

Third Sunday in Lent

Lectionary Title 14: **Jesus, the Messiah for All**

Old Testament: Genesis 21:18-20 (NRSV, 1989)

¹⁸Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.' ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow.

New Testament: Matthew 15:21-28 (NRSV, 1989)

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' ²⁴He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' ²⁶He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' ²⁷She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

General Concept: The inclusiveness of Jesus' mission is formed through his encounters with outcasts and people of other faiths.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **Jesus cares for all.**

ME/OE: **Jesus is willing to help all.**

Y: **Jesus, as the Messiah, helps all unconditionally.**

A: **Jesus, as the Messiah, commits to help all, especially, the poor and the marginalized.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Hagar and Ishmael were threats to Sarah's security as wife of Abraham. She considered them rivals to Abraham's attention and inheritance. So she drove them away to the desert. When travelling in the desert, the ideal Middle Eastern practice was to bring enough water, food and other supplies on camels or horses. They usually travelled in groups for safety and to ensure survival in the harsh desert. But Hagar and Ishmael travelled by themselves with only a little food and water. They were unsure of where they were going. They were at risk from possible attacks from bandits. Their chances of survival in the desert were minimal. But God saw their struggles and heard their cries. Even without Abraham's protection, God provided for their needs and took care of them, especially Ishmael. God is merciful and just to all people, especially the suffering, oppressed and rejected.

In the Book of Matthew, the story of Jesus encounter with the Canaanite woman comes before the story of the feeding of the five thousand. The way the stories are arranged is fitting. Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman is the turning point of Jesus' ministry. It is a reorientation of his purpose as Messiah. From being the messiah exclusive only for the Jews, he becomes the bread of life that provides spiritual nourishment to many people, and eventually to all nations.

Jesus and his disciples are on their way to the region of Tyre and Sidon. This region was where the non-Jews lived. Here they encounter the disturbing and persistent Canaanite

woman. Jesus and his disciples respond to her in the usual way Jews respond to non-Jews, to people they consider less important or even to an enemy. At first, they ignored the cry of the Canaanite woman. They avoided responding to her needs. They viewed her as an outcast unworthy of their time and attention. But the faith and persistence of the Canaanite woman made Jesus realize that he needed to reevaluate the scope of his mission. Here, the Canaanite woman is teaching and reminding Jesus that his God is one and the same as the God of other peoples.

After Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman, we see a shift in the tone of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' ministry now extends and offers salvation to all people regardless of ethnic or religious background. In fact, he commissioned his disciples to go and baptize all nations. His commissioning symbolizes the breaking of boundaries. Jesus abandons the old thinking that only Jews are the chosen people worthy of God's love and mercy. Here, the loving, accepting and forgiving character of God in the Old Testament is embodied in Jesus' dealings with the people, especially the outcast and neglected.

Jesus now becomes identified as the messiah that will save not just the Jews, but also the outcast and the oppressed. Jesus intends to fulfill God's call for justice and to exhibit God's love, acceptance and mercy so all may experience the Reign of God.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

The term, messiah, which means "anointed" has a specific meaning in Jewish history and theology. It refers to God's chosen agent to save the people of Israel. When used by the church as a divine title exclusive to Jesus, the word took on new meaning. Jesus Christ is savior of both the Jewish people and the nations of the world (Gentiles). This transition is not a church invention but is derived from Jesus' earthly ministry itself. Jesus' messianic self-understanding was first informed by Jewish tradition. But his encounters with people in need who were ethnically non-Jewish caused him to make a radical turn outwards. It was the Canaanite/Syro-Phoenician woman who educated him that Israel's God was also her God. This broadened understanding about God was already anticipated by the Old Testament prophets but had been drastically toned down by the more dominant nationalistic authorities of the law. In this instance, Jesus the messiah has fulfilled the prophecies of old.

Jesus the Christ reveals and realizes in his ministry the all-encompassing broadness of God's love, justice and mercy. Faith communities that emerged alongside tribal, ethnic or national formations tend to develop a narrow theological perspective. There is a close association of religious identity with national, tribal or ethnic identity. For example, being Jewish is both an ethnic and religious identity. For several centuries at the peak of modern Western colonialism, Christianity was identified with Europe and North America while paganism was used as a generic religious term referring to native populations. Today, Muslim people are profiled also in terms of their demographic origins.

A particular community of faith is like a window from which one is able to view the larger environment outside the house. This means that Christians see Muslims from a Christian point of view and tend to evaluate them based on Christian standards. This is unavoidable and may not be completely overcome but this limitation does not necessarily lead to religious bigotry. Let it serve as a condition and challenge to seek dialogue and cooperation in a mutually enriching relationship. Underlying the process is a genuine recognition that they are both children of one and the same God and that God has a different and special plan of salvation for each.

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. tell that Jesus cares for all;
2. relate the concept of Jesus' care for all with what the people of God do to others regardless of differences; and
3. express appreciation to Jesus' desire to care for everyone and to do the same at home, in school, and in the church.

II. Concept: Jesus cares for all.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), circles (4" in diameter), crayons, paper puppets of Jesus and the Canaanite woman, coloring sheet, scissors, tape

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug.
2. Opening prayer: "Our God who created all things with colors and shapes, we thank you for loving us all. You gave us this morning for us to live a life of welcoming to those who are in need. Teach us today, how to accept others and welcome them as Jesus did welcome and care for the Canaanite woman. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Greeting song: "I'm Part of You" (Words by gbb, Tune: "His Banner Over Me")
I'm part of you and you're part of me together in God's family (thrice).
We're living together in God's household.

B. Getting Ready

As a pre-assignment, ask the class to bring pictures of their relatives or friends living abroad. Ask the children to display these pictures in the display board.

C. Learning Time

1. **For N/K:**
 - a. Let the children take turns in describing the persons in the pictures and where they live.
 - b. Process the activity. Ask: "Do you think Jesus loves all of them? Why or why not?" Say: "Jesus loves all."
 - c. Teach the song "Jesus Loves the Little Children"
Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.
Brown and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.
2. **For YE:**
 - a. Call on selected children who will talk about their relatives or friends living in other countries. Tell to find out the relation of the activity with the story that they will talk about.

- b. Assist the children in preparing the paper puppets of Jesus and the Canaanite woman. Provide each child with two paper bags. Let the children cut the pictures and paste or tape them in the paper bags. Refer to the activity sheet on page 17.
- b. Read the story on page 19. Use varied voices according to the character being portrayed, *i.e.* the narrator, Jesus, the Canaanite woman, and a disciple.

Jesus and the Canaanite Woman

(Based on Matthew 15:21-28)

- Narrator: Jesus is on his way to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region comes out and starts shouting.
- Woman: (Crying tone) Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.
- Narrator: But he did not answer her at all. His disciples urge Jesus.
- Disciple: Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.
- Jesus: I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- Narrator: But she comes and kneels before him, saying,
- Woman: (Desperate tone) Lord, help me.
- Jesus: It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.
- Woman: Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.
- Jesus: Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.
- Narrator: Then her daughter gets well.
- c. Help the class retell the story. Play the role of the narrator and ask two pupils to represent the characters in the story and have them use the puppet of Jesus and the Canaanite woman's puppet. Call another pupil who will play the disciple.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the story. Ask these questions.

1. Where were Jesus and his disciples going? (They were going to the district of Tyre and Sidon.)
2. Who was crying for help to save her daughter? (The Canaanite woman)
3. What happened to her daughter? (Her daughter was tormented by the demons.)
4. Why was Jesus silent to the cry of the Canaanite woman? (Jesus thought that his ministry was for the Jewish people only and not for other people.)
5. How did Jesus explain to the woman that his mission is for the house of Israel only? (He used an illustration by saying, "it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.")
6. How did the woman convince Jesus to extend his ministry to other people? (She said, "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.")
7. What was the reaction of Jesus of the Canaanite woman's response? (He was pleased and he made the Canaanite woman's daughter well even though she was not a Jew.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How did Jesus show that he loves all? What does Jesus want us to do? (Jesus wants us to help all people especially those who are poor and in need.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "O woman, great is your faith!" (Matthew 15:27)
2. **For N:** Color the drawing
3. **For K:** Tell the children to gather around and sing the song: "Can You Help Us" (gbb. tune: "Are You Sleeping?")
Can you help us? (twice)
Sure we can (twice).
Let us help each other in cleaning our room together.
To please our God in all we do.
Note: Replace the phrase *cleaning our room* with *sweeping the floor, washing the dishes, or play and run.*
4. **For YE:** Ask: What can you do?
 - a. When you have two bananas and see a child begging for food
 - b. When you are with an adult and see a child with special needs lost in the mall
 - c. When you witness a child being bullied by his/her classmates
 - d. When you see your friend crying in your class for he/she wants to go home

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering: Put a basket offering at the center and instruct the children to bring their offering while singing the doxology.
3. Closing song: "Jesus Loves the Little Children"
Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.
Brown and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.
4. Closing prayer: We thank you O God for welcoming all of us in your grace. May you teach us to help and love others as you helped and loved us. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. retell the story about Ishmael and the Canaanite woman;
2. compare how God extends His help to them;
3. describe the role of these two persons in the willingness of Jesus to help; and
4. demonstrate acts of kindness to others with Jesus as the model.

II. Concept: Jesus, as a savior, is willing to experience difficulties.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), Bible drill, song chart, offering plate, coloring sheets (Canaanite woman and her daughter, Hagar and Ishmael)

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners warmly with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug. Give them a high five and lead them to their seats.
2. Opening prayer: "Our Creator God who created all things with colors and shapes, we thank you for loving us all. Thank you for this beautiful day and for the loving fellowship with one another. Lord, teach us how to accept others and to welcome them as you welcomed and cared for Hagar and the Canaanite woman. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening songs:
 - a. "The Love of Jesus"
The love of Jesus sweet and marvelous (thrice), O..o.. Wonderful love...
Higher than the sky above, deeper than the ocean
Wider than the universe, O..o.. Wonderful love.
 - b. "I'm Part of You" by gbb (Tune: "His Banner over Me")
I'm part of you and you're part of me together in God's family (thrice).
We're living together in God's household.

B. Getting Ready

1. *Bible drill.* Distribute Bibles of the same version to the learners. Say: "We will find out how well you can locate the following verses that I will tell you. (Example: John 3:16)
2. After the activity, ask: "What do you think all these verses say about God?" (God's love)

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read the biblical references in unison.
 - a. *Genesis 21:18-20.* The story of Hagar and Ishmael
 - b. *Matthew 15:21-28.* The story of the Canaanite woman and her daughter
2. Form two groups to discuss the two stories. Assign the first group the story of Hagar and Ishmael and the second group the story of the Canaanite woman and her daughter. Provide this outline for the discussion.
 - a. Description of the characters
 - b. Their problem
 - c. How God showed His love for them
3. Ask both groups to share their discussion to the whole class.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Discuss the stories. Ask these questions.
 - a. Who are the characters in the first story? (God, Hagar and Ishmael)
 - b. Who are the characters in the second story? (Jesus, the Canaanite woman, disciples of Jesus)
 - c. How can you compare Hagar and the Canaanite woman? (Both women are not Jews. Hagar has a dying son and the Canaanite woman has a daughter who is possessed by the demons.)
 - d. How can you compare Ishmael and the daughter of the Canaanite woman? (Ishmael is about to die because of hunger and thirst. The daughter of the Canaanite woman is restless because of the demons who torture her.)
 - e. How did God help Ishmael? (God showed Hagar where to look for water and food.)
 - f. How did Jesus help the daughter of the Canaanite woman? (The story does not say how Jesus helped her but she was healed instantly.)
 - g. Which of these adjectives describe God? Explain your answer. (Expect all the three adjectives fit to describe God.)
 - 1) kind
 - 2) compassionate
 - 3) inclusive
2. Prepare the class to dramatize the two stories. Use the same grouping and let the first group present the story of Hagar and the second group, the story of the Canaanite woman.
3. Have both groups present their dramatizations one after the other.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Why do you think God extended God's grace to Hagar? What made Jesus change his mind and help the Canaanite woman?" (Jesus' messiahship is for all.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the memory verses:
 - a. "God was with the boy, and he grew up" (Genesis 21:20a)
 - b. "O woman, great is your faith!" (Matt 15:27)
2. *Think-Group-Share*. Say: "Jesus welcomes and helps every person who needs his help especially those people who are considered as the least, the lost and the last of our community." Tell the class to form dyads and ask each dyad to discuss how they can help people who are in need. Tell them to include these ideas: welcoming a newcomer, accepting people who are different from them, planning ways of extending help to victims of flood, fire or other natural calamities in the communities near them.

G. Closing Worship

1. Let the class recite the memory verses.
2. Reflective action: I want to be like Jesus. I will do my best to help others.
3. Offering: Put a basket offering at the center and instruct the children to bring their offering while singing the doxology.
4. Closing song: "Make Me a Servant"
5. Closing prayer: "We thank you O God for the lesson of welcoming others in your grace. May you teach us to help and love others as you helped and loved us. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen."
6. Goodbye song: "Our Sunday School Is Over" by gbb

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. compare how Hagar and her son Ishmael and the Canaanite woman and her daughter are helped by God;
2. illustrate how Jesus learns from the Canaanite woman as he begins to understand his being the Messiah; and
3. compose creative work to demonstrate how God uses each of us to help others unconditionally.

II. Concept: Jesus, as the Messiah, helps all unconditionally.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), hymnal, activity sheet

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners warmly with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug. Give them a high five and lead them to their seats.
2. Opening prayer: "Our Creator God who created all things with colors and shapes, we thank you for loving us all. Thank you for this beautiful day and for the loving fellowship with one another. Lord, teach us how to accept others and to welcome them as you welcomed and cared for Hagar and the Canaanite woman. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening songs:
 - a. "The Love of Jesus"
The love of Jesus sweet and marvelous (thrice), O..o.. Wonderful love...
Higher than the sky above, deeper than the ocean
Wider than the universe, O..o.. Wonderful love.
 - b. "I'm Part of You" by gbb (Tune: "His Banner Over Me")
I'm part of you and you're part of me together in God's family (thrice).
We're living together in God's household.

B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to look for verses that tell about relationships of parents and children in the Bible. Then let them describe these relationships related to how God showed His love for them.

1. Abraham and Isaac
2. Naomi and Ruth
3. Jacob and Joseph
4. Lois, Eunice, and Timothy

C. Learning Time

1. Form two groups. Assign the first group to read and discuss the story of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 21:18-20 and the second group the story of the Canaanite woman and her daughter in Matthew 15:21-28.
2. Instruct each group to act out the verses that have been discussed. In their presentation, let the groups contextualize their story. Instead of the stories of Hagar and the Canaanite woman, tell them to tell a story of God helping a single mother in distress.
3. After each group's presentation, say: God's grace embraces all God's people. Though God promised Abraham to be the father of all nations, God extended God's

loving grace to Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness. God never let this unwanted mother and son to just die in the desert. God heard their cries of despair and rescued them. God even promised them blessings and God's presence. Draw from the class these ideas.

- a. As God's beloved Son, Jesus loves all kinds of people. He welcomes and helps every person who needs his help especially those people who are considered as the least, the lost and the last of our community.
- b. There was a time where Jesus thought that His ministry was for the Jewish people only. He thought that He had been sent by His Father to help the Jewish people alone. But when Jesus met the Canaanite woman, things became clear to Him. Jesus realized that his mission was for all the people of God whether Jews or Gentiles—all are recipients of God's gift of salvation.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson. Ask these questions.

1. What was the story all about? (Address this question to both groups)
2. Who were the main characters of the two stories? (God, Hagar, Jesus and the Canaanite woman)
3. What similarities can you find between the two stories? (Hagar and the Canaanite woman are mothers whose children need urgent help to save them from imminent death.)
4. How did God/Jesus respond to the needs of Hagar and the Canaanite woman?
5. What great action did God/Jesus do to respond to the women's plea?
6. Why do you think Jesus gives us second chances to repent? (To serve others by doing what is right)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Why do you think God extended God's grace to Hagar? What made Jesus change one's perception of his Messiahship upon his conversation with the Canaanite woman?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the memory verse: "O woman, great is your faith!" (Matthew 15:27).
2. Think-Group-Share. Use the same two groups formed earlier. Tell each group to think of ways by which they can share their time and talents in addressing the situations listed below. After their group work, ask them to share their work to the whole class.
 - a. Meeting a sibling from your father's previous relationship who wants to visit your family before leaving for work broad
 - b. Visiting single parents or children of migrant workers
 - c. Involving in the church's outreach ministry by accommodating displaced tribes or victims of natural or man-made calamities in your community and in distributing food, clothes and other relief items.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Make me a Servant"
3. Closing prayer: Lord, show us the way. Help us be grateful for every day. Show us the difference between right and wrong. Keep us safe, Lord, all night long. Give us direction on what to do, lead the way, Lord, We trust in you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

Adult Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. compare how Ishmael and the daughter of the Canaanite woman are helped by God;
2. discuss the choice made by Jesus to become the Messiah for all people;
3. realize how people are used by God to extend help to those who are poor and marginalized; and
4. share one's resolve to extend help unconditionally to those who really need it.

II. Materials

The Holy Bible (NRSV, 1989), hymnal, activity sheet

III. Learning Experiences


A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer:
3. Opening song: "All Because of Our Sins" (Dahilan Sa Ating Mga Kasalanan)
Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 154 Words: Cirilo A. Rigos; English Translation: Dominica Faurillo, 2002; Music: Hilarion F. Rubio

B. Getting Ready

Let the class read the words of St. Teresa of Avila and share their thoughts about it. Refer to the activity sheet.

*Christ has no body on earth but ours,
no hands but ours, no feet but ours.
Ours are the eyes through which the
compassion of Christ
looks out upon the world,
ours are the feet with which he
goes about doing good,
ours are the hands with which he
blesses his people.*



—St. Teresa of Avila

C. Learning Time

1. Form two groups. Assign the first group to read and discuss the the story of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 21:18-20 and the second group the story of the Canaanite woman and her daughter in Matthew 15:21-28. Tell each group to discuss the following:
 - a. Description of Hagar and Ishmael for Group 1
 - b. Description of the Canaanite woman and her daughter fro Group 2
 - c. Their similarity of circumstances that require urgent need and attention
 - d. The way God showed His love for them although the women are not Jews
 - e. The value or significance of Jesus modelling his messiahship for all
2. After their group discussion, have each group share to the class the insights that they have gleaned from the two stories.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Tell the class to say whether they agree or disagree with the following and explain briefly their answers.

1. God's grace embraces all God's people. Though God promised Abraham to be the father of all nations, God extended God's loving grace to Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness. God never let this unwanted mother and son to just die in the desert. God heard their cries of despair and rescued them. God even promised them blessings and God's presence.
2. As God's beloved Son, Jesus loves all kinds of people. He welcomes and helps every person who needs his help especially those people who are considered as the least, the lost and the last of our community.
3. There was a time where Jesus thought that His ministry was for the Jewish people only. He thought that He had been sent by His Father to help the Jewish people alone. But when Jesus met the Canaanite woman, things became clear to Him. Jesus realized that his mission was for all the people of God whether Jews or Gentiles—all are recipients to God's gift of salvation.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How did Jesus manifest his being the Messiah for all people? Why do you think God use people to extend help to those in need?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Tell the class to choose anyone of the following and make some life applications showing their unconditional love.

1. Start a food and relief bank in your church. Think of practical ways of doing this.
2. Conduct Disaster Management and First Aid Seminar. Remind them the things they need to know about service.
 - a. It's how people know God's grace (an outward discipline)
 - b. It's not optional (commanded in the Scriptures).
 - c. It's hard (disciplined) life.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Make Me a Servant"
3. Closing prayer: Lord, show us the way. Help us to be grateful you every day. Show us the difference between right and wrong. Keep us safe, Lord, all night long. Give us direction on what to do, lead the way, Lord, We trust in you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."