

Retreat: The Call: Living Sacramentally, Walking Justly



United
Methodist
Women

FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

PREPARATION

Six-hour retreat: This retreat is planned to take six hours at a leisurely pace with plenty of time for silent reflection—including breaks between segments and lunch.

For a three-hour retreat: Pray the Psalm responsively to open. Plan a shorter version (less time for reflection) of the first two sessions (baptism and the Last Supper), totaling one hour combined. Rather than acting out the Book of Jonah, simply read it aloud; allow half an hour for the reading and individual reflections. Do all the exercises in the discernment section, allowing an hour. Close with the Love Feast for half an hour.

Provide notebooks and writing instruments for participants, or invite them to bring them to the retreat. Have blank sheets of unlined paper and crayons, markers and pencils available. Encourage participants to wear loose and comfortable clothing.

For the Love Feast at the end, prepare water or juice other than grape juice—perhaps apple juice—and a cracker or cookie (not bread, to distinguish it from Holy Communion). Each participant will need a small glass or cup and a napkin. You will pass the cups and crackers on trays.

The setup for this retreat allows for much creativity. Using your imagination and materials you can gather, plan four areas—in different rooms or one very large room.

One room or area will call to mind the Jordan River, where Jesus was baptized. Another, the upper room and Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. A third will be where the story of Jonah is read or acted. If this is a day-long retreat, there will need to be a place for lunch apart from these rooms (unless you want to extend the Last Supper experience and eat where the disciples and Jesus ate). The fourth area is the gathering space and will be used at the end for the Love Feast. If possible, arrange the chairs in that room in a circle, with the chairs close to each other. It will be helpful to arrange for a guitarist or pianist, and plan to have the Love Feast in a room with a piano. It's also possible to sing the songs a cappella, with someone who's confident leading the singing.

As you set up the rooms, take into consideration the physical needs (i.e., some who may not be able to sit on the floor, etc.) of the participants.

To set up the rooms: The room (or area in a large room) where the retreat begins and ends is set up with chairs in a circle. If it is a large group, set up two circles, either next to each other or one inside the other. This space will also be used for the Love Feast at the end of the retreat.

The second room (or area) is decorated to resemble the River Jordan. Use a long blue cloth to represent the water. You could put a children's plastic pool in the middle of the cloth. Use green and brown cloths and potted plants to help create a sense of the river. You can use recorded water sounds or a table fountain. If you have access to a projector and screen, you could project an image of the River Jordan or some other river.

The third room (or area) has a low table with carpets under and around it and pillows, too. If participants need chairs to sit in, provide those; otherwise, participants can sit on the floor around the table, as the disciples did at the Last Supper. Use candles or oil lamps to light the room. Have some pita bread on a platter and grape juice in a goblet set on the table. The room should feel dark, secretive, intimate. Here is a link to a photograph of what the Last Supper may have looked like, historically: www.iol.ie/~duacon/lastsup.jpg.

The fourth room (or area) is a place to read aloud or act out the Book of Jonah. Characters can be played by everyone on the retreat: narrator, ship captain, Jonah, sailors, a large fish, the Lord, the people of Nineveh, King of Nineveh. Props can include something that looks like a boat, cargo, oars, straws, a bush.

Please note: If this rather elaborate setup is not suitable for your group, this retreat can be done without the decorations and all in one room. Use the circles of chairs and provide some other spaces in the room where people can go to have more solitude to do reflections.

Please practice reading the scripts before the retreat. You will be reading them to lead people into meditation and contemplation.

THE RETREAT

Morning Session

GATHERING

Leader: Today, we come on retreat to be in touch with how we live life sacramentally and discern our call to walk justly. On this retreat we have the opportunity to experience our baptism more deeply, to sit at table and be in communion with Jesus and his disciples, to notice how God calls every one of us, uniquely, to be in mission with God in and with the world.

OPENING PRAYER

Psalm 46

Nan C. Merrill's *Psalms for Praying*¹ (read responsively)

**The Beloved is our refuge and our strength,
a loving Presence in times of trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though
the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.**

There is a river whose streams make glad the Holy City,
the holy habitation of the Most High.

The Beloved is in the midst of it,
it shall not be moved;

our loving Creator is an ever-present help.

The nations may be at war, countries left in ruins,
yet is the Voice of the Almighty heard,
melting hearts of stone.

The Beloved is with us, the infinite Heart of Love.

**ALL: Come, behold the works of the Beloved,
how love does reign even in humanity's desolation.**

**For the Beloved makes wars to cease,
breaking through the barriers of fear,
shattering the greedy and oppressors,
refining hearts of iron!**

"Be still and know that I am Love.

¹ Nan C. Merrill, *Psalms for Praying* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 90.

**I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth!”
The One who knows all hearts is with us;
The Beloved is our refuge and our strength.**

OPENING SONG

“We Are Called,” *The Faith We Sing* #2172

Explain that this day will be a pilgrimage—to the River Jordan, to the Last Supper, to Nineveh with Jonah. We are gifting ourselves with the time and space to reflect on our call and to be in beloved community. Invite them into the first space, the River Jordan.

BAPTISM

Allow 45 minutes to an hour for this experience (including a break at the end).

As retreatants enter the river space, invite them to come to the river, take it in, put their hands in the water, perhaps remove their shoes and socks. If there is a pool of water, they can stand in it, and then find a place to sit near it. Encourage them to imagine that this is the River Jordan. Let them know that at any time during this part of the retreat, they may move to the water. Assure them that they are free to close their eyes or keep them open as you read the meditations. Read the script below slowly, pausing to let the hearers have time to imagine in their mind’s eye what they are hearing.

Read aloud the scripture of Jesus’ baptism in Mark 1:9–11:

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Read the passage again, a second time.

Now invite the participants into a time of meditation in an imaginative prayer with Jesus at his baptism. Read the following script slowly, honoring the pauses as marked:

Imagine yourself at the River Jordan. Burdened by life’s challenges, you have come away from the city and traveled out into the wilderness with others. You’ve heard that there is a man who is dipping people in the river and helping them reclaim their closeness with God. That sounds hopeful to you, so you have come to the river. Smell the clean desert air. Does it smell dry? Dusty? Spicy? Sweet? *[Pause]*

See the water. Notice its color. Is it blue and clear? Is it muddy? *[Pause]*

Hear the breeze as it blows through the scrubby trees alongside the river. Can you hear the water moving in the river? Listen for the hushed voices around the river and see John, in the water, holding people and dunking them in the river water. [Pause]

Hear the splash of water as another person rises out of the river, wipes her face and slogs in her heavy clothing back to the shore. [Pause]

You watch and consider if you are willing to walk into the water yourself. Notice how you are feeling. Do you want to go into the river, too? Are you resistant? Are you apprehensive but feeling drawn to the water anyway? Are you eager? [Pause]

Then one man goes into the river and walks toward John. Your attention is drawn to him. Maybe it's the way he approaches John or the expression on his face. Maybe it's the expression on John's face as he sees this man. [Pause]

The man and John seem to have an exchange, and then John lowers him into the water. John raises him out of the water and you notice something different about the man. A certain feeling comes over you. What are you feeling? [Pause]

You watch as the man comes ashore and walks along the riverbank until you can see him no more. [Pause]

For some reason, you don't hesitate now but walk into the water and approach John. John places his hands on your back and your head and lowers you into the water. Suddenly, you are springing up out of the water and are overcome with a sensation that you've never felt before. You hear a tender voice saying to you: "You are my child, my beloved." You hear your name spoken: "_____, with you I am well pleased." [Long pause]

You somehow find that you have made it back to shore, and you sit there on the bank, letting the sun and warm air dry you. You allow this experience to soak deeply into your being. You keep hearing the words, "You are my child, my beloved." You hear your name: "_____, with you I am well pleased." [Long pause]

Invite the participants into a time of silence for their personal reflection. Tell them the amount of time that is provided. Encourage them to keep hearing the God of their knowing (Creator, Christ, Spirit) say to them by name: "_____, you are my child, my beloved. With you I am well pleased." Invite them to sit with the God of their knowing, receiving the love and acceptance of God, allowing themselves to be God's beloved.

Allow them time and space to journal, write a letter to someone, write a poem or draw a picture of their experience. Ask them to please keep silent throughout this exercise.

Having remembered their baptism in this prayerful way, invite them to consider what it means in their daily life; how are they to live out their baptism? Give them the handout "Reflection Questions Following the Baptism Experience."

Tell them they may leave the River Jordan in silence when they are ready.

After a break, invite them into the space prepared for the Last Supper.

THE LAST SUPPER

Allow 45 minutes to an hour for this experience (including a break at the end).

Invite participants to take their place around the table that has been prepared for Jesus and the disciples—including them. For a few moments of silence, let them enter into the space, taking it in...

Encourage them to enter with their imagination into the Last Supper, as a participant, a friend of Jesus at the table...

Read this passage, from Luke 22:7–20:

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it.” They asked him, “Where do you want us to make preparations for it?” “Listen,” he said to them, “when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters and say to the owner of the house, ‘The teacher asks you, “Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there.” So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal. When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

Lead them again into a time of meditation through imaginative prayer. Read the following script aloud slowly, with pauses as indicated:

Jerusalem is busy. It's Passover, the time when pilgrims come to the city to remember that God led Moses to bring the Hebrew people out of captivity in Egypt. Jesus of Nazareth has made arrangements for this Passover meal. The room is furnished with cushions and carpets and a low, U-shaped table at which the disciples will recline for the meal. The wine, unleavened bread and bitter herbs are already provided. Peter and John sacrificed the lamb at the temple, slitting the lamb's throat at the appropriate time during the liturgy. It has been roasted on a pomegranate wood spit. The lamps have been filled.

When all is prepared and the lamps in the dark room are lit, Jesus joins the disciples. Imagine the private gathering in this dark but warmly lit room. *[Pause]*

Notice the colors of the cushions and carpets. *[Pause]*

See the faces of the disciples. Notice their robes, their sandals left at the door, the wine and plates of food. [Pause]

Imagine how they greet one another as they enter. [Pause] Smell the combination of scents: lamp oil, roasted lamb and bitter herbs. [Pause]

See Jesus there with them. How does he look? What is his demeanor? How does he interact with his friends? [Pause]

Observe them as they recline around the low table. What is the mood in the room? Are they laughing and talking? Are they subdued? [Pause]

Imagine the tension in the room as Jesus says: "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I tell you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." [Pause]

Watch as Jesus takes a cup, gives thanks for it and tells those at the table to divide it among themselves. Watch as each of the disciples drinks from the cup. [Pause]

Then see him take the loaf of unleavened bread—the symbol of the old covenant between God and the Hebrew people—and give thanks for it. Watch as he breaks the bread, as is the custom during the Passover meal, and then says this surprising thing: "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [Pause]

Watch the faces of the disciples as they pass the flatbread and eat it, having heard Jesus' words. What is the mood in the room now? What do the faces of the disciples show you? [Pause]

After supper, see Jesus take the cup and say: "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." [Pause] How do the disciples respond as the cup is passed to each of them? [Pause]

Now see yourself at the table, reclining next to Jesus. As the unleavened bread is passed, see yourself taking a piece of it. As the cup of red wine is passed, see yourself drinking from it. Look at Jesus and ask him any questions that you have. Perhaps you want to know what this means for your life now. What does this new covenant mean to you now? What does it mean in your daily life to remember Jesus in the bread and wine? Let yourself ask any question or say anything you want to Jesus. Then be still and quiet; look into his face, lean against him... be open to his response to you...

Encourage participants to remain in silence as they journal, write letters or poetry, draw pictures of their experience of Holy Communion with Jesus. Tell them how much time they have to relax into this reflection. Hand them the slips of paper with "Reflection Questions Following the Last Supper Experience."

Let participants know when it is time to leave the communion space. After a break, invite participants to lunch. An option is to have lunch in silence and invite each person to imagine having lunch with Jesus beside her or at table with the group.

Afternoon Session

OPENING PRAYER (*in unison*)

O God of unlimited grace, we thank you for calling us to live our lives in constant awareness of your love and grace. Help us remember our baptism and grow in our commitment to the means of grace offered through prayer, scripture, Christian conferencing and conversation, fasting, worship, and Holy Communion. Through our faithful practice, may we come to know the joy of living consciously in your ever-present love. Let our lives become a sacrament; may we walk justly, giving evidence of your presence with us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

THE CALL

Allow 45 minutes to an hour for this experience.

Read or act out the Book of Jonah. The group doesn't need to practice this beforehand; let the participants experience it for the first time as they act it out. But remind them that this is a sacred telling of a sacred story. The tendency may be to be nervous and playful. But this is a serious story and acting it out helps us experience it.

After you have read or acted out the Book of Jonah, lead the group in a discussion of the "Group Reflection Questions Following the Book of Jonah Experience."

- What do you find most interesting in this story?
- How would you characterize Jonah and God's relationship?
- Why do you think Jonah doesn't want to answer God's call?
- Does God give up on calling Jonah?
- How does God stay in relationship with Jonah?
- How does God work with Jonah?
- Is there a pattern in the way God calls Jonah?
- How does Jonah know what God is doing with him, that it's God calling and engaging him?

Following the group discussion, invite everyone into a time of silent, individual reflection. They may journal, write poetry, draw their answers. Hand out "Individual Reflection Questions Following the Book of Jonah Experience."

- Do you identify with Jonah? In what way?
- Have you ever turned the other way or been silent and not responded to something you felt God was calling you to do?
- What are the reasons we don't want to do what we think God might be asking of us?
- Do you have an inkling—or a shout—of something God might be calling you to do in your life to help God's love be revealed?

Break.

DISCERNMENT: LEARNING GOD'S CALL TO YOU

Allow 45 minutes to an hour for this experience.

In the large group, read the story of how Maggie Liechty received her call, as told by George McLain and Tilda Norberg in the 2013 spiritual growth mission study, The Call: Living Sacramentally and Walking Justly, 75.

Our friend Maggie Liechty, of Berne, Indiana, received such a call in the crucible of her own great weakness and suffering. An energetic lover of life, she was suddenly stricken with debilitating sensitivities and allergies, a condition known as multichemical sensitivity, or environmental illness. Once released from the hospital, she found herself extremely sensitive to scents, airborne chemicals like fertilizer, cleaning products, pollens, dust and myriad things in the atmosphere that most people hardly notice. Consequently, for some 30 years now, she has had to stay indoors, cloistered in a couple of rooms that have been cleansed of every possible threat. To venture outside leaves her with intensified emotional and physical side effects that can last for days.

What is amazing, though, is that despite all her limitations, near-constant pain and chronic insomnia, she has carried on a ministry of spiritual companionship with scores of people, whether a college president or recent immigrant. God has claimed her for a new kind of identity and calling and endowed her with resilience, deep gratitude and infectious joy. Through telephone calls, e-mail, letters, personal visits and intercession she has been a tower of hope, peace and strength for many.

While God's calls can come in a single crystallizing moment, perhaps most commonly, they come more or less as a continuous summons, reconfirmed in life's events and marked by pivotal moments.

*Hand out the "Discernment Questions" sheet and lead participants into a time of silent, individual reflection to help them discern God's call to them at this time in their lives. Encourage them to write the answer to as many of the questions from the Linns' book *Healing the Purpose of Your Life*² as time allows. Invite them also to answer the last three questions.*

- When in your life have you been so absorbed in something that time flew by? For example, as a child what were you doing when you were called for dinner and came in late?
- What are you most grateful for today? What are you least grateful for? If you were to ask yourself these questions every day, what pattern would you see?
- When have you felt most alive, especially in your body? What were the times of most life that you would like to repeat?
- What would you do if you had time and money to do anything?
- What is the wildest thing you have done in your life that turned out better than you ever imagined? If you were assured of not failing, what is the wildest thing you can imagine doing now?
- Who is the person you most wanted to grow up to be like? Whom do you most want to be like today? Conversely, is there anyone you would like to mentor?

² Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn and Matthew Linn, *Healing the Purpose of Your Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 22–23.

- What movies or other stories have moved you most?
- What do your best friends say they like about you? What do they see as your unique way of giving love?
- What is your special way of receiving love?
- What is it that you *have* to do—that you can't *not* do?
- If you had only one year to live, what would you do?

And these questions:

- If you had a \$100,000 and you had to give it away to help the poor, oppressed, suffering, which group would you want to help?
- When you hear stories about the sufferings of people and the planet, which circumstances make you angry?
- Which social injustices stir your heart?

To continue this process of discernment, hand out the “Walking Justly Exercise” and give them time to write their answers.

- As I consider how I think God might be calling me to walk justly next in my life, my complaint is...
- I change this complaint into a statement of commitment by saying, “I value God’s call to me to walk justly in this way because I am committed to....
- I am doing or not doing the following, which keeps me from fully realizing my commitment.
- I am not doing this thing because I fear...
- The big assumption(s) that supports this fear is/are...
- The good news is...

Invite participants to take a break when they are ready.

THE LOVE FEAST

Allow 45 minutes to an hour for this experience.

Return to the room where the retreat began, where there are chairs in a circle. Prepare now to share in a Love Feast, a special expression of deep Christian fellowship that is rooted in the Methodist tradition and extends back to John Wesley’s experience with the Moravians, who introduced the feast to him. Through sharing stories about how we perceive God in our lives, singing and sharing food, the Love Feast is marked by the tenderness of enjoying community as the family of Christ.

There is no strict structure to the Love Feast. It is a Spirit-led time of prayer in which participants are invited to share impromptu readings of scripture passages, give personal witnesses, pass a plate and cup of simple food and drink, and sing songs that are chosen spontaneously.

In this Love Feast, participants are invited to share their experience of the day, including what God has begun to reveal to them about how they can live their baptism, supported by the nourishment of Holy Communion, in the specific way God is calling them to walk justly.

One suggestion is to begin with singing “Here I Am, Lord” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #593), which points to God’s call to serve and witness and to our heart’s response. As the food is passed, the reflections and witness are shared, participants can spontaneously suggest other songs for the group to sing.

Food is passed quietly without interrupting the flow of the service. It is merely passed as the other sharing proceeds. It may be passed more than once. Designate a couple of people to begin offering or passing the food, and pay attention to when to pass it again. It is passed with the love and hospitality we experience in God’s gift of Holy Communion.

A suggested closing is to prayerfully recite together the words to the hymn “God of Grace and God of Glory” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #577).

Handouts

Psalm 46

Nan C. Merrill's *Psalms for Praying* (read responsively)

**ALL: The Beloved is our refuge and our strength,
a loving Presence in times of trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though
the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.**

There is a river whose streams make glad the Holy City,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
The Beloved is in the midst of it,
it shall not be moved;
our loving Creator is an ever-present help.
The nations may be at war, countries left in ruins,
yet is the Voice of the Almighty heard,
melting hearts of stone.
The Beloved is with us, the infinite Heart of Love.

**ALL: Come, behold the works of the Beloved,
how love does reign even in humanity's desolation.
For the Beloved makes wars to cease,
breaking through the barriers of fear,
shattering the greedy and oppressors,
refining hearts of iron!**

Reflection Questions Following the Baptism Experience

- What would your life look like if every day you were aware of living as God's beloved one?

- How does your life look if you are aware that God has named you, claimed you, and asked you to be love in the world? How does God call you, _____, to be God's love in the world? How has God gifted you, "Beloved _____," to walk justly in the world?

Reflection Questions Following the Last Supper Experience

- What did you experience?

- What impact did this prayer have on you?

- How did this imaginative prayer inform your understanding of Holy Communion?

- What do you want to remember when you share Holy Communion next?

- Like Jesus, how are you called to share your life with others?

Opening prayer (afternoon session)

ALL: O God of unlimited grace, we thank you for calling us to live our lives in constant awareness of your love and grace. Help us remember our baptism and grow in our commitment to the means of grace offered through prayer, scripture, Christian conferencing and conversation, fasting, worship and Holy Communion. Through our faithful practice, may we come to know the joy of living consciously in your ever-present love. Let our lives become a sacrament; may we walk justly, giving evidence of your presence with us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Group Reflection Questions Following the Book of Jonah Experience

- What do you find most interesting in this story?

- How would you characterize Jonah and God's relationship?

- Why do you think Jonah doesn't want to answer God's call?

- Does God give up on calling Jonah?

- How does God stay in relationship with Jonah?

- How does God work with Jonah?

- Is there a pattern in the way God calls Jonah?

- How does Jonah know what God is doing with him, that it's God calling and engaging him?

Individual Reflection Questions Following the Book of Jonah Experience

- Do you identify with Jonah? In what way?

- Have you ever turned the other way or been silent and not responded to something you felt God was calling you to do?

- What are the reasons that we don't want to do what we think God might be asking of us?

- Do you have an inkling—or a shout—of something God might be calling you to do in your life to help God's love be revealed?

Discernment Questions

- When in your life have you been so absorbed in something that time flew by? For example, as a child what were you doing when you were called for dinner and came in late?

- What are you most grateful for today? What are you least grateful for? If you were to ask yourself these questions every day, what pattern would you see?

- When have you felt most alive, especially in your body? What were the times of most life that you would like to repeat?

- What would you do if you had time and money to do anything?

- What is the wildest thing you have done in your life that turned out better than you ever imagined? If you were assured of not failing, what is the wildest thing you can imagine doing now?

- Who is the person you most wanted to grow up to be like? Whom do you most want to be like today? Conversely, is there anyone you would like to mentor?

- What movies or other stories have moved you most?

- What do your best friends say they like about you? What do they see as your unique way of giving love?

- What is your special way of receiving love?

- What is it that you *have* to do—that you can't *not* do?

- If you had only one year to live, what would you do?

Additional questions:

- If you had a \$100,000 and you had to give it away to help the poor, oppressed, suffering, which group would you want to help?

- When you hear stories about the sufferings of people and the planet, which circumstances make you angry?

- Which social injustices stir your heart?

Walking Justly Exercise

- As I consider how I think God might be calling me to walk justly next in my life, my complaint is...

- I change this complaint into a statement of commitment by saying, "I value God's call to me to walk justly in this way because I am committed to..."

- I am doing or not doing the following, which keeps me from fully realizing my commitment.

- I am not doing this thing because I fear...

- The big assumption(s) that supports this fear is/are...

- The good news is...

Script for the Book of Jonah

Narrator: Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying:

The Lord: Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.

Narrator: 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, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

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. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was on the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. [*Jonah asleep*] The captain came and said to him:

Captain: What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.

Narrator: The sailors said to one another:

Sailors: Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.

Narrator: So they cast lots [*sailors draw straws*], and the lot fell on Jonah. [*Jonah draws the shortest straw.*] Then they said to him:

Sailors: Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?

Jonah: I am a Hebrew. I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

Narrator: Then the men were even more afraid and said to him:

Sailors: What is this that you have done!

Narrator: For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so. Then they said to him:

Sailors: What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?

Narrator: For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. He said to them:

Jonah: Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of that, that this great storm has come upon you.

Narrator: Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land [*sailors rowing*], but they could not; for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. Then they cried out to the Lord:

Sailors: Please, O Lord, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man's life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.

Narrator: So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea [*throw Jonah into the sea*], and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. But the lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah [*large fish swallows Jonah*], and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah [*inside the big fish*] prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying:

Jonah: I called to the Lord out of my distress and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried and you heard my voice. You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, "I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?" The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God. As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who worship vain idols forsake their true loyalty. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay: Deliverance belongs to the Lord!

Narrator: Then the Lord spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land. [*Jonah is spewed out upon dry land.*] The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying:

The Lord: Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.

Narrator: So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. [*Jonah goes to Nineveh; the Nineveh people are there.*] Now, Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out:

Jonah: Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!

Narrator: And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. [*People of Nineveh act out putting on sackcloths.*] When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. [*King of Nineveh covers himself with sackcloth and sits down in ashes.*] Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh:

King of Nineveh: By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. Human beings and animals shall be covered with

sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows? God may relent and change God's mind; God may turn from fierce anger, so that we do not perish.

Narrator: When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed God's mind about the calamity that God had said God would bring upon them; and God did not do it. But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. [*Jonah looks/acts angry.*] He prayed to the Lord and said:

Jonah [*angrily*]: O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? This is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

Narrator: And the Lord said:

The Lord: Is it right for you to be angry?

Narrator: Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city and made a booth for himself there. [*Jonah makes a booth.*] He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it to come up over Jonah [*bush moves over to shade Jonah*] to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. [*Bush falls over.*] When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah [*Jonah is hot*] so that he was faint and asked that he might die.

Jonah: It is better for me to die than to live.

Narrator: But God said to Jonah:

The Lord: Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?

Jonah: Yes, angry enough to die.

The Lord: You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?

About the Author

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