JONAH 1:1-3; 3:1-5 AND 4:1-11

READERS: NARRATOR, GOD, JONAH

NARRATOR: Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying,

GOD: Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.

NARRATOR: 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’s escape is thwarted by a storm and then a large fish. After some time to reflect in chapter 2, Jonah is given a second chance:

NARRATOR: The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying,

GOD: Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.

NARRATOR: So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord.

NARRATOR: Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out,

JONAH: Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!

JONAH: 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.

And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.

NARRATOR: And the Lord said,

GOD: Is it right for you to be angry?

NARRATOR: 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.

NARRATOR: 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.

But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered.

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,

JONAH: It is better for me to die than to live.

NARRATOR: But God said to Jonah,

GOD: Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?

JONAH: Yes, angry enough to die.

GOD: You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night.

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?

Everyone in Nineveh responds to Jonah’s less than stellar sermon.