

Ceres, Kemback & Springfield Community Church
(SCO17442)

Ceres Church



Jonah 3vv 1 - 10 & St Luke 11 vv 29 - 54

The Gospel of Luke The Road to Golgotha

5th Sunday of Epiphany

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Sunday, 8th February , 2026

Call to Worship

When doubt doubles down
and the questions arise
and we wonder where we are going
and who is leading us there,
when the sky turns red
and the omens are bad
and our gut-feeling is restless
along with our blood pressure,
dare we seek a sign
that leads us through,
a sign of transformation,
of turning back to shore
and solid ground
with a message to proclaim
that speaks of repentance and forgiveness,
that offers a new chance
for prophet and people
that saves the future from darkness
and fills it with possibility and light:
a sign that points us
to a way of being in the world,
renewed through repentance
and reborn through forgiveness
when doubt doubles down
and the questions arise.
The sign of Jonah is waiting
with hope for tomorrow.

Look around
the story of faith is here.

In the colours,
the images,
the signs,
that have led generations to worship.

Hymn 320 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Prayer Of Adoration And Confession

Prayer Of Adoration & Confession

Markets.

Climate.

Peace deals.

Tariffs.

In such signs of the times
we gather,
and wait,
and wonder,
discombobulated,
confused,
uncertain what is true
and what is fake.

We pause.

We hesitate.

What signs shall we seek?

Compassion,

Justice,

bread breaking,

healing.

These signs,
these Kingdom signs

fragile and alien,
hold the universe.
Holy God,
may our eyes be opened to your signs
of renewal,
of hope,
of possibility.
And we praise you
and accept such signs you give.
That call us,
invite us
into worship
life and living.
So be it.
Amen.

Our Prayer of Confession

For the dimming of hope
that we cannot see,
the signs that lead to life.
For the selfish ways
whose focus is so small,
that we miss the signs of renewal.
For the narrow faith
that believes we are right,
cannot see signs in diversity and community.
For the fear of the future
that could be our vision,
that cannot see the path before us.

For blind spots and impatience
that misses the signs,
that calls us on from here.

We pause.
We confess.
We wait.
For renewal.
Forgiveness.
New eyes to see.
Amen.

Hymn 606 Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders

The Context

Well ... the story of Jonah ... it's a cracker isn't it ...and one of those incredible tales which we probably first encounter in Sunday School and swallow whole oops - no pun intended - get it ... we probably swallow it who - ... yeah ...

Biblical Scholars offer as ever diverse opinion ... in the main we could say that its a matter of the historical verses the allegorical ...is the story of Jonah being swallowed by an enormous sea creature a literal event or is it parable/ satire intended to teach us theological truths?

While we're on the subject of examining the detail you might be interested to know that while the creature commonly called a whale is in the Hebrew *dag gadol* which simply means *big fish* ... the term *whale* was popularised in later Greek and Latin translations ..

It's also interesting to note that in Judaism this story is read on Yom Kippur which is the most solemn and holy day in the religious Jewish calendar .. it translates as *Day of Atonement* and is read in sometime late September ... the meaning of Yom Kippur is that it is the time to put

things right with God through sacrifice and prayers the word atonement of course pointing to the sense of at - one- ment with God ... putting everything right so that there is no separation btw me and God ... all ills, wrongs, vulnerabilities dealt with ... in the lead up to the day itself religious Jews traditionally ask forgiveness from God and from their fellow human beings ... Yom Kippur is a precious time enabling religious Jews to believe having done this, they are at one with God ...

But a particular strand in this story I'd like to pick up on today is the fact that as we know , when the sea monster swallowed Jonah we're told he was in its belly for three days and three nights ... now as Christians our ears prick up at this number because we'll always associate it with the number of days Christ was in the tomb ...

In the ancient world when a person died they were laid to rest for three days and night and only pronounced legally dead on the fourth day ...

An allegorical, teaching truth from this story surely means, therefore that Jonah died to his sins, his cowardice, his lack of faith in God and was dead to them for three days - and being spewed out by the sea creature on the fourth day was not only alive but cleaned and cleared from his sin ... and so cleared and cleared and put right with God he was able to do his job and turned his face to Nineveh to do God's work ... Three days in the darkness of the creature's belly meant he died to all that separated him from God ... In the Hebrew numbering system the number three is called *Gimel* ... and what does it mean? Harmony, divine completeness ...

In a while we'll be commemorating the sacrament of Holy Communion ... taking the things of bread and wine, the elects of ordinary, everyday use and using them to God's holy use and mystery ...

These too are signs pointing to the presence and healing power of God ... for Jonah the darkness of the creature's belly while extreme proved to be his way back to being at one with God ... his cowardice and terror put away and the courage of faith re-newed ... for us the signs of the Last

Supper are offered as our reminders and way back to one-ness with Christ
- who himself suffered three days of dark and separation, symbolically
taking the weight of the world's sin into that tomb and gifting a new start
with - WITH God

Let's listen to Jonah's story and David will also read from St Luke chapter
11 ...

Bible Readings Jonah 2 vv 1 - 10 & St Luke 11 vv 29 - 54

Homily

If the story of Jonah - while alarming in parts ends hopefully for Jonah -
what do these series of narratives in Luke's gospel say about many of the
people Jesus encounters? I don't know about you but I'm exhausted when
I read this section of Luke ... it's enoucntemr after encounter with Jesus
offering, teaching, describing, appealing, being frustrated ... I mean he
must have been shattered ... I hope he was taking two days a week at the
very least!

I offer a view which says we can question God all we like - and questions,
discussion, robust examination - all these are surely legitimate ... without
these we wouldn't have much in Biblical scholarship that has uncovered
untold wonders and secret codes which reveal oil themselves the
awesomeness that is the divine ... but for sanity's sake and our mental
health it's good to discern when to stop asking sometimes ... and rest in
the love and being of God ... perhaps stop exhausting ourselves some days
when questioning and aggravation against God and life is draining the life
and energy out of us and be mindful of the simplest of signs ... the fact we
can draw breath into our lungs ... the roof over our heads the food on
our tables - yes I'm talking about counting our blessings AND something
else ... do we need sometimes to have a little Yom Kippur in our lives ...
to quietly lay our regrets before God ... to go for a walk, or sit quietly in a
chair and say I face up to that thing I did or didn't do ... not to crucify

oarless with guilt ... God doesn't want that ... but to be in the quiet
darkness where transformation lies ...

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Offering & Dedication of the Offering

All we are,
all we are yet to be.
Today we join them once more,
people of faith
who see the sign
and trust in what it points to.
Let us worship.
All the hope,
all the light,
all the love we can give.
With these gifts,
signs of your kingdom alive in us,
we dedicate ourselves
to a way of living
that is a sign of your joy,
and your hope,
and your love.
So be it.
Amen.



Invitation to Communion

*We come, not because we are strong, but because we are weak.
We come, not because any goodness of our own gives us a right to come,
but because we need mercy and help.
We come, because we love the Lord a little and would like to love him
more.
We come, because he loved us and gave himself for us.*

Communion Hymn 659 Put peace into each other's hands

Prayers for Others & Ourselves & the Lord's Prayer

We need you, O God,
the light,
the word,
the peace,
that is the sign of the kingdom.

We need you, O God,
the justice,
the mercy,
the compassion,
that signals your renewal for the world.

We need you, O God,
the challenge,
the critique,
the truth to power,
that is the sign of your voice being heard.

And we can wait for it
and long for it,
and twiddle our thumbs.

Or we can work for it,
hear it call us,
and by your power make ready the place for your renewing.

May we be your signs in the world
that we live in peace where we are:
a sign of what the world can be.
That we live justly towards each other.
a sign of what you call us to be,
that we live as community of hope and light.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread, and
forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen

The Great Prayer

M. The Lord be with you.
People. *And also with you.*
M. Lift up your hearts
People. *We lift them up to the Lord.*
M. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
People. *It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

Let us pray ...

It is right to praise you -
for you are the One from whom we came
and the One to whom we will return.
You conceived the universe
wove the world
and hold all life in your hand.

You watch us waking and sleeping
notice each tear we shed
and hear every prayer we utter.
You know our best and worst
and never let us go.
Therefore with all the elements of earth

and with rain, wind and sunshine
with all that moves in time with our Maker
we praise you.

With angels and archangels
in communion with saints from the ages
with our loved ones here and gone
we praise you. With the Church throughout the world
Orthodox and Lutheran, Catholic and Reformed
with all who love Jesus and honour his name
we praise you ..

You grew up with neither privilege or status
who walked the way of heaven
through the backstreets of the world.
You told deep truths using ordinary words
and touched, healed, blessed and disturbed
without fear or favour.

For all this you was crucified by worldly power
and buried for good.

But the power which is beyond the earth's
did not let you go, and you lived in the
lives of companions and people who
saw beyond the everyday. We believe
you are present with us now, helping us
build the Kingdom of God on earth.

This morning we hold to you for blessing
people we personally know who are struggling ... frightened ... anxious
and praying for change and hope

... and we pray for Mark Todd recovering from a stroke in Victoria ... for
his whole family, his parents Myra and Andrew, his brother Ewan ... his
children Phoenix and Leo ... imbue them with your strength and rock-

steady resilience ... and we give thanks for skill of hospital staff and the
care of faithful chaplains ...

We invoke the healing, hopeful power of you, bound in heaven and loosed
now through the cosmos ...
singing the Angels' hymn telling of your everlasting love, saying together

...

Angels' Hymn

*Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of power and might
Heaven and earth are full of your glory
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he
Who comes in the name of the Lord
Hosanna in the highest.*

The Epiklesis and The Fraction

Ever Living Love, let your Spirit
move among us, settle on this bread and wine -
that they become for us
the mysterious gifts of Jesus Christ - even as
that same Spirit stirs in our souls, disturbing us
and renewing us in our bonds of communion. Amen.

Among friends
gathered round a table
Jesus took bread;
and when he had blessed it
he broke it and said,

“Take this and eat. It is my body given for you.

Do this to remember me.”

Later, as they were eating
he took a cup of wine, and when he had given thanks he said,

*“This cup is the new relationship with God, made
possible because of my death. Take this, all of you to
remember me.”*

Agnus Dei

M. O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,

ALL. Have mercy upon us.

M. O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,

ALL. Have mercy upon us.

M. O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,

ALL. Grant us your peace.

The gifts of God for the people of God.



The Peace of Christ

Sending out Hymn 465 Be thou my vision

Sending Out & The Benediction

Go,

embrace Gods mercy,

accept forgiveness,

show love and compassion to others,

rather than asking for miracles.

Be open to the light of Christ,

to help you see the world clearly,

and to transform your soul,

to express Christ to all.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
Mother, Son and Holy Spirit
be with us all, with everyone whom we love -
especially those we struggle to love,
Amen. Amen.Amen.

