

Focus: Everyone is invited to God's Kingdom

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: Adam Raccoon and the King's Big Dinner

Gathering (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: *Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about taking care of God's creation. This week Jesus tells us a story that shows us that God is very generous with his love.*

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 have given us great things. We offer you our thanks and praise. Help us to be generous to others and celebrate your love. In Jesus' name, we pray.

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.*

All are invited to God's Kingdom.

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

Say: *In the bible we hear all about God's goodness in all of creation. Because God is good, he wants everyone to live with him always. God's love and goodness are never-ending. God is faithful and loyal and will never give up on his people. He keeps inviting and forgiving, inviting and forgiving, throughout our lives.*

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]

The kingdom of heaven is like a royal wedding banquet.

[Place an imaginary crown on your head]

The king invited many guests.

[Extend generous, giving arms]

but no one came.

[Hold up empty hands, frown and shake head sadly]

The king sent his servants to invite his guests again.

[Point into the distance]

Some ignored the servant's invitation

[Yawn]

Others hurt and killed the servants.

[Raise angry fists]

The king was angry!

[Put your hands on your hips]

He sent soldiers to punish them.

[Point to the distance]

Then the king invited everyone he could find to the banquet.

[Extend wide welcoming arms]

He invited the good and bad alike.

[Gesture your arms to “come along”]

Strangers filled the hall, ready to feast.

[Use fingers to eat imaginary food, smile and pat tummy]

The king noticed one guest who had not dressed in his wedding party clothes.

[Mime talking with someone]

The king had him thrown out

[Thumb over shoulder]

Many are invited

[Extend wide welcoming arms]

Few are chosen.

[Mime counting fingers on one hand]

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

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

Discussion Starters:

- *What does Jesus say is like a banquet or party?*
- *What does the king do when the first guests do not come to his special banquet?*
- *Why does the king tell his servants to go out and invite everyone to the banquet?*
- *Who came to the feast?*

Reflection on Reading:

Jesus invites everyone to follow him, but some people don't follow him. Jesus was telling this story to the leaders of the church of long ago. Many of the leaders were jealous of Jesus because more people listened to him than to the leaders of the Jewish Faith. These leaders were more interested in their power than in learning from Jesus. They didn't want to listen to what Jesus had to say.

Jesus told the people that God loves them and they should turn away from bad choices and turn toward God's goodness. The leaders wanted the people to follow the leaders' rules, not God's rules. These are the people who don't follow Jesus. These are the people who don't come to the banquet that God gives for us.

Gospel Activity

Activity 1:

Read the book "**Adam Raccoon and the King's Big Dinner**"

Follow-up questions are located on the last page of the book. (Ignore the last one (about the Gospel of Luke))

Activity 2:

Jesus Says:

This game is played like Simons Says, but instead of saying "Simon Says", you say "Jesus says"

Pick a few actions ahead of time when you won't say – Jesus Says.

The gospels tell us what we should do to be like Jesus. We should pray, listen to and learn from the stories of Jesus, love and serve God and each other. We can say "yes" to God's invitation to be in the Kingdom by following Jesus.

Let's practice what Jesus has taught us to do.

Sample Actions-. No one is out, everyone gets another chance:

Hug your neighbor
Close your hands in prayer
Pick up your toys
Bow your head

Jesus says, make the sign of the cross
Clap your hands!
Go to Church-(March in place)

Say peace be with you to your neighbor
Say Alleluia
Jump one time
Shake hands with your neighbor

Praise God-Raise your hands up high
Jesus says, Look around you to find Jesus (put your hands to your like looking thru binoculars)

Feel free to make up some more on your own.

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 invites us to be a part of His Kingdom?*

Do you believe in Jesus, who tells everyone that God loves them and invites them to God's heavenly banquet?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who fills us with God's love?

Sending Forth

Say: Every Sunday, just before communion, the priest says, "Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." Let's go back into church and see if we can listen for Father to say this and in our hearts we can say, "Yes, Lord, I am happy. Thank you for inviting me."

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.