

Welcome to our All Age Worship Service Prepared by Emma and Dave

Listening to God

What love could remember no wrongs we have done Omniscient, all knowing, He counts not their sum Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more Stronger than darkness, new every morn Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

What patience would wait as we constantly roam What Father, so tender, is calling us home He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more Stronger than darkness, new every morn Our sins they are many, His mercy is more So much more

What riches of kindness He lavished on us
His blood was the payment, His life was the cost
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more
So much more!

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more Stronger than darkness, new every morn Our sins they are many, His mercy is more By Keith & Kirsten Getty

Heavenly Father

Thank you that in these strange times you are never far away. In all times, you are always there for us. You listen to our prayers, moaning & groaning, and our worship.

Help us to take time to listen to you in our busy lives with all its distractions. We want to focus on your praises, your affirmation, and how much you us.

In Jesus name, Amen.



this week to...
Jean C, Steve W &
Matthew T.



Belated Happy Birthday

to... Amy and Patrick.
Whoops SORRY! :-)



Have you ever been in the situation where your mum or dad has told you to do something, and you have chosen not to do it? Can you remember *why* you decided not to follow the instructions, and what happened *afterwards*?





Sometimes we might not want to follow the instructions we have been given because we don't understand why we must do something. We might disagree with them; we might think we know best or we might even be afraid.

When I was a teenager my mum told me, I had to be home by a certain time when I was out with my friends. I put my watch back half an hour so that I could show her I was on time by my watch. When I got home, she was standing on the doorstep in her dressing gown and she was mad. She didn't believe me, she said, "I wasn't born yesterday!" Needless to say, I was grounded for the rest of the week.

Whether we choose to listen to what our parents tell us to do, or not, *every* decision we make has consequences.

Today, we're going to think about a guy called Jonah, and what happened to him when he chose not to listen to God's voice telling him what to do.

The Story of Jonah The Message

Running away from God - extracts from chapter 1

One day long ago, God's Word came to Jonah'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.' But Jonah got up and went the in other direction, running away from God. He went down to the port of Joppa and found a ship headed for 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 over-board to lighten the ship. ... Jonah was sound asleep. The captain came to him and said....'Get up, pray to your god, maybe your god....will rescue us. Jonah confessed 'I worship the God of Heaven who made sea and land.' The men were really frightened.... Jonah said, 'throw me overboard into the sea. Then the storm will stop...... they took Jonah and threw him overboard. Immediately the sea was quieted down.... The sailors were in awe of God...

At the bottom of the sea – extracts from chapter 2

Then God assigned a huge fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the fish's belly three days and nights. He prayed 'Help!'....... I'll do what you asked me to do! God spoke to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah on the seashore.

May be God will change his mind - extracts from chapter 3

God spoke to Jonah a second time.....'Go to Ninevah....' This time Jonah started off straight for Ninevah... telling the people'In forty days, the city will be smashed'. The people of Ninevah listened and trusted God.... showing their repentance turning back from evil ways. God saw what they had done and changed his mind

God wanted Jonah to go to a place called Nineveh, but Jonah didn't want to go, I mean *really* didn't want to go! God needed Jonah because He wanted to help the people of Nineveh. They were making bad choices, and God wanted Jonah to warn them and help them turn their lives around and worship God. I think it was probably a combination of the reasons we talked about just now about not doing what our parents say, that made Jonah so reluctant to follow God's voice. He definitely disagreed with God – Jonah didn't think the people of Nineveh deserved to be saved. Even after his experience with the whale, he told God he didn't like the fact that God had compassion on the people of Nineveh. I mean, you'd really think he'd have learnt his lesson after three days in the belly of a whale! He thought he knew better than God, and he was certainly afraid to follow God's instructions.

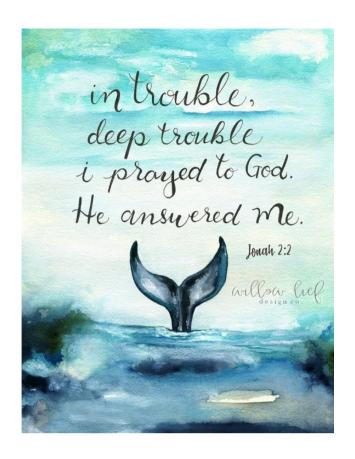
God helped Jonah learn a very important lesson about listening to and following God's plans. When you choose not to follow directions from your teachers or parents, what might happen? I hope none of them sends a whale to gobble you up for three days – just think how bad you'd smell!

So Jonah stayed in the whale for 3 days and 3 nights. During that lonely time, Jonah did a lot of praying. He told God that he was sorry, he was ready to listen and that he would go to the city of Nineveh and let the people know that they needed to change their ways and follow God.

And do you know what? The people in the city listened to Jonah, and they asked God for forgiveness. They changed their ways and promised to live better lives and make better choices. God used Jonah to help save the lives of many people in the city of Nineveh.

Jonah 3:10 explains what God did after Jonah spoke to the people of Nineveh and after they chose to change their lives and follow God. "When God saw what they did and how they chose better ways to live, He forgave them and protected them."

Even though Jonah didn't understand why God wanted to help the people of Nineveh, he DID learn to listen to God. Jonah learned to follow God's directions, even when he was afraid, and didn't agree. While he was inside the whale, Jonah poured out his heart to God, he told God he was sorry, and he agreed he would go to Nineveh. He didn't just talk to God though. He had to stop (well, he couldn't go anywhere sitting in the stomach of a whale) and listen.



Not talking, not singing, not reading – too dark and wet, not watching telly – not invented, not scrolling through social media for the latest gossip, not doing anything. He was able to open his heart and mind to God because he had stopped talking and doing things. And because he listened to God, God was able to fill his heart with the confidence and trust he needed to obey God's instructions.

There are other stories in the Bible about people listening to God's voice and following what He tells them to do. Can you think of someone else who heard from God?

Well, Samuel was someone who listened to God. You can read his story in 1 Samuel chapter 3. He was asleep in bed when he heard a voice calling his name. At first, he thought it was his master Eli, so got up to see what Eli wanted. Eli told him it wasn't him who had called. This happened twice more, until Eli realised God was calling Samuel's name. He told Samuel to go back to bed and if it happened again to say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." And do you know what, it did happen again, Samuel did what Eli had told him, and God spoke to Samuel. As Samuel was in bed at the time, we can assume he was able to hear God's voice clearly, without any distractions.

The difference between Samuel and Jonah, however, is that Samuel didn't run away from what God told him. He had to tell Eli that God had told him He was going to destroy Eli and his family because they had not done what God had told them to do. Can you imagine how hard that must have been for Samuel? He was only a child, and he had to tell Eli God was going to destroy him!

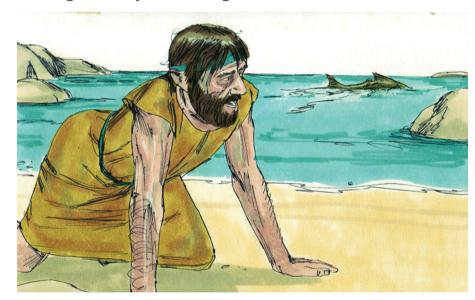
But instead of running away from God, even though the Bible tells us he was afraid, Samuel told Eli what God had said. The Bible says that God was with Samuel as he grew up and he went onto become one of Israel's judges.

So, two people who listened to God – Samuel who heard and obeyed immediately, and Jonah, who had to learn the hard way to listen and obey.

God didn't love Jonah any less because he ran away. He understood that Jonah was scared, just like He understands when we don't always follow His plans for our lives. But He had to teach Jonah to trust Him and show Jonah that God really did know what was best for him and the people of Nineveh. We need to be ready to let God teach us to trust Him and listen for His voice.

God was trying to help Jonah <u>learn to have compassion for others</u> and understand that because God loves and forgives us of our sins, we should forgive others who have done wrong things. Even when we don't understand God's plans, it's important that we listen to and obey God. Jonah didn't have the luxury of a Bible to read God's word like we do today. This is a really good way of letting God speak to you – by reading His word and asking Him to show you what it means. Asking other Christians to pray for you, and talking things over with them is also a good way of hearing God's voice. God uses other

people to help and guide us, but make sure you go to someone you know and trust! And lastly, sometimes we just have to turn off the telly, putting down our phones, sit quietly, open our hearts and our minds and as Samuel said to God, "Speak Lord, I'm listening."



Dear God,

Thank you that you created each one of us and you love us so much.

It can be so hard sometimes when you ask us to do something. We might feel that we know best or we might feel scared. Please help us to trust you and give us courage to make the right decisions Help us to learn to listen to you – to open our hearts and say, "speak Lord, I'm listening."

Please help us remember to follow your commands, even when we don't understand all your plans. Help us to love and forgive others, just as you love and forgive us.

Jonah and the Big Fish

One day God asked a man called Jonah to go to a place called Nineveh and tell the people living there to stop being bad. The only problem was that Jonah didn't want to help the people there. He knew they were bad, and he wanted them to be punished for their mistakes.

So instead of listening to God, Jonah decided to run away from Nineveh and not do what God asked him. He ran to the sea where he found a ship that was going to another city. He paid the captain, went in the lower part of the boat and went to sleep.





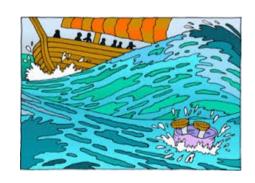
Shortly after the boat left the shore, a very bad storm came up and started tossing the boat around. All the men were very afraid so they started to throw all their packages and bags overboard in hopes that they wouldn't drown. The captain went to find Jonah who was still sound asleep in the boat. He said to Jonah, "How can you sleep? Get up and pray to your god, maybe he can help us!"

The captain didn't realise that Jonah didn't just believe in any god but the one true God and that He could help them.

Meanwhile, the other sailors thought Jonah must have done something wrong to make his god so angry. So, they asked him, "What have you done? What god do you believe in? What can we do to make this storm stop?" Jonah told them, "I believe in the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land, and I am running away from something God asked me to do. It is my fault this is happening. If you throw me into the sea the storm will stop." The men didn't want to hurt Jonah by throwing him off the boat so they tried to row the best they could, but the storm just got worse. Eventually they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea.

The storm immediately calmed, and the sea became still. The men on the boat realized that Jonah believed in the one true God and prayed to Him.

Then the captain and the crew looked out to sea as a huge fish came and swallowed up Jonah. God actually sent the fish to keep Jonah from drowning. Jonah stayed in the fish for three days and three nights.



Just think for a second what it would be like to be inside a fish. There are no windows, and lots of strange things floating around that you can't see because it's

so dark. And it must have been so smelly! Jonah probably didn't know if he would ever see daylight again.



While he was trapped inside the fish, Jonah did a lot of praying to God. He asked God to forgive him for running away. He also thanked God for not allowing him to drown.

After the third day God told the fish to spit Jonah out onto dry land. And the fish did just that. Jonah was happy to be out of the dark belly of the fish, but boy, did he need a shower. He was slimy and smelly.

Then the Lord told Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh and tell the people there to stop being bad. This time Jonah obeyed God and left for Nineveh right away.





When Jonah got there, he told the people what had happened to him. He warned them that God said that they should stop doing bad things or in forty days the city and everything in it would be destroyed. To Jonah's surprise the people listened to him and they prayed to God and they said sorry for all the bad things they had done.

Soon the king of Nineveh heard what was going on and he ordered everyone to listen to God and to stop doing bad things. And when God saw that they were trying to good instead of bad, He felt love for them and did not destroy their city.

That could be the end of the story except Jonah left the city very angry. He was mad that God didn't punish the people. He knew that God was a loving God and didn't want to destroy anything if he doesn't have to.

So, Jonah went on a hill and sulked!

God saw Jonah and knew how he was feeling so he explained to Jonah that He loves everyone (after all He made us). He doesn't want to destroy people who are doing bad things. God would rather see us turn from our bad ways and do good again.



"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it." Luke 11:28

