



**Here I am Lord, send me .....but not there**

This is based on the story of Jonah, Part (or all) of the book of Jonah could be read.

The principles in this book could be applied in different ways, in that a person could be running away from a place of God's direction (near or far), a situation, a ministry role in one's own church, etc. I have elected to apply it to a relatively local situation and use of a gift as it may be too sensitive to apply it internally in a church and too remote to most people to think of a faraway country. Anyhow, it can be adapted.

I have used places local to my church in this drama but these can be substituted by any names which will be meaningful to any particular congregation.

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## **Narrator**

### **Jonah 1**

#### **Jonah Runs from the LORD**

<sup>1</sup> The LORD gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup> "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."

<sup>3</sup> But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the LORD. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the LORD by sailing to Tarshish.

<sup>4</sup> But the LORD hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart. <sup>5</sup> Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship.

But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold. <sup>6</sup> So the captain went down after him. "How can you sleep at a time like this?" he shouted. "Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will pay attention to us and spare our lives."

<sup>7</sup> Then the crew cast lots to see which of them had offended the gods and caused the terrible storm. When they did this, the lots identified Jonah as the culprit. <sup>8</sup> "Why has this awful storm come down on us?" they demanded. "Who are you? What is your line of work? What country are you from? What is your nationality?"

<sup>9</sup> Jonah answered, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land."

<sup>10</sup> The sailors were terrified when they heard this, for he had already told them he was running away from the LORD. "Oh, why did you do it?" they groaned. <sup>11</sup> And since the storm was getting worse all the time, they asked him, "What should we do to you to stop this storm?"

<sup>12</sup> "Throw me into the sea," Jonah said, "and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault."

<sup>13</sup> Instead, the sailors rowed even harder to get the ship to the land. But the stormy sea was too violent for them, and they couldn't make it. <sup>14</sup> Then they cried out to the LORD, Jonah's God. "O LORD," they pleaded, "don't make us die for this man's sin. And don't hold us responsible for his death. O LORD, you have sent this storm upon him for your own good reasons."

<sup>15</sup> Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! <sup>16</sup> The sailors were awestruck by the LORD's great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him.

<sup>17</sup> Now the LORD had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

### **Enter Jonah**

*Jonah walks across stage slowly with a rucksack on his back, map in hand, occasionally consulting it and looking around to find orientation like he was going travelling somewhere.*

**God:** *(from a concealed position)*

Hello Jonah! *(As this is being said, Jonah should be walking away from the voice and on hearing it looks around casually and then continues).*

**God:**

Going somewhere Jonah?

**Jonah:** *(turns around, a little surprised)*

Yes Lord, you know I'm looking for something to do for you.

**God:**

Well, I've got news for you. You see, I've given you some special gifts, just right for an important assignment - or you could call it 'your calling'. Now here's.....

**Jonah:** *(cutting God off)*

Oh great! You know I'VE been working that out too.

**God:**

You see, there's this town called Bray (or pick some local district to your church or you could pick something like Coronation St. to reflect modern society) where there is a large community of people who have forgotten me. Their pursuits in life are material things and their own personal fulfilment; in fact that is what they worship. *(Jonah interjects ~ he and God need to maintain continuity of conversation, no gaps – almost speaking at same time – Jonah not on his own track)* Yes, crowd of wasters! *(God continues)* They have become conceited in thinking I am out of fashion and that they are smarter than me. They need to hear my word again in a manner that gets to their hearts so they can turn back to me. And you're just the man to get this through to them .....

**Jonah:** *(cuts God off)*

Yes, God, I know you want me to take on some ministry among the Christians in my own church. I've prayed about it you know and I firmly believe that is what you want.

**Commentator:** *Jonah moves down into congregation and back to stage while this is being read.*

Jonah goes off and busies himself at his own church, getting involved in different groups. He even starts up an outreach group, but when no outsiders come, he wonders what God is doing; after all it was a great plan and he had asked God to bless it..... **Jonah interjects: Where is everyone?'**..... He begins to irritate others in the church with his OTT enthusiasm over what he is involved with.... **Jonah interjects: why aren't people interested?'**... and begins to wonder what has gone wrong. He slips into being depressed.

*Jonah, back on stage – a large cardboard picture/drawing of a fish is drawn or discreetly carried across stage hiding Jonah*

After he had been like this for a while, he remembered a Sunday morning sermon he had heard recently

**Jonah**

Lord, I did pray to you but what has gone so wrong? Lord, I do want to be right with you and follow you .... So please help me.

**God:**

Yes Jonah, you did pray about what I wanted you to do, but the voice you listened to was your own, not mine. Anyhow you know I love you and I'm, going to give you another chance. I will lead you to where you should be, you see, I have a special role for you and we'll work together on that.

**Commentator:** *(Jonah symbolically pushes the fish further across and off stage.*

*In the following piece, Jonah can be alone, with a couple of large envelopes or a few others can come on to form a queue, but they need to look a bit alive),*

Then one day shortly after that, he went to the Post Office in Bray and as he waited his turn in the queue his mind was mulling over his recent encounter with God. **Sound of bell** immediately at end of this sentence *(He is clearly in another world when he is suddenly startled by 'Counter No. 4 please')* As he did so, a voice inside his head prompted

*(Alternative is to omit the Commentator and merely have someone hold up or walk across front stage holding a very large sign saying 'Post Office' and Jonah acts the day-dreaming bit)*

**God:**

Jonah, come back! *(Jonah comes back from his dreamland)* Where are you?

**Jonah:**

Mmm... I'm in the Post Office.

**God**

Yes but where?

**Jonah:**

Why, Bray of course

**God:**

Yes, remember a conversation you and I had about Bray a while back?

**Jonah:**

.....BRAY (*a little bit of an exclamation*)

**God:**

Last time, you thought you had a better idea, but the voice you listened to wasn't mine; it was your own! And did it work?

**Commentator:**

Suddenly remembering what God had originally said to him here he was right in that very spot; in Bray. Forgetting all about his errand at the Post Office, he left the queue, went down the seafront and talked over the challenge with God (*Jonah sits down in thoughtful manner ~ and/or sound of sea on PA system and hold this for a short space*)

So, from there, he set about getting involved in the community at every level he could; you see he had a special gift at this sort of thing.

*(During the following piece, he puts up a poster from last election! and a poster for some local event: he goes down to shake hands with some of the congregation handing out leaflets as he does.*

He got involved in local politics, joined the Chamber of Commerce and got involved in as many social events as he could. He made sure to promote Christian values at every opportunity using his special gift of sensitivity. He got himself invited to help in community development work. Everywhere he pressed people to consider their position before God and presented Jesus in a manner which caused many people to find their way back to God. You see, Jonah was using his gift where God wanted.

.....God was delighted, but Jonah didn't see it that way

**Jonah:**

Now God see what has happened. These people were their own god, doing what seemed right only to them, setting their moral values by the world around; they don't deserve your forgiveness. It's not fair.

**God:**

Jonah! (*said with a sigh*), when will you ever learn? First you think you know better than me going off on what you figure I wanted and now you are unhappy that I extend my grace to those most in need of it. Besides, you know nobody earns or deserves my forgiveness. Maybe you need to look to me a bit more and less to your own ingenuity,

**Jonah:** *(turning to the audience)*

**As Jonah starts this sentence start song\*** Yes, I thought I could work out what God wanted, but I got it wrong here and there ~ what about you? *(and he freezes for a minimum of 5 seconds)*

*\* the song we used was I, the Lord of sea and sky/Here I am Lord which has a musical lead in which overplays Jonah's last words. We also put the chorus on screen with an invitation to the congregation to join in that. (Make sure your licence covers this)*

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