

尼尼微是當時世上最大的城市，約拿花了三天的時間走過整個大尼尼微，包括周遭的郊區。令他驚訝不解的是人民真的悔改了，當時是以穿粗麻衣（可能是羊毛製的袍）和撒灰在身上來表達。如此一來，立即性的審判免了，上帝赦免了他們，接受他們的信心，那些悔改的外邦人要列於聖徒之中，有一天他們要審判這個罪惡的世界（參路 11:32；林前 6:2；太 19:28）。

事後，約拿生氣了，可能是他所宣告的噩耗沒有出現，破壞了他作先知的名聲。但最根本的原因，該是上帝憐憫恩待尼尼微這個以色列的敵人。為此，上帝責備糾正他狹隘的心胸和偏狹的種族主義。然後，上帝藉著一棵樹，在一夜之間長大可為約拿遮蔭，證明祂的主權。這個目的是要讓約拿看到他的罪，自私和自憐是何等的繆誤。上帝造了樹和人，卻只有人不滅的靈魂為上帝所特別關心。約拿學了一個功課：以色列的上帝不只關心以色列人。而當耶穌基督來時，上帝要藉以色列祝福天下萬國（創 12:3）。約拿書教導我們上帝照顧外邦人（所有失喪的靈魂），上帝的百姓也應當如此行。

## 禱告

主啊！您如何對待尼尼微人，警戒他們悔改，又向他們施展恩典和慈愛，也會照樣待我們，向我們施慈愛。我們願向您悔改，並感謝您的恩典。奉主耶穌基督的名，阿們！

## November 15

**Scriptures:** Read Jonah 1-4

**Key Verse:** "... should I not pity Nineveh ... ?" (Jonah 4:11)

### Overview

When the prophet Jonah was told by the Lord to go to Nineveh, he went in the opposite direction instead, toward Tarshish (thought to be Spain). Because of his deliberate disobedience in running from the will of God, his life literally went "down hill". Firstly, he went down to Joppa, then down into the bottom of the ship, where he laid down. He then went down into the sea, and finally down into the belly of the great fish (1:3, 15, 17). While down there he repented, expressed his faith in God, and vowed to submit and be obedient to Him (2:7, 9). Then he came up to the place God wanted him to be, and his words were fulfilled: "you have brought up my life from the pit" (2:6b; cf. Ps. 16:10).

The storm that the Lord sent upon the sea, must have been very unusually severe, for the experienced sailors immediately recognized it as being of supernatural origin, and so each crewman (likely from many different countries) called out to his respective god. They wanted Jonah to cry out to his God too, but nothing worked. God heard their cries, but until Jonah confessed his sin and was thrown overboard, as God had purposed, the winds would not die down. When all their attempts had failed, they concluded that someone on the ship was responsible for the storm by having offended one of the gods. Under God's direction, the lot they cast fell to Jonah (cf. Prov. 16:33), who then confessed that he served the Creator, the God of heaven (and thus the God of the elements), but was running from Him. Even the heathen could not comprehend how someone, especially a prophet of God, could possibly disobey the will of the God of heaven.

In response to their question about what should be done to appease his God, Jonah instructed them to throw him overboard. Many understand this as though it indicated repentance and a heroic thing, so that Jonah would not cause others to suffer too. But in light of his initial stubbornness and his attitude after Nineveh repented, it seems likely that Jonah said this because he would rather die than go to the Gentiles in Nineveh. It is hard to tell exactly what Jonah's real intentions were at that point, but it seems that his true repentance did not come until he was in the fish's belly, where he called upon God and quoted many verses from the Psalms (2:2-9). It has been proven that there are several types of sea creatures that are capable of swallowing a man whole. God merely took direct control over one of His creatures and commissioned it to serve His purpose.

Even though Jonah was on the ship in disobedience to God, the Lord was still able to make something good come out of it. All the sailors clearly saw that Jonah's God was the true God and they feared and worshipped Him by offering sacrifices. They also made vows, which were no doubt vows of commitment to serve Him alone (1:14, 16). Jonah, then, was still a witness for God to Gentiles, even though he had been running in the opposite direction in order to not witness to Gentiles. These sailors, in turn, would have taken this story to their homelands and influenced others to serve God as well.