

This week we are having a break from our regular 25 week series on Advent

For anyone creating the Jesse tree (some are using a Christmas tree as we are in church) you can catch up on any missing pictures by going to the church office on Sunday mornings or during the week.

Can you look at the pictures and remind yourself of the stories?

The whole Old Testament tells us something about the coming of Jesus. Can you relate to the stories like that? For example, the door in the side of Noah's ark reminds us of the wound in Jesus' side on the cross. Out of the Ark's side the world was populated. Out of Jesus' side flowed blood and water. His death and resurrection given in baptism creates a Godly population!



## Jonah got swallowed by a big fish, on his way to Tarshish...

Do you see what I see?

**Read: Jonah** (It's only four chapters!)

Jonah struggles with what God has asked of him, and ends up in the belly of a whale. Three days later, God redeems Jonah, who is spat up on the beach. Looking ahead about 800 years, we see **Jesus** struggle with what God asks of him (Matthew 26:39); and we see Jesus crucified. **Three days later**, God overcomes the power of death and raises Jesus to life. You can't say the Old Testament doesn't point to Jesus!

In the belly of the whale, Jonah prays: 'When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple' (2:7). Jonah came face to face with hopelessness, and life bottoming-out on him, and he *remembered God*. He turned *back* to the very God he had questioned, and prayed. And God redeemed him.

*When have you been 'in the belly of a whale'? Did you remember God? What difference does it make to those seasons, when you **do** remember God in the midst of those seasons?*

Hindsight is a wonderful teacher: but God is present in the valley of the shadow of death while you walk there. Remember Him.

Finally, Jonah shows us a very interesting characteristic of humans. It's how we respond to God. In Luke 8, we see storms submit to Jesus' command and be stilled; we see demons cast out, we see people healed. Nature obeys Jesus. Demons obey Jesus. Disease obey Jesus. But when it comes to human beings... like Jonah ... well, he said "No!"  
God asks something of Jonah, and he...  
ran away!

*When God asks something of us, how do we respond?  
Do we leap to obedience? Do we obey at all? Do we look after the poor?  
Do we love our neighbour? Do we give generously? Do we obey our parents?  
Do we forgive others, even when they are not sorry?  
Why do we think we can say "no" to the very God whom nature obeys?*