

Godly Play - The story of Jonah

The story of Jonah is found in the Old Testament of the Bible in the book of Jonah. You will need a piece of blue felt to make the sea, and a piece of green or brown felt to make the land. You will also need a figure to be Jonah, a boat, something to represent a whale and something else to represent the city of Ninevah (Cardboard cut outs?)

One day God spoke to a man called Jonah. (Figure of green felt)

"Do you know the city of Ninevah?"

"Oh yes, Lord, I have heard that the people living there do lots of very bad things."

"Yes, it is true. I want you to go there and tell them that because they are doing such bad things, I am angry with them and will destroy their city!"

Suddenly Jonah was very scared. If the people of Ninevah did such bad things, they would surely be angry with him and do bad things to him too!

So instead of doing what God wanted, Jonah ran away! (Jonah runs away) He ran and he ran. Perhaps if he went far, far away, God would leave him alone! I wonder ... why was Jonah so afraid ... I wonder ... can people run away from God?

He ran all the way to the sea where he found a ship that was going to Spain. (Jonah gets into the ship) Jonah was so tired he went down to his cabin where he fell fast asleep.

Shortly after the boat left the shore, a terrible storm came up. The waves grew bigger and bigger (crease the blue felt to make waves) All the men on the boat were very afraid. The captain found Jonah asleep in the boat. He said to Jonah, "How can you sleep? Get up and pray to your god, maybe he can help us!" The captain didn't realize that Jonah didn't just believe in lots of gods, but in the one true God and that He could help them.

Meanwhile, the other sailors decided that the storm was Jonah's fault. He must have done something wrong to make his god so angry. So, they asked Jonah, "What have you done? What god do you believe in? What can we do to make this storm stop?"

Jonah told them, "I believe in the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land. I am running away from something God asked me to do. It is my fault this is happening. If you throw me into the sea the storm will stop."

The sailors really did not want to hurt Jonah, but the storm was getting worse and worse. Eventually they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea. (Throw Jonah out of the boat)

Straight away, the storm calmed, and the sea became still. (make the felt flat again) "Wow!" the sailors said, "Jonah's God must be real!" They all bowed down and worshipped him.

Meanwhile, Jonah was sinking down and down, right down to the bottom of the sea. Just when he thought that he would die, a big fish (whale) swam by and swallowed him whole. (Show Jonah inside the whale)

While Jonah was trapped inside the fish he did a lot of thinking and praying to God.

I wonder ... how did Jonah feel about what he had done?

I wonder What did Jonah say to God?

Jonah said sorry to God for running away and he asked God to forgive him. He promised that if God rescued him, he would do what God wanted and go to Ninevah. He also thanked God because he realised God sent the whale to stop him from drowning!

After the third day God told the fish to spit Jonah out onto dry land. And the fish did just that.

(Show the whale being sick and Jonah back on dry land, the green felt. Show him walking to Ninevah)

God told Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh and tell the people there to stop being bad. This time Jonah obeyed God and left for Nineveh right away. Then an amazing thing happened. The people all listened to Jonah! They said sorry to God for all the bad things that they had done. They promised God that they would try to stop being mean and selfish to everyone and be kind instead.

I wonder ... how do you think Jonah felt now? ... What does this story say about how God feels when people do bad things? Does God stop loving them?

This story is to teach us that God loves everyone. He doesn't like to destroy people who are doing things bad, God would rather see us turn from our bad ways and do good again.

The people who heard what Jonah said were sorry for all they had done wrong and said they were sorry. They also began to say sorry to God.