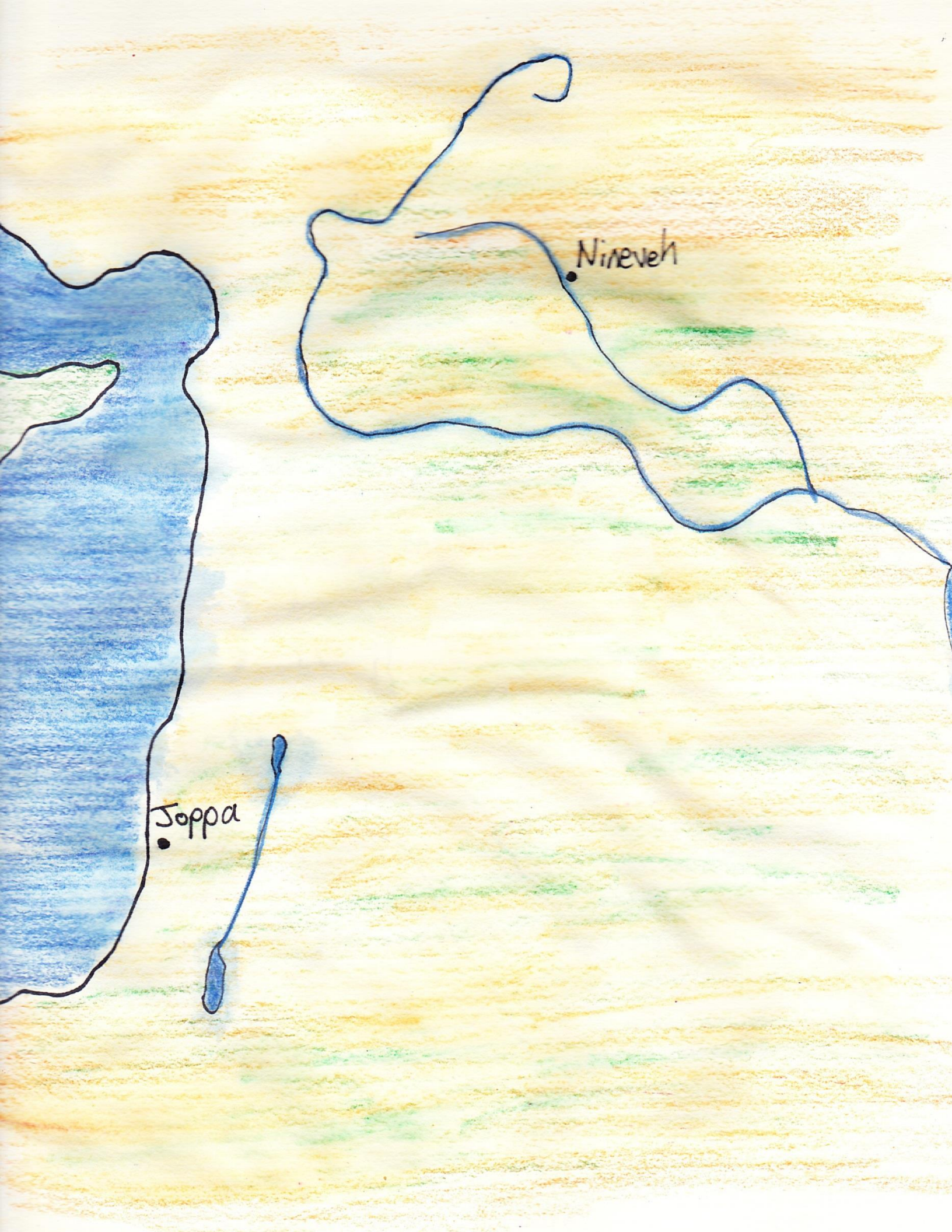


Jonah, God's Unwilling Servant

The book of Jonah





Nineveh

Joppa

Jonah was a prophet of God. He carried God's words to Jeroboam the second, and followed God's will. One day God spoke to Jonah.

"Jonah, go to Nineveh and warn them 'God is angry with you. If you do not repent, then God will bring judgment on you.'"

Jonah heard this and was not happy. The people of Nineveh had attacked Israel several times and taken land from them. They were cruel and mean people. He did not want to tell them about God's love. He did not want God to forgive them.

So, Jonah got on a ship going to Tarshish, as far from Nineveh as he could go.



As the ship sailed a storm rose up. The sailors panicked. They were sure the ship was going to sink.

Desperately they threw things overboard, and tried to make the ship lighter. Still the ship tossed and turned.

Below decks, Jonah slept. He did not know about the terrible storm, or how scared everyone was.

The captain came down to throw more things overboard and found Jonah, “How can you sleep? We’re all about to die. Call on your God to save us.”



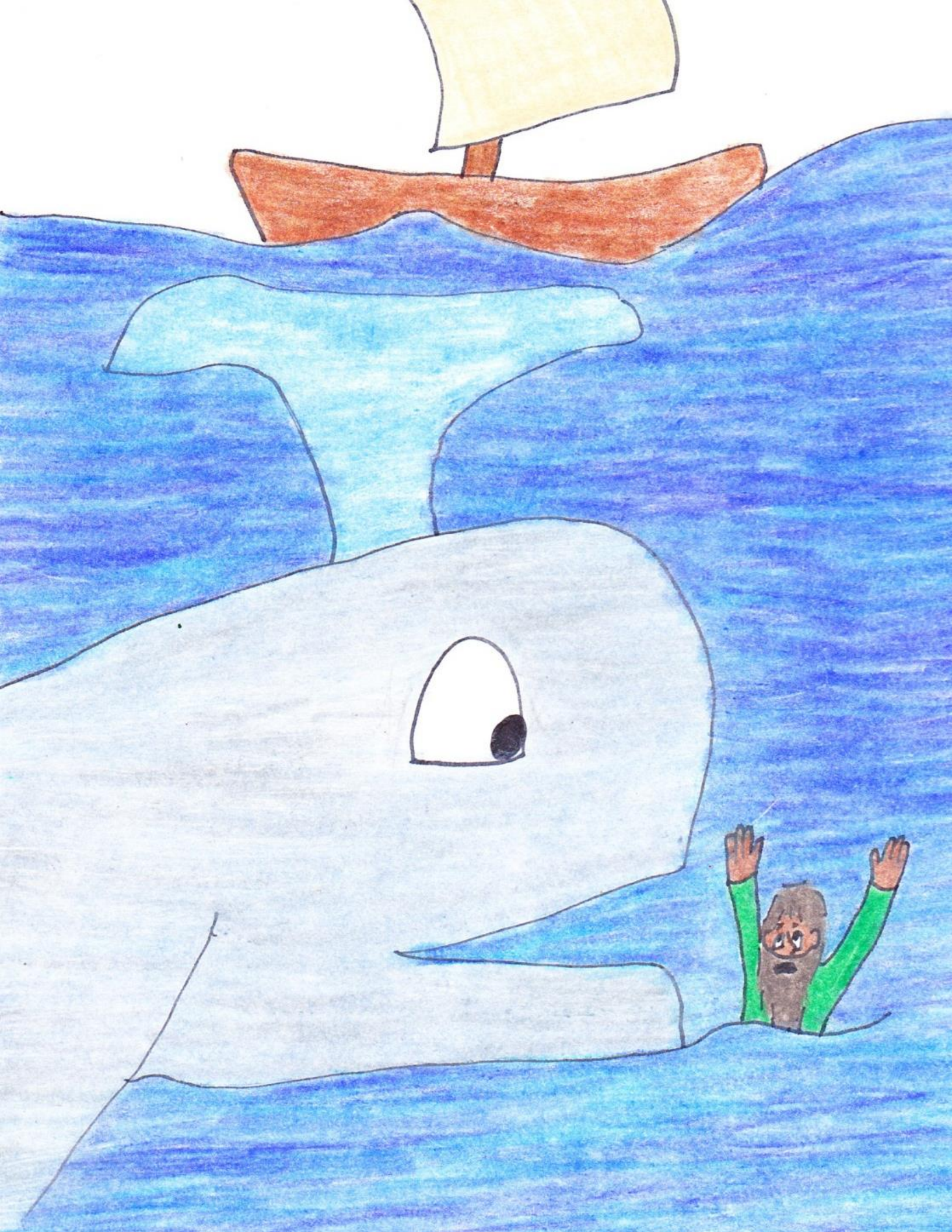
“Get up above,” the captain yelled, “We’re going to cast lots to see who is to blame.”

The sailors all threw dice to see who the gods would choose. When all had gone, it was clear Jonah was to blame.

“I have run from the Lord, the God of Israel. He told me to preach to Nineveh and I did not want to, so I got on this ship. This is all my fault.”

The storm got worse and the sailors asked, “What do we do now?”

“Throw me into the sea,” Jonah answered. “That will appease God.”



“Don’t be ridiculous,” said the captain, “Men, let’s start rowing.”

The crew valiantly tried to row to land, but the storm grew worse and the ship threatened to break apart right then.

Finally the men gave up, “God, have mercy on us, and do not hold us responsible for his death. Remember how we tried to save him.”

They threw Jonah off of the ship, in the water. As soon as they did the storm calmed and the sailors heaved a sigh of relief and thanked God.

They turned around to check on Jonah, and saw a huge fish leap out of the water and swallow Jonah whole.



God had chosen that fish to teach Jonah a lesson in mercy and forgiveness. Jonah spent three days inside that fish praying and asking God for forgiveness.

“Lord you found me in my worst of times. You searched for me when I ran from you and did not listen to you. I thank you for your great mercy on me, and how you rescued me from myself.”

After three days God commanded the fish to vomit Jonah up onto dry land.



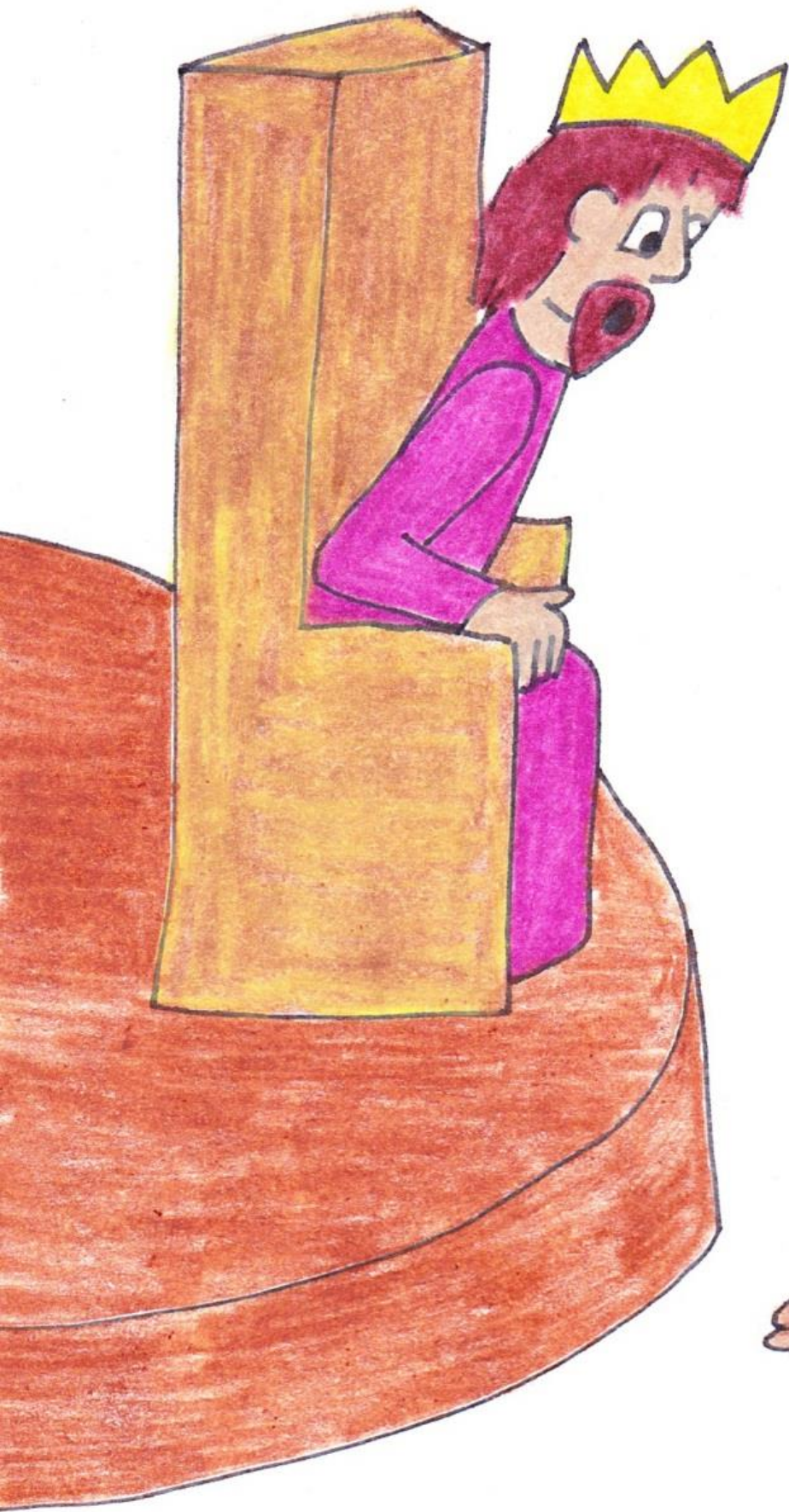
Jonah got up from the beach he had landed on and began to walk to Nineveh. After quite a journey he arrived there and began to preach to the city.

“People of Nineveh, the Lord God has seen your sins. He sees how you hurt and abuse many people. Your sin is great, and God will destroy you, unless you repent.”

People gathered around and listened to Jonah as he preached. He wandered through the streets proclaiming God’s message.

“God does not want you to die lost from Him, but He cannot let you continue to disobey Him. Forty days He has given you. Then you will be punished, and great destruction will come to the city.”

The Ninevites believed Jonah and repented, they turned to God for forgiveness.



News of Jonah's message reached the king, and again Jonah explained God's mercy and desire to save them.

The king listened in astonishment, and tearing his clothes, he declared, "The city will fast. No person, animal, or beast will eat. Everyone will put on sack cloth and pour ashes on their heads. Maybe God will be merciful and save our city."

When God saw their hearts and their desire to repent, he did not destroy the city.



Meanwhile, Jonah sat outside the city walls and waited eagerly for the city to be destroyed. He couldn't wait to see them punished for all of the evil things they had done.

But nothing happened.

"See God, this is why I didn't want to go. I knew you would be merciful, and not kill them, so I disobeyed you. Why don't you just kill me now, so I don't have to watch you love them?" Jonah whined.

It was hot and God took mercy on Jonah and caused a bush to grow up over Jonah.

Jonah leaned back and waited for the destruction to come. But nothing happened, so he sat fuming in the shade of the bush.

Then God called a worm to come and eat the plant, and Jonah watched angrily as the plant fell over.



God called forth the sun to shine down on Jonah. Jonah hated the worm that killed his shade.

God called a blistering wind to blow, and Jonah shaded his eyes and sand and grit blew at his face. “Why don’t you kill me now? This isn’t fair.”

“Jonah, is it wise to be mad at a caterpillar? Do you have a right to be angry about that plant?”

“Yes, it’s not fair. It gave me shade,” Jonah answered.

God answered him, “You are sad because the plant you did not care for, and did not grow died. Why shouldn’t I pity Nineveh with its many people? I created them and love them, why shouldn’t I try to rescue them?”

Questions

Younger Kids

1. Why didn't Jonah want to go to Nineveh? Have your parents ever told you to do stuff you didn't want to do?
2. Why did Jonah say the storm was happening?
3. Did the Ninevites listen to Jonah? Did God still punish them?
4. Why was Jonah angry when God spared Nineveh?

Middle Kids

1. Read Jonah 1:5. What is Jonah doing during the storm? Is he aware of other people's problems? What can you do to be aware of other people's problems?
2. Read Jonah 1:10. What did God do to bring Jonah back to Him? What has God done to bring you back?
3. Read Jonah 4:2. Why did Jonah run? Is Jonah's statement a sin? Have you ever wanted to run because of what you knew was going to happen?

4. Read Jonah 4:9. Look at Jonah's response. Have you ever answered like that?

Older Guys

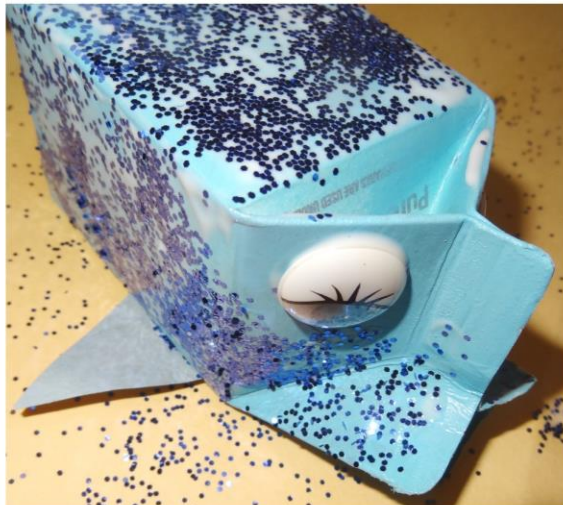
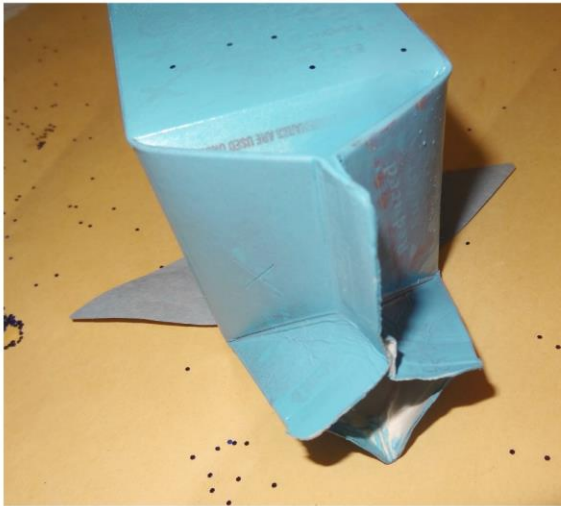
1. Read Jonah 1:5-14. Compare Jonah and the sailors. Who is more aware of other people's feeling and sins? Does God only use believers and the Bible to teach His children?
2. Read Jonah 1:3 and 4:2. Why did Jonah run from God? What causes you to run from God's commands?
3. Reread chapter 2. Where is Jonah during this time? Would you have considered that something to praise God for? When you are in the midst of tough times how do you praise God?

Activities

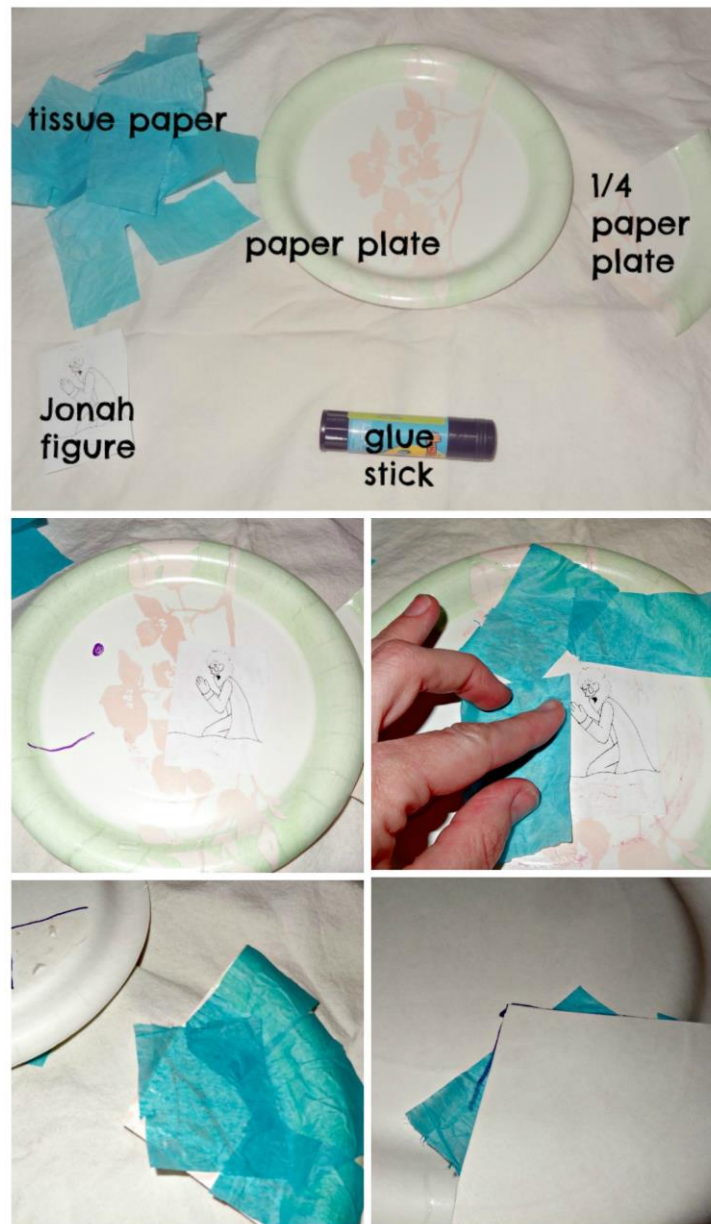
1. Start a God moment journal. Those small things that only God could have done. For example a few years ago I was at the store and got all the way through checking out only to discover my wallet had fallen out of my purse. In great embarrassment I asked the clerk to put my stuff

aside so I could go find it. In the meantime a woman from my church was the only person in line behind me, and she offered to watch the kids while I got my wallet and wait for her turn. Only God could have orchestrated that, just as god orchestrated the “big fish,” and the plant.

2. Make a milk carton whale and act out the story.



3. Make a paper plate whale and glue a picture of Jonah onto the whale.



Online

1. Jonah swallowed by whale craft-

<http://nurseryrhymesandfuntimes.blogspot.com/2011/11/kids-in-word-jonah.html>

2. Jonah pouting about Nineveh-

<http://auntiesbiblelessons.wordpress.com/2012/08/08/jonah-pouts-but-the-lord-god-prepares/>

3. Jonah and the whale balloon craft-

<http://jeremymavis.com/2012/06/26/jonah-in-fish-craft/>

