

Gospel Lesson for Younger Children

Scripture: Matthew 25:1-13

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Jesus is now finished with the confrontations and moved on to talking about preparing for what is ahead. This parable warns of what happens when one does not prepare for something you know is going to happen.

In that culture, weddings were a bit different than they are in our culture. The bridegroom, his family and guests would gather in their house, the bride, her family and guests would gather at their house. When they were ready, the groom and his family would make their way to the bride's house. Upon their arrival, the groom would take his bride inside the house to consummate the marriage, and they were then married. After the bride and groom join their family and guests again, the party would begin.

This being the case, there was not a definite start time, but you knew it was going to happen on a given day or the day after. You were to prepare and stay prepared and be ready for the celebration that ensued after the marriage took place.

Our lesson for Matthew today is saying that the kingdom of heaven is like this. How so? For Matthew's community, it was about being immediately

ready for Christ to come back and not to fall asleep on watch. 2000+ years later, the message is still to be ready, but in a slightly different way. The kingdom of heaven is both in the future and in the present. The kingdom of heaven is happening now – so how are we prepared? How are we sustaining our life of faith and lighting our lamps with extra oil to show the world who God is?

Theme: Be Prepared

Before: You will need response materials (such as paper, markers, crayons, clay) so they can be creative after you play your game.

Beginning: Welcome the children into the room and have them sit in your gathering area. Ask how their week was and what they had to do to get ready to come to church.

Opening Prayer: *God, we come together today to learn more about you and how we can be prepared to follow you each and every day. Be with us as we hear your word and discover more about you. Amen.*

The Story: Matthew 25:1-13

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God's plan is for each of us too.

Note: Since the concept of wedding preparation and weddings from this culture may be new to the children, you may want to read the children the second paragraph from the "Notation" section above to explain a bit about the parable they are going to hear. You can do that before or after reading the Scripture.

Read Matthew 25:1-13.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you liked about today's Scripture?

- Are there things you have questions about?
- I wonder what Jesus' parable means?
- What could it be telling us today?
- I wonder what we can do to prepare for God?

Preparing for your Journey with God

As we heard in our lesson from today, it is important to be prepared. How many of you have ever gone on a trip? What are the things that you do to prepare for a trip? Do you pack anything? Allow the children time to respond.

Well, walking with God isn't any different, but we might need to pack some different things to help us be prepared and stay connected with God. We are going to play a game to help us think of the things that we would want to have as we journey with God.

Here's how the game works, I say, "I'm going on a journey and I'm taking with me..." and then I name something that I would want to take with me as I spend time with God. I could say, candles or a bible or my favorite blanket to stay warm as I pray. Then the next person goes and says "I'm going on a journey and I'm taking with me..." and they say what they would want to bring.

Have the children go around the room once and if you have time two or three times. After you have had a good game of it, give them some response time to draw or create what their journey would look like.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to clean up their space. Invite them to share what they have created or if you have done the scavenger hunt, have them share what they found and how it prepares them for God being in their lives.

Closing Prayer: *Gracious God, We thank you for our time together today. Help us to be constantly preparing and ready for you in our lives. Be with us as we go into the world to do your work that we will be ready, with lamps lit when you come among us. Amen.*

Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus said, "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

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