

Sunday between September 18 and 24 – year A

Preparation

Read [Matthew 20:1-16](#). Pay attention to the words or phrases that jump at you. Read over the lesson so that you are familiar with what is intended to happen. Gather the materials that you will need for each section of the lesson. For deeper thinking or for ways to extend the lesson take a look at the following websites:

<http://www.textweek.com/yeara/propera20.htm>

http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm?id=248

http://www.sermons4kids.com/not_fair.htm

<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/pent18amtles.htm>

<http://www.word-sunday.com/Files/a/25-a/A-25-a.html>

<http://www.efree.mb.ca/lectionarypuzzles/in-awvx.htm#p25>: word puzzle

Gathering

Materials needed

- Small table or end of one table
- Candle and candle lighter
- Bible and bookmark
- Green cloth
- Newsprint and markers
- Small coloured pebbles

Print up the prayer on the newsprint so that the readers can say the prayer with you. Gather around the small table or at the end of one table. With the children place the cloth on the table. Have them help you place the candle and the Bible on the cloth. Light the candle. Pray the following prayer together:

**Creator God you are here,
Loving Jesus you are here,
Holy Spirit you are here;
Come and show us the way. Amen.**

Blow out the candle. Gather the children in a circle. Put the pebbles in the centre of the circle. Ask the children what they think the fairest way would be to give everyone the pebbles. Suggest that everyone with green eyes should get more pebbles – see what the response is. Suggest that everyone with blue socks should get more pebbles – see what the response is. Tell the children that in today's story from Jesus they are going to hear about an employer who acted in a way that everyone didn't think was fair.

Story Time

Materials needed

- coloured pebbles from the gathering
- card stock and markers

Instructions

- Print up on separate pieces of card stock the following times:
6 a.m., 9 a.m., Noon and 5 p.m.
- Get comfortable with the children to share the story.

Jesus looked at all the people with him. He said, “Listen up everyone. I have a story to tell you about God’s kingdom.” This is the story that he shared.

There once was an employer. He had lots of work for people to do. He didn’t have enough workers to get everything done. He went out into the market place early in the morning. Hold up the first time sign.

He saw lots of people waiting to get work. The employer said, “If you are looking for work go into my fields. There you will find plenty to do. I will pay you the regular amount at the end of the day.”

The work was going well. The employer knew he could still use more workers. He went back to the market place. Hold up the second time sign.

The employer still lots of people needing work. He said, “If you are looking for work go into my fields. There you will find plenty to do. I will pay you the regular amount at the end of the day.”

The employer went back to the market place looking for more workers several times. Hold up the third and then the fourth time signs. He saw lots of people still looking for work. He told them, “If you are looking for work go into my fields. There you will find plenty to do. I will pay you the regular amount at the end of the day.”

Finally it was nearly the end of the day. The employer decided to go back to the market place one more time for the day. He looked around and saw some people sitting around. He asked them, “Are you looking for work? If so, then go out into my fields and you will find work there.”

It came to the end of the day. The employer gathered all the workers together. He thanked them all for the work that they had done. Then he handed out their pay. He started with those who had started first. He gave them each the pay for the day. Give each child a pebble. Then those who had started later in the morning came to see him. He gave them each the pay for the day. Give each child a pebble. Then the people who had started to work at noon came forward. He gave them each the pay for the day. Give each child a pebble. Then came those who came to work in the middle of the afternoon. He gave them each the pay for the day. Give each child another pebble. Last came those who had started work at the end of the day came forward. The employer gave them each their pay for the day. Give each child a pebble.

Now the workers who had started earliest in the day were quite upset. They came to the employer and were very angry. They said, “How come those people who came

after us got paid the same amount as we did? We were here all day and worked hard the whole time. It is NOT FAIR!”

The employer looked at them and shook his head. He said sadly, “What does it matter to you how I pay the workers? Didn’t you agree to work for the regular pay? Didn’t I pay you what we agreed to? It should not matter what I pay to the pay who started work later.”

After Jesus finished telling the story, he told the people this, “In God’s kingdom, the first shall be last and the last shall be first.”

Response

Project Idea 1: God’s Kingdom Picture

With this response the children will be able to share what they heard about God’s kingdom with different art and craft materials. There is no expected response to this, just what the children come up with.

Materials needed

- construction paper
- glitter
- glue
- scissors
- pipe cleaners
- stickers
- tissue paper and wrapping paper
- card stock
- markers and crayons
- stamps and stamp pads
- anything else that might be interesting

Instructions

Lay out the craft materials in an attractive manner. Invite the children to remember the story that they just heard. Ask them to think about what it means for the ‘last to be first and the first to be last’. As the children look at the craft materials and when they seem ready encourage them to make a picture with the materials that shows God’s kingdom to others. When the children are finished and as they are comfortable have them share with each other their pictures.

Project Idea 2: Clay Sculptures

For this response there will be a direct tie in with the pebbles used during the story and will enable the children to make a concrete reminder of the story.

Materials needed

- play dough recipe (at end of lesson) and the ingredients needed in the lesson
- pebbles from story
- heavy large paper plates

Instructions

Make enough of the play dough that each child has a good size ball to work with. Give each child a ball of dough, the plate and the pebbles they had for the story. Invite them to hold the clay in their hands and remember the story they have just heard. Suggest to the children that they come up with a shape that will help them remember what Jesus had to say about the last being first. When they are done their shapes have them put them on the plates and let the children decorate their sculptures with the pebbles used during the story.

Project Idea 3: ‘Last shall be First’ collage

Older children will probably appreciate this response than younger ones. It will give them a way to make a connection between Jesus’ words and the world they live in today.

Materials needed

- severay days of newspapers and magazines
- poster board
- markers and glitter
- scissors and glue

Instructions

Print the following up on the newsprint:

**“Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are in our debt;
Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
Forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

Cut the poster board in half and have a half piece for each child. Lay out the magazines, newspapers and scissors. Invite the children to look through the magazines and newspapers for stories, headlines, words, or pictures that describe when people who might be seen as the last in the world coming first. Let them cut them out. When they have enough encourage them to make a collage with them on the poster board. Suggest that they use the glue and glitter to make a title across the poster that uses Jesus’ words from the story: **“The Last shall be First”**. If possible find places in the church that they can share these posters with the congregation.

Closing

Gather with the children around the worship table again. Relight the candle. Say the prayer line by line and encourage the children to repeat it after you:

**Creator God thank you for loving us,
Loving Jesus thank you for teaching us,
Holy Spirit thank you for helping us grow,
Be with us in everything we do. Amen.**

Play Dough Recipe

Mix together:

- 250 mL (1 cup) flour
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) salt
- 10 mL (2 tsp) cream of tartar
- 1 package unsweetened drink mix

Add:

- 250 mL (1 cup) boiling water)
- 15 mL (1 tbsp) vegetable oil

Stir until soft dough forms, knead until smooth. Store in air tight container in refrigerator.