



The Story of Jonah  
*Jonah 3-4*

Retold by  
THE REV. DR. MATTHEW POTTS  
CO-FOUNDER, THE LOVE FIRST PROJECT

There was a man named Jonah who lived in the northern kingdom of Israel a long time ago. Israel had a great and powerful enemy: the kingdom of Assyria, with Nineveh its greatest city. One day, Jonah heard God's voice say to him, "Jonah, go to Nineveh and give them my message of love and forgiveness."

Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh. But he did, and when the people there heard God's message of love and forgiveness from Jonah, they felt regret for all the bad things they had done and promised to live better lives. The king of Assyria even made a law that every person in the whole kingdom must pray for forgiveness and never do any evil or violence again. This made God very glad.

But it made Jonah angry. He shouted at God, saying, "This is why I didn't want to go to Nineveh in the first place! I knew my enemies would hear your message of love and forgiveness and turn from their violence. I wanted you to punish and destroy them! And now instead they've accepted your message and turned away from war."

Jonah sulked and went and sat grumpily outside the city. It was very hot, but he sat in the shade of a bush to stay cool. But the bush withered and died as the sun beat down, and Jonah was miserable. He said to himself, "That bush was so special to me. I am so upset that it is gone."

When God heard this, he said to Jonah, "You are upset because you have lost only one little bush. How much more upset do you think it would make me to lose Nineveh to war and destruction? Nineveh is full of people and animals whom I love. Of course I should send them my love and forgiveness. My message is for them and for everyone."