Open Door All age talk Jonah 5 July 2026

This term we have been thinking about different journeys in the Bible and today we are thinking about Jonah.

God asked Jonah to go to the city of Ninevah. Jonah grumbled a lot didn't he?

- Why do you think Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh? People not the same, had a bad reputation and they were their enemies. Unlike Jonah the people of Ninevah were not Hebrews so Jonah might have thought of them as being different to his own people in some way. Jonah let his prejudices and his fear get in the way of what God wanted him to do.

So he didn't do what God told him to do. He got on a boat going in completely the wrong direction. You can see on this map just how far Jonah was trying to go in the wrong direction.

- What do you think Jonah could have done differently? He could have done as God told him to even if he thought the people were not his friends.

It looked as though he had got away with it, but God sent a storm. Jonah's bad choice was affecting not only himself but also the lives of the sailors When we made poor choices in what we do or say they can have an impact too. The sailors though, even though

they didn't know God did the right thing. In this story they realised that God was angry and that Jonah was the cause.

Now, I don't think we should go around throwing people into the sea if we think they haven't followed God, but the sailors understood the importance of following God's ways even if Jonah didn't.

- How did Jonah get a second chance? God sent a big fish who swallowed him.

It was horrible in the fish's stomach, but God doesn't punish Jonah as he deserves. It must have been slimy and smelly in the fish's stomach for those three days, but they gave him time to think about the choices he had made and the fact that he had gone against God's commands. During those three days Jonah came to understand more about how important it is to listen and obey.

Whilst in the fish Jonah cries out to God, acknowledging that he has done wrong and he asks God for forgiveness. His prayer is a powerful expression of his sorrow and a plea for mercy. Jonah's words are honest, he really wants God's forgiveness and to change, to make amends for what he has done wrong

God doesn't let Jonah down, he doesn't let him drown in the sea and when he is spit up on the beach, God gives him a second

chance. God forgives him and gives him another chance. God is kind and compassionate.

So, Jonah goes to Ninevah and warns them to change their ways, to turn away from doing wrong and to follow God and God's ways. And surprisingly to Jonah, they listened to him! They were sorry and decided to change their ways.

But Jonah still hasn't learnt about God's love and God's care for everyone. Jonah who was a Hebrew and a prophet didn't do nearly as well as the people of Ninevah that he and all the Jews despised.

Instead Jonah was cross because he knew that would happen. He knew that God was loving and would forgive the people, but he still didn't like them. He sat under a tree where he sulked. When God sent a worm which ate the tree, Jonah was cross that the tree had died. God had tried to get through to Jonah, but Jonah still didn't get it. He was more worried about the tree then the people. He struggled to show kindness and love to others, even though God had given him a second chance.

- I wonder – Who might we find it hard to show kindness to, and why?

Perhaps we see them as different in some way or another – maybe they go to a different school, they look different to us in

some way, they have different ideas or beliefs? I wonder if there are any people you need to forgive and to give a second chance to, perhaps because they are not like you in some way?

The summer is a time when we often meet people who we don't know, we might go on journeys ourself. Our challenge is not to have prejudices and to care for others even if they are people we struggle to understand or who are not our friends, because God loves everyone – it doesn't matter who we are, what we look like or where we have come from.

God loves us just all as we are and God forgives us on our journey through life even when we don't follow God's ways and might even go in completely the wrong direction.

God always gives us a second chance when we come to God and say sorry. God wants us to love God and because we have been forgiven we need to extend that forgiveness and kindness to others. So let's give others a second chance too!