



TNCC
CHILDREN'S
CHURCH

JONAH: GOD'S MERCY

STORY: Jonah: God's Mercy (Jonah 3)

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.*

What happened after Jonah was thrown overboard? *He was swallowed by a large fish.*

How long did he stay in there? *3 days. Then the fish spat Jonah back on shore.*

What does that remind us of? *Jesus died for us and rose up again on the 3rd day!*

STORY:**Let's see what happens in Jonah 3.**

Older kids can read this out.

Use paraphrased version below for younger kids; source: <http://www.essex1.com/pages/paul/bible37.html>

Then God said to Jonah, "Okay, Jonah, get up! Now go to Ninevah!"

This time Jonah went the right way.

Ninevah was a big city. It took three whole days to walk all the way from one side to the other. It had walls all around a hundred feet tall, and so wide three chariots could ride, side by side.

THAT is a big city!

Jonah walked into the center of the city and he shouted out, "In 40 days God is going to destroy this city you think is so great!"

Now, that's not the kind of thing most people want to hear. And Jonah must have thought that no one would pay much attention to him.

But Jonah was in for a surprise.

The people of Ninevah listened to Jonah. The evil there must have been so bad, that everyone knew they couldn't go on like that. They needed someone to show them the way out. And Jonah showed it to them. They could turn to their loving God.

And so, from the greatest to the least, they got rid of all their evil things (just like the sailors threw overboard the things that were making them sink when they were in trouble) - and they begged God for his forgiveness.

When the king heard the news of this, he didn't get angry as you might have expected.

Instead, he tore off his royal robe, and put on an old robe made of the cheap, scratchy stuff they made sacks out of. He took off the robe of a king, and put on the robe of a beggar, to show he understood that God is the real king, and compared to God, he was nothing but a poor beggar.

And then the King made a decree. There would be a fast. No one was to eat or drink, not even the animals of their herds. Everyone was to put on sackcloth, and cover themselves with ashes, to show how dirty they must be in the sight of God.

"Let us call out to God!" The King decreed. "Let us all stop the evil things we have been doing. Let us stop hurting each other, and maybe God will have mercy on us. Maybe he will forgive us, and not destroy our city like we deserve."

When God saw that they had called up to Him and turned from their wicked ways, and He had mercy on them.

God decided He would not destroy the city after all.

God saved their lives!



LESSON

1. Old Covenant Mercy

When Jonah announced God's judgment on the city of Nineveh, the king and the people all called out to God, begging for forgiveness and promising to change their wicked ways. The king said, "Maybe God will have mercy on us. Maybe he will forgive us, and not destroy our city like we deserve."

God is a God of mercy. But for the Ninevites, they were not sure. They had a big "maybe" ... if we are good and don't do bad, maybe God will have mercy and forgive us.

Can you imagine living your life with a big "maybe"? Maybe God will forgive me! Maybe God will still love me!

2. New Covenant Grace

Thank Jesus that today, we don't have a big "maybe". We can know that God loves us unconditionally and forgives us completely because of Jesus' death on the cross.

Jesus took the punishment we deserved, so we have all the blessings we do not deserve (grace!).

When we realise that we've done all these wrong things and deserve punishment, we can call onto God and we know He will forgive us all our sins — past, present and future — so we can live for Him every day of our lives!

Ephesians 2:3-5

By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. (just like the Ninevites)

⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much,

⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins,

he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.

(It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

Invitation:

How many of you have done something naughty or bad?

Do you know that when we do something naughty or bad, we deserve punishment?

Do you know that Jesus took the punishment on the cross for you and me?

Do you want to believe in Jesus and receive His grace and life?

Let's pray together!

ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

GAMES

- **Pass it on (Chinese whispers):** Can kids into 2-4 teams. Get first member of each team to memorise one part of the memory verse and pass it on to the next person in the team. The verse should be passed on one by one until the last member, who will write it down on the piece of paper. The winning team is the one that gets the verse correct.

Choose the verse according to age group (or can assign 1 sentence per team or more).

Ephesians 2

- *By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.*
- *⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much,*
- *⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.*
- *It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!*

CRAFT:

- **Loudspeaker:** Fold a piece of card/paper into a loudspeaker with the words "God saved us by His grace!" Tell the kids that while Jonah was a reluctant messenger of God's goodness, they can tell everybody about how merciful and gracious God is! Can get kids to use their loudspeaker and announce "God saved us by His grace".