

Go to Nineveh! – A Two-Jonah Duet

R. Rachel Barenblat & R. David Evan Markus
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Characters:

God (white shirt)

Jonah 1 (blue shirt)

Jonah 2 (red shirt)

SCENE 1 THE CALL

Jonah 1, God and Jonah 2 face the congregation in a line, from stage-right to stage-left, so Jonah 1 appears to be standing on the left with God between them.

GOD:

The word of the Eternal came to Jonah, son of Truth: Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim judgment on it, for their wickedness has come before Me.

JONAH 1:

I don't want to go to Nineveh!

They're anti-maskers. They say COVID is a hoax.

Their disdain for science risks us all.

JONAH 2:

I don't want to go to Nineveh!

They're like sheep. They want Big Government to control everything.

Their disdain for liberty risks us all.

JONAH 1:

I don't want to go to Nineveh!

Their talking heads on Fox News spew right-wing propaganda.

They control the masses by stoking their anger. Of course they got violent.

JONAH 2:

I don't want to go to Nineveh!

Their talking heads on MSNBC spew bleeding-heart nonsense.

They control the masses by stoking their anger. Of course they got violent.

JONAH 1:

I don't want to go to Nineveh!
They dog-whistle racism. They hate diversity, culture and learning.

JONAH 2:

I don't want to go to Nineveh!
They have no respect for property or traditional values.

JONAH 1:

They think only people like them should vote.

JONAH 2:

They're soft on crime. They're bankrupting the country.

JONAH 1:

They steal elections.

JONAH 2:

They steal the future from our children.

JONAH 1:

They're selfish, short-sighted and corrupt.

JONAH 2:

They're arrogant, short-sighted and corrupt.

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER:

And You want me to go *there?* to Nineveh?
You want me to go somewhere so backwards and ungodly?
You want me to save them from themselves?

It's a fool's errand.
Who cares about people like that?
We'd be better off if they were dead.

GOD:

I said: Go to Nineveh!

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER:

I don't want to go to Nineveh!

GOD:

I didn't say it'd be easy.

SCENE 2 LOCKDOWN

God steps back but still visible, leaving Jonah 1 and Jonah 2 forward.

JONAH 1:

I tried running away.

I sheltered in place, safe in my living room. I binge-watched Netflix.

JONAH 2:

I tried running away.

I sheltered in place. I had no choice: jobs disappeared.

JONAH 1:

Schools went virtual. I felt grateful.

Teachers and children needed to be safe.

JONAH 2:

The schools went virtual. I felt appalled.

How could we educate kids like that?

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER:

I worried about kids getting left behind.

JONAH 1:

I became addicted to news reports from MSNBC.

JONAH 2:

I became addicted to news reports from Fox News.

JONAH 1:

I watched as friends became scared and sick.

JONAH 2:

I watched as friends lost their jobs.

JONAH 1:

I had trouble sleeping. I spent nights scrolling Twitter and Facebook.

JONAH 2:

I had trouble sleeping. I spent nights scrolling Twitter and Facebook.

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER:

There was a run on toilet paper.
Groceries became harder to find.
I waited in two-hour lines at the food pantry I used to support.

JONAH 1:

I got sick of Zoom. I didn't like how I looked on screen.
I found myself tuning out and staring into space.

JONAH 2:

I toggled between numb, scared and angry.
I figured that it all had to end soon – but it dragged on and on.

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER:

I couldn't believe what was happening. I feared losing America.
I feared losing it all. I cheered my leaders trying to stop the insanity.
But the longer it dragged on, the longer I stayed in, the angrier I got.

GOD:

Jonah, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim –

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER (interrupting):

Do it Yourself, will You?

GOD (like an annoyed parent):

Do you want Me coming down there? I said, go to Nineveh!

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER (hands over ears, whining):

La la la... I'm not listening. Nyeh nyeh nyeh.

GOD:

Yes, you are listening, Jonah. So go to Ninev–

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER (interrupting, angrily):

Cut it out! Leave me alone!

GOD

You really want that, Jonah? Okay... have it your way.

SCENE 3 DESCENT

God slowly steps toward the side but still visible. God turns around and watches. The Jonahs become visibly shaken and increasingly anxious, pacing.

JONAH 1:

I tried running away, but trouble seemed to follow me.
Everywhere I went, there was more anxiety and worry.

JONAH 2:

I tried running away, but trouble seemed to follow me.
I went to my basement treadmill, but I couldn't rouse myself to use it.

JONAH 1:

I tried yoga, but that didn't work. I tried meditating, but I couldn't quiet my mind.
I tried sleeping through it, but restful sleep became harder to come by.

JONAH 2:

I binge-watched bad movies and stupid cat videos on Facebook –
Anything to distract myself for weeks on end.

JONAH 1:

I took imaginary exotic vacations to places I'll probably never visit –
Anything to distract myself for *months* on end.

JONAH 2:

I tried not watching the news or reading the paper. I got into dumb spats
on social media, then I tried to stay off it – but I kept going back.

JONAH 1:

I took up baking. I ate too much.
I drank too much. Everything was too much.

JONAH 2:

I went overboard trying to escape it.
I might as well be at the bottom of the sea.

JONAH 1:

I might as well be at the bottom of the sea.
I feel like I *am* at the bottom of the sea.

JONAH 2:

It might be better if I *were* at the bottom of the sea.
At least there I'd be safe. I'd be safe there – right?

JONAH 1:

I'm not even safe here. Oil spills at sea are catching fire. Fisheries are dying.
Icecaps are melting. Sea levels are rising faster.

JONAH 2:

Whole nations are on fire. Thugs took over more than half the world.
Freedom is on the retreat. Mobs, gangs and militants are winning.

JONAH 1:

The virus is surging back, wave after wave.
ICUs are filling up again. We're all at risk.

JONAH 2:

How can they consider locking down again?
Gutting jobs and destroying businesses yet again?

JONAH 1:

There's a booming business in propaganda, like facts don't matter anymore.
The "Big Lie" is like a zombie: it just won't die. Have you seen how they live?

JONAH 2:

More government always is the answer – another lie that just won't die!
Did family values die, too? Have you seen how they dress?

JONAH 1:

How many more must die before things finally change? How many more
will die from covid, poverty, guns and police violence? It's not too late.

JONAH 2:

How many more must die before things finally change? How many more
will die from drugs, gangs and terror? It's not too late.

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER:

It's not too late – not yet. But we're running out of time.
Or maybe it is. Maybe it'd be better if everything was just over.

GOD (from the side)

I told you, Jonah: Go to Nineveh. It's the only way.

**SCENE 4
ASCENT**

God steps back in between the two Jonahs.

GOD:

So, let's try this again. Go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out what I tell you.

JONAH 2 (*looking at Jonah 1*):

Exactly. God says to proclaim liberty in all the land. That's why God says:
Less government! No masks! Lower taxes!

JONAH 1 (*looking at Jonah 2*):

No, God says to love your neighbor as yourself. That's why God says:
Protect elders and children! Vaccines! Paid child care! Social infrastructure!

GOD:

Here we go again.

JONAH 2 (*getting angrier*):

Pick yourself up by your own bootstraps! Reward work, not welfare!
The American dream for Americans: USA! USA! USA!

JONAH 1 (*getting angrier*):

God trusted humanity to tend the earth for everyone – for Native Americans,
for immigrants, for descendents of freed slaves, for future generations.

GOD:

I said *go* to Nineveh. You have to actually *go* there. You have to *care*.

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER:

But I do care! I do care about the world.
And I gotta say, sometimes it hurts to care.

GOD:

You have to *go* there. You have to *care* about *them*.

JONAH 1 (*snarky*):

You mean the dumb fascist racist conspiracy mongering right-wing nutballs?

JONAH 2 (*snarky*):

The arrogant weak-kneed lily-livered radical left-wing squad mobs?

GOD:

Is that what you think? Do you really see others just as their worst caricatures?

JONAH 1 (*pausing*):

I guess there *are* a few better ones. They did move the infrastructure bill.

JONAH 2:

And they cut the price tag, and didn't make America socialist – y'know, yet.

JONAH 1:

And began standing up to conspiracy mongers in their ranks.

JONAH 2:

And began showing the far left the complex implications of naive ideas.

JONAH 1:

Some even started getting their people vaccinated – late, but it's happening.

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER:

Some of them are changing. I didn't think *any* of them could.
How did You know they were capable of change?

GOD:

Life is change. How about you? Can *you* change? I told you to "Go to Nineveh, that great city" – the greatness within, the part of you that you think can't change.

JONAH 1:

I'd rather be at the bottom of the sea.

JONAH 2:

I'd rather die under a vine.

GOD:

You can choose to live that way – but it's not inevitable. There's still time.
If others you imagined were hard as stone can begin to change, then can't you?

BOTH JONAHS TOGETHER:

But it might hurt. There's been enough hurt. Why should I even try?

GOD:

Because I care about you – just as I care for them, and the sea you didn't fill and the vine that you didn't plant or tend. If I care for people who need to learn fact from falsehood, and the animals of this fragile earth, shouldn't I care for you?