STORY: Jonah's Prayer (1:17-2:10)

INTRODUCTION/RECAP:

Today, we're continuing our story from the Book of Jonah.

Who is Jonah? *A Prophet*

Where did God ask Jonah to go to preach? *Nineveh*

Did Jonah want to go? *No!*

Why? *Because the people of Nineveh were very wicked, and Jonah didn't want them to know God.*

Where did Jonah go instead? *Tarshish*

How did he go there? *On a ship*

What happened while he was on the ship? *A huge storm*

What did Jonah tell the sailors? *To throw him overboard.*

Why? *Because he knew he was responsible for the storm. And he wanted to save the lives of the others on the ship.*

What does that remind us of? *Jonah gave his life for his wrongdoings .Jesus gave His life for our wrongdoings, so that all of us can live.*

STORY:

Who knows what happens next …

Jonah 1:17 *Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

That's right! Jonah didn't die. Jonah couldn't get away from God THAT easy! Even down in the deep, dark sea, God was with him.

God sent a BIG FISH to swallow Jonah in one big gulp!
(note: the Bible says "fish", not "whale", although it could have been a "whale")

HOOK:

This exercise is to get the children experience the situation Jonah is in and to get them to imagine how he felt.

Today we are going to continue with the story of Jonah in the belly of the fish. What do you think it was like in the fish's belly. Do you think it was a dark place or was there light?

Probably dark. *Either switch off or dim the lights.*

Let's imagine we are in the stomach of a big fish. How to you think it smelled? Fishy? Probably smelly, with half-digested food, parts of other fishes.

Did Jonah have anything to eat? Probably not. If he did, it would be fishes swallowed whole or parts of fishes that the big fish ate and he would have to eat them uncooked, unlike these fish snacks that we are passing round. *Pass round some fish snacks, eg anchovies, fish crackers or snacks in the shape of a fish.*

Did Jonah have friends to talk to? Obviously not. How do you think he felt?

He was alone. Alone and feeling cold, wet, miserable, desperate. There was nothing he could do to save himself.

Now, let's look at what he did. Jonah prayed, and this was what Jonah said to God.

READ Jonah 2:2-10 (Easy to read version)

"I was in very bad trouble.
  I called to the LORD for help,
  and he answered me.
I was deep in the grave.
 I cried to you,
 and you heard my voice …

I went down, down into the deep sea.
 The water was all around me …

But I continued looking to your holy temple for help.

The seawater closed over me.
 The water covered my mouth,
 and I could not breathe.
 Seaweed wrapped around my head.
I was at the bottom of the sea …
 I thought I was locked in this prison forever,

(for younger kids)
"When I was in trouble,
I called to My Lord
and he heard my prayer.

Even from the belly of a fish,
in the deep, dark sea,
God could hear my voice!

The water swallowed me up,
seaweeds wrapped around my head.

And then I remembered my God.

I called out to him,
and in his holy temple
he heard the sound of my cry!

My God saved me!

And so I will give him
an offering of thanks.

For our God saves!"

but the LORD my God took me out of my grave.
God, you gave me life again!

My soul gave up all hope,
but then I remembered the LORD.
I prayed to you,
and you heard my prayers …
I will praise and thank you …
Salvation only comes from the LORD!

Then God spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out of its stomach onto the dry land.

That fish was probably glad to get rid of bony old Jonah, making all that noise in his belly.

Jonah spent three days in the belly of a fish, and stepped out alive again - just like Jesus would spend three days in the belly of the earth, and step out alive. How great and powerful God is!

LESSON

1. **Whatever situation we are in, God is with us.**

   He knows our problems and our needs. He hears us when we talk to him. He rescues us when we are in trouble. Jonah was in a bad situation. No one could rescue him. Nobody knew where he was. He was in a big fish, in the middle of an ocean. Who will know where to find him? But God was with Jonah. He protected him from drowning. He protected him from being harmed by the fish. He heard Jonah's prayer and made the fish vomit him on dry land.

2. **There is no more death for us.**

   Jonah was in the fish's belly for 3 days, just as Jesus was in the tomb. Jesus died and rose from the dead after 3 days.

   Jesus said in **Matthew 12:40**, *"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth".*

   When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, he saved us from the death. Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever who believes in me will never die".* (John 11:25-26)

   Recently one of our church members, (some of you know), Uncle James, passed away. His family members were very sad, and many of the church members were sad too. But you know, there is no more death for him because he believed in Jesus. Likewise, there is also no more death for all of us who believe in Jesus, who accept Him as our personal Saviour. Those who accept Jesus as their Saviour receive His life. We have a new and wonderful life - His life! And we will be with Jesus forever, whether in this world and in heaven.

   Ask if any of the children want to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour and if any, pray together with them.

MEMORY VERSE:

Jonah 2:10 *"Salvation only comes from the LORD!"*

JONAH'S PRAYER

ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

GAMES:

- "Pin the Jonah in the whale"- this is like pin the tail on the donkey

- "What did the big fish eat" (http://www.daniellesplace.com/html/rrsampleprejonah.html)

SONG:

- Who did swallow Jonah? (1st verse)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a97yDnWEoUE

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVFMMUF441Q

VIDEO: (more for fun/filler … older ones may like it)

- In the Belly of the Whale https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wH5NEDzv-os