

February 1, 2017

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, though none of these lessons are dependent on your church’s participation in Change for Children. 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!

In my twenty years in children and youth ministry, 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 congregation would tell 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 (Revised Common Lectionary Readings- Year A), 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.

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,



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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: Matthew 4:1-11, New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

¹ The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert. There the devil tempted him. ² After 40 days and 40 nights of going without eating, Jesus was hungry.

³ The tempter came to him. He said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man doesn't live only on bread. He also lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Deuteronomy 8:3)

⁵ Then the devil took Jesus to the holy city. He had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. It is written, "'The Lord will command his angels to take good care of you. They will lift you up in their hands. Then you won't trip over a stone.'" (Psalm 91:11,12)

⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Deuteronomy 6:16)

⁸ Finally, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain. He showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ "If you bow down and worship me," he said, "I will give you all of this."

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Get away from me, Satan! It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve.'" (Deuteronomy 6:13)

¹¹ Then the devil left Jesus. Angels came and took care of him.

Week 2: “Are you a big baby?”

Objects needed: A baby doll, preferably one that looks like a newborn infant.

Theme/Main Idea: Sometimes we want to be so big and grown up, we have a hard time realizing that we are like a child to God. Just like a baby depends on someone to care for it, we need to depend on God to care for us.

Presentation:

“I have something today to show you, children, that I bet each of you has seen before. There might be some of you who think you are too big to play with this toy any more, and some of you might really like to play with this and pretend, and you’d have a great time. Want to see what I am talking about? [Take out baby doll]

Yes! It’s a baby doll. I can already see some of the boy’s eyes rolling... What? You think you are too big and tough to play with a baby doll? [wait for responses]

I wonder if my friend Nick (short for Nicodemus) felt that same way when he met Jesus? Well, he’s sort of my friend, anyways. I know him pretty well from reading about him in the Bible.

You see, Nicodemus was a teacher of God’s law. He was pretty smart. He would have been an A+ Sunday School teacher. So, even though he thought he had most of the “God-stuff” figured out, he recognized that Jesus might have something to teach him! But, as is sometimes the case with really smart people, he didn’t want to appear to others as if he needed to learn from Jesus—a son of a carpenter from a back-woods town in Galilee, someone who clearly didn’t have the same level of education as he had. Well, Jesus was probably young enough to be Nicodemus’ son! So, to avoid other’s questions and prying eyes, Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night.

While they talk, Jesus tells Nicodemus something he has a hard time wrapping his considerable brain around—Nicodemus must set aside all he THINKS he knows about God, humble himself, and be born again like a little baby!

WHAT?!? I don’t know about you, but when I was a kid, the last thing I wanted anyone to call me was a little baby. How many of you have ever been treated like a baby and you didn’t like it? [children respond]



You see, Nicodemus had the same reaction we all have when we learn about Jesus. The type of trust and dependence on God Jesus wants us to have means we have to set aside all our smarts, our talents, our skills, and whatever we think we have learned about God. Jesus said to Nicodemus what he says to us, “I tell you the truth, you must be born again.” Not a rebirth physically, like Nicodemus thought at first, but a spiritual birth that starts the growth of spiritual maturity in your life. And, if you ever want to be grown up in God’s sight, it’s your spirit you need to feed and take care of.

One last thing... God has given us everything we need to grow spiritually. But, just because someone looks old, like Nicodemus surely did, doesn’t mean they are not a “big baby” in God’s sight! And, being God’s baby isn’t a bad thing... it’s the place you start in your walk with Jesus. Then as you learn, pray, worship, and serve as God leads you... Well, you start to grow up spiritually. And then, my friends, no one could call you a big baby in Christ!

Let’s pray:

God, thank you for the change you have brought to each of our lives. For the young ones here, and the older ones overhearing, help any who haven’t set aside their own way of living to be born again by your Spirit have the courage to come to Jesus just as Nicodemus did. Sometimes, God, we have to admit we don’t have it all figured out. We need to be changed from the inside out. Spirit, we thank you, also, for the other type of change... the change that is the money we are gathering in our Change for Children cans this Lenten season. Bless our efforts to help the children of Intermountain experience the same joy we have in you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Key Text: John 3:1-6, New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus. He was one of the Jewish rulers. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. We know that God is with you. If he weren’t, you couldn’t do the miraculous signs you are doing.”

³ Jesus replied, “What I’m about to tell you is true. No one can see God’s kingdom without being born again.”

⁴ “How can I be born when I am old?” Nicodemus asked. “I can’t go back inside my mother! I can’t be born a second time!”

⁵ Jesus answered, “What I’m about to tell you is true. No one can enter God’s kingdom without being born through water and the Holy Spirit. ⁶ People give birth to people. But the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised when I say, ‘You must all be born again.’”

Week 3: “Need a drink?”

Objects needed: A box of saltine crackers, a bottle of water (or several bottles... as you might want to give each child a bottle)

Theme/Main Idea: Only Jesus meets the need of a thirsty soul.

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 saltines.]

That’s right! Food. Food is really important, right?! In fact, I am so hungry, I am going to eat some right now. [This is where you get to do your “Cookie Monster” impersonation and shove A LOT of crackers in your mouth].

Mmm-fff. Uh-oh. I think I forgot something... my mouth is really dry [it’s bad manners, but will make more of an impact on the kids if you say this with the crackers still in your mouth]. I need something! What do I need?

[wait for responses]

Yes! Something to drink! Thank goodness you are all here to help take care of me. I have some water around here somewhere... [pull out water bottles and open one to drink. Make a BIG deal out of how refreshing it is and how much better you are now that you have washed down the crackers]

Ahh! So much better. You know what? This reminds me of a story from the Bible. Jesus met a woman by a well who was really thirsty, too. But, unlike me, she was thirsty for a different reason. It wasn’t because of the bad choice to shove a bunch of saltines in her mouth. No, she had made other bad choices. She had made bad choices about relationships with people.



She was trying to quench a thirst for love and belonging with other people rather than with God. She had tried and failed many times to love and be loved in relationships and it just wasn't working. Something was still missing. Down deep in her soul she was SO thirsty.

And then she met Jesus.

Jesus told the woman that he could meet her needs. She could know him and grow closer to God and she would never have that thirst again. She could stop looking to other people to make her happy and fulfilled, and instead she could let Jesus fill up her heart and soul.

Well, just like me with the saltines, she jumped at the chance to have her thirst quenched! More than that, she got so excited about not being thirsty anymore, she thought about all the other unhappy and unfulfilled people she knew in her home town. She thought—they are just as miserable and thirsty in their hearts and souls as I was... I have to make sure they meet Jesus, too!

This woman had a lot in common with the children and families we work with at Intermountain. Something has broken down in a relationship because it's grown hard to trust and depend on another person, a caregiver, a child or a parent. Jesus is a big part of the healing that needs to happen in these young people's lives. They need to know that God has put wonderful people around us to care for us and love us, but that ultimately there is a thirst for love and belonging that only Jesus can meet fully. Only in a relationship with him will our thirst be fully quenched.

Let's pray:

God, thank you for meeting our needs for relationship, love, and care in your Son, Jesus. Just like the woman in the story, it is easy for us to try and fill our needs with things that just leave us thirsting for more. We long, Holy Spirit, to be filled up with you... Filled so much that our joy, just like the woman AFTER she met Jesus, that our love and caring spills out towards others! Continue to bless our efforts to fill our change cans for the children at Intermountain, working so hard on their relationships and learning more about Jesus every day, just like us. Thank you that we can be part of the answer to their longing to have their thirst for true love and acceptance met in relationship with you. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Key Text: John 4:5-18, 39-42 (NIRV)

⁵ [Jesus] came to a town in Samaria called Sychar. It was near the piece of land Jacob had given his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there. Jesus was tired from the journey. So he sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A woman from Samaria came to get some water. Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

⁸ His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew. I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" She said this because Jews don't have anything to do with Samaritans.

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "You do not know what God's gift is. And you do not know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would have asked him. He would have given you living water."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you don't have anything to get water with. The well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"

¹² "Our father Jacob gave us the well. He drank from it himself. So did his sons and his flocks and herds. Are you more important than he is?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "All who drink this water will be thirsty again. ¹⁴ But anyone who drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty. In fact, the water I give him will become a spring of water in him. It will flow up into eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water. Then I will never be thirsty. And I won't have to keep coming here to get water."

¹⁶ He told her, "Go. Get your husband and come back."

¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands. And the man you have now is not your husband. What you have just said is very true."

³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from the town of Sychar believed in Jesus. They believed because of the woman's witness. She said, "He told me everything I've ever done."

⁴⁰ Then the Samaritans came to him and tried to get him to stay with them. So he stayed two days.

⁴¹ Because of his words, many more people became believers.

⁴² They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said. We have now heard for ourselves. We know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Week 4: “Blind Man’s Bluff”

Objects needed: A blindfold.

Theme/Main Idea: Temporary blindness might be fun, like when we put on a blindfold for a game. But just like being blind presents some real difficulties in life, being spiritually blind is a great danger for many people who don’t “see” Jesus for who he is: God’s Son and our Savior!

Presentation:

“Have you ever played ‘Blind Man’s Bluff?’ Maybe you have played something like it... I know a lot of kids who are familiar with the game ‘Marco Polo.’ They both work kinda the same way. The person who is it closes their eyes, or in ‘Blind Man’s Bluff’ they wear a blindfold.

The other players scatter out. Then, in Blind Man’s Bluff, the person who is it spins around 5 times and then yells ‘freeze.’ Everyone else has to stay in the spot they ran to. Then, the ‘blind man’ calls out, ‘Blind Man’s...’ and the others respond from their places, ‘Bluff!’ They can disguise their voices and move a little in their spots, as long as their feet stay still. The next person to be ‘it’ as the Blind Man is the first person to be found by the blindfolded child searching, groping about and calling ‘Blind Man’s...’ over and over again until they find someone. [Take out blindfold]



Do I have a volunteer to wear the blindfold today? [wait for a volunteer] Okay, I am going to tie this blindfold around your eyes so you can’t see. We’re not actually going to play the game right now, because I am not sure that would be safe in this setting, but I do want to know how you feel right now... How has putting the blindfold on changed things for you? Do you remember where everyone is sitting? Do you think you could find your way back to your family in the pews? [wait for responses]

Here, I am going to help you sit down, because it wouldn’t be nice to make you stand for the rest of the time, would it? No. I don’t think so. Here you go, sit here next to me.

Okay... now that s/he is settled in, I’d like to tell you about a blind person Jesus healed. Now, there were plenty of blind folks that regained their sight when Jesus healed them, but this story was a little different. Jesus healed this guy by spitting on the ground, making some mud, spreading it on his eyes, and then sending him to go wash it off!

The man was healed, his sight given to him for the very first time!

You see, he had been born blind. The Bible says he went home to see—for the very first time!—his family. He was probably so excited that he forgot to go thank Jesus... or, maybe since he didn't know what he looked like, he figured it was foolish to go running off after Jesus when he could just go home and share the good news of his healing!

Well, at least he thought it was good news. Apparently, not too many others in the story thought so. His friends and neighbors didn't believe he was the same man who had been born blind. The religious leaders in town were upset that he had been healed by Jesus and that he thought Jesus was God's Son. His parents—his own parents!—even distanced themselves from him because they were afraid of all the attention and possible trouble having their son healed by Jesus might bring.

Wow. All this man wanted to do was to share his joy at seeing for the first time, and everyone around him was upset and angry! How discouraging. They wanted this man to call Jesus a sinner and deny he was the Messiah, God's Son. To this, the man could only reply, "I don't know if he is a sinner or not. I do know one thing. I was blind, but now I can see!"

[take the blindfold off of the volunteer]

All of us who have put our trust in Jesus to lead us and to take away our sins can say the same thing... We were blind, but now we can see. We can see Jesus for who he is—God's Son and our Savior.

Let's pray:

"God, thank you for giving us the ability to see Jesus for who He is, our Lord and Savior. Sometimes change is difficult for people to accept, especially if they are used to knowing us as the bad kid in school, or the not-as-good child in the family. When you come into our lives, Jesus, you change things. We start to become new people. The change can be as dramatic as someone going from blindness to sight! Help us, and help the children Intermountain works with to experience the same healing and joy the man in the story had. Give them each a similar story, so when they are tempted by others to say that you are not such a big deal, Jesus, they can say—'Big deal or not, I know this... once I was lost, hurting, broken in my relationships and my thinking about who I was and my worth in other's sight. But now? Now I know I am loved, I belong to God, and I have hope for a better future.' In Jesus' name, Amen."

Key Text: John 9:1-25 (NirV)

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who was blind. He had been blind since he was born. ² Jesus' disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned? Was this man born blind because he sinned? Or did his parents sin?"

³ "It isn't because this man sinned," said Jesus. "It isn't because his parents sinned. This happened so that God's work could be shown in his life. ⁴ While it is still day, we must do the work of the One who sent me. Night is coming. Then no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

⁶ After he said this, he spit on the ground. He made some mud with the spit. Then he put the mud on the man's eyes.

⁷ "Go," he told him. "Wash in the Pool of Siloam." Siloam means Sent.

So the man went and washed. And he came home able to see.

⁸ His neighbors and those who had earlier seen him begging asked questions. "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" they asked.

⁹ Some claimed that he was.

Others said, "No. He only looks like him."

But the man who had been blind kept saying, "I am the man."

¹⁰ "Then how were your eyes opened?" they asked.

¹¹ He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed. Then I could see."

¹² "Where is this man?" they asked him.

"I don't know," he said.

The Pharisees Want to Know What Happened

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴ The day Jesus made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ So the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.

"He put mud on my eyes," the man replied. "Then I washed. And now I can see."

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "Jesus has not come from God. He does not keep the Sabbath day."

But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?"

So the Pharisees did not agree with each other.

¹⁷ Finally they turned again to the blind man. “What do you have to say about him?” they asked. “It was your eyes he opened.”

The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jews still did not believe that the man had been blind and now could see. So they sent for his parents. ¹⁹ “Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”

²⁰ “We know he is our son,” the parents answered. “And we know he was born blind. ²¹ But we don’t know how he can now see. And we don’t know who opened his eyes. Ask him. He is an adult. He can speak for himself.”

²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews. The Jews had already decided that anyone who said Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ That was why the man’s parents said, “He is an adult. Ask him.”

²⁴ Again they called the man who had been blind to come to them. “Give glory to God by telling the truth!” they said. “We know that the man who healed you is a sinner.”

²⁵ He replied, “I don’t know if he is a sinner or not. I do know one thing. I was blind, but now I can see!”

Week 5: “It’s never over until it’s over.”

Objects needed: A variety of sports balls

Theme/Main Idea: Yogi Berra once said, “It ain’t over til it’s over,” and he was true to a point. There are lots of small ‘endings’ we come up against in life: a school year end, we move away and lose a good friend, a favorite pet passes away. Endings are difficult. But, because we know Jesus, we have the assurance that even these ‘endings’ doesn’t mean it’s all over!

Presentation:

“Who here likes to play games? Who enjoys sports? Yes, a lot of you. Well, who can tell me when you know the game is over? That’s right... sometimes you play a game to a certain score or play on the board, and sometimes there is a time limit and when the time runs out, the game is over. I have brought some examples for us today to think about... [Take out sports balls, games, etc.]



What games do we play with these items? [Hold up one item/ball] If we played a game with this, how would we know when we were done? [wait for responses]

All very good responses, thank you. With most things like games or sporting events, it is easy to tell when the game is over. And, unless its hockey or soccer, there is usually a winning team and a losing team. The end of the game settles any question about who was the best that day.

In the Bible story today, we see a story that is anything but a game for the people involved. All friends of Jesus, two sisters had lost their brother. Lazarus had died. Mary and Martha were very upset, maybe even more so because they knew that if Jesus had come just a few days earlier, he could have healed Lazarus and he wouldn’t be dead. But, now the scoreboard showed “0:00.” Time was up. Lazarus had been dead for four days. Death was a winner once again, and life had lost.

But, then Jesus did something amazing. After crying for the pain he saw his friends were in, and for the pain he was in for knowing Lazarus had dies, he told Mary and Martha that God would be given glory in this situation because Lazarus would live! Death might have thought it had won, but Jesus was greater than death.

How amazing would it have been to be there by the graveside when Lazarus was called out? After a lifetime of seeing death win time and again, claiming close friends, family, neighbors... now, there was hope that Jesus was bigger than death and the grave? Incredible!

This story is given to us for a number of reasons, I think. One reason would be to show us that no matter what, Jesus is bigger than death. We can trust him. Sometimes the people we pray for and ask God to heal get better. A lot of times they don't. And, in both cases, God is doing what is best... even if all we can do is look at the scoreboard, see that time is up, and that it LOOKS like death has won again. This leads to another reason I think we have this story... it was like a preview of what was to come, kinda like you see before the movies? "A preview of coming attractions," they usually announce. In showing everyone that he had power over death, Jesus raised Lazarus so his followers could have hope and believe that when he died on the cross and was buried that he too would be brought back from death! And, because of Jesus' resurrection, we know that we can live forever with God, our sins forgiven and forgotten by God. That is good news.

So, remember this... no matter what the scoreboard says. It's never over until it's over. And, death isn't the end of the game. With Jesus in our lives, it's just the beginning of a life forever with God in heaven.

Let's pray:

God, thank you for giving us victory in Jesus. We can win, no matter what life hands us, because we know that death and the grave have been defeated. So help us not have the attitude of those who have lost, depressed in spirit and downhearted because we think there is no hope. NO! We trust that there is always hope, for us and for all people. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Key Text: John 11:17-44, NIV

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found out that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

¹⁸ Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁹ Many Jews had come to Martha and Mary. They had come to comfort them because their brother was dead.

²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him. But Mary stayed at home.

²¹ "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "I wish you had been here! Then my brother would not have died.

²² But I know that even now God will give you anything you ask for."

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha answered, "I know he will rise again. This will happen when people are raised from the dead on the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even if he dies. ²⁶ And those who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God. I believe that you are the One who was supposed to come into the world.”

²⁸ After she said this, she went back home. She called her sister Mary to one side to talk to her. “The Teacher is here,” Martha said. “He is asking for you.”

²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Jesus had not yet entered the village. He was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ Some Jews had been comforting Mary in the house. They noticed how quickly she got up and went out. So they followed her. They thought she was going to the tomb to cry there.

³² Mary reached the place where Jesus was. When she saw him, she fell at his feet. She said, “Lord, I wish you had been here! Then my brother would not have died.”

³³ Jesus saw her crying. He saw that the Jews who had come along with her were crying also. His spirit became very sad, and he was troubled.

³⁴ “Where have you put him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

³⁵ Jesus sobbed.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, “See how much he loved him!”

³⁷ But some of them said, “He opened the eyes of the blind man. Couldn’t he have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Once more Jesus felt very sad. He came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone in front of the entrance.

³⁹ “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad smell. Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days.”

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed, you would see God’s glory?”

⁴¹ So they took away the stone.

Then Jesus looked up. He said, “Father, I thank you for hearing me. ⁴² I know that you always hear me. But I said this for the benefit of the people standing here. I said it so they will believe that you sent me.”

⁴³ Then Jesus called in a loud voice. He said, “Lazarus, come out!”

⁴⁴ The dead man came out. His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of linen. A cloth was around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the clothes he was buried in and let him go.”

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 out 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 can 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 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 can of pennies, as well as some of the cans 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 cans 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.