

Introduction

Sometimes when we have a call from God to do something, we think it's too difficult, or that we're not good enough, or it's too scary, or others might put us off doing it – all of those things that prevent us 'walking on water' that we looked at last time. Today's story is of someone who was alive before Jesus came to live on the earth and so he wasn't able to look to Jesus for his inspiration. However, the story does show us how trusting in God and following his call can bring about surprising results.

The bible passage is from the book of Jonah (abridged)

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah, saying, ² 'Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it.' ³ 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.

⁴ But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god.

⁸ Then they said to him [Jonah], 'Tell us why this calamity has come upon us.' ... 'What is this that you have done!' For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them so.

¹¹ Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quieten down for us?' For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. ¹² He said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quieten down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.' ¹⁵ So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

¹⁷ But the LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.

Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry.

Activities:

1 Story telling scene

You will need: a big piece of cardboard, newspapers or tissue paper (with blue/green colouring is best) scrunched up into balls for waves, pipe cleaner, plasticine or play-doh, A5 sheets of paper.

Create your own scene of Jonah running away from God,

sailing in a ship, getting caught in a storm and being thrown into the sea before being eaten by a big fish.



1. Cover the cardboard with Pritt stick or paste and stick the balls of paper all over it.
2. Using A5 size paper make a paper boat following the instructions from last month, using coloured paper if possible.
3. Draw a whale shape on paper or card or make up a big fish as follows:
 - Cut an A5 sheet in half lengthways and cut curves at the ends.
 - Make creases across one half
 - Draw on eyes and teeth and glue into a whale shape
 - Cut a 'fringe' from a piece of paper, roll it up, make a hole in the top of the whale and insert the rolled up 'water spout'
4. Make a Jonah figure from a pipe-cleaner, plasticine or playdoh or draw a figure which you could colour.
5. Assemble the "scene": you may need to attach a cocktail stick with Sellotape to one or other of the shapes to keep them in position.

Talk about: The storm that blew Jonah's ship was very strong. I wonder how the sailors felt? They cried to their gods, but Jonah realised what it was that would still the storm – he knew he had to follow God's call.

2 Jonah in the fish

You will need: 3 paper plates and a plastic wallet, as well as coloured pens, pencils or crayons.

Cut an 'off-centre' hole in one plate (this will need adult help). Draw Jonah inside another plate to match the location of the hole. Cut a (larger) hole in some clear plastic from the wallet and tape to the inside of the hole to make a window. Cut a tail shape from the third plate and make a water spout from thin paper (as for the big fish in activity 1). Stick the edges of the two plates together and add



the tail and water spout to the fish, together with some eyes and teeth.

Talk about: What must it have been like inside the fish? What places have you liked to be during lockdown and where have you not enjoyed being? What makes something a good or a bad place to be?

3 Getting Jonah into the fish

You will need: a hoop or bucket, cardboard or paper to make 'teeth'

Line a hoop or bucket with teeth and throw bean bags or balls into it, just like Jonah went into the fish's mouth.

Talk about: Was it a co-incidence that the big fish was there just as Jonah was thrown into the sea? Where do you see co-incidences happening and can they be used as opportunities to follow God's path?

4 Plastic fish

You will need: a large piece of card with a fish outline drawn on it; glue; scissors; recycled plastic wrappers

Glue pieces of plastic on to the fish to make a brightly coloured collage.



Talk about how sea creatures are being hurt with plastic rubbish in the sea. There are masses of plastic waste, which are causing environmental hazards for fish and other wildlife. What can we do? In Australia, there are clean-up days at beaches. Inventors and scientists are developing ways to vacuum or collect the plastic, which is then removed from the sea. But it would be far better if it was never there in the first place.

5 Fish biscuits

You will need: 200g plain flour, 200g margarine, 200g Parmesan cheese (if available and if liked), 100g cheddar cheese – grated, cayenne pepper and salt, a little egg yolk and water

1. Chop the margarine into the flour until fine.
2. Add cheese and seasoning.
3. Bind to a stiff paste with yolk and water.
4. Roll out the pastry and cut out fish shaped biscuits.
5. Bake at gas mark 6 or 200c for 5 - 7 minutes.

ENJOY!!

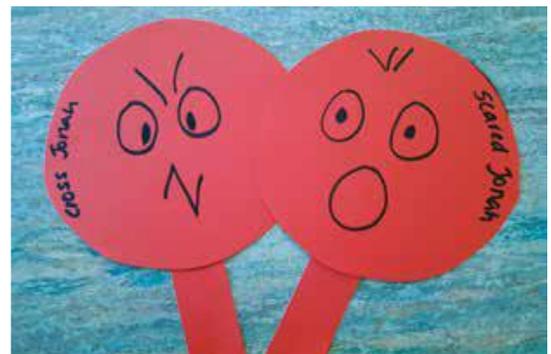
Talk about how different these fish are to the plastic fish. Although they might not be as colourful, they are much tastier. Have you been doing much home cooking during lockdown?



6 Jonah masks

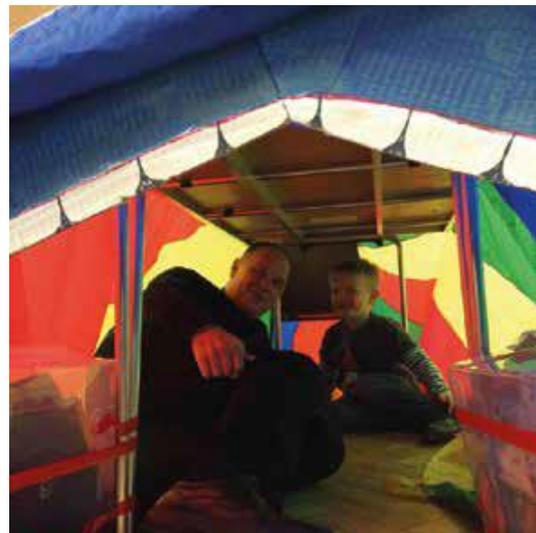
You will need: paper plates or cut-out circles; pens/crayons; lolly sticks or similar; sticky tape
On one side of the circle or plate draw a scared face, and on the other side draw an angry or a cross face. Attach the lolly stick as a handle.

Talk about how Jonah was scared on the boat but angry with God later. What feelings have you had recently that you might want to share with God?



7 Big tent

You will need: a tent or parachute; lots of brown paper; coloured paper; scissors; sticky tape; marker pens; bottles; pens
Put up the tent and leave the door open as the 'mouth' of the fish, adding teeth to the sides of the door. You could cover the tent with paper, adding eyes, scales and a tail. Use a parachute or large sheet over a table if you can't get hold of a tent.
Inside the tent have a supply of bottles, pieces of paper and pens. Write prayers



that start, like Jonah's prayer: 'Lord God, HELP!...' and put the message in a bottle.

Talk about how Jonah probably prayed to God while he was inside the fish. Reflect on the way God hears our prayers even in the deepest, darkest places.

Prayer

At Messy Church we have thought previously about praying teaspoon (tsp) prayers:

Thank you – use the fish biscuits to say thank you to God for all the food that we have and the fun that we have creating it. Thank God for his creation.

Sorry – that we have allowed the world to become polluted. Reflect on our wastefulness, as seen in the rubbish that clogs up the oceans and destroys sea life.

Please – Using the masks consider the ways in which Jonah was turning away from God when he was scared and angry. Use a picture of a boat to ask God to help us in trusting in him, focussing on different parts for each part of the prayer: the prow (ask God to guide you where you should go); the rudder (ask God to steer you away from places of danger); the oars (ask God to help you work hard for him each day); the sails (ask God to fill you with the wind of the Holy Spirit).

Next date: Friday 7th August 2020

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