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PROPHET JONAH

(Based on the book of Jonah)



"Jonah," said the Lord. "I want you to go to the big City of Ninevah, and preach really loudly to them, because I know about all the bad things they do.

Jonah tried to run away from God. He bought a ticket, got on a boat and thought he would sail away from God.

But the Lord sent a big wind to the sea and the boat was about to tear apart. The sailors began to pray to their gods and threw stuff overboard to lighten the load so they wouldn't sink. Guess where Jonah was. He was fast asleep in the lower deck of the boat.

"What are you doing you sleeper!" shouted the captain of the boat. "Get up and pray to your God! Perhaps your God will save us."





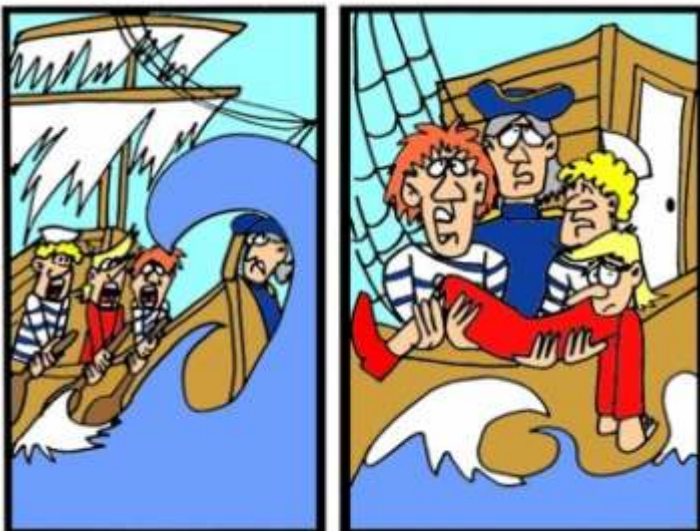
The sailors believed that someone had done something bad to cause all this trouble so they played a little game and Jonah was the loser.

"What did you do?" gasped all the men. "Who are you and where are you from?"

"I'm a Hebrew person," answered Jonah. "God told me to go and preach to the City of Ninevah, but I'm trying to run away from him."

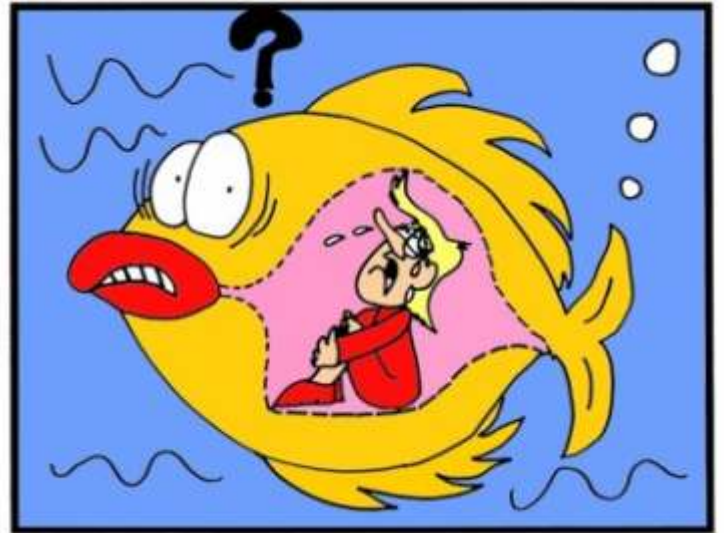
"What should we do to you to make this storm stop?" asked the men.

"Just pick me up and throw me into the sea," answered Jonah. "Then the sea will be calm."



The men tried to bring the ship to shore, but the storm grew worse. They prayed. "Oh Lord please don't let us die because of this man and please don't say we hurt an innocent person." Then they threw Jonah into the sea and the sea became still. Then the men were really afraid and they made promises to God.

Meanwhile under the sea, the Lord had prepared a big fish to come and swallow Jonah. Jonah lived inside the fish's belly for 3 days and 3 nights until he finally prayed.



God heard his prayer and said, "Fish, throw up Jonah on the shore." Suddenly the fish became sick to his stomach.

"Jonah," said God the second time. "Go to the city of Nineveh and preach to them the message that I tell you."



Jonah obeyed and went to the city. Nineveh was a huge city and it took three days to walk from one end to the other. As he entered the city on the first day he shouted, "In 40 days Nineveh will be turned upside down."





The people of Ninevah believed and everyone put on scratchy clothes called sackcloth. They sat in ash piles and cried out to God with all their hearts. They promised to stop doing bad things and stop hurting people.

God saw, and he did not bring the disaster upon them.

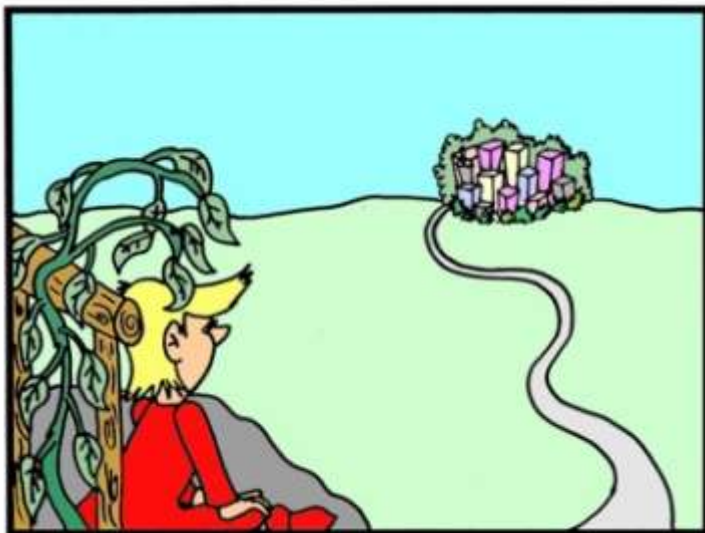
Jonah became very cranky. "Lord, this is why I ran away. You don't get angry fast. You are full of loving kindness and you are soft when it comes to hurting people. Oh Lord please kill me! It's better for me to die than live!"

"Jonah," said God. "Is it right for you to be angry?"



Jonah went out of the city. He made himself a shelter and sat under it, waiting to see what would happen to the city.

The Lord made a plant to grow and it provided shade for Jonah. Jonah was very thankful for the plant.



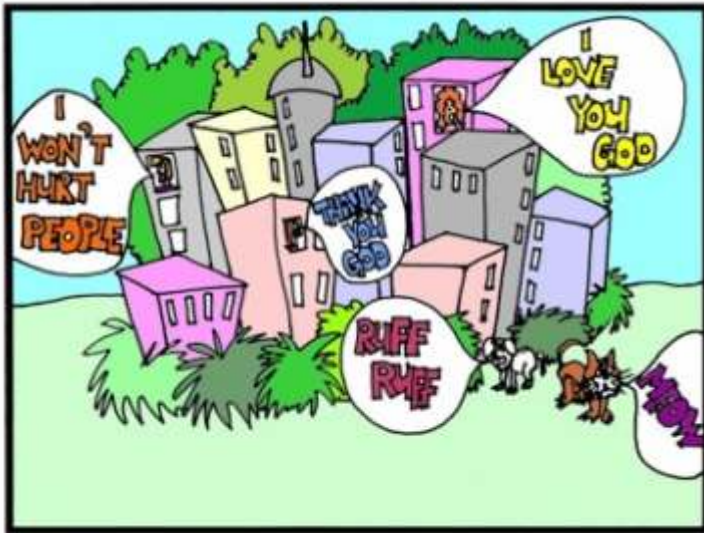
The next morning the Lord sent a worm and it damaged the plant so that it withered. When the sun beat down, Jonah became weak. "Oh I wish I could die," he said.

Then God spoke. "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"Yes!" answered Jonah.



The Lord said, "You had pity on the plant. You didn't plant it or take care of it. It came up one night and it died in one night. Shouldn't I pity Ninevah, that big city. More than 120,000 people live there besides all the animals that live there."



Jonah finally did obey God, but he certainly didn't have God's heart of love. He would rather have seen them destroyed than saved. He didn't even care about the animals! We should pray for God to give us his heart of love for the people to whom he sends us.

