

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

27 September 2020

about you clap their hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?' Jonah's message, in contrast, was to show that there is a way back for Nineveh and that there is a God who forgives, heals and restores. Jonah knows this, and resents this, and attempted to thwart God's plan by going his own way. His guilt and shame are so strong that he cries out, 'Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.' That's what unresolved guilt and shame can do, that is how crushing they are and why they need to be healed. Jonah is angry with himself, takes it out on God, and cannot bear to live with it.

'Is it right for you to be angry?' Jonah clearly had serious anger issues, a known symptom of guilt and shame, however irrational. Sitting in his shelter beyond Nineveh he had expected to witness its destruction; but instead God challenged Jonah himself. You see this is the story of Jonah, not the story of Nineveh. It is about a man who is called to be one person, but loses his way and becomes someone else—and the inner turmoil and anguish that brings. The Jonah we see at the end of the story is an angry man, happy when things go well but ready to erupt, to the point of destruction, when things don't go his way. In the heat of his delirium, a simple plant providing shade becomes Jonah's whole world. Everything becomes out of perspective. Yet it is the Lord who gives the plant, and the Lord who takes away!

A Very Adult Story. The story of Jonah is definitely one for grown ups. Existential anger, suicidal longings, let alone the guilt and shame that lie beneath, are not themes for children. We rip the power out of Jonah's story when we confine it to the Children's Bible or reduce it to a biographical account. As an extended parable or spiritual morality tale it challenges us to look at our lives, our identity and our purpose and calling, in ways that can be transformative and liberating—but something which we too often ignore or run away from contemplating. Ultimately it all amounts to a right perspective on life, a right relationship with God, knowing who we are as his children and as active disciples of Jesus, and living in the liberating and energising power of his Holy Spirit.

SUGGESTED SONG

How Deep The Father's Love For Us
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CNF-4tC8m4>

BLESSING

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. (Psalm 25:8-9)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and always. Amen.

<https://rydebaptist.xyz>

Dear Friends,

The year seems to be moving by really quickly now. Over the last few days Autumn weather has set in and we are only three months until Christmas, which contrary to rumour will not be cancelled. Next week, 4 October, we will celebrate Harvest Festival in a way we would never have foreseen, and similarly when we acknowledge Church Anniversary on 11 October. You only have to blink and time moves on. In the same swift pace, today we reach the end of our short series looking at the two Old Testament prophets, Jonah and Nahum. Very different in style, tone, time period and content, they nevertheless both focus our attention on Nineveh, the wicked capital of the Assyrian Empire.

One of the things that workers in overseas or cross-cultural mission have to face is the fact that different cultures see things in different ways. Good training courses will prepare them for this, and it is good for all of us to understand this when talking about our faith. When it comes to talking about sin and its consequences the east is as far as it could be from the west, although they have a great deal to learn from each other. Western cultures, influenced by Roman

legal practices, think primarily in terms of guilt. We are guilty of the charge of sin. Eastern cultures, on the other hand, think more in terms of honour and shame. Sin is something that brings dishonour and causes shame. It is less about what we have done and more what it reveals about who we are.

The world of the Bible brings both these cultural understandings together. In Psalm 25, David longs to live a righteous life under the Law of God. 'Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths', he prays. Yet he also prays, 'do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.' Someone once said, 'I can live with the guilt, it is the shame that I cannot stand.' And it is true that we can often cover guilt with a penalty or a punishment; guilt has a price that is paid when the fine is settled or the sentence is over. Shame reaches into the depths of our being and needs far deeper healing. Therefore Jesus, our Saviour, is both redeemer and healer, settling the cost of the past and healing the way from the present into the future.

In our story this morning, I wonder what made Jonah so angry, guilt or shame? And who was he most angry with? Was he angry with God or with himself?

Zoom is the safest way for most people to meet during this time, and will continue to be the main way we will meet for some time to come, with increased Covid-19 precautions now being put in place. Our Zoom Sunday Morning Fellowship Meeting is at 10.30am, and our Monday Prayer Meeting is at 7.00pm. If you are able to join us, you will be welcome. If you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can also click on the readings and songs. There is more at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

PRAY FOR RYDE 2020

Launched on 1 July 2020, our 2020 hours of prayer came to a conclusion on 23 September. Themes and videos can still be seen on the dedicated website: prayforryde.org. Last week's themes: 20 September, Isle of Wight Festival; 21 September, Ryde Gateway to the Island; 22 September, From Ryde into All the World; 23 September, Final Prayers as 2020 Hours Completed. There will be a short Zoom service of celebration and thanksgiving at 7pm this evening.

CALL TO WORSHIP

In you, Lord my God, I put my trust. I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me... Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long. (Psalm 25:1-2,4-5)

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 25:1-9](#)

[Jonah 4:1-11](#)

[Nahum 3:1-19](#)

SUGGESTED SONGS

Come People Of The Risen King
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofIAD-UGdYE>

Give Thanks With A Grateful Heart
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka1_axLcDgw

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we come to worship you on this new day. As the seasons change yet again, we are reminded of your goodness towards us, and the fruitfulness of your love. As our lives move from season to season, from birth in the Spring all the way to our Autumn years, so we thank you for your faithfulness and your constant presence alongside us on the way. With the Psalmist we pray, 'Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good.' Often we carry so many unnecessary burdens with us, so we thank you, as the song words remind us, that 'You took all my guilt and shame, when you died and rose again'. Help us never to be ashamed about who we are, or to share with people who you are and what you have done. Amen.

TO PONDER

The Bible is full of stories of people experiencing guilt and shame. It doesn't begin well, as the first man and woman disobey God, their nakedness exposed, and they are ejected from the garden. The story of the 'Prodigal Son' is one where the guilt and shame of his desultory and sinful life led the man, who had been reduced to eating with the pigs, to return to the loving, healing arms of his father. This is one of the more sensitive and difficult subjects to address because it is so personal, touches intimate areas of our lives. Unacknowledged guilt and shame can have a devastating effect, an unbearable weight or a slow-release poison. In Romans 1:16 the apostle Paul reminds us that we have one who saves us from this, and takes away its consequences: 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.' When we are ashamed in ourselves and carry a burden of guilt that is overwhelming, we only have to come to Jesus who longs to release us and set us free to live as restored fulfilled people.

SUGGESTED SONGS

Purify My Heart—Refiner's Fire
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKqJHUJIKVM>

When I Survey The Wondrous Cross
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBdP9EsoDFQ>

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Jonah's Anger. The final chapter begins, 'But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry.' He had just witnessed the mercy of God towards a repentant Nineveh. Why would this make him angry? Perhaps it shows how deep-seated the hatred for the wickedness of the Assyrians and their treatment of their enemies had become. They deserved to be punished and destroyed, and nothing could change that. Except that God had a different plan, which he had already revealed to Jonah. That's why Jonah was sent to Nineveh. Nineveh repented and God relented, according to plan. Jonah knows that God is 'a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity' (see Psalm 145:8), so why was he so angry? And who was he angry with?

The Guilt and The Shame. In truth, Jonah had not only disobeyed God by fleeing to Tarshish, now he was questioning the very nature of God himself. Jonah knew that as a prophet it was his life's calling to proclaim God's voice, and he had done so faithfully—until now. The prophet Nahum had a similar calling, but his message was different: 'King of Assyria...Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them. Nothing can heal you; your wound is fatal. All who hear the news