

February 2016

Dear Church Partners,

In this packet are seven free lessons for your use! My hope is that you will find this resource helpful for you as you interpret the “Change for Children” campaign to the young people of your church. While written primarily for a Children’s Sermon format, these object lessons could be used in a Sunday school setting, youth group, or even as sermon illustrations.

2016 marks the twentieth year I’ve been in children’s and youth ministry, and I have found that the object lessons I have used for children’s sermon times have been a very effective way of communicating the truth of God’s Word. Many of the adults in the congregations I’ve served have told me they preferred my children’s sermons to my “regular” sermons. Jesus taught in object lessons and word pictures, too, so it should be no surprise to us that this method is highly effective—surely Jesus knew what he was doing and set an example for us to follow!

These lessons have been carefully crafted around the stories of the Lenten season (Year C), how the Easter story impacts our hearts and lives, and the ways in which your church can connect to the ministry of Intermountain. I hope this resource blesses you, saves you time in preparation, and makes your workload a little lighter. It is my hope that our relationship will truly be a partnership of mutual benefit. As Intermountain’s chaplain, I want to be a resource to you and an encouragement in your work with children and families.

Perhaps you have already visited our website: www.intermountainministry.org ? It has regular posts about what we’ve been up to in ministry with the children in residence as well as hosting an ever expanding library of resources **free** for your use! I endeavor to update the content regularly, so I’d encourage you to check back at least twice a month. Any feedback or requests for specific types of resources or content are also welcome any time. We also have a church email newsletter that goes out twice a month, and if you would like to be on that list or add a youth minister or children’s ministry director to that mailing list, please let us know!

So, enjoy these lessons for now, and let me know what you think. I’d love to hear from you and build a stronger relationship between my chaplain’s ministry at Intermountain and the good work you are doing in your church and community.

Blessings,

Chris Haughee

Chris Haughee, Chaplain
chrish@intermountain.org or 406-465-9693

CHANGE 
for children

Week 1: “Tests and Timing”

Objects needed: Two bags of marshmallows, one open so you can hand each child a single marshmallow, and the other closed.

Theme/Main Idea: The temptations that Satan confronted Jesus with had more to do with timing than anything else. Jesus trusted God the Father to give him what he needed and what was his at the appropriate time. As we walk through Lent, can we be as patient as we wait on the Lord to meet our needs?



Presentation:

“How many of you like to eat? Mmm-mmm... me too! I like to eat so much that sometimes I eat things I know aren’t really good for me, but they taste good! [Take out marshmallows.]

What are these? Yep. Marshmallows... big yummy marshmallows. I’d like to give one to each of you. Would that be okay? But, before I do, what if I told you that you could have one yummy marshmallow now, or... IF you waited and just held on to that marshmallow, I’d meet you back here after church and you could show me that marshmallow, and I would give you 9 more... making how many? Yes! TEN total marshmallows. What would you say about that? [Pass out the marshmallows, wait for responses]

How many just want to eat the one marshmallow now? [response] How many would rather hold on to it and guard it, and then show me after church, earning another 9 marshmallows? [responses]

Very interesting. Did you know that this is the type of choice that Jesus had before him in the Bible lesson today? When Satan tempted Jesus with turning stones to bread, depending on God to send angels to protect him from a fall, or the chance to rule all the nations of the world... well, all these things were stuff that Jesus could have given into and said, ‘I deserve this. I want it now.’ Think about it, Jesus created the whole world, so if he wants to change a rock into bread, why not? Jesus is God the Father’s only Son, dearly loved, so Jesus might have thought, ‘Why not test my Father’s love by doing something dangerous and scary?’ And, finally, Jesus is God—King over everything. So, ruling over the nations? He might have thought, ‘Ok, that sounds reasonable. Someday everyone will bow their knee to me, so why not today?’

Wow. Kinda a big deal when you think about it that way! Why didn't Jesus just take the devil's bait and give in to one of those tests? I think it was because he knew that all the good things God the father wanted for him needed to also come WHEN the Father knows is best.

Waiting for God can be a tough thing. It can be as tough as holding on to a yummy marshmallow now, because you know you'll get even MORE later if you wait. But, waiting for God to answer our prayers and meet our needs always works out better than trying to get things done on our own. Let's pray for God's help through this season of Lent, as we wait on God and listen to him teach us and lead us.

Let's pray:

God, thank you for your presence in each of our lives. Give us patience to wait for all the good things you promise to those that love you and place their trust in you. When the little temptations of this life come our way, help us not trade in our heavenly treasures for the little trinkets this world can give us. Help us hold out for the best, YOUR best God—for us, and for our church and our community. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Key Text: Luke 4:1-13, New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

⁴ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River. The Spirit led him into the desert. ² There the devil tempted him for 40 days. Jesus ate nothing during that time. At the end of the 40 days, he was hungry.

³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man must not live only on bread.' " (Deuteronomy 8:3)

⁵ Then the devil led Jesus up to a high place. In an instant, he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ He said to Jesus, "I will give you all their authority and glory. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸ Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve.' " (Deuteronomy 6:13)

⁹ Then the devil led Jesus to Jerusalem. He had Jesus stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ It is written,

" 'The Lord will command his angels to take good care of you.

¹¹ They will lift you up in their hands.

Then you won't trip over a stone.' " (Psalm 91:11,12)

¹² Jesus answered, "Scripture says, 'Do not test the Lord your God.' " (Deuteronomy 6:16)

¹³ When the devil finished all this tempting, he left Jesus until a better time.

Week 2: “Chicken Little or God’s baby chick?”

Objects needed: A picture of a hen, a puppet or figurine of a hen. Preferably, you could find one with chicks to reinforce the message.

Theme/Main Idea: Even when we are scared the sky is falling, we can be sure that we have a God, who like a loving hen gathers her chicks under her wing, wants to comfort us and shelter us from harm.



Presentation:

“Good morning, children. I have a story I’d like to share with you today. Maybe you have heard this story before. It goes by a few names—Henny Penny or Chicken Little are the most common. I’ve even heard someone call this story ‘Chicken Licken!’ It’s a folk tale about a little chicken who jumps to conclusions and thinks the world is going to end. Ready for a story?”

ONE day, Chicken Little was picking up corn in the cornyard when – whack! Something hit her upon the head. “Goodness gracious me!” said Chicken Little, “the sky’s a-going to fall. I must go and tell the big boss.”

So she went along and she went along and she went along until she met Cocky-locky. “Where are you going, Chicken Little?” said Cocky-Locky. “Oh! I’m going to tell the big boss the sky’s a-falling,” says Chicken Little. “May I come with you?” says Cocky-Locky. “Certainly,” said Chicken Little. So Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky went to tell the big boss the sky was falling.

They went along, and they went along, and they went along, until they met Ducky-daddles. “Where are you going to, Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky?” said Ducky-Daddles. “Oh! We’re going to tell the big boss the sky’s a-falling,” said Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky. “May I come with you?” says Ducky-Daddles. “Certainly,” said Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky. So Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky and Ducky-Daddles went to tell the big boss the sky was a-falling.

So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, till they met Goosey-Loosey, “Where are you going to, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky and Ducky-Daddles?” said Goosey-Loosey. “Oh! We’re going to tell the big boss the sky’s a-falling,” said Chicken Little and Cocky-Locky and Ducky-Daddles. “May I come with you?” said Goosey-Loosey.

“Certainly,” said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky and Ducky-Daddles. So Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles and Goosey-Loosey went to tell the big boss the sky was a-falling.

So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, until they met Turkey-Lurkey. “Where are you going, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, and Goosey-Loosey?” says Turkey-Lurkey. “Oh! We’re going to tell the big boss the sky’s a-falling,” said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles and Goosey-Loosey. “May I come with you; Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles and Goosey-Loosey?” said Turkey-Lurkey. “Why, certainly, Turkey-Lurkey,” said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, and Goosey-Loosey. So Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey and Turkey-Lurkey all went to tell the big boss the sky was a-falling.

So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, until they met Foxy-woxy, and Foxy-woxy said to Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey and Turkey-Lurkey, “Where are you going, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey?” Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey said to Foxy-Woxy, “We’re going to tell the big boss the sky’s a-falling.”

“Oh! But this is not the way to the big boss, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey and Turkey-Lurkey,” said Foxy-Woxy, “I know the proper way. Shall I show it to you?”

“Why certainly, Foxy-woxy,” said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey. So Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, Turkey-Lurkey, and Foxy-Woxy all went to tell the big boss the sky was a-falling. So they went along, and they went along, and they went along, until they came to a narrow and dark hole. Now this was the door of Foxy-Woxy’s cave. But Foxy-woxy said to Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey, “This is the short way to the big boss’s place. You’ll soon get there if you follow me. I will go first and you come after, Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey.”

“Why of course, certainly, without doubt, why not?” Said Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey, and Turkey-Lurkey.

So Foxy-Woxy went into his cave, and he didn’t go very far but turned around to wait for Chicken Little, Cocky-Locky, Ducky-Daddles, Goosey-Loosey and Turkey-Lurkey. First Turkey-Lurkey went through the dark hole into the cave. He hadn’t got far when “Hrumph,” Foxy-Woxy swallowed up Turkey-Lurkey.

Then Goosey-Loosey went in, and “Hrumph,” she was eaten too.

Then Ducky-Daddles waddled down, and “Hrumph,” snapped Foxy-Woxy, and Ducky-Daddles made the next course.

Then Cocky-Locky strutted down into the cave and he hadn't gone far when "Snap, Hrumph!" went Foxy-Woxy.

But Foxy-Woxy had made two bites at Cocky-Locky, and when the first snap missed, he called out to Chicken Little. So she turned tail and ran back home. She never told the big boss the sky was a-falling.

Well, now that I am finished with my story, what do you think? [children respond]

I'll tell you what I think... I think that little chicken caused a lot of trouble for her friends by jumping to conclusions and getting very afraid. Rather than face her fear by turning to someone who could help, Chicken Little was too chicken to see that the sky WASN'T falling and that everything was okay.

Do you know Jesus had to deal with some 'Chicken Littles' in his day? Yes! It's true. They were so concerned about what Jesus should or shouldn't be doing, who he should have healed and when he should have done it, and all manner of things that... well... they missed that Jesus was really God's Son sent to show them God loved them and cared for them. In fact, rather than being like Chicken Little, Jesus said that God wanted them to be like little chicks willing to be pulled in close and warm by a loving God.

[pull out picture of Hen and chicks, or figurine, etc.]

See this? Yes, it's a Mama Hen. To protect her chicks, she will hide them under her wings. In Luke, chapter 13, verse 34, Jesus says, "I have wanted to be like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. And you would not let me."

Next time you feel scared and worried, like the sky is falling, will you remember to be like a little chick and not like Chicken Little? Yes? [hopefully children respond and nod heads or say yes]

God wants to help us with our big worries and to know that God loves us like a hen loves her chicks.

Let's pray:

God, thank you for loving us so well. Like a mother hen, you want to shelter us from the big and scary things in the world, even if they are just imaginations. When we feel like the sky is falling, you are strong to protect us. Help us to give all our worries and cares to you. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Key Text: Luke 13:31-35, New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

Jesus' Sadness Over Jerusalem

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus. They said to him, "Leave this place. Go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

³² He replied, "Go and tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons. I will keep on healing people today and tomorrow. And on the third day I will reach my goal.' ³³ In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day. Certainly no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

³⁴ "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and throw stones in order to kill those who are sent to you. Many times I have wanted to gather your people together. I have wanted to be like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. And you would not let me. ³⁵ Look, your house is left empty. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' " (Psalm 118:26)

Week 3: “When will we ‘fig’-ure it out?”

Objects needed: Fig Newtons (preferably one small package, and one large package)

Theme/Main Idea: God waits patiently for us to respond to his love... what are we waiting for?

Presentation:

“Good morning! How are you this morning? Are you filling up your change cans at home or in your Sunday school class? I sure hope so! It makes a big difference in the lives of the children at Intermountain. You know what else makes a big difference... at least for me when I am hungry?”



[Take out small package of Fig Newtons]

That’s right! Food. Food is really important, right?! In fact, I am so hungry, I am going to eat some right now.

[eat all of the small package of Fig Newtons and really ham it up... Mmmm... Mmmm... so good, etc.]

There... much better. Not hungry anymore. [pause]

Why are you all looking at me like that? Oh, you thought I had some for you? Hmmm... maybe I should have shared? Well, I’ll see what I can do about that later. But first I want to tell you a story. Actually, it’s a story Jesus told...

“A man had a fig tree,” Jesus said. “It was growing in his vineyard. When he went to look for fruit on it, he didn’t find any. So he went to the man who took care of the vineyard. He said, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree. But I haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’

“‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year. I’ll dig around it and feed it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

What an interesting story, right? Do you think Jesus was really talking about fig trees?

[kids respond]

Well, here's one thing I get from the story...

In the story, we're supposed to think, 'Yes. That is a really reasonable way to treat a tree that hasn't produced any fruit for three years.' Cut it down... why not?

Then, we are supposed to see how reasonable it is wait and hold out hope for maybe one more year, and with special attention, maybe the tree will bear fruit.

But, what about people? How long do we give them before we cut them down or cut them off? God shows us love and patience but I am wondering, does he get tired and want to be rid of us if we aren't doing what we are supposed to? [children respond]

No. God doesn't. God keeps patiently waiting for us, loving and caring for us way beyond what might be considered reasonable. And, I am so thankful for that! Let's pray and thank God for just how patiently and loving he cares for us until we do what we should... which is not only to respond to God's love, but to share that love with others... which is why...

[take out larger package of Fig Newtons]

I think I should share with you some of what I was greedily just enjoying myself. Do you think that's a good idea? [children respond enthusiastically] Yeah, me too.

Let's pray:

God, thank you for so patiently loving us. We are glad that, unlike the fig tree in the story, we can see the fruit in our lives as a result of your love flowing through us to others. For those who have not responded yet to Jesus' call, or maybe haven't got much fruit to show for all the love you have poured into them... Prompt them, Holy Spirit, to open their hearts to you this day. Bless our ongoing collection for Change for Children, and may it be a great way that we can show that we are 'fig trees' bearing much fruit! In Jesus' name, Amen."

Key Text: Luke 13:1-9 (NIrV)

Some people who were there at that time told Jesus about certain Galileans. Pilate had mixed their blood with their sacrifices. ² Jesus said, “These people from Galilee suffered greatly. Do you think they were worse sinners than all the other Galileans? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you turn away from your sins, you will all die too. ⁴ Or what about the 18 people in Siloam? They died when the tower fell on them. Do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you turn away from your sins, you will all die too.”

⁶ Then Jesus told a story. “A man had a fig tree,” he said. “It was growing in his vineyard. When he went to look for fruit on it, he didn’t find any. ⁷ So he went to the man who took care of the vineyard. He said, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree. But I 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. I’ll dig around it and feed it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’ ”

Week 4: “The Father’s Heart is full of Mercy”

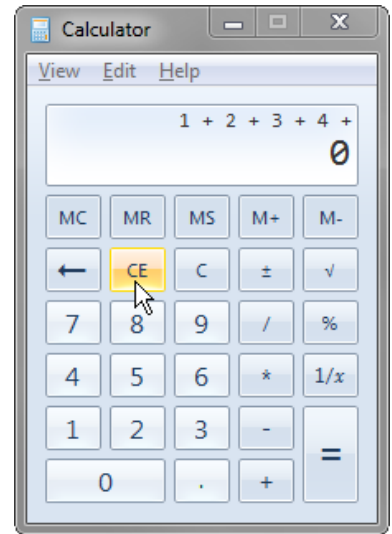
Objects needed: A calculator.

Theme/Main Idea: God doesn’t keep a running total on all every bad things we have done, nor does God forget about all the good you have done because of the last time you “did something bad.” When we ask for forgiveness, it is wiped away... cleared out like on a calculator when you hit “CE”—“clear entry.” Then, we can continue doing good and adding to the work of God’s Kingdom.

Presentation:

“Have you ever wondered what all the buttons on a calculator are for? I mean, there are some buttons I don’t think I’ve ever used.

[Take out calculator]



Take a look at this calculator. Do you know what these symbols mean? I get the numbers, that’s pretty easy... 1... 2... 3... 4... and so on. But what about this symbol? [point to addition symbol] Is that a little cross? No? What is it?

[children respond]

Yes... it’s for addition! Good. How about this one? [you can continue with various symbols until all the children are engaged]. Great answers, everyone!

Now, here’s one that might be a little trickier. See this one? It says, “CE.” What does that mean?

[children take turns guessing]

Well, it’s not “clear everything,” which is what I used to think. And, it’s not anyone’s initials. It means, “clear entry.” Do you know what that means? Do you know what that helps you do?

Well, let’s say you are adding up a list of numbers... like, maybe we want to know what $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5$ is. So, you put in, [do this on the calculator as you narrate the steps] 1, hit the add sign, then 2, then the add sign, then 3, then the add sign, then... oh no! I just hit the number 7 instead of 4! Arg! Now I have to start all over because I made a mistake!!

But wait... let's try the 'CE' button. It has the power to clear out my last entry without wiping out all the work I have done up to that point.

[hit 'CE' to erase the 7]

There! No more 7. Now I can add my last two numbers... 4... hit the add sign... and 5. And, finally, equals... what is it? Yes. The answer is 15. Cool, right?

[This would be a fun time to reinforce for some of the kids that 'math is fun/cool'... never hurts, right? Maybe, "Hey mom and dad, I just got your son/daughter to say math was cool! Alright!]

Now, we aren't calculators, but I think we can learn some spiritual lessons from what we just did. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 13, verse 5, he writes, 'Love keeps no record of wrongs.'

Notice he doesn't say, 'Love doesn't keep records.' Because, of course love keeps track of all the wonderful things we do. Someday, we'll come before God and God will say, 'Look at all the amazing things you did to show love to others in my name. Well done! Let's celebrate!'

And, we might think... 'But, what about all the bad things I did?' And God will have no idea what we are talking about! Why? Well, because when we ask for forgiveness, God hits the 'CE' button... clear entry! And, it is as if that mistake had never occurred. And, better yet, all the good we have done doesn't get wiped out with it... it's still there!

Now, Jesus didn't have calculators to make his point to his listeners, but he did tell a story about two brothers and a dad. The younger brother took his inheritance early, left the family, and wasted it all. He was ashamed of his behavior and dragged himself home. Perhaps he thought that all the bad he had done would wipe out any good—any love—his Father had for him. But, the Father ran to meet him on the road as he returned, interrupted his apology, and celebrated his return. That Father hit 'CE' and picked up right where they had left off, loving him and giving him the best he could of all he had. The older brother had a hard time with this, just like we have a hard time REALLY believing that when we've asked for forgiveness, Jesus forgives, and the Heavenly Father wipes out any record of wrong doing.

So, next time you are holding a calculator, think about that 'CE' button, maybe say a little prayer like we will now, and be VERY thankful that we serve a God like the Father in the story, not like the older brother.

Let's pray:

"God, thank you for forgiving us and hitting 'CE'—clear entry. When you look at us, you see your beautiful sons and daughters, forgiven and redeemed in Jesus' name. We can keep a record of our own wrongs, but you certainly don't. As the Bible says, 'when we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and forgives our sins and cleanses us from all wrong.' Amazing. Hear our hearts this morning. Forgive us any wrong that we have done that we are still holding on to. And, ultimately, Lord, help us to know how deeply you love and care for us. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Key Text: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 (NIRV)

The tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were whispering among themselves. They said, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³ Then Jesus told them a story...

¹¹ Jesus continued, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger son spoke to his father. He said, 'Father, give me my share of the family property.' So the father divided his property between his two sons.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son packed up all he had. Then he left for a country far away. There he wasted his money on wild living. ¹⁴ He spent everything he had. Then the whole country ran low on food. So the son didn't have what he needed. ¹⁵ He went to work for someone who lived in that country. That person sent the son to the fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The son wanted to fill his stomach with the food the pigs were eating. But no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "Then he began to think clearly again. He said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough food! But here I am dying from hunger! ¹⁸ I will get up and go back to my father. I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven. And I have sinned against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer fit to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." ' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him. He was filled with tender love for his son. He ran to him. He threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.'

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattest calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate.

²⁴ This son of mine was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “The older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants. He asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come home,’ the servant replied. ‘Your father has killed the fattest calf. He has done this because your brother is back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry. He refused to go in. So his father went out and begged him.

²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve worked like a slave for you. I have always obeyed your orders. You never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

³⁰ But this son of yours wasted your money with some prostitutes. Now he comes home. And for him you kill the fattest calf!’

³¹ “ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me. Everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad. This brother of yours was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found.’ ”

Week 5: “Will our love for God ever be wasted?”

Objects needed: Play money and a watch or some other timepiece

Theme/Main Idea: There are a lot of ways we can “spend” both time and money. We will never regret what we invest in God’s work, because it will last.

Presentation:

“Who here likes money? [wait for responses]

Why do you like money? [kids will probably talk about things they can buy with money]

So... what you are saying is that it’s not the money you like so much, but it’s what can be done with the money. Interesting. We’ll get back to that in a moment. But, today, I actually have two items.

[take out both the play money and the watch or time-telling device]

Do you know what these two items are? [kids respond] That’s right... play money, because I don’t have that much real money but I wanted you to get the idea of what a LOT of money would look like, and a watch.

Here’s another question: what do these two items have in common? Can you guess?

[children respond]

Ooh, all good guesses, but I was thinking of this similarity: both time and money can be spent! Yes, we take money and buy things, and we sometimes talk about investing our time or spending it on things that are important.

In the Bible story for today, a woman takes something very expensive—a sweet smelling and rare perfume—and uses it to do something nice for Jesus. She pours it on his feet!

I am seeing some funny looks. What is so funny? Oh, maybe you are thinking what Jesus’ disciples were thinking. One even said, ‘Why did you let her do that, Jesus? That was worth a lot of money! What a waste... we could have sold it and helped a lot of people!’



And, most of us hearing that story might think, ‘That disciple had a point! It does seem like a waste. I wonder what Jesus was thinking.’

Well, luckily, we don’t have to guess. Jesus tells us what he was thinking. He saw the supposedly wasteful act for what it was: an act of love. The woman took something that had either cost her a lot of money, a lot of time, or some combination of both. And, for her, it wasn’t too much to ask that she give it all to Jesus to show him what he meant to her.

But what does that mean for us? Well, when we love someone or something, it usually shows in what others might consider ‘wasteful’ behavior. We spend hours and hours talking, or texting, or writing the one we love. We buy gifts and we go out for fancy dinners. We treat other loved ones this way to show we love them and they are worth the expense. But, what does God get from us?

The heart of love asks, ‘How much can I afford to spend—time and money to show God how much he means to me?’

The heart not captured by the love of God is more *reasonable*, and wonders, ‘How little can I do and still be okay?’

God has given us everything, even his son Jesus, because his love for us is HUGE! Let us consider the love that the woman in the story showed—giving up something very expensive and very dear to her—to show that Jesus was even more important.

Let’s pray:

God, thank you for giving us everything we could ever want in Jesus. Help our hearts, minds, and souls to be captured by your love. The time and money we invest in you, God, is never wasted. The toys we buy here on earth won’t last forever, but our love and relationship with you will. That is time and money well spent. Speaking of money, Lord, bless that offering for Intermountain’s Change for Children that we are a part of. Help increase our generosity so other children can know your love and the love of a family. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Key Text: John 12:1-8, NIV

It was six days before the Passover Feast. Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived. Lazarus was the one Jesus had raised from the dead. ² A dinner was given at Bethany to honor Jesus. Martha served the food. Lazarus was among the people at the table with Jesus. ³ Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard. It was an expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the sweet smell of the perfume.

⁴ But Judas Iscariot didn't like what Mary did. He was one of Jesus' disciples. Later he was going to hand Jesus over to his enemies. Judas said, ⁵ "Why wasn't this perfume sold? Why wasn't the money given to poor people? It was worth a year's pay." ⁶ He didn't say this because he cared about the poor. He said it because he was a thief. Judas was in charge of the money bag. He used to help himself to what was in it.

⁷ "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "The perfume was meant for the day I am buried. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you. But you won't always have me."

Week 6/Palm Sunday: “Pet rocks don’t talk”

Objects needed: If possible, a “pet rock” decorated with eyes, mouth, etc. If not a “pet rock,” then just any old rock will do!

Theme/Main Idea: Jesus wants us to use our words and actions to show that we know He is God’s Son and our Savior.

Presentation:

“Good morning, boys and girls! I have a question for you before I show you what is in my box. Here it is... How many of you have a pet?”



[Kids raise hands, possibly offering the kids of pets they have and their names, etc. Let the children answer, but cut the responses short if it goes more than 20-30 secs. One way to involve all the children is to take a “poll” and have kids raise hands for different kinds of pets they might have: dogs, cats, birds, turtles, etc.]

Well, my pet is here in this box. It is very well behaved. Would you like to see it?

[Take rock out of the box you brought it in, or bag, or your pocket... whatever.]

What is it? [A rock!] What do you think of my pet? [Kids might think it is silly, funny, dumb...]

Some of you don’t seem to appreciate my pet. But let me tell you something:

In 1975... ancient history for all of you kids, I know... in 1975, a man named Gary Dahl was talking with his friends who were all complaining about their pets. They complained about feeding, paying vet bills, cleaning up after them... all sorts of things. Gary joked about a rock being the perfect pet, and a few months later he started selling pet rocks! You may think the idea is silly, but he sold enough of them that he became a millionaire. Wow! Apparently a lot of people thought a rock would make a great pet, too.

But, let me ask you... can a rock play with you? [NO.] Can it fetch a stick or roll over? [NO]. Is it fun to cuddle with? [NO!] Okay... one last question... does a rock make any noise? Like, can it talk or bark or sing or say anything? [NO!!!]

What if I were to tell you that there was one time in history when the rocks almost could have shouted and sung out? Do you know when that was? [children respond]

Yes! It was Palm Sunday. The day Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. When Jesus was told to tell his followers to be quiet and to stop praising him as the Messiah, the son of David... the one who had come in the name of the Lord, well... Jesus told them that he couldn't tell them to be silent. And, here's the kicker... even if he could have made them silent, Jesus said the rocks on the ground and all around them would have started to shout and sing his praises!

Wow! It almost makes me wish the people would have been quiet. It would have been really cool to see a rock sing! But, as it is... well, my pet rock doesn't do much of anything. And, I guess that's okay.

I'd hate for my rock to start praising God for Jesus because I wasn't willing to. How about you? Wouldn't you rather sing and praise Jesus yourself than count on the rocks to do it? Yes, me too.

Will you pray with me?

"God, we thank you that the rocks don't need to cry out on our behalf. We praise you for filling our hearts with joy and causing us to sing and shout your praises. Our joy is so great, we can't keep it to ourselves. We want to share this joy with everyone, and especially with the children of Intermountain. Bless our efforts, and bless our Change for Children cans, that as we fill them with our gifts, You might fill us with your love, grace, and peace. Amen."

Key Text: Luke 19:37-40, (NIRV)

³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

⁴⁰ "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Easter Morning/Week 7: —Collection day for Change for Children!

Objects needed: a few loose pennies or coins, and a jar FULL of pennies or coins

Theme/Main Idea: By itself, a penny isn't worth very much. But lots of pennies together can buy much more! Small gifts can seem insignificant alone, but together many small gifts can be used by God to make a huge difference.

Presentation:

"I see you have brought your change cans back with you today! That's great! I can hear the satisfying sound of clinking coins being moved around in your cans. To help us focus during this time, however, why don't we pass all those cans to me...? [Take a moment to collect the cans from the children, thanking each of them]

Wow! Look at all this... fantastic! And, this leads us right into what I wanted to share with you today.

[hold up a penny]

What is this? Right! It's a penny. What can you buy with a penny these days? Anything? No, not really... not anymore. When I was a child, you could still buy candy for a penny in the store... now, well, it costs at least a quarter, right? That's 25 pennies! Boy, how things have changed.

Did you know that the government is talking about not making pennies anymore? It seems it costs more to make them than they are actually worth! In fact, our neighbors to the north in Canada have stopped making pennies, and now every purchase gets rounded up (or down?) to the nearest nickel. The penny doesn't get much respect.

A penny isn't worth much. We know that. And, sometimes we might feel like what we are doing for God isn't worth much either. No one seems to notice it, or nothing seems to change. Sometimes we might think... 'Why bother?!'



Psalm 118:22 says, “The stone the builders didn’t accept, has become the most important stone of all.”

Here’s another way of putting it, my paraphrase, if you will: “You know that stone that got thrown out because nobody thought it was worth building with? Yes... that stone in the trash heap! THAT stone has now become the most important one in the whole building!” Was God talking about stones when this verse was written? No. God was talking about his one and only Son, Jesus!

God the Father took his Son, Jesus, a person that was so looked down upon that we killed him even though he didn’t do anything wrong... THAT Jesus has become the most important person ever to live on earth. Because Jesus came to live with us, died for our sins, and rose on Easter morning we all have hope of new life and freedom from sin! Amazing!

You know what else is amazing? Let’s see... though a penny by itself isn’t worth much... let’s take a look at what we have here... [hold up your jar of pennies, as well as some of the jars the children have brought in] We’ve got lots of pennies and other coins here! Lots of little coins making one big collection! Wow! You guys are amazing... great job!

All together, we are making a difference. That’s why it’s important to remember that our efforts are not isolated. We are doing what we do for Jesus’ sake alongside many others that also love Jesus. Our Change for Children jars will join those from many other churches and many other families. Added up, it will make a big difference. God can take lowly little pennies and make them the most important part of what He is doing in the lives of children at Intermountain.

Thank you. Today makes my heart very happy, and I can see it makes you happy, too. Let’s pray and thank God for this opportunity we have been given to take all our gifts and prayers and add them to the amazing work that He is doing at Intermountain...

“God, take our small gifts and multiply them many times. You are in the business, God, of taking what we would count as nothing much at all—throw away junk, even—and using it to build your coming Kingdom. Bless our change can offering, Jesus, not for our sake, but for yours, and for the sake of the families and children at Intermountain. As we have been blessed, we seek to be a blessing. As you have encouraged our hearts, we pray that our efforts and our gifts would encourage others. In Jesus name, Amen.”

Key Text: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, because he is good.
His faithful love continues forever.

² Let the people of Israel say,
“His faithful love continues forever.”

¹⁴ The LORD gives me strength. I sing about him.
He has saved me.

¹⁵ Shouts of joy ring out in the tents of godly people.
They praise him for his help in battle.
They shout, “The LORD’s powerful right hand has done mighty things!

¹⁶ The LORD’s powerful right hand has won the battle!
The LORD’s powerful right hand has done mighty things!”

¹⁷ I will not die. I will live.
I will talk about what the LORD has done.

¹⁸ The LORD has really punished me.
But he didn’t let me die.

¹⁹ Open the gates of the temple for me.
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD.
Only those who do what is right can go through it.

²¹ LORD, I will give thanks to you, because you answered me.
You have saved me.

²² The stone the builders didn’t accept
has become the most important stone of all.

²³ The LORD has done it.
It is wonderful in our eyes.

²⁴ The LORD has done it on this day.
Let us be joyful and glad in it.