

The story of Jonah

Julian Smith *reflects on* Jonah 3:10 – end of 4

The word Jonah has entered the English language as shorthand for someone jinxed, who brings misfortune to others. But his story is about much more than being thrown overboard and swallowed by a fish; it explores the age-old tension between justice and grace.

Jonah has been called by God to “cry out against” the city of Nineveh. His response is to take a ship for Tarshish and run away from God’s call. God sends a storm, and to calm the storm Jonah insists on being thrown overboard, since the storm is God’s judgement on his disobedience. Jonah is promptly swallowed by a large fish which eventually spews him out on the shore.

God calls Jonah again and this time he obeys. His message moves the people of Nineveh to repent in sackcloth and ashes. In turn, God spares Nineveh the fate he’d prepared for them. Jonah is distraught and angry with God, feeling that he has been made to look an idiot. God teaches Jonah a final lesson through the bush that springs up quickly but dies after only a day.

Jonah’s God is just yet merciful: Nineveh is evil and should be destroyed, not spared. But God repeatedly spares it and Jonah, for God is firstly merciful and then just. Jonah stands for everyone, for it is easy for our wrong ideas about God to deny others the grace that we all depend upon. 😊

God, we thank you for your love and grace, which are renewed every day. Let your love and mercy colour our thoughts, words and actions, that we may not deny others the grace on which we depend. Amen.

Back to university

by Tabitha Francis

Tabitha concludes her series about returning to university to study medicine.

Something I wasn’t expecting to face is the constant feeling of not being committed enough to the course. This mostly shows itself through my work-life balance. So many people in my year work so, so hard. They spend every evening trying to commit the

day’s lectures to memory, and rarely take weekends off to do something different.

God rested from his work, and teaches us that we should also rest from ours. Aside from the fact that my brain seems to switch off at seven o’clock anyway, I find it increasingly important to remind myself of this truth, and that it is okay to not study every hour that God gives. People in all walks of life burn out when they work too hard and the phrase, “it’s a marathon, not a sprint” has never seemed truer than with this course I find myself on now. 😊

“God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.”

Acts 2:24

International Day of Sign Languages

by Lisa Tulfer

Wednesday will be the third United Nations International Day of Sign Languages. The day is part of the International Week of the Deaf, which for over sixty years has raised awareness of the issues that deaf people face in their everyday lives.

There are some seventy-two million deaf people worldwide, who between them speak over three hundred different sign languages. Sign languages are

more than gestures – they are proper languages, structured differently to spoken languages. This is not always acknowledged, and deaf people in many countries are marginalised, with fewer than two per cent having access to sign language education. In the UK, some seventy thousand people have British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language.

Through sign language people can express themselves, connect with others, and participate in the educational, social, economic, cultural and political spheres of life. Signing is also the language of prayer and worship in deaf churches across the world. 😊



Eleventh-century medieval art in the Cathedral of Gaeta, Italy