

**Focus:** Caring for the Kingdom of God

**Materials:**

- Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest's vestment) and Altar Cloth
- CD: America's 25 Favorite Bible Songs
- Gospel: In lesson plan
- Book: The Jesus Storybook Bible
- Creation Flash cards
- Felt Board

**Gathering** (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: *Good Morning everyone, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Last week we talked about obeying God, today Jesus tells a story, a parable, about the Kingdom of God.*

**Opening Prayer**

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: *Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.*

*Let us pray.*

*Dear God, you care for us as tender plants in your garden. Help us to make beautiful flowers for you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Song/Movement**

*I Will Call Upon the Lord*, track: 17, from America's 25 Favorite Bible Songs

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc.

I will call upon the Lord  
Who is worthy to be praised  
So shall I be saved from my enemies

Refrain:

(Echo in parentheses)  
I will call upon the Lord (I will call upon the Lord)  
Who is worthy to be praised (Who is worthy to be praised )  
So shall I be saved from my enemies  
(So shall I be saved from my enemies )

Chorus: The Lord liveth, and  
blessed be the Rock  
And let the God of my salvation be  
exalted  
The Lord liveth, and blessed be the  
Rock  
And let the God of my salvation be  
exalted

Repeat the Chorus 2 times

**Memory Verse**

Say: *Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.*

*Chosen to go and bear fruit that will remain.*

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *God created the heaven and the earth so we could have a home. God wants us to take care of all creation. He wants us to care for things that will remain always. We can build a house or make a statue or plant a garden, but over time they will crumble and fall if no one cares for them. God sent Jesus to show us how to care for others and to care for the flowers and the trees Spreading kindness and love are things that remain—stay with us forever.*

### Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of Matthew.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *“Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it.”*

Read: None, pp. N/a,

#### Jesus told this parable:

*[Press palms together, then open them like a book]*

#### **A landowner planted a vineyard.**

*[Mime hoeing and wiping your brows]*

#### **He planted a hedge and built a watchtower.**

*[With your arms wrapped around an imaginary tower, raise arms]*

#### **He built a press to crush the grapes for wine.**

*[twist palms together in squishing motion]*

#### **Then he hired workers to care for his vineyard.**

*[Mime paying money to a group of people]*

#### **At harvest time, he sent his servants to the vineyard.**

*[point into the distance ]*

#### **The worker’s didn’t give them the produce for the landowner.**

*[cross arms on chest and shake head ‘no’]*

#### **Instead the beat and killed the servants**

*[raise your fists]*

#### **The landowner sent more servants and the workers did the same to them**

*[raise your fists]*

#### **Then the landowner sent his son.**

*[point to the distance]*

#### **He thought surely the workers would respect his son.**

*[tap forehead]*

#### **Instead, they beat and killed the son as well.**

*[raise your fists]*

#### **Jesus asked his listeners...**

*[Chatty hands, thumb to forefinger]*

#### **...what the landowner would do to the workers.**

*[firmly place hands on hips]*

#### **They said he would punish them severely...**

*[Shake a scolding finger]*

#### **...and find new workers**

*[point into the distance]*

#### **Jesus told them...**

*[chatty hand, thumb against fingers]*

**...that the kingdom of God is like this vineyard.**

*[point heavenward]*

**It will be taken from those who killed the prophets (the people God sent before Jesus)**

*[raise fists]*

**...and those who hate Jesus, his son**

*[Put your hand on your heart]*

**...and given to those who do God's will.**

*[extend generous, giving arms]*

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

#### **Discussion Starters:**

- *What story does Jesus tell?*
- *What do the workers do to the vineyard owner's servants and son?*
- *What will God do to those who do not obey him? (Keep them from his Kingdom— unless they repent)*
- *What does Jesus teach about God's kingdom?*

#### **Reflection on Reading:**

*In this parable, the owner of the vineyard, shows us what God is like. The workers are like the people who didn't listen to God's Word. They were selfish people and wanted to do things their own way. They didn't think it was fair that they had taken care of the farm and then had to give all the produce to the owner. Some people are like this still today.*

*The owner had given them a place to live and food to eat and paid them well, but they didn't think that was enough. God has given us all of creation and we get the portion that we need, even if sometimes it doesn't seem like enough.*

*Prophets were people who had a special relationship with God. They would travel around and tell others to obey God's word. The prophets were treated like the servants the owner sent. The people didn't want to hear what the prophets said and the prophets were treated harshly. Finally God sent us Jesus and some people treated him badly too and hung him on the cross to die. But we know that Jesus rose again and that if we treat others with kindness, share our things, thank God for the good things he gives us, we will live with him in the kingdom forever.*

**Gospel Activity**Activity 1:**God the Creator**

God made all of creation. He wants us to take care of others and all that he has made just like the vineyard owner had the workers take care of his vineyard.

Read the story The beginning: a perfect home, pp. 18-27 in The Jesus Storybook Bible.

Then show them the flash cards with the creation images and say:

These pictures show the story of creation, but they are out of order. Can you help me put them back in order?

As you read have them point to the picture that shows the verse you have just read.—Have a volunteer add the card to the felt board.

1. God separated the light from the dark
2. God made the sky to separate it from the water
3. God gathered the water into seas and called the dry areas “land” Then God blessed the land and it produced vegetation.
4. God made two great lights in the sky, the sun to govern the day and the moon for the night sky
5. God filled the sea with living creatures and the skies with birds
6. God blessed the land and it brought forth all kinds of creatures, tame, wild and crawling. Then God created Man and Woman to rule over everything he had created.
7. God blessed the day and made it a holy day of rest.

Activity 2:**Caring for Creation:**

We can show we are followers of Jesus by the ways we treat creation.

Use the cards to talk about ways that we can take care of creation:

1. God separated the light from the dark—Shut off lights when we leave a room
2. God made the sky to separate it from the water—Shut off the water when we are brushing our teeth.
3. God gathered the water into seas and called the dry areas “land” —Recycle, use less, reuse instead of new.
4. God made two great lights in the sky, the sun to govern the day and the moon for the night sky—Walk or ride a bike instead of using cars.
5. God filled the sea with living creatures and the skies with birds—take care of our pets, make sure others treat their pets with kindness.
6. God blessed the land and it brought forth all kinds of creatures, tame, wild and crawling. Then God created Man and Woman to rule over everything he had created.—Be kind to others, share our toys
7. God blessed the day and made it a holy day of rest.—Say our prayers, come to church each Sunday.

They may have other ideas, praise appropriate ideas.

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group-let the children color them if there is extra time

**Closing Prayer**

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who created us?*

*Do you believe in Jesus, who teaches us to love God and care for his creation?*

*Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps to make the right choice?*

**Sending Forth**

Say: *Show God that you want to be a part of his Kingdom, Listen to others, be kind to animals, don't waste water, love and forgive others.*

**Lining Up/Closing Song**

Play "*Change My Heart O' God*" track 23 from America's 25 Favorite Bible Songs while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.