



Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

February 18, 2018

1st Sunday in Lent

Jesus as the Suffering Messiah*Old Testament:* Isaiah 53:1-12 (NRSV)

¹Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ²For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. ⁴Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. ⁹They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

¹²Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

New Testament: Matthew 16:21-23 (NRSV)**Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection**

²¹From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' ²³But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

General Concept: Jesus embraced his destiny as a suffering Messiah.**Key Concepts N/K/YE: Jesus is our helper.****Exegesis of the Biblical References**

Isaiah 53 is one of the four "Servant Songs" in which the prophet describes how God will

redeem Israel through the suffering servant. It portrays the arrival of a kind of messiah who will challenge the existing powers that dominate, oppress and humiliate the Israelite people. Here, the suffering messiah though not identified by the writer is suffering and afflicted. But he will become God's instrument to exalt and restore Israel's glory. However, he will be the kind of messiah that confronts rejection and endure torment for a greater cause in a manner contrary to the usual ways of the world which is to conquer and impose change through military and political power and authority. The messiah however will carry on with his mission through silence and nonviolence, and even in his acceptance of suffering and death. This is the new image of messiah that will now define the mission and ministry of Jesus as the messiah sent by God.

After being affirmed by Peter as the Christ, Jesus now prepares for the next phase of his destiny, his eventual death. Here, Jesus not only anticipates his suffering in the hands of the worldly power, but also prepares his disciples by explaining and describing to them what will happen to him in the days to come. Peter's reaction to Jesus' attitude of embracing his forthcoming suffering symbolizes the typical reaction of the world, a reaction contrary to how God works. Jesus' rebuking Peter suggests opposition and defiance of God's unique redemptive plan through Jesus and his own adherence to the usual ways of the world. Jesus reveals the human's incapability to understand this new mystery in God's ways.

Jesus continued his ministry after he predicted his death and suffering proclaiming a sort of reversal theology which suggests opposition to the norms of the world. Jesus now use opposing illustrations in his teachings that signify contradictions in meaning with disorienting implications for one party but empowerment for the other such as the last becoming the first, adults becoming a child, and the rich not inheriting the kingdom but the poor among other examples.

The suffering servant described by Isaiah who underwent many forms of misery to bring redemption and restoration to the people in a way reflected how Jesus understood his destiny. Both the suffering servant in Isaiah and Jesus embraced their destinies as suffering messiahs prepared to undertake all the gruesome challenges for the good of the people. In addition, both intend to create a conflict highlighting the differences between the worldly ways and that of God's ways. Furthermore, Jesus shares similar view with the suffering servant who disregard the option of conquering adversaries by force to fulfill his mission. Rather Jesus mirrored the suffering servant's full reliance on God's power despite the great physical, emotional and spiritual demands involved in the process of liberating the people. Jesus took upon himself the identity of a suffering messiah as his act of total obedience to God's will and full dependence on God's righteousness.

Early Christians point to Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecy because of the manner he gave his life for the people. Though this has been debated, we cannot deny that Jesus reflects the description of Isaiah's suffering servant. Moreover, whether Jesus is the expected messiah long waited by the Jews to restore their nation and redeem them from the Roman rule or not, Jesus has successfully overcome the ways of the world and proved that God's ways is the ideal way even how seemingly contradictory, absurd and difficult it may appear to be.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

In his time, the traditional image of God's anointed, that is, messiah, is that of a conquering hero

like King David. It was this kind of messiah that the disciples expected Jesus to be. But Jesus was not a populist political leader whose aim was to please the crowd in order to keep their loyalty. As they drew closer to Jerusalem he intimated to the disciples that he was going to suffer in the hands of wicked men, but even his most trusted disciple, Peter, didn't get it and rebuked him. At that point, the notion of a suffering messiah has not appeared on their horizon.

Jesus didn't invent the idea of a suffering messiah. He was acquainted with what may be considered a marginal concept of a suffering servant of Yahweh in the hind portion of the Book of Isaiah which scholars today refer to as Deutero- or II Isaiah. Here, it's not by fiat of conquest but by virtue of the affliction suffered by the Lord's servant that Israel may obtain redemption. Jesus rejected the dominant or mainstream view of a conquering messiah as he saw himself fulfilling the role of a sacrificial lamb being dramatically played out by an obscure and mysterious messiah.

In his mind, Jesus realized that his journey to Jerusalem was not an entrance of a king seeking to reclaim his crown but an act of total defiance and provocation to the powers of the authorities. In this, he wished to bring about the ultimate confrontation between the powers of Rome and Jerusalem and the righteousness of God. Either the authorities would respond by crucifying him or God would bring down the heavenly forces to scatter his enemies and right then and there establish God's reign throughout the world. He offered his life to set up the final crisis between heaven and earth. He was hoping for God's vindication but he also expected Rome to claim his body. From hindsight, the church believed that Jesus got both — God's vindication and Rome's pound of flesh. For Rome it was just a routine cleaning up of a minor commotion. But God elevated that piece of human history into the realm of the eternal.

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 willing to help us;
2. list the things that show that Jesus helps us; and
3. demonstrate one's thankfulness for the things Jesus helps us to do.

II. Concept: Jesus is our helper.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), offering plate, wooden cross or picture of a cross, coloring sheet (cross), crayon, water colored pen

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug
2. Ask the children to sing these songs.
 - a. "Jesus Loves Me" (Words and Music by Rev. Goel B. Bagundol)
 - b. "Jesus Helps" (Words and Music by gbb)

Jesus helps the little children. He cares for those who are sad

He heals the sick and broken hearted. Jesus heals all those in need.

I must help as Jesus helped me, care for those who are sad.

Helping others gain their strength, loving each who needs my care. We must help for we love Jesus, give to those who have none.

Loving others as God loves us, let us all together help.

3. Opening prayer: "Our God who loves us so, we thank you for this beautiful day You have given unto us. We ask you to be with us as we learn more about being a good child of yours, loyal and obedient to follow your will. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.'

B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to recall situations when their parents inform them that they are going away and they will be left at home. Let them share their reactions. Process the answers of the pupils and help them to accept what their parents tell them.

C. Learning Time

Tell the story.

Jesus Tells about His Mission

(Based on Matthew 16:21-13)

Jesus continues to do about doing good. His disciples go with him. Jesus heals the sick. He makes the blind see. He feeds hungry people. He blesses children everywhere.

One day, Jesus calls his disciples. He says, "I need to go to Jerusalem. I will do what my Father wants me to do. I will face the people who want to kill me. I will die but on the third day, I will raise from the dead."

The disciples do not want Jesus to go there. They feel unhappy. He is their Master.

Peter says, "Lord, please do not go there. This should not happen to you!"

Jesus answers, "Peter, do not keep me from obeying the will of my Father. I have to fulfill my mission to help all of you. Your mind is filled with things of men and not with things of God."

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the story. Ask these questions.

1. What did Jesus do to the people? (He went about doing good.) Do you agree with what Jesus did to the people? (Yes)
2. Who went with Jesus when he did good to the people? (His disciples)
3. Where does Jesus want to go? (To Jerusalem to face his death and resurrection) Why? (It is his mission.)
4. Why did the disciples become unhappy about the plan of Jesus? (They do not want Jesus, their Master, to die.)
5. What did Peter say to convince Jesus not to go to Jerusalem? (Do not go to Jerusalem.)
6. Did Jesus like what Peter said? (No) What did he say to Peter? (Peter should think of things of God and not with things of men.)
7. Which of these words describe Jesus? (Ask why all these adjectives describe Jesus.)

- a. brave
- b. obedient
- c. helpful
- d. loving

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How can Jesus help us?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the biblical verse found in Matthew 16:23b: "... for you (Peter) are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."
2. Encourage the class to talk about how they can help their friends and classmates because Jesus helped us first.
3. *Creative work.* Tell the class to decorate the artwork. Before that, let them read the sentence, "Jesus is our helper. I thank him."

G. Closing Worship

1. Ask the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "My Lord Knows the Way"
My Lord knows the way through the wilderness, all I have to do is follow (twice).
Strength for today, is mine all the way
And all that I need for tomorrow.
My Lord knows the way through the wilderness, all I have to do is follow.
4. Closing prayer: "Thank you, God for giving us Jesus. You ask him to come and live with us to be our helper. May we always be obedient to you and willing to help others as Jesus is willing to help us. This we pray in Jesus' Name. Amen."
5. Let the children sing a goodbye song "Our Sunday School is Over" by gbb

February 25, 2018

Second Sunday in Lent

Jesus, the Messiah for All

Old Testament: **Genesis 21:18-20** (NRSV)

¹⁸“Come, 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)

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.” ²⁶“He 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 N/K/YE: Jesus cares for all.

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.

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), 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.

March 4, 2018

Third Sunday in Lent

Jesus' Encounters with the Powerful and Wealthy

Old Testament: Psalm 72:1-7 (NRSV)

Prayer for Guidance and Support for the King
Of Solomon.

¹Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. ²May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. ³May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. ⁵ May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. ⁶May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth. ⁷In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

New Testament: Mark 10:17-25 (NRSV)

The Rich Man

¹⁷As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; honor your father and mother.'" ²⁰He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." ²¹Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." ²²When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. ²³Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

General Concept: Jesus is challenging the powerful and the wealthy to become compassionate, repentant, and just.

Key Concepts N/K/Y/E: Jesus calls us to care and share.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Psalm 72 indicates that it is a prayer originally of Solomon but it was later adapted by succeeding kings as the standard prayer for use during their coronation. The prayer is asking God for wisdom that will allow the king to see the needs of his people. The king is asking God to help him know what is righteous, to discern what is just, to have compassion to defend those who are poor. This in effect, defines the qualities that would characterize and differentiate Israel's kings from the kings of other nations. This suggests that there had been kings before who succeeded in power but avoided following this standard for the rule of an anointed king. The prayer reflects the experience of a person who witnessed the cruelty and abuse of the powerful and wealthy towards the lowly and the weak of the land. This is supposed to provide the yardstick for evaluating the rule of every ruler and leader of any

nation, how he/she practices justice toward those who have less in life as a defining quality of one's regime and administration.

The life and ministry of Jesus undeniably favors the poor, oppressed and marginalized. On the other hand, his teachings is seen as an antagonist that is persistently challenging the powerful and wealthy usually identified with the Pharisees and scribes and the rest of the ruling elite of Judah. They have become the usual target of his denunciations and bitter critical diatribes (e.g., Matt.23). After Capernaum, Jesus went to the region of Judea across the Jordan and met again a large crowd. Here, Jesus directs his teaching towards the powerful and wealthy who are capable of either upholding justice or inflicting oppression. Jesus also reminds them of their responsibility towards the poor who are weak, vulnerable and helpless. This passage reflects the context during the Roman regime where there are a few rich and powerful while so many are poor and struggling because of very unequal distribution of wealth and because of the abuse and corruption of government officials and temple leaders. Jesus' encounter with the rich young man is part of Jesus' teachings that challenges the powerful and wealthy to look into their relationship with the poor and how they use their power and wealth.

Power and wealth are highlighted by Jesus as the stumbling block for the rich young man that keeps him from becoming one of those who can enter the Kingdom of God despite his efforts of following the law. The rich young man's obedience to the law is admirable, yet for Jesus it is not enough since this has only benefited him but not others specially the poor. Here, Jesus was concerned not about the person's obedience to the law but how the man used his wealth and power.

Inheriting the kingdom of God entails following Jesus and becoming an agent of change and reform for oneself and for one's relationship with others especially the poor. Jesus provided the rich young man the way to inherit eternal life. However, Jesus' answer was not favorable to the rich young man so he was displeased. This suggests that the rich young man was not willing to surrender not only his wealth, but also his status, power and privileges. The rich young man's resistance to Jesus' invitation to follow him clearly shows his unwillingness to participate in a just reordering of relations by sharing his wealth and helping the poor. A just reordering of economic relations involving sharing and redistribution of wealth to uplift the poor and the downtrodden is a vital expression of a life of repentance and commitment to follow Jesus all the way.

Like the kings, people with power and wealth are viewed as people entrusted with God's blessings so they can look after the welfare of their subordinates. They are not to abuse and maltreat the people from the lower social classes. Kings and the wealthy who possess power are expected to become the defenders of the powerless against all forms of unrighteousness and injustice. Their leadership should primarily benefit the poor and the downtrodden. Perhaps the powerful and wealthy can learn from the prayer of Solomon who asks God for wisdom to know the purpose why God has blessed him. The powerful and wealthy are not ruled out as unable to enter the kingdom of God, they are constantly being invited by God just like Jesus invited the rich young man to follow him—all they have to do is to have the compassion, to repent and to practice justice.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Jesus preached a message of repentance in view of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God. His intended primary audience was the rich and powerful of his time whose repentance would

benefit the poor and downtrodden. This is dramatically illustrated in the story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus. So, the gospel is good news (Greek, euangelion) to the poor. This line comes straight from the prophets of old, whose prophetic message was addressed to the rulers of the nation. To those who bore the brunt of injustice, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount which enumerates the blessings of the coming kingdom of God for them.

In other words, Jesus' message was good news to the poor but he was speaking to the rich. Aside from being theologically sound, there is a good economic sense to it. We live in a world where so very few people own so much wealth, while so many subsist on so little. According to Oxfam International, 1% of humankind own more than half of the world's total wealth. A simple redistribution of the world's wealth could easily provide food, health care, housing and education to every family everywhere. That would, of course, require a new mechanism of managing the world's resources. Before God, everything has a spiritual dimension in that nothing lies outside God's judgment. For every amount that a person makes, she or he will have to account to God on the Day of Judgment. In an intricately interconnected world, the bulging wealth of one is the impoverishment of many others. To people with moral scruples, this is scandalous; before God, this is an abomination. According to Oxfam again, this situation is leading towards a global catastrophe that will spare no one. To put it theologically, it means the apocalyptic coming of God's final judgment.

No other message rings with more urgency today than this: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." The rich and the powerful must repent, that is, smash the poverty-generating machine of corporate globalization and replace it with a social economy that puts the public well-being first before profit. Short of that, the world will perish.

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 the story of a man who desires to inherit eternal life;
2. list ways of caring for others;
3. express one's appreciation for the chance to share and thankfulness for the chance of being helped.

II. Concept: Jesus calls us to care and share.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), pictures described in the story, costumes, colored paper, pair of scissors

II. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug.
2. Opening prayer: "Our loving parent God we thank you for life and love. Keep us safe and under your care. Guide us in all we do and bless us all as we bless others too. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen."
3. Opening songs:
 - a. "Stop!" (Words and Music by Rev. Goel Bagundol gbb)

Must tell someone to stop. Stop! Doing what is wrong.

Saying God is watching us and never wants us to be bad.

I must tell someone to stop. Stop, doing what is wrong!

b. We Shall Overcome"

We shall overcome, we shall overcome, we shall overcome someday; Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome someday.

c. "I'm Sharing" (Tune: I'm Giving)

I'm sharing (twice) because I love Jesus. I'm sharing (twice) because I love Him. Giving... Loving... Serving...

B. Getting Ready

Prepare outlines of butterflies in clean sheets of paper and tissue paper of different colors or used wrapping paper. Give each child a sheet and ask them to cut the outline of a butterfly. Tell the class to decorate the butterfly. Then provide each child a small poster with these words written in it: Beautiful Life in Jesus. Give them strings to tie the poster into their butterfly. Say: Like these butterflies that came out of their cocoons and became beautiful, we can also become beautiful if we follow Jesus.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the children to listen carefully as you tell the story of the rich man who came to see Jesus.

Jesus and the Rich Man

(Based on Mark 10:17-25)

One day, a rich young man asks Jesus, "Good Teacher, what must I do to enter the Kingdom of God?"

Jesus answers, "Do you follow the commandments of God?"

The rich young man answers, "I always obey the commandments of God."

Jesus looks at him and says, "Sell your riches and share them to the poor."

The rich man wants to obey Jesus. But he is so rich and he does not want to share his riches to the poor. He becomes very sad and leaves Jesus.

Jesus says, "It is very difficult for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God."

2. Prepare the class to do a role play. Form two groups. Assign each group to take on the role of either Jesus or the rich young man. To make the activity interesting, let the children wear costumes.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions as you show pictures of the story.

1. Who came to see Jesus? (a rich young man)
2. Why did this man see Jesus? (to ask Jesus how he can enter the Kingdom of God)
3. What was the first question of Jesus? ("Do you follow the commandments of God?")
4. What was the answer of the rich man? ("I always obey the commandments of God.")
5. What was the advice of Jesus? ("Sell your riches and share them to the poor.")
6. Why do you think the rich man become sad? (He did not want to sell his riches and share it to the

poor.)

7. Why do you think the rich man is wrong in not wanting to sell his riches? (He thinks he worked hard to have his riches. He forgot that God owns all the riches of the world.)
8. Why do you think Jesus said that it is hard for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God? (Some rich people love their riches more than God.)
9. Say: "Look at your butterflies. They changed after coming out of the cocoon. They became beautiful. Ask: "How can Jesus make our lives beautiful?"

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Why is it important to care for others and share what we have with others?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse by putting actions: You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, (circular movement extending one's arms sideward from top to the bottom) and you will have treasure in heaven; (open palms) then come, follow me.' (Extending and pointing both hands upward)." (Mark 10:21b)
2. For N/K: Give each child a colored paper. Tell them to fold it and let them trace their right hand (the fingers have to be close together) near the folded side. Help them to cut the hand tracing and have them open it after cutting. There will be two hand figures in the shape of a heart. Let the children write their name in the middle. Have them offer their heart-shaped hand cutout during offertory together with their offering.
3. For YE: Present these ways and let the children react: saving their one-day allowance in a week and use it to share food to others in need or sorting out clothes that can be given to those in need.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: Put a basket offering at the center and tell the class to put their offering with the heart-shaped hand while singing the song: "We're Sharing" (Tune: I'm Giving)
2. Closing song: "With God All Things Are Possible" (gbb Tune: London Bridge) With God all things are possible (thrice),
With God all things are possible, that's why we trust God
3. Closing prayer: O God our Parent, we thank you for teaching us today how to share what we have to others. May we hold nothing from you. This is our prayer. Amen."

March 11, 2018

Fourth Sunday in Lent

The Mystery of the Messianic Grace

Old Testament: Isaiah 58:6-12 (NRSV)

⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? ⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard. ⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am." If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. ¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. ¹² Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

New Testament: Matthew 20:1-16 (NRSV)

The Laborers in the Vineyard

¹ For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; ⁴ and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. ⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" ⁷ They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard."

⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." ⁹ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹² saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." ¹³ But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

General Concept: Jesus is the embodiment of God's grace.

Key Concepts N/K/YE: Jesus shows God's love to us.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The practice of fasting has always been part of Israel's life, faith and religious tradition. The Israelites practice fasting either individually or communally as an expression of grieving or mourning or as a form of repentance and seeking forgiveness or as part of their worship ritual or as an expression of total reliance on God's grace. Whether fasting is done in private or as a community, it requires a sincere faith with a concrete corresponding action in the hope of receiving God's favor. Over time, however, fasting as a practice became a venue for some people to project their religiosity even as they continue with their sinful ways, ignoring the more important social and ethical implications of their faith in God.

After Israel has returned from their exile in Babylon and have settled back in their homeland, people began putting more emphasis on the ritual dimension of fasting. In response to this new development, the unknown prophet of the post exilic period (known to the scholars as Third Isaiah) began criticizing the kind of fasting that people are practicing and the hypocrisy behind such practice as he sees the contradiction between the rituals undertaken by the rich Jews and the denial of basic care, compassionate assistance and support for the needy especially for those fellow Jews (kababayan) who are working for them. The prophet wants to remind the Israelites about the true essence of fasting that God expects from them - providing food for the hungry and clothes for those with nothing to wear especially during the winter. In other words, Isaiah is proclaiming the kind of fasting that God intends them to do and that is to become God's instrument of grace and source of hope especially for their fellow Israelites who are poor and weak. It also illustrates one very profound truth about what is really the true essence of religious faith- that religious rituals such as fasting become empty and devoid of any relevant meaning at all if the actual practice of the ethical requirements of such religion is ignored. Actual practice of these ethical requirements in daily life experiences is indispensable and non-negotiable for one's faith to be acknowledged as truly an authentic one.

The parable of the workers in the vineyard illustrates the rather unexplainable mystery behind God's sovereignty in dispensing God's grace. Jesus' teaching in parables mirrors God's mysterious nature and ways - incomprehensible, unpredictable and hidden to those unworthy to receive the grace, but for those chosen by God who remained obedient, faithful and trusting it is not impossible to understand and follow. In this parable, Jesus emphasizes that the grace of God is available to all and will be given to all who accept and help propagate the gospel not on the basis of one's social, religious or economic status or of one's vocation nor of the amount of effort a person gives. Grace depends on God's prerogative, will and purpose and not on human effort nor on the amount of time, energy or talent invested or offered for the advancement of God's kingdom. Jesus reminds the people that no one can dictate the amount of grace a person deserves to receive. Here, Jesus proclaims a radical message that challenges the traditional interpretation of how one can earn the grace and favor of God. He also challenges the authority and integrity of the Pharisees and scribes as the acknowledged dispensers of God's grace and official teachers and implementers of the law. The gospel of Jesus reverses the traditional understanding that the grace of God depends upon one's obedience to the law and constant good works. Instead, Jesus reminds the people that God's grace does not rely on human efforts or obedience to the law but through one's faith and loyalty to God's will regardless of whether they have been long time believers in God like the Jews or new or late entrants to the faith like the newly converted Gentiles.

For Christ's followers, the law remains an important part of their faith that guides them in their daily living. But they now also perceived that God's grace abounds so much that they become empowered to live and aspire more than what the law requires. Like Jesus who embodies the grace of God, his followers now accept their call not because the law mandates them but it is an expression of their faith and loyalty to God in response to the grace of God they received in and through Jesus Christ.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Law determines the standards of justice. Laws may vary from one society to another but underneath the various legal provisions are universal concepts of justice. This is true from the time of Hammurabi, the ancient lawgiver of Mesopotamia up to the modern times. Of course, there are laws that are patently unjust because they serve special vested interests rather than the entire population. But on the whole the law is justice's most trusted servant.

The Jewish law continues to have an important role for the regulation of Christian life and community. This was affirmed by Jesus himself and recognized by the Apostle Paul. But the place and value of the law was now to be seen only in the light of the gospel which is about God's grace that was manifested in and through Jesus Christ. The glory of the law shines forth from the light reflected from grace.

God's grace was already there in the law but it had remained a mystery until it was disclosed in Jesus Christ. Due to human weakness, human beings have misunderstood and misused the law to serve and glorify one's self rather than be subject to it to fulfill humanity's destiny as appointed by God. As a result, God's grace is hidden from human beings and consequently have missed the law's true and primal purpose. In Jesus' life and work, death and resurrection, grace and law found their rightful places in the economy of God's salvation.

Created and redeemed by grace, Christians obey the call to mission in gratitude rather than being compelled by law. Such obedience exceeds the requirements of the law and without any thought of reward as promised by the law. Jesus exemplified grateful obedience to a gracious God as he subjected himself completely to God's will.

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 the story of the workers hired in the vineyard;
2. describe how they are treated with love by the landowner; and
3. infer that the love shown by the landowner is the same kind of love shown by God.

II. Concept: Jesus shows God's love to us.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), glue, crayons, cotton, paper, preferably with design

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug. Tell each

- learner, "I love you and Jesus loves you best!"
2. Opening prayer: Tell the class to gather around and complete the sentence: "I thank you God for _____" Then lead the class in prayer: Dear God, thank you for the bright new day, thank you for my family and friends. Thank you for your love as shown in Jesus. Guide us as we learn more of your love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."
 3. Opening songs:
 - a. "God Loves Us" (Tune: "Barney Song")
God loves you. God loves me. God loves us the way we are.
Though we're different and unique in every way; still God's love is for everyone.
 - b. "Jesus Shows God's Love To Us" (Tune: "Mary Had A Little Lamb")
Jesus shows God's love to us, God's love to us, God's love to us.
Jesus shows God's love to us that we may love Him best.
Replace the word loves with gives and lives.

B. Getting Ready

Discuss with the children about their siblings at home. Ask: "How many brothers and sisters do you have? Are you the eldest or the youngest? What things do you do at home with your parents?" Encourage the children to talk about their families.

C. Learning Time

1. Prepare the class by doing a finger play.
2. Present the story.

God Is Gracious

(Based on Matthew 20:1-16)

A landowner hires helpers to work on his farm that grows grapes.

He hires some workers in the morning. He offers them their daily pay and they accept it.

He hires some more workers in the afternoon. He offers them the same daily pay and they accept it.

Then before the end of the day' work, he still hires workers who still need the job. He offers them the same daily pay and they accept it.

At the end of the day, everyone receives the same daily pay.

Those who worked longer hours complained, "Why did you give the same pay to everyone when we worked longer than the others?"

The man answered, "Did you not accept my offer of daily wage? You take what is yours and leave. Are you angry because you are envious or because I am generous? The last shall be first and the first shall be last."

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Ask these questions.
 - a. What did the landowner do for his farm? (He hired helpers to work on his farm.)
 - b. When did he hire his workers? (He hired some in the morning, some in the afternoon,

and some before the end of the day's work.)

- c. What did he offer to all the workers? (He offered the same daily pay.)
 - d. What did all the workers do? (They accepted the offer.)
 - e. How much did the landowner pay all his workers? (He gave them the same daily pay.)
 - f. What can you say about the landowner? Was he unfair? (He did what he promised—give all the workers the same daily pay.)
 - g. What can you say about the workers who started in the morning? (Introduce the word envy. Discuss what bad things envy can do to people.)
2. Inform the class that the story is about God's love to all of us, like the workers in the vineyard of the landowner. Say: "God loves us that He sent Jesus to us to save us. Through Jesus, God shows His offer to save us in the same way. It is freely given. Jesus offers salvation to those He meets in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening. We only have to accept it to enjoy it."

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How does Jesus show God's love for us?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Tell the class to recall their sharing about their families. Ask them if the eldest siblings are loved more or less than the other siblings. Encourage them to see that their parents love all of them in the same way. Then tell them that God's love works the same way. He loves us even if we are older or younger. His love is the same for those who stay in church shorter or longer than the others. His love does not come in pieces. He loves us the way we are. Once we accept God's love, we will follow Him. We can have all His love and can keep it forever.
2. Remind the class what God can do for them once they accept His love. Teach them the memory verse: "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (Matthew 20:16)
3. Let the class do a collage. Provide them with available materials.

G. Closing Worship

1. Ask the children to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing songs: "God Loves Us"; "Jesus Shows God's Love To Us"; and a goodbye song
4. Closing prayer: "O God our Parent, we thank you for sending us Jesus to teach us how to love. May we love all people and your creation as Jesus loves them so. This is our prayer in your Son's name. Amen."

March 18, 2018

Fifth Sunday in Lent

The Amazing Gift of God's Grace

Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:34

³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the LORD', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

New Testament: Luke 15:11-24

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

¹¹Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them.

¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'"

²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

²²But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

General Concept: God's amazing grace builds a forgiving community by restoring the alienated back to the fellowship of the church.

Key Concept

N/K/YE: **God forgives.**

Exegesis of Biblical References

The Israelites were exiled to Babylon as God's punishment to them for their disobedience. Despite the warnings and repeated calls for repentance by Jeremiah, the Israelites, led by their ruling elite in Jerusalem, refused to listen and continued their evil

ways. As a result, chaos broke and there was disunity and disharmony among themselves. This is why the Babylonian enemy was able to easily defeat them and took them into captivity. However, after spending years as an alienated, uprooted and a vanquished people in a foreign land, God once again heard the cry of His people and the Lord began to listen to their hearts asking for forgiveness. God then sent a word through Jeremiah to proclaim God's desire for forgiveness and plan of restoration saying "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." After all they have been through, the people still have a future to look forward to right in their own homeland where they can once more live as a people able to freely worship and serve their God as a forgiven, restored people.

Jesus use parables to make his message more understandable for his audience and to emphasize better his point. In the parable of the lost son, Jesus cited the human capacity and tendency to sin as exemplified by the son who craved for and took his share of wealth and spent it unwisely. But Jesus, in the parable, also taught about forgiveness as illustrated by the father who welcomed and accepted his son despite of what he has done and what he has gone through. Jesus presented to his audience a God who is prepared and willing to forgive those who humble themselves and would turn back from their evil ways.

As followers of Jesus who comprise the church and as recipient of God's grace, we are reminded of our capability to forgive others, gifted with the ability to restore those who are alienated, and our duty to accept those who are lost. Being a forgiving and accepting community of fellow forgiven sinners becomes one of the abiding and outstanding marks of a true fellowship of the church that is imbued with the spirit of our Lord Jesus. Let God's grace direct, motivate and empower us so we can be the church that is meant and called to be, one that accepts and embraces all peoples.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Like the good shepherd who left the ninety-nine in order to find one lost sheep, the church never gives up seeking to restore an alienated member. The church is a community that doesn't take delight in punishing the offender; it rejoices in the return of a forgiven sinner. If punishment needs to be handed out as the law requires, it is for the purpose of restoring relationships that have been broken by the offense committed. The satisfaction served by punishment, however, does not make a forgiving heart. It is God's grace that heals the hurt suffered by the violated and at the same time breaks down the violator towards repentance. God's grace working on both sides prepares the ground for reconciliation and restoration.

As God's children, the church lives under the rule of the gospel rather than the law. In contrast to the law which is harsh and punitive, the gospel is tender and forgiving. The intents of the law are self-evident and self-operational, whereas the power of the gospel comes from God's grace that knows no bounds. That does not, however, abolish the function of the law in the Christian life. In actual fact, God employs the services of the law in order to make the work of the gospel effective.

Accordingly, the church employs the co-operation of the law and gospel by which the offender accepts the guilt and submits to the process of making amends for the injury done.

At the same time, the offended party goes through a process of healing to soften the ground for forgiveness to sprout. The two-pronged process takes place under the grace of God. Finally, damaged relationships are repaired and the separated members are restored back to the fellowship of the church.

I. Objectives

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

1. tell that God helps us to forgive others;
2. express one's feelings when he or she is forgiven and when he or she accepts apology from others; and
3. demonstrate through creative activities the act of forgiving others.

II. Concept: God forgives.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), song chart, pictures of the story, candies/chocolates/banana/kamote

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children as they arrive. Set the mode for a joyful classroom. You feel the presence of God by being happy and friendly.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, thank you for gathering us today! We know you are always with us. Please help us to forgive. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen!"
3. Opening song: "Rejoice in the Lord"
Rejoice in the Lord always and again, I say rejoice and again I say rejoice (2x).
I'm excited (3x) in the Lord (3x),
When you're walking with the Lord you can't get bored.
Oh, oh, oh, somebody touched me (3x)
It must have been the hands of the Lord.

B. Getting Ready

1. **Activity for N/K** "Picture Study"
 - a. Show a picture showing a boy and a girl fighting.
 - b. Ask these questions:
 - 1) What do you see in the picture? Why do you think they fight?
 - 2) With whom did you fight? What did you fight about?
 - 3) What did you feel? How did you become friends with this person?
2. **Activity for YE.** Sharing time
 - a. Ask the class: Did you experience somebody hurt your feelings? (Let everybody share in the class.) What did you do? Did you cry? How did you forgive that somebody?
 - b. Lead the discussion and connect to the story below.

C. Learning Time

1. To prepare the pupils, let them form a big circle and sing, "Shake a Friend's Hand" and accompany the song with appropriate action.
2. Tell the story.

The Lost Son

(Based on Luke 15:11-15)

There was a man with two sons. The younger son said, "Father, give me my share of the property. The father gave him his share. Then his son left. He went to a far place.

The son spent all his money. He became poor. He looked for a job. He became a caretaker of pigs. He ate their food with them. He slept with them and stayed with them the whole time.

One day, he remembered his father. He said to himself, "I will get up and go to my Father. I will say to Him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer called your son. Treat me like a slave.'"

So he set off and went to his Father.

His father saw him coming. He was filled with compassion. He ran and put his arms around him. Then he kissed him.

The son told his father about his intention. He asked for his forgiveness. The father forgave him. He accepted him as his son. He clothed him with a robe. He put a ring on his finger. He gave him sandals for his feet. He prepared a good meal for him. Then he said, "This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!"

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson. Ask these questions.

1. Who are the characters of the story? (Father and younger son)
2. What did the son ask? (Give him his share)
3. Where did he go? (To a far place)
4. What happened to him? (He spent all his money. He became poor.)
5. Where did he work? (He became a caretaker of pigs)
6. Whom did he remember? (His father)
7. What did he do? (He went back to his father. He asked for forgiveness.)
8. Did his father forgive him? (Yes.) How? (He accepted him. He clothed him. He put a ring on his fingers. He gave him sandals. He set a good food for him.)
9. Who helped the father to forgive? (God)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: When we ask for forgiveness, what does God do? (God guides us. We follow.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "'Father I have sinned against heaven and before you." (Luke 15:21)
2. Reflective Commitment. Tell the children to recall any experience where he/she forgave someone who did wrong. Let them share their experiences and affirm that they should forgive others.

3. Candy/Chocolate/Banana/Kamote of Forgiveness. Distribute 3 pieces of candy each. Tell them not to eat the candies. Let them share with their classmates particularly those who did something wrong to them or bullied them. As they give the candy they may say, "Peace be with you" or "I forgive you." They may also accept candies from their classmates whom they have wronged.

G. *Closing Worship*

1. Offering
2. Commitment: "I commit or promise to forgive others."
3. Closing songs: "Come Holy Spirit" and other good-bye songs
4. Closing prayer: "Loving God, we thank you for your forgiveness. May we learn from you so that we may forgive those who have sinned against us. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."



March 25, 2018

Sixth Sunday in Lent/Palm Sunday

Entry to Jerusalem

Old Testament: Psalm 118:26 (NRSV)

²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD: We bless you from the house of the LORD.

New Testament: Mark 11:1-10 (NRSV)

Jesus Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem

¹When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately." ⁴They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" ¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

General Concept: Jesus defines his being the Messiah not from the Jewish and imperial perspectives but according to God's call.

Key Concepts N/K/YE: Jesus enters Jerusalem to obey God.

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The entire chapter of Psalm 118 can be observed as taking place in the context of worship to God for the protection and victory experienced by the worshipper. Some scholars attribute this psalm to David during his ascension to the throne or someone appointed by God for a higher position praising God with so much joy. Verse 26 is a line used by priests to greet and welcome pilgrims who are entering the gate of Jerusalem during the celebration of Passover.

Jesus' triumphant entry to Jerusalem is part of the fulfillment of his messianic plan. Jesus had long foreseen the arrival of this moment and he knew the outcome of this occasion. Jesus' entering Jerusalem marked the climax of his ministry and this portrays his total obedience and loyalty to God despite the plots and plans of religious leaders against him. Jesus' entry to Jerusalem conveys a strong message to the authorities that Jesus was not afraid of their power nor the suffering that awaits him. This is also to provide encouragement to his disciples who are worried and afraid of losing Jesus.

As Jesus marched into Jerusalem, people celebrated by waving palm leaves and putting their cloaks on the ground to welcome him in anticipation of the eventual restoration of Israel's glory as in the time of David. But how people welcomed Jesus in his supposed triumphant entry was nothing special at all. This is a common expression by people who welcome generals in the same manner

during their homecoming after winning battles. Jesus' riding on a colt instead of a war-horse or chariot suggests that he came in peace and not as a conquering savior that people wanted and hoped him to be.

Jesus's entry to Jerusalem is his concrete expression of responding to God's call in total, unconditional obedience. His entry was not to fulfill the vision of the Jews nor to satisfy their desire for glory, but to respond to God's call to come to Jerusalem to fulfill God's plan to establish God's reign here on earth.

The passage does not describe Jesus' response to the celebration and call of the people. This is unusual since Jesus often responds by instructing people not to disclose his identity as the Messiah. Nearing the end of his ministry, Jesus perhaps knew that it was time for all people to know his identity as the Messiah specially the religious leaders who, understandably, will feel threatened with his coming and being acclaimed as the Davidic Messiah. His seeming triumphant entry represents the open and public acknowledgement of his messianic claim and the alternative reality and alternative message that he represents which has given hope to the hopeless and powerless of the land. This is certainly most threatening for the powers-that-be in the land who would do and resort to anything just to protect the status quo. The prevailing system benefited them so much that they prevented any meaningful change to occur that will benefit the majority especially the poor of the land. The day of Jesus' entry was the start of the open clash between the powerful Jewish and Roman authorities and the solitary Jesus who had taken an unequivocal stand of solidarity with the powerless and marginalized of the land. The powerful simply had to act to stop the advance of this alternative reality and message this simple carpenter had been proclaiming and witnessing to. They had to immediately act against him. This was the way Jesus' mission was to be fulfilled as he courageously confronted his soon to be persecutors and executors.

God in Jesus expects his believers to respond in similar degree of loyalty and obedience to the call of God to proclaim the gospel and establish the Kingdom even in the face of danger, and resistance from those who may feel threatened. Jesus' followers must be prepared for the consequent sacrifice and suffering that await. Furthermore, believers must not be distracted with the glamour, cheers, and ecstatic ovation while marching toward God's call. Instead, believers must stay focused, committed and faithful not to satisfy others' expectation, but to simply and sincerely respond to God's call in all loyalty and obedience to God's gracious, loving, and liberating will.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

As Jesus and his retinue entered the gates of Jerusalem, the people waved branches, put clothing on the road and shouted his name in acclamation signifying the entry of the long-awaited messiah. It was a rehearsed action after the manner of welcoming a Roman military commander returning from conquest. They expected Jesus to seize control of Jerusalem, the nation's seat of power. Jesus went on to enter the temple, overturned the tables of the money changers and drove them out with a whip. It was an outrageous act that had a chilling effect on the authorities of the city.

Most probably, the religious leaders went on a hurry to report the incident to the Roman governor with an urgent appeal to quell a rebellion against the Empire. Apparently, Pontius Pilate sent in his soldiers not so much to suppress a real uprising as to oblige and accommodate Rome's allies. It was clear to him that Jesus' action was more symbolic of the Jewish people's aspirations for freedom rather than a real and imminent danger to the Empire. It was also possible that Pilate was a kind of person who

could not tolerate a mere nuisance to the Pax Romana.

But Jesus had other things in mind when he entered Jerusalem. He was there for a meeting with destiny—the fate of a suffering messiah. Everything that happened from the time he accepted God's call in the wilderness up to the moment of his arrival in Jerusalem pointed to just one direction—the cross. He knew what the cross meant to the sufferer since many before him had gone that way. It was the most gruesome way of leaving this world ever invented, the most horrifying prospect of dying. But he could not have known what lay behind the cross. Was it going to be worse than dying by crucifixion? Was it but a passage to a glorious life never disclosed to any human being? Or was it simply the end?

God has disclosed to him the cause for which he was going to suffer and die. But God is silent about what awaits him after the cross. Perhaps this was more horrifying than crucifixion itself. But it is not for him to know. It was sufficient for Jesus to know that he was putting his fate completely in God's hands.

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. listen to the story of Jesus when he entered Jerusalem;
2. discuss what the people shouted to welcome Jesus;
3. recall occasions when their families welcome relatives and others people in their homes as a sign of obedience to God.

II. Concept: Jesus enters Jerusalem to obey God.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), pictures showing Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem, pieces of recycled paper, leaves, preferably palm leaves

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug. Tell each learner, "Jesus, our Messiah loves you so much!"
2. Opening prayer: "Thank you, O God, for this beautiful morning. We ask you to be with us as we learn more about Jesus especially in His triumphant entry to Jerusalem. This we ask in Jesus' name we pray. Amen."
3. Opening songs:
 - a. "Welcome Jesus" (Tune: "Mary Had a Little Lamb")
Welcome, welcome Jesus Christ, you're God's promise to us all
Welcome, welcome Jesus Christ, come reign in our lives today.
 - b. "Hosanna"

B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to recall some of their experiences when their families expect the coming visit

of their relatives from the province or from the city. Ask them what they and their parents prepare. Let them describe their feelings on such happy occasions. Ask the class if God will be pleased when we welcome others to our homes.

C. Learning Time

1. Explain to the class the meaning of the Passover. Tell them it is a Jewish celebration to remember how God saved the Israelites in Egypt. The angel of death did not enter their houses but passed over their houses that had the lamb's blood painted on their doors. This saved them from death.
2. Prepare the children to listen to the story. Provide them the activity sheets that tell the story.

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

(Based on Mark 11:1-10)

It is almost Passover. Jesus wants to celebrate it. He tells his disciples that they will go to the temple in Jerusalem. He asks two disciples to get a donkey.

"Go into the village. You will find a tied donkey. Untie it and bring it to me."

The disciples obey Jesus. In the village, they find a tied donkey just as Jesus said. As they are untying the donkey, some people ask them, "Why do you untie the donkey?"

"The Lord needs it," They answer. "We will return it later."

So the disciples bring the donkey to Jesus.

Jesus rides on the donkey. He starts to go to the Temple. Some people see Jesus coming. They tell others about it, "Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming."

Many people hear about it. They run to greet Jesus. As they see Jesus coming, they remove their cloaks and put them on the road. Some hold palm branches and wave them at Jesus. They shout joyfully, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna! Save us!"

It is indeed a joyous occasion!

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions.

For N/K

1. What celebration is about to happen in Jerusalem? (It was almost Passover.)
2. Who wanted to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover? (Jesus)
3. Who do you think asked Jesus to go to Jerusalem? (God) What kind of a man is Jesus? (He is obedient to God.)
4. What did he ask his disciples to get? (He asked two disciples to get him the tied donkey in the village.)
5. Did the disciples find the donkey? (Yes) What did they do? (They untied the donkey and brought it to Jesus.)
6. When asked by the people why they got the donkey, what did the disciples reply? (The Lord needs it.)
7. What did the people do when they saw Jesus coming and riding on a donkey? (They put their

cloaks on the road. They got palm branches and waved them at Jesus.)

8. What did the people shout?" ("Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna!")
9. What does hosanna mean? (Explain that the word hosanna means "Save us!")
10. Why do you think the people shouted "Hosanna"? (They believe Jesus can save them.)
11. If Jesus is coming today, how will you welcome him? Why do you think Jesus can save us? (Expect different answers from the class.)

For YE:

1. What celebration is about to happen in Jerusalem? (It was almost Passover.)
2. Who wanted to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover? (Jesus)
3. Who do you think asked Jesus to go to Jerusalem? (God) What kind of a man is Jesus? (He is obedient to God.)
4. What did he ask his disciples to get? (He asked two disciples to get him the tied donkey in the village.)
5. Did the disciples find the donkey? (Yes.) What did they do? (They untied the donkey and brought it to Jesus.)
6. When asked by the people why they got the donkey, what did the disciples reply? (The Lord needs it.)
7. Why do you think Jesus asked for a donkey and not a horse? (He will ride on a donkey in going to Jerusalem. He chose to ride on a donkey because it means being humble. A horse means being great.)
8. What did the people do when they saw Jesus coming and riding on a donkey? (They put their cloaks on the road. They got palm branches and waved them at Jesus.)
9. Why do you think the people did that? (They thought Jesus is the king they have been waiting for. They were happy to welcome the king.)
10. What did the people shout?" ("Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna!")
11. What does hosanna mean? (Explain that the word hosanna means "Save us!")
12. Why do you think the people shouted "Hosanna"? (They believe Jesus can save them.)
13. If Jesus is coming today, how will you welcome him? Why do you think Jesus can save us? (Expect different answers from the class.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Aside from celebrating the Passover, why do you think Jesus entered Jerusalem?"
(Jesus entered Jerusalem to obey God.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9b)
2. Tell the children to think of something that will please Jesus. After each child says what he/she can do humbly, let the class respond by singing "Hosanna in the Highest."

3. For N/K: Provide the children a green leaf, preferably from a palm tree. Ask them to paste the memory verse on the leaf.
4. For YE: Provide the children a green leaf, preferably from a palm tree. Ask them to paste the leaf on a recycled sheet of paper on top of the memory verse. Then let them decorate their artwork.
5. Ask the children to join the parade inside the classroom (or outside the room together with the other children) waving their artwork as they say joyfully the memory verse.
6. Remind the class that as they wave their leaves, they should remember Jesus who came humbly to save us from our sins because he loves us and he is obedient to God.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: Lead the class in saying, "As we offer our money, we also offer ourselves to God through Jesus who died on the cross for our sin."
2. Closing song: "Hosanna, Laud Hosanna" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 148)
3. Closing prayer: "Our Parent God, we thank you for Jesus who showed us to be humble. Teach us to serve humbly like Jesus. In His name, we pray. Amen."

