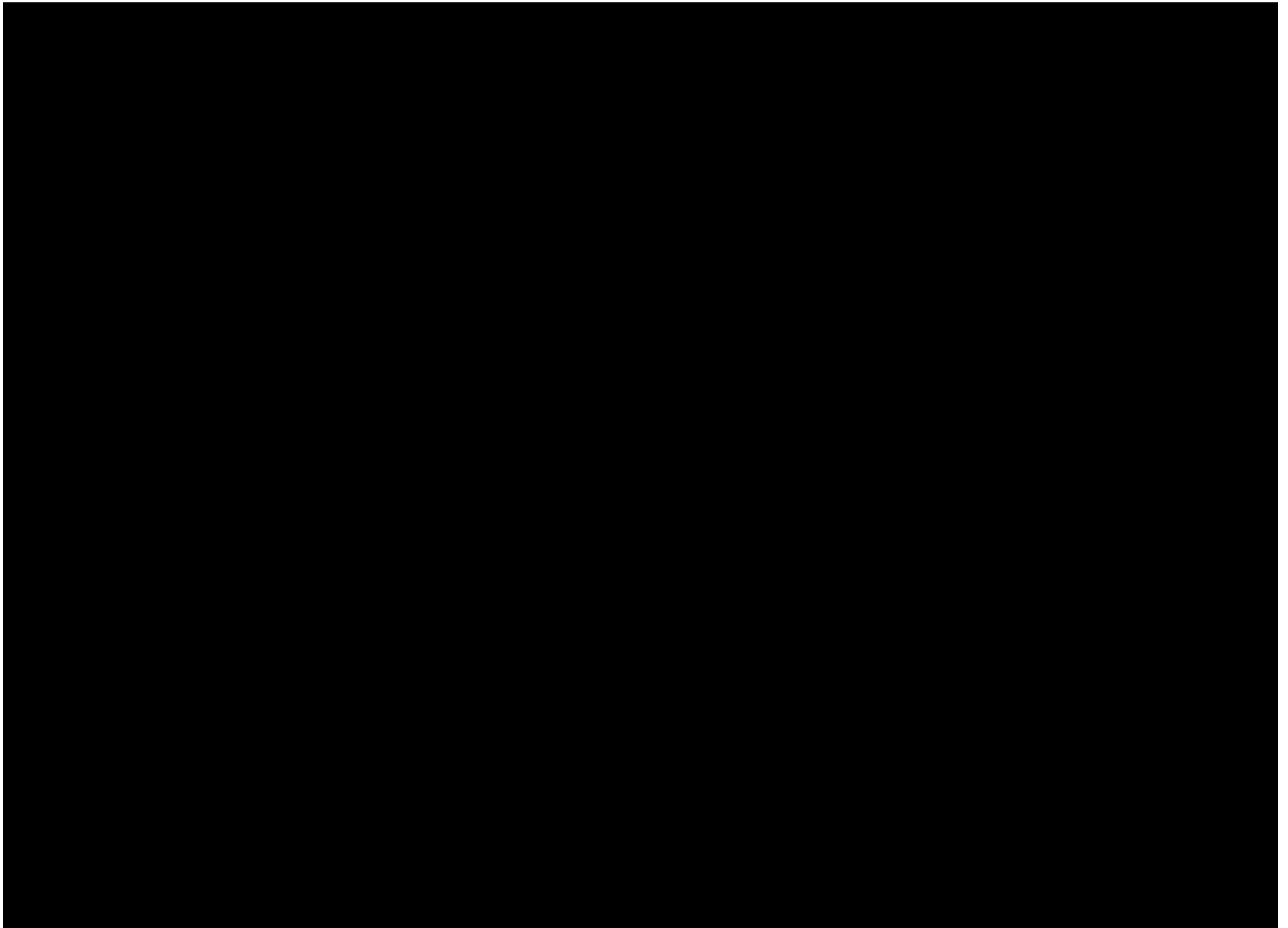
Please find help if you feel like Jonah, having done something that makes you want to jump ship. Some of us have created almighty storms in our own lives and when we wake up to the damage we have done, it can be overwhelming.

But here's what I know to be true: The God who rescued Jonah is no less invested in you.

And if there's a Jonah in your life who has caused terrible storms on what you thought was going to be a pleasant journey through warm, sunny waters? Seek help as well. No question the damage is real. But it is not the end of the story.

God saved these sailors, and when the storms finally subside they realize they are safe within God's careful, generous hands.

God sees and loves those who are caught in someone else's storm.



Hymn #645 "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above"

*1 Sing praise to God who reigns above,
the God of all creation,
the God of power, the God of love,
the God of our salvation.*

*With healing balm my soul is filled
and every faithless murmur stilled:
To God all praise and glory.*

*2 The Lord is never far away,
but through all grief distressing,
an ever present help and stay,
our peace and joy and blessing.
As with a mother's tender hand,
God gently leads the chosen band:
To God all praise and glory.*

*3 Thus all my toilsome way along,
I sing aloud thy praises,
that earth may hear the grateful song
my voice unwearied raises.
Be joyful in the Lord, my heart,
both soul and body bear your part:
To God all praise and glory.*

*4 Let all who name Christ's holy name
give God all praise and glory;
let all who own his power proclaim
aloud the wondrous story!
Cast each false idol from its throne,
for Christ is Lord, and Christ alone:
To God all praise and glory.*

Prayers of Thanksgiving + Concern

For what and for whom do the people of God pray?

The Lord's 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, and the power, and the glory,

forever.

Amen.

