

# Creation-tide Bible Study • Week 5

## Sunday 7 November – (Harvest)

**Preacher – Canon Christopher Carolane**

Reading: Prov 8.1-4, 22-31; Ps 95; Hebr 4.1-11; John 6.11-15

### 1. Read Jonah 4:1-11

The story of Jonah is well known to Sunday school children everywhere but as a book it can often be overlooked by adults with its incredible tale of men swallowing fish. Like all books of the Bible there is no single 'correct' way to read Jonah and many truths can be found within the narrative of the story. Two things that emerge from the book of Jonah are the very human characteristics Jonah displays and the central role of nature in the book. Jonah's actions in the course of his story display both disobedience and obedience; weakness and strength. He is a very human Biblical character. Having warned the people of Nineveh about God's wrath he is then angry that having repented God does not punish the Ninevites anyway. Jonah chapter four picks up the story when he is angry with God for failing to punish the Ninevites. Just as stormy seas and a great fish played a role in God's engagement with Jonah once again God speaks to Jonah through the natural world.<sup>1</sup>

Jonah welcomes the bush which God creates to give him shelter and is then angry when God causes it to die.

- Have you ever had a similar experience with Jonah where you were happy with God had given you but angry when God took it away?
- What does this say about our complex relationship with nature?
- Have you ever experienced God's presence or voice through nature? Share your experience.

### 2. Read Genesis 2:15

In this chapter, we get an entirely different picture of the role of humans in relationship to Earth. When God makes Adam, the first human, God places Adam in the garden 'to till and keep it'.

A closer look at the text reveals that the Hebrew word for 'till' normally means 'serve'. The role of the first human then—and presumably all humans—is to 'serve' and 'preserve' Earth.

If we compare this text with the preceding reading from Genesis One, we discover that they seem to be diametrically opposed. The first reading has 'rule' and the second has 'serve', the first reading has 'subdue' and the second has 'preserve'.

In Genesis 1:28 humans are to 'rule' the living creatures and 'subdue' the earth.

In Genesis 2:15 humans are to 'till/serve' the earth and to 'preserve' it

The verbs in Genesis 1:28 imply royalty and domination, those in Genesis 2:15 indicate service and preservation.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from [Microsoft Word - Week Five \(churchofengland.org\)](https://www.churchofengland.org/microsoft-word-week-five)

- In the light of the current ecological crisis we face on planet Earth, which of these perspectives do we choose and why?
- How can we do that practically and personally?
- What implications and costs will it have on your life?

### **Jonah 4:1-11**

<sup>1</sup>But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup>He prayed to the LORD and said, 'O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. <sup>3</sup>And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' <sup>4</sup>And the LORD said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' <sup>5</sup>Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. <sup>7</sup>But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup>When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'

<sup>9</sup>But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.' <sup>10</sup>Then the LORD said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup>And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?'

### **Genesis 2:15**

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.