



January 7, 2018  
First Sunday after Epiphany

### Jesus Observes the Rites of His Faith

*Old Testament:*

#### **Genesis 17:9-13** (NRSV)

<sup>9</sup> God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup>This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup>You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup>Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. <sup>13</sup>Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant."

#### **Leviticus 12:2-6** (NRSV)

<sup>2</sup>Speak to the people of Israel, saying: If a woman conceives and bears a male child, she shall be ceremonially unclean for seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. <sup>3</sup>On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. <sup>4</sup>Her time of blood purification shall be thirty-three days; she shall not touch any holy thing, or come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are completed. <sup>5</sup>If she bears a female child, she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation; her time of blood purification shall be sixty-six days. <sup>6</sup>When the days of her purification are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its first year for a burnt-offering, and a pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering.

#### *New Testament: Luke 2:21, 41-46* (NRSV)

##### Jesus Is Named

<sup>21</sup> After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

##### The Boy Jesus in the Temple

<sup>41</sup> Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. <sup>42</sup>And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. <sup>43</sup>When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

<sup>44</sup>Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup>When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. <sup>46</sup>After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

*General Concept: The rites of the church embody its historic faith.*

*Key Concepts:* NK/YE: **Jesus goes to the temple.**

### ***Exegesis of the Biblical References***

The process of circumcision is the physical manifestation of the covenant entered into by God with Abraham. This is an agreement which Abraham is bound to keep in order to manifest his faithfulness to the covenant with his God. Circumcision is the cutting of the excess skin of the male sex organ which is necessary to make one clean or hygienic in the Hebrew tradition. Being clean is a requirement of the special relationship which the Jewish people had entered into with their God. This account of Abraham's circumcision and the legal provision on circumcision in Leviticus is deeply rooted in the priestly tradition of the Jewish community. The priestly writers are very particular in the practice not just because it has become a tradition but because in the practice of circumcision itself is embodied the principle of being loyal to their covenant with God. In being loyal to the covenant through this practice, the Jewish community is also able to assert its own unique and distinct identity amidst the diversity of peoples and nations that surround them which generally do not engage in such a ritual practice. It is a practice that somehow assures them that they will always be recognized as a covenanted people of God and each individual is a valued member of this covenanted community. The mark of circumcision also provides each male member with a consciousness of their rootedness in their rich and moving history as a people specially chosen by God as initially demonstrated in the story of their great ancestor, Abraham: a person who embodied great loyalty to God and to God's promise. This particular ritual indeed, has become the mark of their covenant loyalty, the mark of their distinct identity as a people called to a special relationship with God who had been so gracious in caring for them and the mark of their being rooted in a history they can always be proud of.

The text presents Jesus undergoing the required rituals of the Jewish community. This text demonstrates how Jesus had been rooted in the community where he belongs. He has the clear mark of identity as a Jew and he also has the mark of being a member of a covenanted community having undergone the requirement in the Jewish law. Here, it is important to see that Jesus has not defied nor was he exempted from the requisites of the Jewish community, rather the story demonstrates the importance of a member going through the required rituals and practices of his community. Thus, the text also shows the reality of the Jewish people who became marginalized in other societies in the course of their practicing the requirements of the law. It could be that the understanding of those who became marginalized because of their zealous observance of the law has become different than those who are in the center and pinnacle of society. Deeper understanding of how the law was understood in this context is discussed in the following narrative when Jesus was presented in the temple, again, to fulfill the requirement of the law. It is important to understand that the text did not mention who was doing the circumcision. It could be the parents but in the case of the gospel writers, if the subject had been missing in the statement, it also implies that God himself is the one at work. Again, God remains at work as a covenant partner from the days of Abraham towards the days of Jesus. This means that the covenant has not been forgotten and neither are those in the margins forgotten by God, neither does the

marginalized Jew forget God's promise for people like them. The mark of circumcision will always remind them of the gracious, loving God behind this ritual who had always stood by them even in their most critical moments of their history.

### ***Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users***

Liturgy is the employment of the church's sacred symbols— Scriptures, creeds, objects and ritualistic gestures— into forms appropriate for worship. It makes use of music, literature and the arts as vehicles for conveying the symbols with the participation of the congregation.

These symbols capture the primordial sources of faith like time capsules that release streams of meaning that are rendered in contemporary forms across time. Liturgy serves to keep the contemporary connected to its origin and the passage of time. For that reason, it contains very old elements as well as new ones just emerging in the present.

Liturgical symbols provide a unique medium of the gathered community to and from the Spirit as they have the power to communicate and evoke meanings too deep to be articulated in the common language. It is in the very nature of faith that its most profound contents can only be preserved and shared through symbols. There is something of the faith that is and will remain a mystery until its final revelation at the end of time. At the apex of the Christian mystery is the incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus of Nazareth. Next to that is the main symbol of God, the mystery of the Trinity and then the mystery of bodily resurrection and the *eschaton*, the end of the present age and the beginning of a new one. The chief symbols of faith are deposited and reenacted in two aspects: the liturgy of the word, the reading and preaching of the Scriptures, and the liturgy of the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Protestantism which emerged in the late medieval period and the onset of modern intellectual and spiritual culture has had an ambivalent regard towards liturgical reform. At one end, it sought to overcome the church's sacramentalism that stood as a wall separating the clergy from the laity by making worship truly an act of the whole church with emphasis on preaching and singing of hymns in the people's dialect and translation of the Scriptures into the common idiom. At the other end, there was a concern to preserve the liturgical heritage of the church accumulated up to the medieval era. This liturgical tension remains to this day in the Protestant world, including the UCCP.

### **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 why Jesus was given that name;
2. explain why Jesus went to the temple;

3. describe the place of worship among Christians;
4. express one's willingness to go to church; and
5. sing songs joyfully and recite the memory verse with confidence.

## II. **Concept:** Jesus goes to the temple.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (NRSV), picture of church with slogan of "I will commit myself to go to Church on Sunday", crayons, pencils, activity sheets

## III. **Learning Experiences**

### A. *Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time: Greet the children warmly and set an atmosphere of a good learning environment.
2. Opening prayer: "Everlasting and ever-loving God, we are indeed thankful for your overwhelming love by giving us Jesus. Be with us as we learn new things today and as we listen to the story of the child Jesus. This we ask in Jesus name we pray. Amen.
3. Let the children sing their welcome songs.
  - a. "Jesus is A Happy Name"  
Jesus is a happy name, Jesus is always the same  
Jesus is a happy name, we've got to smile when we talk about Jesus.  
(You may replace Jesus with the names of the children.)
  - b. "Praise God"  
Praise God, praise God all ye little children, God is love God is love  
Love God, love God all ye little children God is love God is love  
Thank God, thank God all ye little children God is love God is love  
Serve God, serve God all ye little children God is love God is love
  - c. "Ub-Ubbing"  
Ub-ubbing a babassit ay-aywanan ni Jesus  
Iturongnat sakada a mapam kapilya.
  - d. "Little Children Everywhere"  
Little children everywhere, Jesus Christ is caring for them  
Loving, leading them to go to church or temple.

### B. *Getting Ready*

Prepare the class by letting them do this finger play:

Here is the church. Here is the steeple.

Open the door, and see all the people.

(This poem may also be introduced as a song.)

### C. *Learning Time*

1. Picture study. Show a picture of your church building with people inside, or a picture of church

people fellowshiping or gathering as one. Then ask:

- a. What do you see in this picture?
  - b. What do they do when they are in church?
  - c. What have you heard adult's say why they go to church?
  - d. What do you when you are in church?
  - e. What do you feel when you are in the church?
2. After hearing their answers, summarize or validate their answer. (The church is a group of people worshipping God. We also call the place of worship the church.)
  3. Tell the class that in the story, they will find out the name of the place where Jesus and his parents went to worship God.
  4. Read the story.

**For N/K:**

### **The Boy Jesus**

Based on Luke 2:21, 41-42

Jesus is circumcised eight days after he is born. Joseph and Mary name the boy Jesus as what the angel has told Mary.

Every year Joseph and Mary go to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival (It runs for eight days). The Hebrews celebrate it to remember being freed from slavery in Egypt. Jesus and his family usually go to the festival. They travel for days. They bring lots of food. Jesus sees lots of people.

**For YE:**

### **The Boy in the Temple**

Based on Luke 2:41-52

Every year Joseph and Mary go to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival (It runs for eight days). The Hebrews celebrate it to remember being freed from slavery in Egypt. Jesus and his family usually go to the festival. They travel for days. They bring lots of food. Jesus sees lots of people.

When the Passover is over, they start to trek back home, but the boy Jesus could not be found anywhere. Joseph and Mary worry because they could not go without Jesus. They have to find him!

They search everywhere and find him in the Temple sitting with the Jewish teachers. He listens to them and asks them questions. All who hear him talk are amazed at his intelligent answers!

Joseph and Mary are surprised when they see him, and his mother says to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you."

He answers, "Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know that I have to be in my Father's house?" But they do not understand his answer.

Finally, Jesus starts the trek with his parents back home to Nazareth and he continues to

obey them.

*D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

Ask these questions as you show pictures of the story.

**For N/K:**

1. When was Jesus circumcised? (8 days after he was born)
2. Who told Mary to name the child Jesus? (An angel)
3. Where does the family of Jesus go every year? (The temple in Jerusalem) Why? (To celebrate the Feast of the Passover)

**For YE:**

1. Where does the family of Jesus go every year? (The temple in Jerusalem)
2. What is this great event that they go to Jerusalem for? (to celebrate the Feast of the Passover)
3. What happened when the family left for home? (Jesus is left behind.)
4. Where did they find Jesus? (In the temple sitting with the Jewish teachers)
5. What did Jesus say his reason was to be in the Temple (He needs to be in his Father's House.)

*E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: "Where does Jesus go to know about his faith? Where do we go to know about our faith?"

*F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Say: "Our church is like what the Temple is during Jesus' time. The Church is a community of people who worship God. Ask the learners why it is important to go to church. Let them say what they do in the church.
2. Teach the memory verses.

**For N/K:** "Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover."  
(Luke 2:41)

**For YE:** "After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions." (Luke 2:46)

3. Prepare the class to play "Show and Tell!" Do a trip around the church (organized movement of the children) showing the pulpit, the pastors, the people, the cross, the pews, the choir, the flowers, the candles, etc. Then draw from the class the sentences: "Jesus goes to the Temple to worship God. We go to the church to worship God."
4. Creative activity:

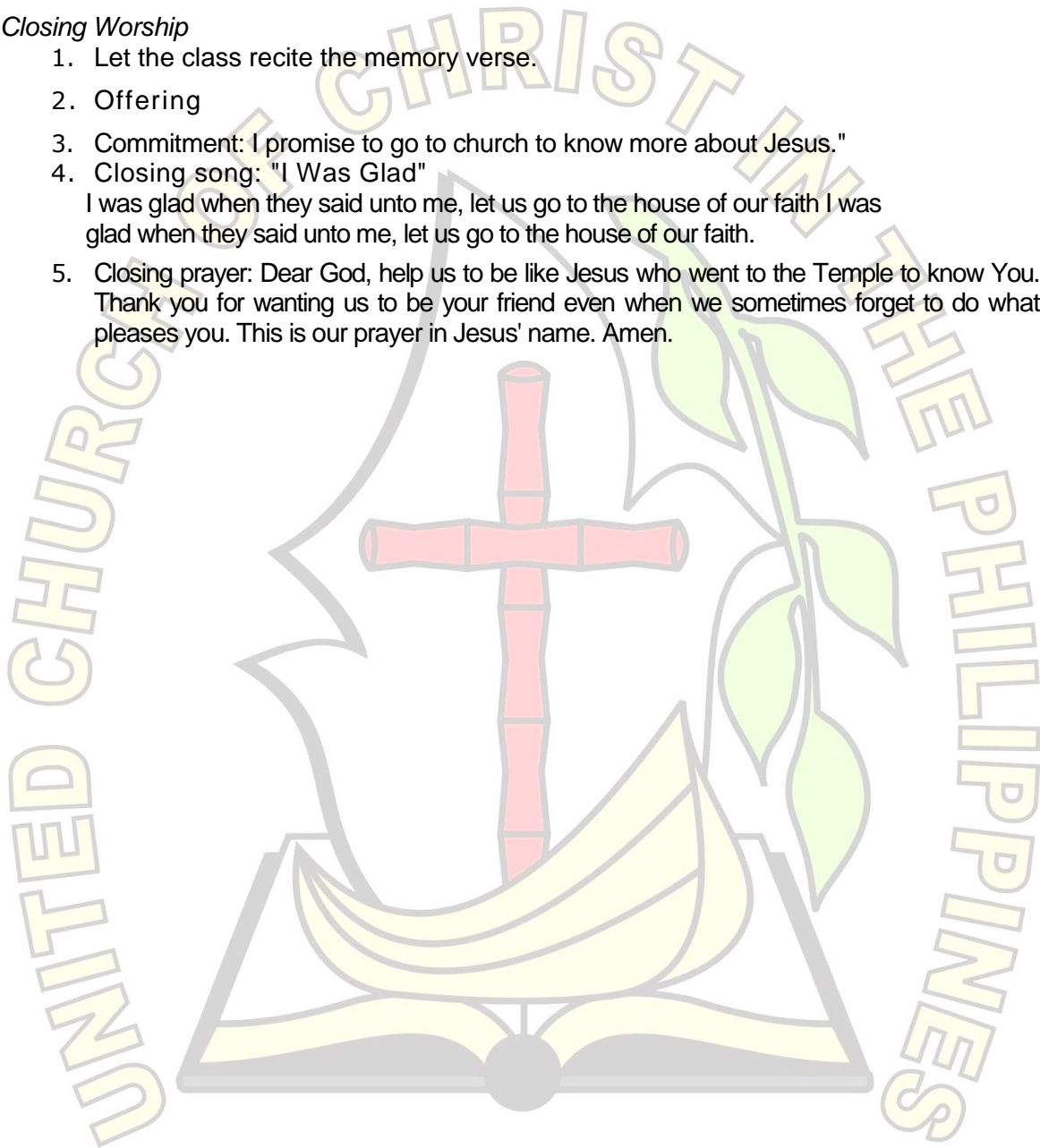
**For N/K:** Tell the class to color the picture and teach them to read the label. (It is fun to go to church.)

**For YE:** Tell the class to decorate the picture with recyclable materials and read the sentences below the picture. (Like Jesus, we learn many things about our faith in church. I promise

always to go to church.)

*G. Closing Worship*

1. Let the class recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Commitment: I promise to go to church to know more about Jesus."
4. Closing song: "I Was Glad"  
I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of our faith I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of our faith.
5. Closing prayer: Dear God, help us to be like Jesus who went to the Temple to know You. Thank you for wanting us to be your friend even when we sometimes forget to do what pleases you. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.





January 14, 2018

Second Sunday after Epiphany

**Simeon and Anna: Witnesses to the Appearance of the Messiah**

*Old Testament:*

**Isaiah 40:31** (NRSV)

<sup>31</sup> but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

*New Testament:*

**Luke 2:22-38** (NRSV)

Jesus Is Presented in the Temple

<sup>22</sup> When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.' <sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, <sup>29</sup> Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' <sup>33</sup> And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.' <sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

**General Concept: Waiting for God's deliverance requires perseverance and patience. The Bible remains a faithful witness to the unfolding of God's plan of salvation.**

**Key Concepts: NK/YE: The Bible tells about God.**

***Exegesis of the Biblical References***

This text is part of a later edition of the Book of Isaiah which came out of the Babylonian exile. It speaks clearly of hope and strength amidst the times of hopelessness and despair. It also anticipates the coming end of their captivity. The writer speaks of an imminent historical event

when the Babylonian empire would soon be defeated by the rising Persian army. The opening verse of chapter 40 already proclaims messages of comfort and assurance of restoration to the exiled people. The whole chapter 40 reflects so much the spirit of hope and excitement as it envisions the imminent fulfillment of the promise of God where they will be liberated from their captivity. There is a tone of renewed strength and revival of the spirit of being a unique covenanted people of God, reasserting and reclaiming the distinct identity of a religious community bound historically to a covenanting God. This is a powerful reassurance from the prophet addressed to a people who may have been losing their hope already of ever returning to their homeland. The prophet strongly asserts that in the midst of a growing sense of hopelessness and despair in the midst of their captors, they should never give up their faith and their hope in Yahweh. For no matter how much the people may have gone down to the depths of sorrow, loneliness in a foreign land, and utter despair, their God remains faithful to those who will remain steadfast and loyal to their covenant God. They will be sustained even in the most difficult and trying of times until the day when the Lord will deliver them once again from their captors and restore them back to their beloved homeland. Their God remains a God who hears and responds to the cries of the despairing and the helpless. This is the faithful witness of the prophet which has become an enduring proclamation and statement of faith in the rest of the Scriptures.

Following required ritual of circumcision, it has also been the practice and tradition of the Jews to dedicate the first born. It is required in the law that every first born should be set apart (Lk. 2:23). To be set apart means being the first choice. The practice of dedicating the first born and even offering the first fruit or livestock is a clear message of giving priority to God. Simeon has discerned a strong implication of this act of Jesus being offered and presented at the Temple. With this act, Jesus becomes the expression of one who is taking in his life the prioritization of God and all matters and concerns of God now becomes the priority of Jesus when he grows up. This is what Simeon has clearly seen in this act of the child being offered and presented to God at this moment. That is why he has to tell what he has discerned to the mother of Jesus: This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too." This rather cryptic prophecy of Simeon will actually set the pattern for the rest of the life and ministry of Jesus, something that the rest of the gospels faithfully testifies to. After being dedicated to God, his life now becomes dedicated to a kind of ministry that will be opposed by the powers that be, but also one that will give hope and new life to the once hopeless in his society. But what eventually happens to him on the cross will certainly pierce the heart and soul of his mother Mary.

### ***Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users***

The basic posture of the Christian believer is that of waiting in hopeful anticipation of salvation. It waits upon the surfacing of the unknown to the realm of the known—the revelation. Hence, the basic virtue of Christian piety is patience and perseverance. Giving life to it is the Spirit-inspired power of discovery and discernment. If you don't have it, you have not known the joy and pain, the

agony and ecstasy, of being a Christian.

For the Christian believer, this future is not simply wishful thinking which is characteristic of religious infantilism. Rather, it is based upon an objective rock of faith — the revelation of God in Christ according to the witness of the Holy Bible. There in the holy book is drawn up the architecture of a reality that is emerging from the present realities. As in music, it is the overture that carries within itself the whole symphony that is yet to unfold. This is how faith is defined: "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

The personal and social consequences of faith in the Biblical sense are astounding and far-reaching. Astounding because it crosses the bounds of reason and far-reaching because it draws the believer to overcome the limits of the possible. Faith is able to explain miraculous change from one kind of personality to another, and fundamental social change that reverses the established order of a political economy into one that follows a new logic. The "assurance of things hoped for" and the conviction of things not seen" render a seemingly indestructible status quo puny and evanescent. The same holds true of personal transformation. The Apostle Paul's exhortation "not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds" is a testimony of faith.

### 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. be aware that the Bible is about the Word of God;
2. be conscious of the Bible by actually observing it physically, to see, to feel, to touch and to open; and
3. express one's desire to have own Bible.

### II. Concept: The Bible is a faithful witness to God.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (NRSV), song chart, crayons, pencils

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children warmly and set an atmosphere of good learning environment.
2. Opening prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the many things that you have done for us. Give us strength to tell other children about You and Your wonderful love. Amen!
3. Opening songs:  
"Read Your Bible"  
Read your Bible pray and obey, pray and obey, pray and obey  
Read your Bible pray and obey, and you'll grow, grow, grow  
And you'll grow, grow, grow, and you'll grow, grow, grow

And you'll grow, grow, grow  
 Read your Bible pray and obey, and you'll grow, grow, grow

"Jesus Loves Me"

Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.  
 Little children here belong, they are weak but He is strong  
 Yes Jesus loves me (thrice)  
 The Bible tells me so.

#### B. Getting Ready

Put the Bible at the center table and open it. Hold it and ask the children: "What is this, children? (Bible) Let's spell the word "B-I-B-L-E". Follow me."

#### C. Learning Time

1. Ask: "Do you know how the Bible came to us? Are you ready to learn how the Bible came to us?"
2. Tell the story. **The Story of the Bible**

(By Iris H. Tibus)

God shows God's love to people, from the beginning of time.

The story of God's love is written in a book with many books, like a library. This book is called the Bible. It started with stories told by people. Later on, some persons inspired by God wrote down these stories.

The Bible has two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament talks about the promises of God to God's people.

Then God sent God's only son, Jesus, to live with us. The New Testament talks about the fulfillment of God's love and grace through God's son, Jesus.

The Bible is the Word of God. It is about God's love for us. It also tells us about Jesus, who is also called Christ, because he came to save us.

#### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Ask these questions as you show pictures of the story.
  - a. What is a bible? (It is a book with many books.)
  - b. How did people learn about it? (The stories were told by mouth. Then they were written by people inspired by God. Later, the stories were printed.)
  - c. What is the Bible about? (It is about God's love for us. It is also about Jesus who loves us.)
2. **For YE:** Assist them to look at their bibles and introduce the different parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament and the books under each.
3. Let the class share how they felt as they saw, touched, and opened their bibles. Encourage them to own their own copies and read them regularly.

#### E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: "Yes, we like to have our own Bible. Ask: Why is the Bible important? (It is the Word of God. It tells us of who God is. It tells of God's love for us. It tells us what to do.)

#### F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the biblical verse: "For my eyes have seen your salvation." (Luke 2:30)
2. **For NK:** Tell the class to cut the letters in the activity sheet and paste them in a separate piece of paper to form the word "BIBLE". Then let them decorate it.

**For YE:** Using the same activity sheet and after cutting and pasting the letters, tell the class to write the following near the letters:

B: Believe. It is God's word. Read it.

I: Inspire others to read it.

B: Bring it with you.

L: Learn from its stories.

E: Enjoy reading it.

Ask the class to decorate their artwork.

3. Teach this song: The B-I-B-L-E"  
The B-I-B-L-E, Yes that's the book for me.  
I stand alone on the word of God, the B-I-B-L-E! (Bible!)  
The B-I-B-L-E,  
I'll take it along with me.  
I'll read and pray, and then obey, the B-I-B-L-E. (Bible!)  
By F-A-I-T-H, I'm S-A-V-E-D,  
I'll stand alone on the word of God,  
The B-I-B-L-E. (Bible!)

#### G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering: Remind the class that as they give their offering, they are reminded of God's love for them and they can show their thanks by giving.
3. Closing songs: Recall the songs they have learned during this session.
4. Closing prayer: Coach a child to read this prayer poem.

Dear God,

The Bible is about your word.

Thank you, for giving us the Bible.

Thank you God for letting us know you and your son, Jesus.

Thank you for we can see, touch, feel and own a Bible. Amen.

January 21, 2018

Third Sunday after Epiphany

### Escape to Egypt, Return to Israel

*Old Testament:*

#### **Hosea 11** (NRSV)

God's Compassion despite Israel's Ingratitude

'When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. <sup>2</sup> The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols. <sup>3</sup> Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. <sup>4</sup> I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them. <sup>5</sup> They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. <sup>6</sup> The sword rages in their cities, it consumes their oracle-priests, and devours because of their schemes. <sup>7</sup> My people are bent on turning away from me. To the Most High they call, but he does not raise them up at all. <sup>8</sup> How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. <sup>9</sup> I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. <sup>10</sup> They shall go after the LORD, who roars like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west. <sup>11</sup> They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria; and I will return them to their homes, says the LORD. <sup>12</sup> Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still walks with God, and is faithful to the Holy One.

*New Testament:*

#### **Matthew 2:13-23** (NRSV)

The Escape to Egypt

<sup>13</sup> Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." <sup>14</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, <sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

The Massacre of the Infants

<sup>16</sup> When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. <sup>17</sup> Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: <sup>18</sup> 'A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'

## The Return from Egypt

<sup>19</sup> When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, <sup>20</sup> "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." <sup>21</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. <sup>23</sup> There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazorean.'

*General Concept:* **There were powerful forces that threaten the mission of the Messiah.**

*Key Concepts NK/YE:* **The family took Jesus to Egypt to escape from Herod**

### ***Exegesis of the Biblical References***

This chapter of the book of Hosea speaks of a prophet who is very concerned about the destiny of the people of Ephraim who are about to suffer the terrible consequences of their stubbornness and refusal to return to God. This prophetic pronouncement reflects the voice of a prophet who is settled in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The tone of the Prophet Hosea reflects the time and context in the period following the death of king Jeroboam II in 745 BCE who earlier had presided over a stable and long reign of about 40 years. After him, there were a series of kings who succeeded one after the other usually in a very violent fashion of bloody takeovers and assassination.

Hosea sees the situation as sliding into chaos and near anarchy. This is just a few more years before its capital Samaria will fall into the hands of its conqueror Assyria in 721 BCE. Hosea describes this situation as a result of the greed for power among so many of those in the ruling elite of the land. In their lust for power they have all but ignored and forgotten their responsibility and accountability before God. According to Hos. 7:7, "All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their own rulers. All their kings have fallen; none of them calls upon me", says the Lord." In Hosea 8:4, he also states: "They made kings, but not through me; they set up princes, but without my knowledge. They made idols with their silver and gold for their own destruction."

Now the prophet expresses God's own extreme sadness and frustration over what is happening to God's own people whom he had been nurturing like a parent since they were brought out of Egypt. God had loved Israel so much like a deeply caring parent, nurturing them like a child so as to make them a people enjoying the life of freedom and prosperity in the Promised Land. But God was so frustrated over what God had been seeing about the ongoing state of affairs in the nation where their return to a seemingly enslaving experience this time under the Assyrians is now inevitable.

They will suffer the logical consequence of their abandoning the Lord and God's ethical covenant demands. Yet God feels the pain and agony of such imminent disaster for God's people. "My heart recoils within me, says the Lord" (v. 8). Even God, like an ordinary loving parent just cannot bear the thought of the imminent death of the nation God created and gave birth to. God was in pain and there was divine hesitancy to proceed with such punishment and desire not to destroy anymore God's people Ephraim. "For I am God and no mortal, the Holy one in your midst, and I will not come in wrath" (v. 9).

Hosea reveals the most distinct and unique character of God being Holy, that this unique Holiness of God is revealed most perfectly in God's remaining so full of compassion and pity even to a people who deserves to be punished and even destroyed. This God feels what it feels like to suffer destruction in the hands of a foreign tormentor.

God knows and feels the pain of being uprooted from one's homeland, from the security of one's home and then brought to a completely strange land, powerless, nameless as a people. God always intends for God's people to live the lives intended for them right at the very beginning, a people living in freedom, abundance, stability, security, with joy and a sense of fulfillment under the protection of their covenant God.

This divine will of God continues to be God's will for all other peoples. God desires nothing but the good of everyone and of all creation. It is never God's intention to punish and destroy a people and their world whom God had so lovingly created and blessed. God will be in pain seeing the disastrous consequences of people's foolish and irresponsible and unjust ways. This is a most amazing truth about our God which should always drive us towards a life of humility, repentance and continuing commitment to share this powerful and truly transforming good news.

The narrative in Matthew 2:13-23 is about the escape of the family of Jesus from Judea to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. But they returned to Nazareth right after the death of the king. This story may be paralleled by the story of the massacre of the Israelite babies during their time in Egypt where Moses was protected by escaping through the basket and the river thus reaching the palace of the Egyptian princess who raised him until such time when he decided to return to his Israelite roots. Matthew also used other prophetic books to point the validity of Jesus' action to fulfill the necessary narrative of a Savior. Herod carried out an evil and unwelcoming action to the One who is now seen and interpreted by the church community as the Messiah long awaited by the Jews; the one who was to bring forth change and a challenge to the social and cultural values of the Roman empire. Herod's action represented a hostile reaction to those who are about to fulfill the task of a Messiah who had been awaited for so long by the people; to serve and proclaim their liberation and salvation.

In this story, we see the real agenda of those who are in power and who always desire to stay in power so that they can continue enjoying the perks and prerogatives of their power while abusing and exploiting to the hilt their own people. They will resort to all means, even the most



violent ones just to try to eliminate those who will represent an alternative order and who will proclaim and witness to an alternative message. This story, rooted also in the story of Moses and the Exodus, will provide the template for the kind of mission and ministry that Jesus will carry out in the name of God who wills nothing but the liberation and transformation of God's people and the rest of creation. This is the mission for which he will also lay down his life, for which he will also be experiencing the most extreme of pain and suffering just like His loving Father in heaven.

### **Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users**

In Greek drama, the plot takes a sudden twist through the operation of a *deus ex machina* whereby a totally unconnected event descends from above in order to bring a resolution to an otherwise insolvable situation. This is not how God's messiah accomplishes his mission. The messiah must face human obstacles and finds ways of overcoming them through human efforts without the benefit of a *deus ex machina*. The evil King Herod could have nipped in the bud Jesus' mission if not for the wily Wise Men whose warning persuaded Joseph to hurriedly escape to Egypt. The road to the kingdom of God is not smooth and straight for easy travel. There are always Herods and other dark forces that are opposed to God's reign of justice and will not spare any means to thwart God's plan. God works out our salvation by partnering with us under the conditions of freedom taking into account our weaknesses and limitations. There are no magical shortcuts to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Fanatical beliefs that God's warriors against evil are invincible would only give the Herods of history opportunity to decimate the forces of righteousness.

In partnering with God to establish a reign of justice via the conquest of the reign of wickedness, we grow in wisdom, courage and strength even as we mature in the faith and grow in holiness. This is the way by which we shed off the outer layer of wickedness to the end that we may shine forth with the brightness of the new life. This kind of change is a prefiguration of the resurrection that is yet to come.

#### **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. begin to tell the circumstances surrounding the flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to Egypt;
2. begin to explain why the family hurriedly left for Egypt;
3. explain how God helped the family escape from Herod; and
4. tell how to listen to God through parents, teachers, and other significant people.

**II. Concept:** The family took Jesus to Egypt to escape from Herod.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (NRSV), song chart, crayons, pencils, scissors, cartolina, pentel pens, ballpens

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet each child with a smile and a welcoming heart. it is important to start the lesson with a warm and caring atmosphere.
2. Opening prayer: To be led by a child (pre-assigned)

3. Opening songs:

"What a Mighty God"

O what a mighty God we serve 4x  
O let us sing and praise the Lord 4x  
O let us shout and praise the Lord 4x  
O let us dance and praise the Lord 4x  
O let us jump and praise the Lord 4x

"O What a Great, Big, Wonderful God"

What a great, big, wonderful God, a great, big, wonderful God  
A God who is always near to us guiding and protecting us.  
A great, big, wonderful God.

"God is so Good"

God is so good, God is so good.  
God is good to me.  
God answers prayers (thrice), God is good to me.

#### B. Getting Ready

Let the class do a guided game: "Message Relay"

1. Say: "It is good to start the morning right and to say what is right. Today, let us learn and appreciate the importance of listening and understanding messages."
2. Process: Prepare messages like:
  - a. God loves you all the time.
  - b. Jesus is our Savior.
  - c. Beloved, let us love one another.
  - d. We have a great big wonderful God.
  - e. God answers our prayers.
3. Divide the children into two teams and let them form one line each.
4. Give the message to the first player. Then, she/he passes it to the next player behind her/him without looking back and turning around. When the message reaches the last player, the player runs to the teacher and shouts the message. It should be the exact words of the message. The first team to complete the most number of accurate messages wins the game.

5. Talk time: Have the learners reflect on the activity. Ask: What were you feeling when you were passing the message on to the person next to you? Why is it important to pass the correct message?

### C. Learning Time

1. Motivation: Say: "In our story today, listen well because Joseph, the father of Jesus, received a message that is long and important. Find out who delivered this message.
2. Tell the story.

#### **Escape to Egypt, Home to Nazareth**

A long time ago, there was a mean king named Herod who lived in Egypt. Herod, the king, wanted to have the child Jesus dead.

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in his sleep and said, "Herod will be looking for the child in order to kill him. So get up! Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you to leave."

Joseph got up, took the child Jesus and Mary, and left in the night!

When Herod heard about the escape of Joseph and his family, Herod gave orders to kill all the Jewish boys who were two years old and younger. Every parent cried for their slain son and refused to be comforted for the untimely death.

Joseph heeded the message and obeyed. Jesus was safe!

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and said, "Get up! Take the child and his mother and go back to the land of Israel.

But Joseph was a wise father; he and his family did not return to their place in the province of Galilee. Instead, he made his home in his town named Nazareth.

### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Ask the following questions:

- a. Who gave the message to Joseph? (The angel of the Lord)
- b. What was the long message? (That Joseph was to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt to escape Herod who wanted Jesus dead)
- c. How did Joseph obey? (He, Mary and Child Jesus left right away.)
- d. What was Herod's order? (to kill all the Jewish boys two years old and younger)
- e. What happened after Herod's death? (Joseph, Mary and Jesus settle down in Nazareth.)

#### **For YE**

2. Call on a pupil to retell one part. Guide each learner by giving cues using these sentence stems:

In the beginning, \_\_\_\_\_

Then, \_\_\_\_\_

But, \_\_\_\_\_

After that, \_\_\_\_\_  
 In the end, \_\_\_\_\_

### E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How did God keep Jesus safe from the mean King Herod? (God sent an angel to deliver the message to Joseph in his dreams.) How does God keep us safe from harm? (We listen to God through our parents, teachers, grandparents and other people who show us God's way. We obey them so we could be out of harm's way.)

### F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. **For N/K:** "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt," (Matthew 2:13)  
**For YE:** "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel." (Matthew 2:30)
2. Say: We will play a game called "God Says...". This is played the way the game Simon Says is played. You need to listen carefully. Follow the instruction if it starts with "God Says..." and do not follow the instruction if you do not hear "God Says..."  
 Practice: God says, "Take one step forward." (Pupils follow.) "Step backward." (Pupils must not follow.) (Instructions may include: Form a line, hug a classmate, sit on the floor, hold hands, etc.)
3. **For YE:** Declare the Truth: Say: "Every day, God is always with us. We just need to listen carefully to God's message for us. The older people around us help us understand what God says to us. Like what Joseph did in the story, we have to obey as well." Tell the class to write one promise they can do to show they can follow God. The teacher will prepare a basket where the children can put their promises.

### G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse,
2. **For YE:** Reading of the promises to follow God Call on the learners and ask them to read their promise and offer it to the altar.
3. Offering: "Salamat Sa Iyo"
4. Closing song: "God Made Every Part of Me"
5. Closing prayer: Dear God thank for everything. Thank you for teaching us always. Thank you for leading us. We pray for your continuous guidance. As we offer our footprints of obedience helped us to live out our promises. Amen.

January 28, 2018

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

**John the Baptizer: Preparing the Way of the Lord**

*Old Testament:*

**Isaiah 40:3-5** (NRSV)

<sup>3</sup>A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

*New Testament:*

**Luke 3:1-20** (NRSV)

The Proclamation of John the Baptizer

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, <sup>2</sup>during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, <sup>4</sup>as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. <sup>5</sup>Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; <sup>6</sup> and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." <sup>7</sup>John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>9</sup>Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.' <sup>10</sup>And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' <sup>11</sup>In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' <sup>12</sup>Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' <sup>13</sup>He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' <sup>14</sup>Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.' <sup>15</sup>As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup>John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup>His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." <sup>18</sup>So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. <sup>19</sup>But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done,

<sup>20</sup>added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

**General Concept: Like John the Baptizer preparing the way of the Lord, the church prepares the world for the coming of the Kingdom.**

**Key Concepts, N/K/YE: John the Baptizer prepares for the Lord.**

### ***Exegesis of the Biblical References***

This prophetic proclamation is a clear announcement of the coming liberation work of God among the people who were in exile and captives of the imperial rule of Babylon. The intention of the prophetic voice is to announce a radically new act of God that is about to take place in the history of God's people. God has now decided to end their captivity and bring them back to their homeland. But in bringing this about God will now be working through a rather unexpected historical agent to become His instrument to liberate the captives in Babylon.

The Persians, led by king Cyrus is now considered as that historical instrument of God who will prepare the way of the Lord for the restoration of God's people in their homeland. The signs are now clearly manifesting such as the continuing stream of victories that Cyrus has already achieved on the way to becoming the new imperial power. His military achievements are now pointing to the imminent collapse and destruction of the once mighty Babylonian empire (cf. Is. 41:2-4, 25; 45:1-3).

Clearly, this prophetic proclamation is a sign of hope to those who are held captives. It is a clear sign of God's working out the liberation of God's people right through the events of history and using concrete and powerful but unexpected historical agents. This act is very consistent with the nature of their God who is also their liberator in the time of their slavery in Egypt and now in their captivity in Babylon. It also echoes the voice of the prophets that God is with those who are in need of salvation and freedom from whatever captivity they may be suffering from. Luke presents a clear and vivid picture of a prophet, John the Baptizer. Being a cousin of Jesus, he is presented with his being part of Israel not just by blood but by the faith tradition that is rooted in the Mosaic laws and interpretation (vv.10-14). John the Baptizer serves as the preparation or prelude to the Messiah's arrival. This may be parallel to the Isaiah account in using an instrument to prepare the way. In the case of Isaiah, it is the Persians led by Cyrus, but in the case of our Lukan text which reveals a context where the Judean community is completely dominated and ruled by the Roman Empire through local puppets such as Herod, it is John the Baptizer. The preparation also gives an abstract of what Jesus will do in his public ministry. This becomes a message to the Church to prepare the way of Jesus Christ in the same way that John has reminded his own people what to do. This is exactly what the Church is also being asked to do.

### ***Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users***

God called John the Baptizer to prepare for Jesus ministry. The message of repentance that John preached was to prepare the people for the imminent coming of the kingdom of God. Following John the Baptizer's execution, Jesus came out to the public preaching exactly the same message. But Jesus' message wasn't simply a repeat of John's but only to introduce himself to the public scene. In relation to the message of repentance and the imminent arrival of the kingdom, Jesus life, work and crucifixion embodied God's judgment as well as his offer of salvation.

It can be said that even if the Lord would return today to establish God's kingdom, the people may not want to enter for lack of understanding and appreciation of it. This is illustrated in the experience of the Hebrew people during the Exodus. Fresh out from Egypt, they were worshippers of other gods. When Moses offered to them a new God by the name of Yahweh, at one crucial point in the journey they created a golden calf representing the old religions. It took the whole of forty years to mold a new community of faith to occupy Canaan.

The world needs to be prepared for Christ's return as judge so that everyone would be fit to inherit the kingdom. Otherwise, the world would in turn judge him as a harsh and unforgiving judge instead of a merciful savior. The church does not rejoice when a single soul is lost and thrown to eternal condemnation. Like Jesus, it rejoices when a sinner returns to the Lord to seek his forgiveness. It is the mission of the church to preach the message of repentance in order to prepare the people for the coming of the kingdom. Since no one knows when it will happen, every moment is a time for preparation.

One must also be prepared to believe and follow Jesus. The quick-fix, instant brand of evangelism negates the importance of preparation. During the period of the ancient church, proselytes or candidates for baptism underwent a process of preparation that included instruction in the new faith, a new ethics and responsible membership in the church. Protestant Reformer Martin Luther spoke about the harshness of the law like hammer blows to break a heart hardened by sin before grace may work out its benefits. A form of evangelism that uses gimmickry and psychological manipulation in fact does violence to the gospel. Let the gospel find in a person a ready and compliant heart.

### **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. identify who John the Baptizer is;
2. describe the work of John as the one who prepares for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and
3. choose people at home who talk about the Lord.

**II. Concept:** John the Baptizer prepares for the Lord.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (NRSV), song chart, four-panel storybook about the life of John the Baptizer, crayons, scissors

### **III. Learning Experiences**

*A. Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time: Greet the children and have them greet each other.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear Lord, thank you for another Sunday. Help us to welcome each other as we learn and work together. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.
3. Opening songs:

"Kumusta Ka"

Kumusta ka? Halina't magsaya  
Pumalakpak, pumalakpak ituro ang paa  
Padyak sa kanan, padyak sa kaliwa,  
Umikot ka 2x humanap ng iba

"We will Walk"

We will walk to the left, we will walk to the right, we will walk,  
We will walk and we'll walk alright,  
With a heel and a toe and a half way around  
With a heel and a toe and a new friend found  
We are travelling in this world, we are on our way to heaven  
And together we'll be there so let us praise the Lord.  
Right hand, left hand, right foot, left foot, turn around, sit down

*B. Getting Ready*

1. Sharing: Have the learners share the names of their parents. Have them say how old their parents are.

*C. Learning Time*

1. Direct learners to the story: Say that in the Bible story for the day, they will find out about a character who was born to parents who were as old as their grandparents.
2. Tell the following story. (Refer to the activity sheets. Convert the pages into a four-panel story book.)

**Meet John, the Baptizer**

The Angel Gabriel visits Zechariah. The angel tells him that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a son. They are to name him John. Zechariah and Elizabeth are already old. But they know that only God could make that happen.

John grows and stays up in the desert of Judea. He eats locusts and honey. He wears clothes made of animal skins. He wears a leather belt.

John is a good man. He loves and obeys God. His job is to make people ready for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

John goes down to the Jordan River and preaches by the water. Crowds of people love to listen to his message. He tells them to repent. He wants them to be sorry for the wrong



things they have done and not to do these again. "That way," he says, "people are prepared to listen to and obey Jesus."

Then, John baptizes people who repent from their sins.

#### *D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

1. Artwork: For the **NK** group, tell the children to color the picture of John the Baptizer. For the **YE** group, ask them to paste indigenous materials on the clothes of John and color the food he eats.
2. Talk about the story. Using the colored picture of John the Baptizer, have the pupils share about the following:
3. Ask these questions.
  - a. Who are the parents of John? (Elizabeth and Zechariah)
  - b. What did John the Baptizer do? (John preached the coming of the Messiah.)
  - c. What should the people do before the coming of the Messiah? (People must repent or to stop doing bad and start doing good)
  - d. What did John the Baptizer do to the people who repented from their sins? (He baptized them with water)

#### *E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: *How can we prepare the way of the Lord like what John the Baptizer did?*

#### *F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. *Class Theater: Act and Repent!*: Divide the class into two teams. One team can act out a bad behavior such as throwing toys, grabbing the things of others, hurting a playmate like kicking or punching (acting-out only please) or calling names. Then, the teacher says, "Repent!" The other team acts out the behavior after repentance.
2. After the activity, have the class realize that a repentant heart is a heart that is ready to follow Jesus.

#### *G. Closing Worship*

1. Memory Verse: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (Luke 3:4b)
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "John the Baptizer Preached"
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, our Parent, teach us to be like John the Baptizer who prepared the way for the Lord. Help us to do good always and change our bad ways, In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

February 4, 2018

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

**The Emergence of Jesus' Christhood**

*Old Testament:*

**Isaiah 11:1-5 (NRSV)**

## The Peaceful Kingdom

<sup>1</sup>A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

<sup>2</sup>The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. <sup>3</sup>His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; <sup>4</sup>but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

<sup>5</sup>Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

*New Testament:***Matthew 16:13-16, 4:1-11 (NRSV)**

## Peter's Declaration about Jesus

<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' <sup>14</sup>And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup>He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

## The Temptation of Jesus

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." <sup>4</sup>But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" <sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>saying to him, "if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you', and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; <sup>9</sup>and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" <sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

**General Concept: Reflecting on his religious heritage and personal history, Jesus realizes his being Christ and his messianic destiny.**

**Key Concepts, N/K/YE: Jesus is the Messiah.**

**Exegesis of the Biblical References**

The account is a reflection written by the prophet during Israel's (Northern Kingdom) time of

exile to Assyria where the prophet witnessed the northerners' hardship, suffering and much agony, with the exiled ruling elite of Samaria longing for their land while hopelessly living in a foreign land. The writer discerns in this tragedy of the Northern Kingdom a divine warning coming also to the people and rulers of the Southern Kingdom in Judah who were living with much air of confidence and sense of assurance regarding their future. The prophet wanted his own people to be more conscious of their covenant responsibility. The only way for the people to remain secure is for them to humbly remember what God has done for them in the past and in the midst of present challenges, to look forward to the savior who will emerge to restore Israel's glory. The writer understands the need for the people to reaffirm the historical roots that trace their lineage to the stump of Jesse, the father of David to whom God made a promise that his descendants will rule forever to establish justice and peace all over the land. Holding on with faith and trust in this historic past as the paradigm for what will yet come in the near future is the source of assurance that God will continue to act to save and uphold God's people even in the face of the greatest crisis they may be facing both in the present and in the future.

In the Gospel texts, Jesus was asking his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" This implies that Jesus has not yet assumed his messianic identity. Jesus wanted to confirm from the persons whom he expected to know him the most who they think he is. The question needed to be raised because his claim as the messiah has always been challenged and tainted with doubts even after the many miracles he displayed because of his personal history. In fact, the book of Matthew started with Jesus' genealogy tracing his roots to the Davidic lineage, precisely to respond to this kind of doubts and questions being raised about the real identity and roots of Jesus. Thus, the opening text of Matthew aims to present Jesus as the messianic "stump" described in Isaiah 11 who will bring salvation to the people. Peter's confession "You are the Christ" validates his messianic identity, affirming his messianic destiny.

The temptations of Jesus that came after his introduction as the Son of God during his baptism suggest the onset of his messianic journey. The emphasis now shifts from his personal history to his personal destiny as the messiah. Jesus overcoming his temptations show his capability and authority over all kinds of trials and ordeals that will confront him in his journey toward the fulfillment and realization of his messianic destiny.

Jesus' understanding of his messianic identity came from his many encounters with people and from various circumstances he engaged with in different times and places. Though his messianic nature is embedded in his being, his realization of the task he needed to undertake slowly unveiled in him as he witnessed different struggles of his people starting in his own hometown. His personal history and religious heritage helped him see what he needed to do that led to his realization of his messianic destiny allowing him to endure the temptations in the wilderness, persevering amidst persecutions and to stand firm in his mission as the messiah of God. All this points to him as the awaited savior, the remnant or the stump from the Davidic lineage that will give the people hope and restore the glory of their nation.

Peter's confession "You are the Christ" affirmed his messianic identity. Though Jesus'

messiahship did not require any affirmation yet he needed acknowledgment from his circle to complete his identity. After the affirmation of the disciples, they gradually began to understand the purpose and mission of Jesus as they learn and participate in his works and ministries. For this, the disciples later on were able as well to understand their own mission and realized their own destiny as they obey their master and Lord.

### ***Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users***

Jesus' messianic consciousness emerged gradually from experience. This is to say that it wasn't an idea that was implanted in Jesus right at his conception. Neither did Jesus just wake up one morning knowing that he was going to be God's messiah to save the world. Rather, it's likely that he went through a typical childhood in the specific context of his time and place, learned the traditions of his faith, took his place in society as a worker and family provider; saw what was going on around him, heard great tales about contemporary heroic figures and got involved in serious discussions and analysis with others about the situation, and weighed his various options carefully. He brooded over them through many nights and at the end he made up his mind: he was going to leave home to become an itinerant preacher of the kingdom of God as John the Baptist was. He would start in his home town of Nazareth. It was a modest start and may have raised only a few eyebrows. The day that sealed Jesus' destiny passed largely unnoticed even by his own family and town mates.

The temptation in the wilderness may have been his moment of truth. As in Job, Satan acts as the Tempter or Teaser who seeks to win Jesus' loyalty in exchange for the things that every patriotic and devout Jew aspires for — the power to perform miracles, sovereign authority over kingdoms and physical invincibility. With all these, one can truly be Israel's liberator to restore David's kingdom in all its glory. Of course, the Devil cannot be trusted to be true to his promise but many a good man with the noblest desires are willing to parley with the Devil for a higher cause. But Jesus is not merely a good man. He is the messiah whose mission is from God. Discarding the better side of reason, he chooses to be loyal to God — to hell with the Devil!

But it's one thing to think of oneself as messiah; it's another thing to be recognized as such. In order for him to complete his messianic identity he needed to be confirmed by his followers. Jesus started like John the Baptist or the prophet Elijah when he selected and called the disciples. But as they continued to learn from Jesus and participated in his work, a new awareness came upon them. They saw him cut a different figure never revealed to them before. Peter's confession came out from a vague intimation that dawned into a decisive declaration: "You are the Christ!" That may have served as a pact that bound the disciples with Jesus in a great adventure of faith.

### **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 is Christ, the Messiah;
2. express one's thanks to Jesus who delivers his people from their sins and suffering; and
3. participate in performing activities that show gratitude to God.

**II. Concept:** Jesus is Christ, the Messiah.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), pictures of people in need, crayons, heart-shaped cards with the lettering, "Thank You Jesus for Being Our Messiah!", song chart

To the teacher: Pray, meditate and review your lesson. Make your classroom child-friendly, safe, clean, and conducive for learning.

**III. Learning Experiences****A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners with your charming smile and your big warm hug.
2. Opening prayer in song: "Thank You, Jesus" (by Rev. Goel B. Bagundol, to the tune of "Where is Thumbkin?")

Thank you, Jesus, Thank you, Jesus for today, for today.

For the gift of friendship (twice), for loving us, for loving us.

3. Singing Time: "Yes, I Want to be Like Jesus" (by Rev. Goel B. Bagundol, to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It")

If you want to be like Jesus, help a friend (twice).

To people who are needy, do reach out and give your help

If you want to be like Jesus, help your friend.

(Replace the word *help* with *hug* or *love*.)

**B. Getting Ready**

1. Before teaching the song, prepare pictures of what Jesus did (healing the sick, making blind see, giving food to the hungry, blessing children). Tell the class to look at the pictures displayed on the classroom walls. Ask: "What do you see on the wall?" (We see pictures of Jesus doing many things.)
2. Teach the song "Jesus Went About Doing Good" (by Lois Horton Young, 1954)  
Jesus went about doing good, the Bible tells me so.  
He healed the sick and healed the blind  
To little children He was kind.  
He gave some hungry people food  
He said to all, "Be kind and good."  
Jesus went about doing good, the Bible tells me so.

**C. Learning Time**

1. Tell the class that in this lesson, they will find out with what names the people called Jesus. Ask them to listen to the story carefully.
2. Tell the story.

"You Are the Messiah" (Based on Matthew 16:13-16)

Jesus travels with his disciples in doing good for the people.

Jesus asked his friends, "Who do people say that I am?"

"Some say that you are John the Baptist. Others say you are Elijah," they said.

"But who do you say that I am?" asked Jesus.

Peter replied, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

Jesus said, "Blessed are you Peter. No one told you that. My Father in Heaven told you. You are Peter. On this rock I will build my church and hell will not conquer it.

Then Jesus told his friends not to tell anyone who he was just yet.

#### *D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

1. Discuss the story. Ask these questions.
  - a. What did Jesus ask his friends? ("Who do people say that I am?")
  - b. What did Jesus ask his disciples? ("But who do people say that I am?")
  - c. What did the other disciples answer? ("Some say that you are John the Baptist. Others say you are Elijah.")
  - d. What did Peter answer? ("You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.")
  - e. How did Peter call Jesus? (Messiah)
2. Tell the class to sing again the song "Jesus Went About Doing Good". Ask the class for the things Jesus did. (Jesus made the blind to see. Jesus welcomed children and blessed them. Jesus gave food to the hungry. Jesus healed the lame and made them walk.)

#### *E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Say: "In our story, we learn that Jesus is the Messiah. The word Messiah means Christ." Ask: What is another name for Messiah? Can we say that Jesus is the Christ and he is our Messiah? Why or why not?

#### *F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Teach the memory verse: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)
2. Creative activity **for the N/K**: *Love Card*. Let the learners color the prepared heart-shaped card with the wordings, "Thank You Jesus for Being Our Messiah!" Creative activity **for the YE**: *Love Card*. Let the learners make their own card that says, "Thank You Jesus for Being Our Messiah!"

#### *G. Closing Worship*

1. Let the class recite the memory verse.
2. Offering: Put a basket offering at the center and instruct the children to bring their offering and their "Thank You Jesus Card" as they sing together the following song:  
"We're Giving Because We Love Jesus"  
We're giving, we're giving because we love Jesus.  
We're giving, we're giving because we love Him.
3. Closing songs: Request the children to gather around and hold hands while singing "Yes! I Want to be Like Jesus" and "Jesus Went About Doing Good"
4. Closing prayer: "Our loving parent God, thank you for giving us your blessings. Let our offerings be of help to those who are in need. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

5. Goodbye song: "Our Sunday School Is Over" (by Rev. Goel B. Bagundol)  
Our Sunday school is over, it's time to go  
May the blessing of our God be with us all.  
May we walk together in love and trust  
Pleasing God in work, in thought, in everything we do.



February 11, 2018

Transfiguration Sunday

***Moses, the Lawgiver and Elijah, the Prophet***

Old Testament:

**Exodus 19:3-6** (NRSV)

<sup>3</sup>Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 'Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup>but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.'

New Testament:

**Luke 9:28-36** (NRSV)

The Transfiguration

<sup>28</sup>Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup>And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup>Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him.

<sup>31</sup>They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup>Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup>While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.

<sup>35</sup>Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' <sup>36</sup>When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

General Concept: **Moses and Elijah representing the Law and the Prophets point to Jesus as the Messiah.**

Key Concepts, N/K/YE: **Moses and Elijah prove that Jesus is the Messiah.**

***Exegesis of the Biblical References***

The text is part of the whole wilderness journey experience of the Israelites after God freed them from slavery in Egypt. This is the third month of their journey in the wilderness traveling toward the Promised Land. After a long journey the Israelites reached the desert of Mt. Sinai and camped there



while Moses went up to the mountain to meet God who called him. There, on top of the mountain Moses encountered God and received the instruction and God's plan to establish a covenant with them. But, God's covenant plan with Israel is conditional. It will require the people's decision to fully obey God and in return they will become God's chosen people, God's treasured possession. God's relationship with Israel is premised on a big "if": "If you obey my voice and keep my covenant", only then shall they be considered as God's special, treasured possession. Disobedience and rejection of God's laws and instructions will only result in the negation of this relationship with its own disastrous consequences. God's covenant then with the Israelites is sealed and proclaimed to the people in the succeeding chapter through Moses who acted as the lawgiver. First, he presented to the people the 10 commandments—the basic instructions that will govern and guide the Israelites in their daily living as a community of God's liberated people. These laws along with the rest of the covenant laws are instructions and core teachings that will provide the framework for the establishment of a truly liberated community, distinct and set apart from all the other nations that surround them. Their life as a community will be a witness, a sign of an alternative way of life that should be lived by a people liberated and set free by God for generations to come and throughout their history.

Like Moses, Jesus and his disciples encountered God in the mountain. But eight days prior to that experience there were a series of events in which Jesus displayed marvelous works of healing. It is then followed by the confession of Peter that Jesus is "The Christ of God." The transfiguration account of Jesus who was standing with Moses and Elijah witnessed by his disciples serves as the final revelation of Jesus' true identity as the messiah. This is then succeeded by Jesus teachings on the cost of following him.

The 10 commandments that Moses received in Mt. Sinai has become the guiding principle that both judges and uplifts the actions of the Jewish people. For centuries, it has become the basis of the prophets like Elijah in proclaiming what is right and unacceptable in the eyes of God. All throughout the history of the Jews, the law or the Torah served as the foundation on who will receive God's blessing and punishment. Moreover, the authority of the Torah continues to define who is righteous, who is cursed even until the time of Jesus.

The presence of Moses and Elijah in the transfiguration account symbolizes the convergence and unification of the authority of the law and the message of God in Jesus as the messiah. Jesus now becomes the authority and model of true righteousness and in him comes the message that brings people to God. However, the transfiguration account of Jesus should not be interpreted as Jesus departing from the old faith nor the authority of the Torah, instead it serves as a reminder to believers not to ignore the abiding authority and value of the Old Testament because Jesus himself was nurtured by the old faith. He was nurtured in the traditions of the Torah and the Torah continues to provide guidance and wisdom that the church needs even today in discerning the truth, what is right and wrong and knowing what is really acceptable to God.

Meanwhile, the gospel of Jesus presents a rather opposite view and interpretation from the Law of Moses. Contrary to the assumptions of the old faith, Jesus highlights faith or loyalty to the God who gave the Torah as the source of God's grace and salvation. Salvation, not even

righteousness can be experienced in the literal obedience to the law. It still provides the basic principles by which an alternative community of freedom and justice may be established by the followers of Jesus. Jesus however liberates the people from the chains of the old faith and laws that has made people assume that they can gain favor from God through their strict observance and literal obedience to their provisions when in fact, they are supposed to be undertaken only as a matter of joyful and thankful response of the people for what God has already done for them.

The Transfiguration of Jesus depicts transformation in the presence of Moses and Elijah whose images fade while Jesus remained, a transition from the old, enslaving assumptions of the law towards the gospel of Jesus which now embodies the very essence and spirit of such law. With Jesus embodying in himself the fullness of the law as a gift of God's grace, the community of disciples can still continue establishing the kind of alternative community of freedom and love which had been envisioned and the very goal of the law itself.

### ***Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users***

In the Transfiguration, Jesus let some disciples see a preview of his resurrection. Of course, they would not understand it but that occasion should help them prepare for his death and resurrection. The appearance of Moses and Elijah at Jesus' side and their subsequent disappearance leaving Jesus standing alone, symbolize the paradoxical nature of the Christian faith: it emerges from the womb of Judaism and at the same time opposed to it in a most fundamental way.

The Hebrew Bible was adopted and made part of the Christian Scriptures, referred to as the Old/Older Testament. The church affirmed that the gospel of Jesus Christ stood out from the Jewish ground. The Law and the Prophets constitute its pre-history, so to speak. But the faith of the Old Testament is more than pre-history. It continues to illumine and guide the church towards breaking new grounds for the understanding of the gospel. It also helps set the boundaries of interpretation that would keep the church from falling into errors that would taint the purity of the gospel. The old faith in which Jesus was nurtured has served and continues to serve the church as the gospel's midwife, nurse, mentor and critic, companion and guardian.

On the other hand and at the same time, the gospel of Jesus Christ stood out opposite the Jewish faith. It subverts the Law of Moses by positing God's grace through faith rather than compliance to the law that brings salvation. The burden of saving shifts radically from the sinner to God. It must be stated, though, that the essence of the gospel was already anticipated by the Old Testament, notably Hosea and Jeremiah. A case can be made that it was already there hidden somewhere in the Law but got lost in the complex labyrinth of legalistic interpretations. Nevertheless, the gospel of Jesus Christ cuts through what has become a solid wall that has kept people away from God. God's final word is, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" as Moses and Elijah fade away.

### **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. identify Moses and Elijah;
2. describe Moses as the Lawgiver and Elijah as the prophet; and
3. explain that both Moses and Elijah point to Jesus as the Messiah.

**II. Concept:** Moses and Elijah prove that Jesus is the Messiah.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (NRSV, 1989), activity sheets, song chart, 3 plates: one with kalamansi, one with chocolate and one with bread; crayons, pencils

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Welcome the children warmly. Tap their shoulders as you bid "kumusta" or how are you.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear Jesus, thank you for this Sunday. Thank you for bringing us together to this Sunday school, to learn, to grow, to play and to make a craft in your name. Bless us with your presence. Amen."
3. Opening songs: Greeting songs  
 "Rise and Shine"  
 Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory (thrice).  
 Children of the Lord  
 "He's my Rock"  
 He's my rock, my sword, my shield  
 He's the mirror in the middle of the wind  
 He's the Lily of the Valley, He's the brightest shining star  
 I don't care what people say, I got on my knees and pray  
 I'm gonna sing until my Jesus comes again.

#### B. Getting Ready

1. Prepare three plates. On the first plate, put a kalamansi, on the second plate, put a chocolate candy, and on the third plate, a piece of bread. Divide the class into three groups. Provide each group with any one of these plates. Tell each group to observe (look, smell and taste) each object.
2. Tell each group to share their observations such as: The kalamansi is sour. It is green. It is hard. The chocolate candy is sweet. The bread is soft, It tastes good)
3. Say: "You're all right. You have described each object after you have seen, touched and tasted each."

#### C. Learning Time

1. Say: "Let's hear a story about Jesus. As we listen to it, we will know and describe the

- changes that happened to him."  
2. Tell the story.

### Jesus Transfigures

(Based on Luke 9:28-36)

Jesus goes up to the mountain to pray. Peter, John and James are with Jesus. When they reach the mountain top, the disciples sleep because they are tired.

As Jesus prays, his face changes and his clothes become dazzling white. Jesus transfigures.

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appear beside Jesus. Both Moses and Elijah have been long dead. They talk about Jesus' mission in Jerusalem to fulfill God's will.

Peter and the other disciples wake up to see what happens to Jesus. They see **Jesus'** glory and the two men who are standing with Him.

After talking to Jesus, the two men leave Him. Right away, Peter stands up and says to Jesus, "Oh Teacher, how good it is that we are here! We can build three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

While Peter is still talking, a great cloud appears and covers with them. The disciples are afraid as the cloud comes over them. Then, they hear a voice from the cloud saying: "This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him."

Then, there's silence. The place becomes clear. Jesus is all by himself.

When the disciples go down from the mountain, they did not tell to anyone in those days about what they had seen.

#### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions.

##### For N/K

1. Who are the characters of the story? (Jesus, Peter, John, James, Moses, Elijah)
2. What happened when Jesus was praying on the mountain? Check the correct pictures.
  - a. The face of Jesus changed. His clothes became white.
  - b. Jesus cried.
3. Who appeared to Jesus? (Moses and Elijah)
4. What did they hear? ("This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him.")

##### For YE

1. Who are the characters of the story? (Jesus, Peter, John, James, Moses, Elijah)
2. What happened when Jesus was praying on the mountain? Check the correct picture.

- a. Jesus transfigured when his face changed and his clothes became white.
- b. Jesus cried while he was praying alone.
3. Who appeared to Jesus? (Moses and Elijah)
4. What did they hear? ("This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him.")
5. Who are Moses and Elijah? (Moses is the lawgiver. Elijah is a prophet.)
6. What did they talk to Jesus? (Jesus will soon fulfill God's purpose by dying in Jerusalem.)

*E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: "Do you agree that Moses and Elijah prove that Jesus is the Messiah?"

*F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Teach the memory verse: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Luke 9:35b)
  2. Lead the class to realize that Moses and Elijah appeared to show that Jesus is about to fulfill his mission on earth. Then ask the children what they can do to show our thankfulness for Jesus who came to die for our sins.
  3. **For N/K:** Show and Tell. Before this activity, help the pupils prepare shining hearts (heart-shaped silver foil with glitters), diamonds and circles. Let the class cover the picture of Jesus with shining hearts, the picture of Moses with diamonds and the picture of Elijah with circles.
- For YE:** Tell the class to draw a garden scene with a big sun and write one way that they can shine for Jesus.

*G. Closing Worship*

1. Let the children recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam"
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we thank you that you came to us to love us. Help us to show love for you by doing what is right. Help us to shine for you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."