

Sunday School Curriculum

Adaptable for Grades 1-5

As based upon:

KINGDOM,  
GRACE,  
JUDGMENT



*Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication  
in the Parables of Jesus*

ROBERT FARRAR CAPON

*“Christian education is not the communication of correct views about what the various works and words of Jesus might mean; rather it is the stocking of the imagination with the icons of those works and words themselves. It is most successfully accomplished, therefore, not by catechisms that purport to produce understanding but by stories that hang the icons, understood or not, on the walls of the mind....*

*Orthodoxy, if it is understood correctly, is simply the constant displaying of the entire collection.”*

*Robert Farrar Capon*

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## WELCOME (as long as you need)

As the kids are coming in, please welcome them and their parents. If they are new, please get their info from the parents. Begin the class with a question that will help you get to know them better and make a more personal connection. For example, ask them about something that happened in their week. It can also be a question that connects with the story for the day.

## STORY (about ten minutes)

This part of the class is the focus on the Scripture. Read or tell the story from the Bible that is assigned for that day. It is really helpful to have some props that go along with the story. If the kids are comfortable reading, they can read part of the story. As you read or tell the story, include questions that will help the kids engage with the story.

## ACTIVITY (about 10-15 minutes)

This will hopefully be something fun to help the kids relate to the story in some way. Including questions they tie it to the story will be helpful.

## SUMMARY (2 minutes)

This will summarize everything we've done that day, tying things together for the kids. It will pinpoint the theme for the day.

## PRAYER (2 minutes)

This can be led by a teacher or the children who feel comfortable praying our loud. We'd like to connect it to the lesson, if possible. For example, as the children to thank God for something.

## THE PARABLE OF THE COIN IN THE FISH'S MOUTH

### **MATTHEW 17:24-27**

#### INFO FOR TEACHERS

This brief parable appears in Matthew 17: 24-27. Its brevity along with the fact that it appears in only one of the four gospels might lead one to think it is of minimal importance. However, this thinking would lead to missing one of Jesus' jewels on freedom. In this parable Jesus draws a vivid picture of who He is, who we are and the freedom that follows.

Upon entering Capernaum, Jesus and his disciples are approached by tax collectors for the Temple; all Jewish males were required to pay a temple tax. "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" is the inquiry directed at Peter. Peter replies "Yes, he does" without consulting Jesus.

Jesus then brings up the issue with Peter. Peter has answered the tax collector's question from the perspective of a dutiful Jew. Peter and Jesus are Jews so they are bound to pay the temple tax. Jesus wants Peter to enlarge his understanding so he asks the following question:

"What do you think, Simon (Peter)? From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes?"

Jesus is not asking Peter a trick question. Rather, he is asking Peter to rethink who Jesus is. Yes, Jesus is a Jew, but he is so much more. He is King of the Jews, King of the Earth and Son of God. All of these understandings are operating behind Jesus' question to Peter. The story is operating on an earthly and a symbolic level. As King of the earth, neither Jesus nor his subjects would be required to pay a political tax. (At that time in history taxes and duties were collected from outsiders, not like our current income tax model.) As King of the Jews, neither Jesus or his followers would be required to pay the religious tax.

From this angle of understanding Peter answers Jesus' question that "others" are to pay the taxes. Jesus confirms Peter's response by saying "Then the sons are exempt."

The conclusion of the story seems to indicate that Jesus is using the situation to particularly instruct and delight his disciples rather than others. "But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

The implications of this story are significant. Jesus is saying that the old ways of practicing religion no longer bind. By identifying himself as king, His children can

go free. They are not required to pay a tax. They are not required to practice religion. All that matters is that they are sons of the King. It is almost as if the liberty and joy that accompanies freedom is alluded to by the delight of finding a gold coin in a fish's mouth – crazy, but true, and worth smiling about!

## ENTRANCE

As the children enter the classroom, Teacher 1 stands at the door and asks the children to pay their tax to enter the classroom and worship God (act like this is a normal thing, no explanation). Then Teacher 2 stands there with some kind of money and offers the child the money to pay, saying, "I will pay it for you." Then the child hands the money to the first teacher and enters. No further explanation until the summary.

## WELCOME QUESTIONS

Have you ever found any money? What happened? How did you feel when you found it? How does it feel to get something for nothing?

## STORY FOR 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> GRADE

It will be important to give some introduction to the kids about Jesus and what a parable is. Hand out the Bibles and ask them what the two parts of the Bible are called. We've been studying the Old Testament which was written before Jesus was born and now we are moving into the New Testament which was written after Jesus was born. We are going to talk about the Parables of Jesus. Does anyone know what a parable is? A parable is just a kind of story that teaches a lesson about something.

Jesus often told parables to his friends and the people he was talking to. Today we are going to talk about the Parable of the coin in the fish's mouth.

Jesus and his friends have arrived in the town of Capernum. They are met by the temple tax collectors. The temple is the name of the church for the people and each man is required by law to pay money to be a member and to worship God.

The tax collectors ask Peter, "doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

Peter replies, "yes he does."

When they all get back to the house, Jesus asks Peter, "When kings collect taxes, who pays them? Do they make their own children pay taxes to them? Or do they go to their subjects and make those people pay?"

Peter answers Jesus, "From their subjects."

Jesus replies, "Then the children don't have to pay. But so we don't get them mad at us, go to the lake and throw out your fishing line. Take the first fish you catch and open its mouth. In its mouth you will find a coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

## STORY FOR 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> GRADE

It will be important to give some introduction to the kids about Jesus and what a parable is. Hand out the Bibles and ask them what the two parts of the Bible are called. We've been studying the Old Testament which was written before Jesus was born and now we are moving into the New Testament which was written after Jesus was born. We are going to talk about the Parables of Jesus. Does anyone know what a parable is? A parable is just a kind of story that teaches a lesson about something.

Jesus often told parables to his friends and the people he was talking to. Today we are going to talk about the Parable of the coin in the fish's mouth.

Jesus and his friends have arrived in the town of Capernum. They are met by the temple tax collectors. The temple is the name of the church for the people and each man is required by law to pay money to be a member and to worship God.

The tax collectors ask Peter, "doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

Peter replies, "yes he does." The tax collectors recognized that Jesus was a member of the temple and Peter agreed that he owed them the money.

When they all get back to the house, Jesus asks Peter, "When kings collect taxes, who pays them? Do they make their own children pay taxes to them? Or do they go to their subjects and make those people pay?"

Peter answers Jesus, "From their subjects."

Jesus replies, "Then the children don't have to pay. But so we don't get them mad at us, go to the lake and throw out your fishing line. Take the first fish you catch and open its mouth. In its mouth you will find a coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

## SUMMARY

Here Jesus is showing Peter that he is not just an ordinary man. He is the son of God, who owns the earth, and the king of the Jews. Therefore, he is actually above the temple too! Because of who he is, he does not have to pay the temple tax like ordinary people. But, in his love, Jesus decided to pay the tax

anyway. He is showing Peter who he really is and still providing a way for Peter to go for free.

Remember how Teacher 2 paid the tax for you to come in? Just like Jesus paid the tax for himself and Peter, he pays our taxes for us and therefore, we get to worship God for free!

## ACTIVITY

Fish Paper Plate Craft

## PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for paying the tax for us so that we can worship God for free.



[Paper plate crafts](#)

Enchanted Learning Software's  
**Fish Paper Plate Craft**  
[More Kinder Crafts](#)



[More animal crafts](#)

This easy-to-make fish is a cute craft that is made from a single paper plate.

**Supplies needed:**

- Paper plate
- Scissors
- Glue (or tape or a stapler)
- Googly eyes (optional)
- Crayons, paint or markers



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	<p>Cut a wedge out of a paper plate. The wedge will be the fish's tail; the hole will be the fish's mouth.</p>	
	<p>Glue (or use tape or a stapler) the tail to the end of the fish.</p> <p>Glue a googly eye on the fish (glue on two eyes if you want a flounder) or simply draw eye(s).</p>	
	<p>Color in the fish, drawing scales, lips, and so on.</p> <p>For an extra touch, make a tiny fish (use the same instructions as above, but start with a tiny circle made from construction paper). Hang the tiny fish from the large fish's mouth using a short piece of thread.</p>	

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

### **MATTHEW 18:10-14, LUKE 15:3-7**

#### INFO FOR TEACHERS

Robert Capon says it is important to consider the context when trying to understand what Jesus is saying. In the preceding verses, the disciples want to know who is going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. They (and of course all human beings) are concerned about who is the best, who is the smartest, who is the prettiest, who is the ..... the list goes on. Jesus, as always turns their ways of thinking upside down. ("My ways are not your ways says the Lord.) Jesus is primarily concerned about those who are the least, not the greatest; those who are the last, not the first; those who are lost, not those who know where they are going. He shows them a little child and says, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven... and whoever welcomes a little child, welcomes me."

[Here I'd like to interject that we are ministering to the "littlest/least". In the world's eyes, children are not given status or prestige or prominence. But Jesus welcomes the little children who in his day were considered very lowly indeed. By teaching Sunday school, we are saying that the children are important and that they are loved and valued by God.]

In verse 10, Jesus says, "See that you don't look down on one of these little ones." - emphasizing again His love for those who are little in the world's eyes. He then goes on to tell the story of the lost sheep. Capon is very funny, and he adds that "this can hardly be interpreted as a helpful hint for running a successful sheep-ranching business. The most likely result of going off in pursuit of one lost sheep will only be ninety-nine more lost sheep." So how can we interpret this story? Jesus seeks and finds the "lost" and guess what, we are ALL LOST! We are not the 99 who stay with the shepherd; we are those who go wandering off into the hinterlands. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who comes after us and carries us back to the flock and he does so with joy! He celebrates over the lost sheep that has been found! In the same way, he derives joy from finding us. We are precious to Him, and He doesn't want any of us to be lost.

#### WELCOME QUESTIONS

Have you ever been lost? What does it feel like?

#### STORY FOR 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> GRADE

When you have been lost, who helped you find your way back?

That's the thing about being lost—most of the time, it's impossible to find your way back all by yourself.

In this parable, Jesus is saying that when we get lost, he will take care of us.

He tells this story: There was a man who had 100 sheep. One of them wandered away and got lost. He cared so much about that one sheep that he left the others and went searching for the lost one. When he finally found the lost one, he put that sheep on his shoulders and carried it home. When he arrived home, he called all his friends to come celebrate with him that he had found his lost sheep.

## STORY FOR 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> GRADE

This is a story of Jesus teaching his followers and the religious people. Jesus' followers (disciples) want to know who is the greatest. They ask him "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." The religious people (Pharisees) see that Jesus hangs out with people who do not follow the religious rules. They think Jesus shouldn't do that and say "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Jesus tells both his followers and the Pharisees that life is not about being great or good, but about being loved. He shows them what he means by telling them a story.

There once was a man who owned 100 sheep. One of them wandered away. The man left the 99 sheep on the hills to go look for the one that wandered off. That one sheep mattered so much to him he was willing to leave all the others. When he finally found the lost sheep he joyfully put it on his shoulders and went home. He was so happy he called his friends and neighbors together and said, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep."

Jesus wanted his disciples and the religious people to know that we are ALL "lost sheep" and we ALL wander away. As the faithful shepherd Jesus will always come after us and greatly rejoice when He brings us home with Him. By telling this story Jesus is painting a picture of what His love for us looks like.

## SUMMARY

Jesus wants us to know that we are lost and helpless, but in his grace he will always come looking for us. He will take us on his shoulders and joyfully carry us home.

## ACTIVITY

First read the book, The Runaway Bunny. Then the class will create a book, the Runaway Sheep. Each child will draw one page where a sheep is being pursued by the Shepherd (following the theme of the story). They can borrow ideas from the book or make up new ones. Have each child compose a sentence: "If you become a \_\_\_\_\_, I will be a \_\_\_\_\_ and come and get you." If they cannot write the words they can dictate it to the teacher. Have each child illustrate their page. Compile the pages into a booklet if desired. You may want to use the attached preface.

## PRAYER

Thank you Jesus, for always coming to find us when we wander off.

## THE PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

### **MATTHEW 18:21-35**

#### INFO FOR TEACHERS

In verses 21 and 22, Peter inquires of Jesus how many times he should forgive, and then gives Jesus a suggestion of 7 times. What do you think Jesus says to that?? Jesus' reply of "not 7 but 77" is a clear refusal to allow forgiveness to be quantified. Jesus is not a proponent of limited forgiveness; in fact, his forgiveness is unlimited. He then tells the story of the unforgiving servant to illustrate his point.

In the story, a King is settling his accounts and calls in a servant to pay what he owes. The amount is an astronomical amount that would actually be impossible to repay. The servant is unable to pay and so the King orders that he and his family and all his possessions be sold to pay the debt. The servant then begs for the King to be patient and says that he will repay the money he owes. The King has pity on the man and cancels the debt. The servant leaves and runs into a fellow servant who owes him money. The fellow servant responds with the exact same words as the first servant had said to the King, but instead of canceling the debt, he has the fellow servant thrown into jail. Others who saw what happened report to the King and the King orders the first servant thrown into jail for being unmerciful. Jesus then ends the story by saying that our Heavenly Father will treat us the same if we do not forgive our brothers and sisters from our heart. Yikes!!!!

OK, what are we to make of this?? The key to understanding the parable seems to be in the fact that the servant believes that he can repay the King. Just like the debt of the servant is astronomical and impossible to repay, so is the debt of our sin. The King completely wipes out the debt, forgets it, just like Jesus wipes out our debt and forgets it. But the servant is unable to see what the King has done for him. Instead of rejoicing in the generosity of being delivered from the debt, he gets his fellow servant in a strangle-hold and has him tossed into jail. He is blind to his own helplessness and still thinks that he has the power in himself to save himself. Therefore, he holds his fellow servant to the same standards. As we read the parable, we are appalled at his treatment of his fellow servant. "How could he do such a thing after he was forgiven himself?" we ask. Sadly, the servant is unable to see the magnitude of what the King has done for him. The servant is stuck in the mindset that he must earn his forgiveness, that he must do it himself. What is the result of his unforgiveness to his fellow servant? He lands in prison. What happens to us when we refuse to forgive? We wind up in our own prison of sorts. Thankfully, we can fall on our knees before a merciful God and ask for His forgiveness and help to forgive.

## WELCOME QUESTIONS

Write down/tell a time when you did something wrong. What happened? How were you treated?

## STORY FOR 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> GRADE

The disciple, Peter, wanted to know about forgiveness. He asked Jesus, "Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Seven times?" Jesus said, "not seven times, but 77 times." Jesus explained what he meant about forgiveness by telling this parable.

Jesus told the story of a king who had a servant. This servant owed him tons and tons of money. The servant owed so much money, in fact, that he would never be able to repay all that he owed. One day the king came to the servant and said he had to repay the money. The servant could not repay the money so the king ordered that the servant, his wife, his children and all he had be sold to repay the debt.

The servant fell on his knees and begged for patience. "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything". The king felt sorry for the servant and forgave him. The servant did not need to repay the money.

Right after that the forgiven servant ran into another servant. This second servant owed him some money. The forgiven servant grabbed the second servant by the throat and demanded his money. The second servant fell on his knees and said, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." The forgiven servant refused and threw the second servant in prison until he could pay the debt.

Other servants saw what had happened and told the king. The king called for the forgiven servant and said, "You wicked servant! I forgave you because you asked; shouldn't you treat the second servant the same way I treated you?" In anger, the king had the first servant put in jail.

Jesus told this story to Peter to help him understand that instead of focusing on how many times to forgive someone else, the important thing is how much he has been forgiven.

## STORY FOR 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> GRADE

There was a servant, said Jesus, who owed his king a whole bunch of money. In today's terms it might be something like a billion dollars. This servant owed the king so much money that it would be impossible to ever earn enough money to pay him back. In fact, you wonder just how he got himself into a situation like that.

The king wanted to settle up with this man, so he called his servant in. Since the amount was so so large, the king called for this man to be sold into slavery along with his wife and kids, and to sell everything he owned. Perhaps he could earn back just a small bit of the massive debt he owed the king.

The man cried out and pleaded with the king for mercy. He says to him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." Ok, well it is a nice thought to think that he could pay him everything, but totally impossible. So what does the king do? Knowing that this man will never be able to pay him back everything, the king decides to... Forgive him!

Can you believe it? Even with the man begging for mercy, he is making promises he could never keep. The debt is just too much. But the king has mercy. He released him and forgave him completely of his debt. How amazing.

So the servant left completely free. As he left he met another slave who owed him money! He owed him about one or two thousand dollars. This servant has just been forgiven by the king a debt of a billion dollars. And now he greets someone who owes him just one or two thousand dollars.

What does he do? This crazy man demands that his fellow servant pay him the couple thousand dollars he owes him. Maybe he was going to go take that money to try to repay the king a little bit. Maybe he just wanted it for himself. Either way, he's crazy. Cause a couple thousand dollars doesn't mean anything—the king has already forgiven him. And if he wants it for himself, how could he—he's just been forgiven so much!

So when he is demanding that the fellow servant pay him back, the servant pleads in the same way he pleaded to the king, "Have patience with me, and I will repay you." But instead of showing mercy, the servant has his fellow servant thrown into prison. Some other servants reported his actions to the king. The king called in the servant and got upset with him, saying, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?" And the king had him beaten up until he could pay his original debt, basically not any time soon.

The idea behind this story is the servant's thinking. He never realized that his debt was just too great. He could never work it off or earn enough to pay it back. He thought that on his own perhaps he could do something, but unfortunately he was wrong and never learned the lesson.

## SUMMARY

When we see how much we have been forgiven by God, hopefully we can respond by showing forgiveness to others.

## ACTIVITY

Throw a forgiveness party! (Balloons, streamers, some kind of treat, music, go outside if it's nice)

## PRAYER

Thank you, God, for forgiving us and help us to show forgiveness to others.

## THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

**LUKE 10:29-37**

### INFO FOR TEACHERS

As always, Capon turns the traditional teaching of this parable on its head. He calls this the "first of the misnamed parables." He suggests, "The man who fell among the thieves parable." First point to make: this parable is not about following the good example of the "good Samaritan." Certainly that is a good idea; it would be wonderful if we all treated others in need that way, but that is not the point of the story. Robert Capon makes this point well by saying, "For if the world could have been saved by providing good examples to which we could respond with appropriately good works, it would have been saved an hour and twenty minutes after Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the 10 commandments."

We veer away from Capon's further interpretation of the parable this time because of the difficulty in bringing it down to a child's level of understanding. His emphasis is on our need to die and be resurrected with Christ which I certainly believe is true but not something we can easily communicate to the kids.

We would like for us to look at it this way. We are the man who fell among the thieves on the side of the road, and Jesus is the "Good Samaritan." The difficulties of life beat us up, and we are often left on the side of the road. Most people walk on by on the other side of the road to avoid having to deal with suffering and because they don't have any way to deal with it. Their religious explanations have nothing to offer in the face of death and pain so it's easier to just avoid it as much as possible. But, Jesus knows our suffering, and He is not afraid to come and care for us. He has conquered death. He comes to us and lifts us out of the ditch. He nurses our wounds and places us in a fresh clean bed. He pays the price for all of our costs. This is a picture of the love and mercy that Jesus has shown to us. This is how much Jesus loves us. And by the grace of God, sometimes we will be able to show that love and mercy to others.

### WELCOME QUESTIONS

What does it feel like when you get hurt or you feel helpless.

### STORY

Jesus told this story to his disciples. A man was traveling on a long, long road. He had to go through Samaria, a town that was most avoided by everyone, because that's where the Samaritans lived. Most people thought the Samaritans

were dirty and diseased and not nice people and so they tried not to go through their town. But this man went through Samaria and on the way, he got attacked by a robber. He was beaten and left on the side of the road.

Luckily, there was a priest who was walking by. The man, weak and hurt, called out for help. But the priest just looked at him and hurried on by. He didn't want to stop and help. Then another person passed by. He also was a religious person. But he didn't want to stop either, so he crossed to the other side of the road.

The next person who came by was a Samaritan. When he saw the wounded man, the Samaritan had compassion. He picked him up and took him to a local hotel. He paid for him to stay there and be taken care of by the hotel people. The Samaritan showed great mercy that day.

## SUMMARY

Jesus is like the Samaritan. He will take care of us when we fall into trouble.

## ACTIVITY

Act out the story of the Good Samaritan. Characters: Robber(s), Beaten Up Man, Priest, Levite (Religious Man), Samaritan, Donkey(s), Hotel Person/People.

Props: Ace Bandage, Money, Robes for Characters, Bedding, Donkey Ears, Gold Coins.

## PRAYER

Thank you Jesus for always taking care of us.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Good Samaritan

A lawyer decided to give Jesus a test. He asked, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "Well, what does the law say?"

The lawyer answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus said, "That is the right answer. Do this, and you will live."

The lawyer wanted to find a way to make himself seem like a good and thoughtful person. He said to Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?"

Then Jesus told a parable:

A man was traveling the road from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Robbers attacked the man. They took his clothes, and they beat him. They left him by the roadside, half dead.

23



The son came back to his home.

22

A priest came along. He looked at the man, crossed over to the other side of the road, and walked on.

Next came a Levite, a religious leader. He, too, passed by the injured man.

But a Samaritan traveler came close. He looked at the man and felt very sorry for him. He bandaged the wounds and poured on wine and oil.

Then the Samaritan lifted the man onto his animal and took him to an inn. He stayed all night to care for him.

On the next day, the Samaritan gave money to the innkeeper. He said, "Take care of this man. When I come back, I will pay you for any other expenses."

As Jesus finished this parable, he asked, "What do you think? Which of these three people (the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan), was a *neighbor* to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The lawyer said, "The one who was kind."

Jesus said, "Go. Do the same thing yourself."

We can read the parable in *Luke 10:30-36*.



The Samaritan was a good neighbor.

## THE PARABLE OF THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT

### LUKE 11:5-13

#### INFO FOR TEACHERS

The passage preceding this parable is Jesus responding to his disciples' request to teach them how to pray. He then goes on to tell them the most famous prayer of all, The Lord's Prayer. As Capon notes, this is not Jesus intending to give them or us a formula for prayer. Capon feels that it really is a concession to the disciples and not Him giving them an outline for all prayer. "Prayer is not really our work at all", says Capon; "Jesus and the Holy Spirit pray in us." This is not to diminish the Lord's Prayer in any way; it is a beautiful part of our scripture and liturgy. However, prayer is not limited to that form.

The parable of the Friend at Midnight and the verses following it are continuing Jesus' teaching on prayer. In the parable, the friend at home asleep is God, the Father, and we are like the man coming to wake him at midnight. The man is in a desperate situation. A friend has arrived and there is no food in the kitchen. In those days, a host was responsible for feeding his/her guests as soon as they arrived. Traveling was a tiresome and difficult endeavor. People would need nourishment as soon as they arrived. There was no such thing as a fast food restaurant. The man had to find some food, but where would he go at midnight? There were no 24 hour grocery stores. He must go to the home of his friend to get the necessary food. And the friend does not disappoint. He gives him the bread. Still, there is mystery to it in his timing.

Here we see the essential elements of prayer: one, recognizing our need and two, believing that God is our only hope. The man knew that he must feed his guest, in fact, it would be scandalous not to do so. But, he had no food. He knows his need. Boldly and without hesitation, he goes to the home of his friend and wakes him in the middle of the night with his request for bread. He wouldn't go to just anyone and wake them up; he went to the home of a trusted friend. Likewise, God is our "go to man" with all of our needs. We are invited to approach God boldly and without shame and ask.

The two verses following the parable re-emphasize this simple message: ASK. Much of prayer is just asking.

With the kids, we want to emphasize the simplicity of prayer. We have needs. God can take care of them. Just ask.

#### WELCOME QUESTIONS

What do you do when you need something?

## STORY

Jesus told his disciples this story:

Imagine if you have a friend come visit you. But you didn't know that this friend was going to be coming and your friend showed up at midnight. You didn't have anything to offer him. This was a bad thing in that culture, to have someone come to your house and have no bread to give him after a long journey. So, desperate to have something to give your friend, you go next door to your neighbor's house, even though it's midnight.

You knock on the door and call out. "Hey! I have a friend that just arrived and I really need some bread to give him from his long journey." But your neighbor calls out from inside, "What do you think you're doing, coming over here and waking me up! Go away! We are all asleep here. I cannot get up at this hour for you."

But you are desperate! Even though your neighbor said he wouldn't get up, you keep knocking. Eventually he comes to the door and gives you what you need.

Jesus goes on to tell his disciples, "Ask and it will be given, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be open to you."

## SUMMARY

We can be bold in asking God for the things that we need, because He wants to give good gifts to His children.

## ACTIVITY 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> GRADE

Read the Lord's Prayer and then have the class write its own prayer, based on this idea of boldness and approaching God with any and all of our requests. It might be helpful to read the story out of the Jesus Storybook Bible, which prays the Lord's Prayer in children's terms. For the class prayer, each child writes a line and if you like, they can draw something to go along with their line.

## ACTIVITY 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> GRADE

Read the Lord's Prayer and then have each person write their own prayer, based on this idea of boldness and approaching God with any and all of our requests. It might be helpful to read the Jesus Storybook Bible version of the Lord's Prayer.

Go into the sanctuary and have them spread out. Talk about the Prayer Book and how it leads us and guides us to prayers. Use the prompt sheets and have them write their own prayers.

## PRAYER

Pray the prayers they have created. They may use the form below if that helps:

God, thank you so much for:

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God, please forgive me for:

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God, please help me:

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Takes from The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd-Jones + Jago ©2007, Zonderkidz

Hello Daddy!

We want to know you.

And be close to you.

Please show us how.

Make everything in the world right again.

And in our hearts, too.

Do what is best — just like you do in heaven,

And please do it down here, too.

Please give us everything we need today.

Forgive us for doing wrong, for hurting you.

Forgive us just as we forgive other people  
when they hurt us.

Rescue us! We need you.

We don't want to keep running away

and hiding from you.

Keep us safe from our enemies.

You're strong, God.

You can do whatever you want.

You are in charge.

Now and forever and for always!

We think you're great!

Amen!

Yes we do!

You see, Jesus was showing people that God would

always love them — with a Never Stopping, Never

Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.

So they didn't need to hide anymore, or be afraid, or

ashamed. They could stop running away from God.

And they could run to him instead.

As a little child runs into her daddy's arms.



## THE PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE

### LUKE 13:6-9

#### INFO FOR TEACHERS

This parable is obviously very short and to the point, but as always there is an abundance of deeper meaning. Capon articulates the primary theme as “the unique way in which the judgment is, for now at least, suspended in favor of grace.”

The man plants a fig tree in his vineyard which interestingly, Capon points out indicates that the fig tree is his hobby—his delight—not his business. Likewise, we are God’s delight, not his “business.” But it’s been 3 years and the tree isn’t bearing any fruit; the owner is getting impatient. He tells his caretaker to cut it down. The caretaker replies to let it be for one more year and he’ll dig around it and put more manure and fertilizer and then, if it doesn’t bear fruit then he’ll cut it down.

So, very simply, God is the man who planted the fig tree, Jesus is the caretaker of the vineyard, and we are the fig tree. Adding on to Capon’s previous comment about us being God’s delight, he says that God’s “spontaneous delight is the very root of his relationship with the world.” However, when we aren’t bearing fruit, it is disappointing to God. He wants us to do what we are created to do because that will be our ultimate delight as well. We deserve God’s judgment. Thankfully, the story does not end there. Jesus steps in on our behalf and says, “Let it be. Don’t cut it down; I will take care of it.” This phrase, “let it be” is particularly intriguing because it is the same phrase that Jesus uses on the cross when he asks God to forgive those who killed him. Jesus rescues us from being cut down. He was cut down for us; He took our judgment. We are forgiven because of him. Hallelujah! Just like the fig tree, we don’t do anything; the caretaker, Jesus, does it all.

#### ENTRANCE

Play pin the fig on the fig tree. Pin a large piece of paper up in an open space. Either draw in advance or have the children draw a fig tree. (You may want to bring in a picture). Cut out “figs” from construction paper and back with double-sided tape. Use a blindfold, spin the children, and play.

#### WELCOME QUESTIONS

What is your favorite fruit? Have you ever had a fig?

## STORY

Read the scripture:

Luke 13:6-9

6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. 7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

8 "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

## SUMMARY

Thanks be to Jesus we are not cut down. It is okay to "Let it be."

## ACTIVITY

Tasting the fruits of the Middle East. (Feta cheese, hummus, unleavened bread, dates, dried figs, pomegranate).

## PRAYER

Thank you Jesus for tending to us.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

## LUKE 13:18-19

### INFO FOR TEACHERS

In this parable, Jesus uses something that was common to many people of the day, a seed and a plant. In our culture, we have become more and more removed from the work of planting and growing and the understanding of what happens in that. So this lesson may be part horticulture and part theology! Jesus is comparing the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed that an ordinary man planted in his garden. It grew to be a tree and the birds came and perched in it. A mustard seed is just an ordinary seed; it is very tiny, but there are smaller seeds and of course, lots of seeds that are larger. What happens when we plant a seed? As Capon says, "A mustard seed or any seed for that matter must end its career as a seed before something can come of it." In other words, the seed must die in order for the plant to grow and have life. We take this little and seemingly insignificant seed and put it in the soil where it dies and amazingly, it emerges as a vibrant living plant which gives food to us and shelter for the birds. In the same way, Jesus lived a seemingly insignificant life on earth and He died on the cross and then emerged from the tomb in order to give us life and give it abundantly. The thought that we would like to emphasize to the kids today is the reality that Jesus, like the seed, died for us that we might have life.

### WELCOME QUESTION

What does a plant need to grow?

(In answering this question you want to flush out all the logical answers –water, sunshine, soil ... After that conversation ask "Is there anything else?". Then respond, "There is one more thing...")

### STORY

Read the scripture:

Luke 13: 18 & 19

Jesus said, "What is God's kingdom like? What can I compare it with? God's kingdom is like the seed of the mustard plant. A man plants this seed in his garden. The seed grows and becomes a tree. The birds will build nests on its branches."

### SUMMARY

Jesus died so that we can have life.

(The final answer to the welcoming question is "The seed needs to die. New plants grow from the seed's death.")

## ACTIVITY

Decorate pots with tissue paper and plant marigolds. (It is helpful to have cut the tissue paper into squares prior to the class). Use Mod Podge to decorate the pots. Have children write out verse 19 of the story on an index card which we can later attach with ribbon. We will watch the plant grow and children can give them as gifts on Mother's Day.

Make the pots on week and let them dry. Plant the seed the next week.

## PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for dying for us so that we can live.

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SON

### LUKE 15:11-31

#### INFO FOR TEACHERS

This parable is commonly referred to as the Parable of the Prodigal Son, yet it is helpful to identify it as the Parable of The Lost Son. As such, it follows in logical order after the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin. The themes of preciousness and pursuit are expanded upon in what Capon calls “an absolute festival of death”. Thanks be to God, death is followed by resurrection and that, as usual, ends up in a rip roaring party!

Capon highlights three “deaths” in this story. The first death occurs at the beginning of the story. The younger son says to his father “Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.” In asking for his inheritance, the son is asking his father to drop legally dead.

The second death partially occurs when the son is feeding the pigs. He realizes that life as he had it is over. The son, however, is still clinging ever so slightly to life. He realizes life as a son is over, but hopes to keep living as a hired hand. His complete death actually occurs when the son sees his father running toward him. As Capon says, “In the clarity of his resurrection, the boy suddenly sees that he is a dead son, that he will always be a dead son, and that he cannot by any efforts of his own or even by any gift of his father's, become a live anything else. And he understands too that if now, in this embrace, he is a dead son who is alive again, it is all because his father was himself willing to be dead in order to raise him up.”

The third death is the killing of the fatted calf. For Capon the fatted calf is the Christ figure. “The fatted calf proclaims that the party is what the father's house is all about” says Capon.

In summary, this story beautifully illustrates God's grace as His crazy initiative. We are forgiven for the sole reason that there is a Forgiver who desires to do just that. Like the prodigal, we may not believe it until we finally see it, but Jesus' parables are chock full of this message.

(We decided not to mention the older brother since he is not in the Jesus Storybook Bible).

## WELCOME QUESTIONS

Have you ever run away from home? Or know someone who has?

## STORY

Read the story from the Jesus Storybook Bible. (Attached).

## SUMMARY

This is a picture of grace—initiated by God—and we contribute only our death.

## ACTIVITY

Make a radio-style recording of the story. Teacher narrates, students make sounds and play role of sons, father, Jesus at end

Sounds: Whining, footsteps running away, laughter, clinking glasses, \$/coins jingling, tooting party hooters, pig sounds, clock, jumping, kissing sound.

## PRAYER

Thank you God for running to us and embracing us as we are.

\*\*Note: To prepare for the Great Banquet story next week, hand out the invitations (attached). See next week for more information.

## Running away

The story of the lost son, from Luke 15

JESUS TOLD this story about a boy who ran away: Once upon a time, there was a boy and his dad. Now, one day, the boy gets to thinking. *Maybe if I didn't have my dad around telling me what is good for me all the time, I'd be happier. He's spoiling my fun, he thinks. Does my dad really want me to be happy? Does my dad really love me?* The son never thought of that before. But suddenly he doesn't know anymore.

So the son goes to his father and says, "Dad, I'm better off without you. I can look after myself. Just give me my share of your money."

His father is sad but he won't force his boy to stay. So he gives his son what he wants.

The son takes the money and goes on a long, long journey to a far off country.

And everything's wonderful and perfect — for a while. He can go wherever he wants, do whatever he wants, be whoever he wants. He is the boss, he is free!

Sometimes he gets a strange, hungry, homesick feeling inside his heart, but then he just eats more, or drinks more, or buys more clothes, or goes to more parties until it goes away.



But soon his money runs out — and so do his friends. He ends up getting the only job he can find: feeding pigs. One day, he is so hungry and so desperate he even tries some piggy food —

"What am I doing?" he says suddenly, as if he has woken from a nightmare.

He spits — YUCK! — all of it — ICK! — out of his mouth.

"My father is rich, and here I am — in a pig sty, eating piggy food!"

He wipes his mouth and dusts himself off.

"I'm going home!"



As he starts for home though, he begins to worry. Dad won't love me anymore. I've been too bad. He won't want me for his son anymore. So he practices his I'm-Sorry-Speech.

All this time, what he doesn't know is that, day after day, his dad has been standing on his porch, straining his eyes, looking into the distance, waiting for his son to come home. He just can't stop loving him. He longs for the sound of his boy's voice. He can't be happy until he gets him back.

The son is still a long way off, but his dad sees him coming.

What will the dad do? Fold his arms and frown? Shout, "That'll teach you!" And, "Just you wait, young man!"

No. That's not how this story goes.

The dad leaps off the porch, races down the hill, through the gap in the hedge, up the road. Before his son can even begin his I'm-Sorry-Speech, his dad runs to him, throws his arms around him, and can't stop kissing him.

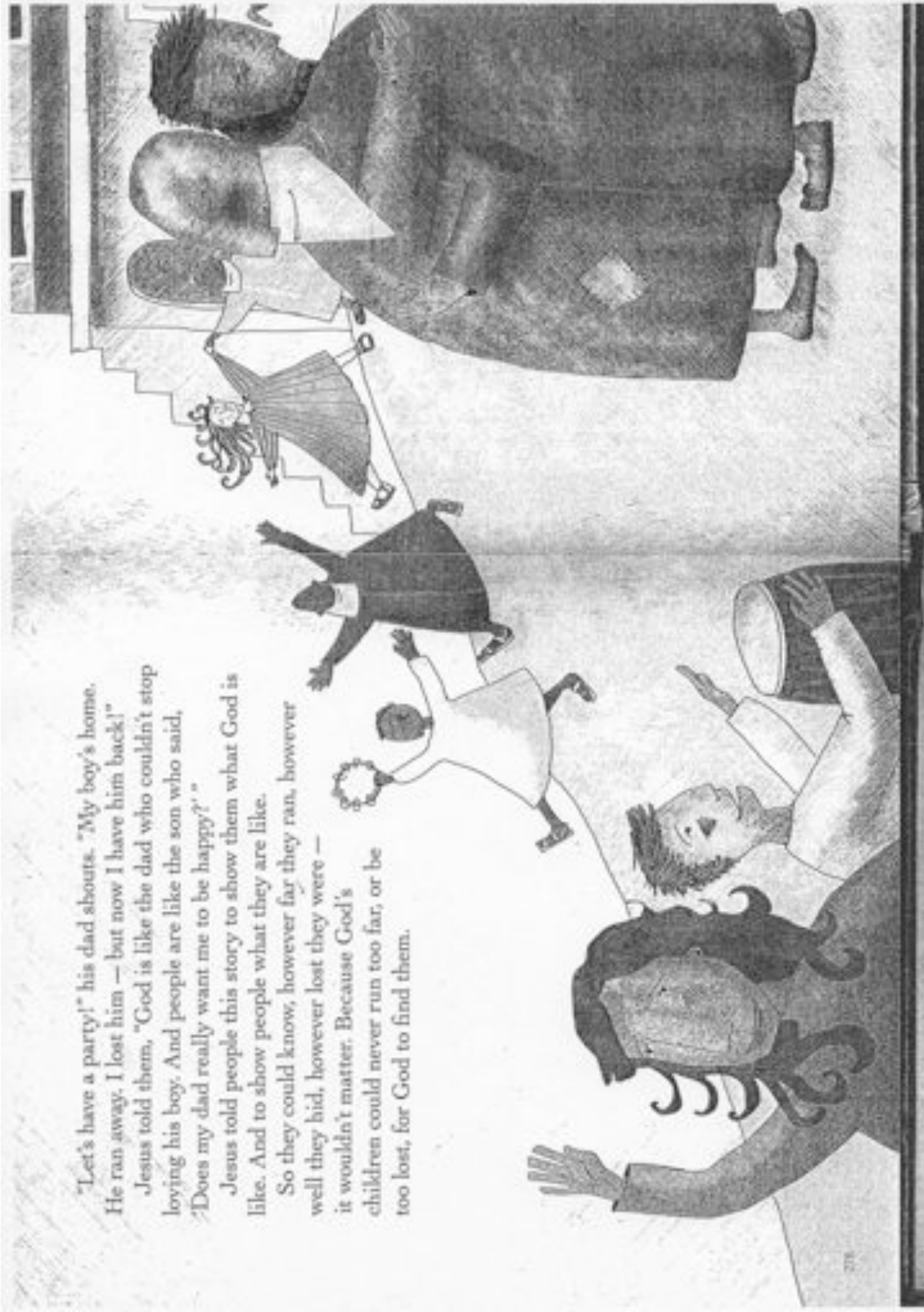


"Let's have a party!" his dad shouts. "My boy's home. He ran away. I lost him — but now I have him back!"

Jesus told them, "God is like the dad who couldn't stop loving his boy. And people are like the son who said, 'Does my dad really want me to be happy?'"

Jesus told people this story to show them what God is like. And to show people what they are like.

So they could know, however far they ran, however well they hid, however lost they were — it wouldn't matter. Because God's children could never run too far, or be too lost, for God to find them.





*The Children of Christ Episcopal Church cordially*

*invite you to a*

*Release party to celebrate our recording of*

*The Lost Son*

*Sunday April 3, 2011 at 10:10 a.m.*

SECRET\*\*\*You're part of a secret illuminating the Parable of the Great Banquet. Please come by the classroom at 10:10 on the morning of and regret that you cannot come to the party because you have some legitimate excuse.

## THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

### LUKE 14:15-24

#### INFO FOR TEACHERS

This story highlights two distinct themes that are repeated again and again in the parables of grace – the theme of God as the initiator and His delight in the lost and the lame, not the best and the brightest.

The story begins with a man instructing his servant to notify invited guests that it is time for the banquet. The invited guests appear to be respectable citizens as their comments mention property and marriage. Each gives an excuse as to why they cannot attend. Though these excuses are legitimate (property management and getting married), Capon describes the excuses as pointing to the root of the problem. Capon says “the parable portrays the pursuit of a sensible, successful life as something that will keep them/us out of the party altogether.” Once again Jesus has turned the established order of things upside down.

In the parable, the man reacts with anger to the reported rejections. Capon interprets this as “Jesus’s way of dramatizing the futility of ‘living’ as a way of salvation. He is saying that God works only with the lost and the dead – that he has no use for winners.” The idea here is that accepting the invitation is salvation; coming to join the banquet is the ultimate acknowledgement that no work, however important, useful or excused, is going to earn us a place in the great banquet in the kingdom of God.

Next the master instructs the servant to go out and bring in “the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” – a roster of Jesus’ usual Who’s Who. When this invitation doesn’t fill the banquet, the man geographically expands his invitation (from alleys and streets to country roads) to make sure that the house is completely filled.

What we see operating throughout the parable is the host’s dogged determination that the house be full. Grace – getting into the banquet -- is depicted here as a crazy initiative. “(It) works only on the untouchable, the unpardonable, and the unacceptable. It works, in short, by raising the dead, not by rewarding the living.”

#### WELCOME QUESTIONS

Have you ever been invited to something that you didn't go to? Or have you ever accepted an invitation and not gone? Why didn't you go—what was your excuse?

## STORY

Read the Scripture, Luke 14:15-24.

## SUMMARY

It is through God's initiation that the house is full.

## ACTIVITY

Host a Great Banquet Feast. The week before, invite "elite" members/staff of the church to the party. Secretly prompt these people to come by at the party hour with a legitimate excuse for their inability to come—"I have to work on my sermon," "I have to set up the altar," etc. At this point, recognize the children's disappointment and read the story of the Great Banquet. Then go out and find the "riffraff," we are using the smallest children and middle schoolers. Invite or even push them into the party (we cleared this with their leaders beforehand) and celebrate their presence at the party, giving no mind to those who couldn't attend. Then explain to the all the partygoers that the kingdom of God is like a party that he intends for us all to enjoy. We put up a piñata and played party games together.

## PRAYER

Thank you Lord for inviting us to the party. On account of Christ we are free to enjoy the delights you have put in our hearts.