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# Narrative Lectionary

Year 3 | The Year of Luke

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## Scripture Readings

### November 8, 2020

*The Twenty-Third Sunday  
after Pentecost*

#### **.....** **About the text**

**S**O WHY WAS JONAH SO reluctant to go to Ninevah?  
God sends, you go, end of story. Right?

Not so much.

Jonah was a Judean. And, Ninevah absolutely *loved* Judeans. Especially the army. Judeans were great targets. Ninevites loved lining up Judeans with their spearpoints, aiming, and letting fly.

A piece of Ninevite art shows soldiers lined up, with Judean heads, at a desk. It's pay day, and the paymaster is checking off trophies for recompense. There was a price, literally, on Judeans' heads. It was a good income.

So, when God calls, Jonah flees 30 miles in the other direction. He has thoughts of survival, sure. And, just maybe, a little confusion about why God isn't just smiting the Ninevites.

Jonah is expected to save these head-hunters.  
Who's a saint in that environment?



## Jonah 1:1-17; 3:1-10

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” <sup>3</sup> But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. <sup>6</sup> The captain came and said to him, “What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.”

7 The sailors said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup> Then they said to him, “Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” <sup>9</sup> “I am a Hebrew,” he replied. “I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” <sup>10</sup> Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he

1 One day long ago, GOD’S Word came to Jonah, Amittai’s son: <sup>2</sup> “Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Nineveh! Preach to them. They’re in a bad way and I can’t ignore it any longer.”

3 But Jonah got up and went the other direction to Tarshish, running away from GOD. He went down to the port of Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went on board, joining those going to Tarshish—as far away from GOD as he could get.

4 But GOD sent a huge storm at sea, the waves towering.

The ship was about to break into pieces. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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.” <sup>7</sup> 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.

8 Then they grilled him: “Confess. Why this disaster? What is your work? Where do you come from? What country? What family?”

9 He told them, “I’m a Hebrew. I worship GOD, the God of heaven who made sea and land.”

10 At that, the men were frightened, really

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had told them so.

11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. <sup>12</sup> He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you."

<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. <sup>14</sup> Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, O LORD, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man's life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you." <sup>15</sup> So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the LORD even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

17 But the LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

3:1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." <sup>3</sup> So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" <sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his

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frightened, and said, "What on earth have you done!" As Jonah talked, the sailors realized that he was running away from GOD.

11 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.

12 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."

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

14 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." <sup>15</sup> They took Jonah and threw him overboard. Immediately the sea was quieted down.

16 The sailors were impressed, no longer terrified by the sea, but in awe of GOD. They worshiped GOD, offered a sacrifice, and made vows.

17 Then GOD assigned a huge fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the fish's belly three days and nights.

3:1 Next, GOD spoke to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> "Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Nineveh! Preach to them. They're in a bad way and I can't ignore it any longer."

3 This time Jonah started off straight for Nineveh, obeying GOD'S orders to the letter.

Nineveh was a big city, very big—it took three days to walk across it. <sup>4</sup> Jonah entered the city, went one day's walk and preached, "In forty days Nineveh will be smashed."

5 The people of Nineveh listened, and

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robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. <sup>8</sup> Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish."

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

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trusted God. They proclaimed a citywide fast and dressed in burlap to show their repentance. Everyone did it—rich and poor, famous and obscure, leaders and followers.

<sup>6</sup> When the message reached the king of Nineveh, he got up off his throne, threw down his royal robes, dressed in burlap, and sat down in the dirt. <sup>7</sup> Then he issued a public proclamation throughout Nineveh, authorized by him and his leaders: "Not one drop of water, not one bite of food for man, woman, or animal, including your herds and flocks!

<sup>8</sup> Dress them all, both people and animals, in burlap, and send up a cry for help to God. Everyone must turn around, turn back from an evil life and the violent ways that stain their hands. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? Maybe God will turn around and change his mind about us, quit being angry with us and let us live!"

<sup>10</sup> God saw what they had done, that they had turned away from their evil lives. He did change his mind about them. What he said he would do to them he didn't do.

## Luke 18:13

<sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'

<sup>13</sup> "Meanwhile the tax man, slumped in the shadows, his face in his hands, not daring to look up, said, 'God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner.'"

The Narrative Lectionary presents the story of God's work in humanity through a single Gospel each year. This is Year 3: The Year of Luke.