

# 40 Days of Fitness

A daily devotional by Rev Garry Hardingham

## DAY 7 – Many Paths to Ninevah

*Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, ‘Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.’ 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. Jonah 1:1-3*

As a kid, I knew nothing about the Church or what it was all about, but I did know about the story of a guy swallowed by a whale because he tried to get out of doing what he supposed to do. It was always one of those stories designed by parents to make kids do things when they didn't want to. You know, “if you don't go collect the eggs, you'll be swallowed by a carpet snake...” and so on.

I remember though as kid dismissing the tale of Jonah and his punishment for not doing what he was told after learning that whales can swallow nothing larger than an orange because of the size of their throats and so therefore the whole story was rubbish and so on and so on.

Even now I find the whole tale a bit hard to swallow, pardon the pun.

But then, over the last few years as I have encountered more and more Jonahs, people trying to get out of doing what God is plainly calling them to do, the story of Jonah and the whale makes more and more sense.

The other story that fascinates me is when Peter tries to walk on the water after Jesus beckons him to come out of the boat. (Matthew 14:22-33) .I admire Peter; he had a fair crack at it. That is, until it all got too much for him and he starts to sink under the waves. He cries out, “Help me Lord!” and Jesus reaches out and saves him from drowning.

These two stories are a reminder to us that God bids us to do His will. And you have a choice. You can step out like Peter, even if its way beyond your comfort zone, but knowing that God will not let you drown.

Or you can do a Jonah and just run. There are many ways to Ninevah.

We are all called by God to undertake good works for His glory. Not to demonstrate how good we are, but to proclaim God's goodness to a world that spends most of its time in the belly of a whale swimming around in darkness.

We are not lacking any spiritual gift required to undertake this work. But unless we seek the path Christ has placed upon us, we will never experience the true depth of joy that being a part of Christ's body can bring us.

There are many ways to Nineveh.

May yours be the path above the chaos rather than the way of the whale.

### PRAYER

Loving God,  
You possess me, Lord, and I possess you  
You have put your faith and hope in me  
and I have put my faith and hope in you.  
My life, my honour, my happiness, my peace,  
all rest in you.  
Make my heart ready to receive you, Lord  
and my soul ready to see you.  
Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace.  
Your word has been fulfilled.  
My own eyes have seen the salvation which  
You have prepared in the sight of every people.  
A light to reveal You to the nations and the glory of Your people Israel.  
Amen.

*St Simeon the Theodidact (949-1022)*