

January 15, 2021

Dear Church Partners,

It's hard for me to grasp the fact that we are just a few weeks away from Lent—the season leading up to Easter! In this packet are seven free lessons for your use during Lent based on the gospel readings for each Sunday. Many of you have been part of our “Change for Children” effort in the past—a low key fundraising effort where congregants collect change for the season of Lent and bring their change cans back on Easter.

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!

In over two decades in children’s 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! It’s a fun way to have an intergenerational focus to the mission partnership you have with Intermountain.

But, perhaps you’ve done Change for Children for years and are looking for something new? Intermountain would love to partner with you to bring a training or event to your church that could build upon our partnership in ministry and mission. ***We’ve done classes through Northern Rockies Institute of Theology, Zoom trainings and sermons, and more!*** Here are some of the ways Intermountain can support you and your ministry:

- Pulpit fills and Moments for Mission
- Supplying materials for small groups and study groups, including a curriculum on ministry to those with adversity in childhood (trauma-informed ministry)
- Trainings for churches, clusters, or conferences on mental health and ministry issues
- Books, videos, and other resources to supplement your ministry or provide continued education

Let us know how we can help bring healing and hope to you and your congregation in 2021.

Blessings,



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Week 1: “Waiting”

Objects needed: Timer that can be set for a short amount of time and then go “ding!” I prefer an egg timer, but you could use the timer on your cellphone if you wanted.

Theme/Main Idea: The people of God had waited a long time for the Kingdom of God to come. When it came in the person of Jesus, many people wondered if it really was the ‘good news’ they had been waiting for.



Presentation:

Who here likes to wait? Raise your hand! Really? [wait for kids to respond, interact with them regarding what they do or don’t like waiting for]

I must confess, I don’t do a great job waiting. So, I’m not going to wait for you to guess what I might have brought as the object lesson today... I don’t want to wait any longer. I’m just going to show you.

[take timer out of box or bag you have it hiding in]

What’s this? Yes. It’s a timer. It helps us know how long we have to wait for something. I’m going to set the timer for a very short amount of time and see if we can wait for it to go off while still focusing on the Bible lesson today.

[set timer for 60 secs... keep talking as it ticks away]

Today’s lesson is from Mark. His gospel doesn’t waste any time telling the story, and in just a few words we get Jesus’ baptism by John in the Jordan River, a voice from heaven, the Holy Spirit sending Jesus out into the wilderness, 40 days of temptation and trial by Satan, angels attending to Jesus after all that, and Jesus’ first sermon!

And, even Jesus’ first sermon was pretty short, at least according to Mark: “The time has come. The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news.”

[timer has gone off by now, hopefully!?!]

That’s a lot to squeeze into a few short words, isn’t it? People had been waiting a long time for God’s Kingdom, and then Jesus came and it all happened very suddenly and not in the way many people expected. Has that ever happened to you? Have you waited for something

Most Kingdoms have important looking Kings, and Jesus didn’t look important. Most Kingdoms have big armies and tough looking soldiers. Jesus didn’t have these things either. Most people thought that what they had been waiting for was God’s version of an human-like kingdom—just bigger and better because... well, because it would be God’s.



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But Jesus came to show us that the good news is that God's Kingdom is very different than worldly kingdoms. Jesus valued things that even our kingdoms and countries today don't value. Some people accepted that and the good news started to spread... the good news that those who felt left out and ignored by the world finally had a place with God. They were loved.

But others? They reset the timer.

[take your timer out and set it for the longest possible wait]

They were looking for God to do something different, so they couldn't recognize God's Son when he was right there in front of them.

Lent is a time of waiting and preparation. We are waiting through these lengthening days, looking for the joy of spring and preparing for the glory of Easter morning. But, as we wait, let's not miss the fact that God's Kingdom is here. He's moving, and acting, and loving all around us. Let's not miss that because we're only looking for something big, bold and splashy.

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 we are tempted to miss your presence in our lives because we are valuing the wrong things and only looking for you to be big, loud, and bold... forgive us. The good news is that each of us—the little “mes” and “yous” of this church—can be that good news of God's Kingdom if we are willing to watch, wait, and move with the Spirit. That's more than good news, that's the BEST news! 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: Mark 1:9-15 (NIV)

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

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Week 2: “Losing it”

Objects needed: A set of keys, a cell phone, a pair of glasses



Theme/Main Idea: Sometimes we lose things. Often, things get misplaced because we set them down during a hurried or distracted time. While we are still distracted and hurried, it is hard for us to find what has been lost. Similarly, if we are distracted by our cares and worries we miss what God might be saying to us. We get caught up in unimportant things that won't last forever, and we lose track of those things that are eternal! As Jesus said, we gain the world and lose our souls. Only when we calm the noise and put God in the center of our lives will we find what we might have otherwise lost.

Presentation:

Good morning boys and girls! I have a question for you this morning. Who here has ever lost something? Yes? What was it you lost?

[give children a chance to share about what they might have lost before, and if they eventually found the lost item or if it stayed lost]

Wow. It can sure be frustrating to lose something and be worried you'll never find it again. You know what I am really good at losing? I have it here as my object lesson today. Can you guess?

[let children guess... remember you can substitute your phone or your glasses or something else you are apt to misplace frequently]

Yes! I lose my keys a lot. I get distracted and set them down somewhere, but then I wander off and I can't remember where it is I put them. *Actually*, It's more like I am the thing that is lost... not my keys! The only way I can ever find them is to calm down. Then, and only then, when I have cleared out the distractions can my mind focus as I retrace my steps and remember where I misplaced them.

Jesus spoke about losing things... did you know that? Yes, and he even spoke about a time when losing something would be a good thing. *I see some confused looks, so I better explain.*

One day Jesus was talking to the crowd as well as his close followers. He told the people that anyone who gets too concerned about their life and chases after money, clothes, and other possessions will lose out on something even more important: a relationship with God that is worth way more than all those things! In fact, Jesus said that if you really want a life that is worth living you need to lose it for Jesus' sake.

What?!? How can someone lose something but still know exactly where it is... in this case, losing the cares of your life in a relationship with Jesus? Well, let's go back to the lost keys and maybe that will help explain.

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When you lose something, does your brain really forget where you put it? No. It doesn't. The memory is there in your brain somewhere, which is why calming yourself down and retracing your steps can help. Eventually, something you see jogs your memory and you remember just where you put your lost item.

In the same way, when you calm down all your fears and worries and give your life and your heart to Jesus you don't really lose your life. Instead you gain something you couldn't have had without first letting go of that control that comes from fretting about things.

Let's say my life—all my worries, hopes, fears, and relationships—are like these keys here. While I hold on to them, I am in control. And, while I am in control I know from experience that I am not going to do so well. Now, I need a volunteer to hold my keys for me... [select a child]

Okay, now let's say you are Jesus. If I give you my keys, I lose them... right? Well, they are still my keys, but *you have control over them*. Likewise, if you give Jesus control of your life, you "lose" your life to God's control, but because God loves you and cares for you... putting God in control is a great thing! I know right where my life is... it's in God's hands!

I think that's what Jesus meant when he said, "Whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it!" Our lives, put in God's hands, are so much more peaceful, purposeful, and joyful.

Will you pray with me?

Jesus, we thank you that by losing our control over our lives we gain so much more. We can't think of anything worth more than our relationship with you that starts now and lasts for all eternity. Help us trust you and be willing to set aside our plans so we can know what you want from us. The same distractions and stress that cause us to misplace things and get frustrated need to be quieted so we can focus on you and what you want for us. Holy Spirit, quiet our hearts now. Help us remember what is important in this moment, to be with you and to worship you as our Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Key Text: Mark 8:31-38 (NIV)

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."



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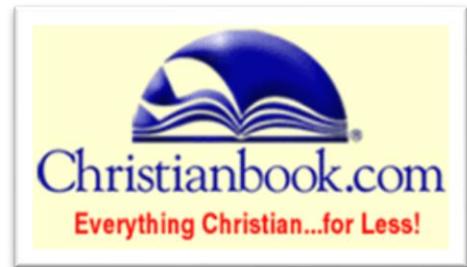
Week 3: “Transaction or Transformation”

Objects needed: a pile of self-help books, brochures, especially if you can find some that say “3 quick steps to...,” advertisements, magazines... whatever you can get your hands on that suggest a “transaction” that makes things better for you without much effort.

Theme/Main Idea: When it comes to a relationship with God, it is always tempting to turn the relationship into a transaction. Transformation is harder and takes longer, so of course we want to shorten it and make it easier. The problem is that the transaction is a trap and we start to bargain with God. We wonder how many sacrifices we can make until God will bless us. Jesus cleared the temple so we could see that God wants (and we need) transformation and not a transaction.

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. We’re already in our third week of Lent and today we come to one of the more surprising stories in the Bible about Jesus. But, before I get into that, I am wondering if you can guess what story I am talking about if I show you my items for today’s object lesson?”



[take brochures, magazines with advertisements, self-help books, etc. out and show the kids... you might need to play it up a little by reading some of the titles or advertisements and talk about how you just need to read that article or buy that item and everything will be better!]

So... any guesses as to what story about Jesus I am referring to? [kids guess] All great guesses. I am thinking that the most surprising story about Jesus is the one we come to today in the gospel lesson where Jesus comes into the temple and clears out the money changers and those selling animals for sacrifice. When you read the story, it seems like Jesus is really upset! Why do you think Jesus acted this way?

[give children time to respond]

Well, I’d like to share some ideas with you about why I think Jesus might have been so upset. Do you know what a transaction is? No? It’s where I give you something and you give me something back. Most often, we think about transactions that involve money... you know, buying stuff. I want a candy bar, so I go to the store and I give them 79 cents for a Snickers bar. They get my money, I get the candy bar... we both go away happy. At least we’re happy for that moment.

Now, what happens when we start thinking about our relationship with God as a form of transaction? I pray and I hope God gives me stuff. I give money to the church, so I want to have a say in how the leaders of the church spend “my” money.

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I want something really bad, even a good thing—like a parent, friend, or grandparent healed from a yucky illness—so I promise God that if he does that thing for me, I’ll do something in return... a transaction. God gets something... right?... and I get something I want in return.

That’s how it should work, don’t you think?! [hopefully, some of the kids disagree and show it!]

Why are you guys looking at me that way? Is there something wrong with thinking about our relationship with God this way? Yes, and I think Jesus has a problem with us viewing God as the great big shopping mall in the sky. God wants a relationship with us, and wants us to pray to him about everything... not just when we want something.

When we pray this way and treat God like a friend and not a vending machine, something happens to us. We are transformed. We experience God’s love that is bigger than anything we could have asked for in the first place. We can’t buy it, and God isn’t selling it. It’s a gift, and it’s free.

Let’s pray:

God, thank you for your transforming love. Correct us when we are tempted to think we can earn your love or buy our happiness with money or good deeds. Jesus, just as you cleared out the temple, clear out our hearts. Make us clean and new. The only transaction we are interested in is accepting your love and grace, freely given to us this day and always. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Key Text: John 2:13-22 (NIV)

Jesus Clears the Temple Courts

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

²⁰ They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”

²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.



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Week 4: "Shining the light"

Objects needed: A flashlight

Theme/Main Idea: We can cover up or ignore a mess by shoving things in a closet or turning off the light and closing the door. Opening the door and shining the light on the mess doesn't create a mess... it just reveals it! If we are willing to open the door and shine a light on our sin and brokenness, belief in Jesus helps us clean things out for good.

Presentation:

Good morning! I want to start out with a question that I promise was NOT suggested by your parents... when was the last time you cleaned your room?

[give kids chance to respond, follow up questions might include, "Do you like cleaning your room? How long does it take? What's hardest about it, etc.?"]

Now, I know no one here would ever do this, but I have HEARD that some kids clean their room simply by shoving things under their beds and in their closets. They might straighten the bed a bit and call it "good!"

Now, does this sound like a good way to clean your room? Hmm... now, be honest. Has anyone here done this? Yes? Really?! Well... me too.

[take out flashlight]

What have I got here for our lesson today? Yes, a flashlight! A flashlight is used for shining light in dark places. Dark places like under beds and in cluttered closets.

Beyond messy rooms, our Bible passage today points out where God's light shines. Sometimes it shines on the yuckiness of sin and gunk in our lives and rather than take care of the yuck by giving it to God through confession and receiving forgiveness, some folks just slam the closet door shut and hide from the light!

This Bible passage is a tough one. It blends Jesus' love for the whole world with pointing out that some people don't respond to the light of God's love as they should. It's as if God is there with loving, open arms ready to embrace us in a big hug. But, if we choose to hold on to our gunk... our arms are full with that stuff and not able to receive that hug as we should.

As we move closer and closer to Easter, we are reminded of God's love. The cross and the empty grave shine light on our need to open wide the closets and give God the stuff we have hidden from others, God, and even ourselves. So, while it might be unpleasant at first... like cleaning our rooms... we should be thankful when God's light shines on the darkness of our hearts because God is doing it simply so we can get rid of the gunk and experience the joy of a clean and forgiven heart!



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Let's pray...

God, thank you for shining the light on the stuff we'd rather hide. You shine the light on our yuckiness and sin because you love us and want to forgive us and give us something in return... your love! As we move closer and closer to Easter, help us to clean up and clear out those things that are keeping us from experiencing more and more of your love and joy. Bless our efforts to help the children at Intermountain, too, as we collect change in our cans at home and at church. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Text: John 3:14-21 (NIV)

¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.



Week 5: “Caterpillars and Butterflies”

Objects needed: Pictures of a caterpillar and a butterfly, or stuffed animals of either/both. If you are really adventurous, you could bring in live examples!

Theme/Main Idea: When Jesus is approached by those that want to see him during the Passover celebrations, Jesus makes a startling revelation... It is time for him to be glorified! The hearers probably got excited thinking that God’s Kingdom was now really going to get going and the Romans and corrupt religious leaders would get what they had coming. But, then Jesus continues his revelation and explains that this glory was going to come through death and resurrection. The image of the seed “dying” and falling to the ground to be buried, only to rise again as a beautiful and fruitful stalk of wheat, points to the glory of Easter. Likewise, the transformation from caterpillar to butterfly mirrors the same spiritual truth.



Presentation:

Hi there, boys and girls! Did you know that the official start of spring was YESTERDAY? Yep! We are now officially in the season of spring. Isn’t it great?

[It’s likely, especially in Montana, that the kids will look at you like you are crazy. It’s likely that there is snow on the ground outside!]

What’s the matter? You don’t look very excited.

[kids might respond, give them time to voice their thoughts]

Well, it’s true that just because the calendar says it’s spring doesn’t mean that it FEELS like spring. It still feels a lot like winter, right?

But, there is a significance in it being spring, even if it doesn’t feel like it. There are things going on all around us, in trees, underground, below the snow and behind the scenes that are prepping the way for spring, even if we can’t see them. It’s like these first weeks of spring in Montana are the *chrysalis* of spring—a time of transition from winter time to the sun, flowers, and bright days ahead. You know what a *chrysalis* is, right?

[take out pictures or stuffed animals, etc. of caterpillar and butterfly]

A chrysalis, or sometimes we call it a cocoon, is what takes this [hold up caterpillar] and changes it into this [hold up butterfly]. That time between the two looks like early spring in Montana... pretty dead, and pretty lifeless.

Jesus spent some time in his own chrysalis... the grave. He knew his death, burial, and resurrection were going to be REALLY difficult for his followers to understand. He knew that when he went from that transition from his earthly body to his resurrected body, most people were going to look at the tomb and think death had won. But, you want to know something amazing?

It was by dying that Jesus was going to defeat death! He tried to explain it ahead of time... He called it his “glory.” Jesus was going to be glorified just like the glory and purpose of a seed is to die, fall from the plant, be buried in the soil, and then grow up in the spring to produce a beautiful and fruitful plant! Yes, Jesus tried to explain it using a picture his followers could understand, but they still didn’t get it.

The caterpillar to butterfly and the transition from winter to spring are two more examples that we have of this same spiritual truth. Let us be amazed not only of the new life that comes to us because Jesus died, was buried and rose on the third day, but marvel, too, at the slow and hidden signs of spring that are moving forth all around us, ready to burst forth in the fullness of spring in days ahead. May that promise of the coming spring give us hope as we look ahead to Easter.

Let’s pray:

God, it’s amazing to see that you swallowed up all the fear of death by dying and being raised. You tried to show your disciples and you try to show us in multiple ways that death never gets the last say. New life is coming and Easter is on its way. Nothing can stop the spring from bursting forth, and nothing can take from us the joy of new life in you. Help us wait patiently for the day when we little caterpillars will experience the glory of a new butterfly-like glory. Our redemption, our healing, and our hope is on the way! Amen and Hallelujah.”

Key Text: John 12:20-33 (NIV)

Jesus Predicts His Death

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the [Passover] festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.”

²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

²⁷ “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Week 6/Palm Sunday: “March Madness?”

Objects needed: Pom-poms or some other prop that would signify cheering on your team

Theme/Main Idea: When Jesus came into town on Palm Sunday, the crowd cheered for him with enthusiasm. They were loud enough that the religious leadership in Jerusalem asked Jesus to calm them down. These days, most of our celebration that gets that loud and potentially annoying to others doesn’t happen in church... Instead, it might happen at home watching “March Madness” or at a High School game. Cheerleaders wave pompoms and crowds roar for their team to make the final four. On that first Palm Sunday, the crowds waved palm branches and shouted “Hosanna!” How might we bring some of that excitement into our worship and celebration today?



Presentation:

Good morning, boys and girls! Does anyone here know what ‘March Madness’ is? No... it’s not the feeling of going crazy in Montana waiting for warmer weather to actually come. And, it’s not the feeling teachers and students have counting the days for Spring Break. Do any of you know?

[give kids time to respond]

Good responses... “March Madness” is what the NCAA Men’s College basketball tournament is referred to! Earlier in the month 64 teams started out in the tournament and over the coming week they are narrowing that down to the Final Four. Apparently March Madness is such a big deal for fans of college basketball that studies have been done on how many people will pretend to be sick from work and school so they can stay home and watch basketball on TV.

Restaurants with TVs in them make sure the games are on, and if you are around those watching the games, you just might get caught up in the excitement. People cheer and shout and get really animated just watching the game on TV!

That brings me to what I have brought as our object lesson today...

[take pompom out to show kids]

Do you know what this is and how it is used? That’s right... it’s a pompom and cheerleaders and fans wave these as they are cheering for their team. This pompom and the excitement of March Madness reminds me of Palm Sunday! Do you know why?

Well, when Jesus entered Jerusalem on the young colt, people recognized that something special was happening. They grabbed palm branches and started waving them like pompoms. They shouted and raised their voices, not for a team, but for Jesus. They greeted him with shouts of ‘Hosanna!’ and blessed him. It’s one of the few times in Jesus’ ministry when he is recognized and worshipped for who he really was—God’s Son sent to save us!

I'd like to think that if I was there, I would have grabbed a palm branch and waved it excitedly too. It seems silly that I can get more excited about someone shooting a ball into a round hoop elevated 10 feet from the floor than I do for worshipping the God that sent his only Son to love me and save me from all the wrong I've done. Doesn't that seem silly to you, too?

Let's check our hearts today and see if we can open them up to a little more awe and excitement about who Jesus is and what we celebrate this coming week as Easter comes next Sunday!

Will you pray with me?

"God, 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: Mark 11:1-11 (NIV)

11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ²saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

⁴They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.

⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.

⁹Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

¹⁰"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

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 jars back with you today! That's great! I can hear the satisfying sound of clinking coins being moved around in your jars and change cans. To help us focus during this time, however, why don't we pass all those to me... [Take a moment to collect the jars 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.

A penny isn't worth much. We know that. According to an article I read in the paper, it costs more to make a penny than a penny is worth! Isn't that silly? You see, even though pennies are now nearly 98% zinc with just a trace of copper, they still cost 1.99 cents to produce. It costs two pennies to make a penny!

Here's something else I learned that might really shock you... Have you ever seen someone throw away a penny or two, or drop one and not bother to pick it up? Maybe not any of you, but I am guessing there are some moms, dads, and grandparents out there that have thought... "Hmmm... it's just not worth the effort of bending down to get that little penny!"

So, lots of pennies are tossed away each year. In fact, it's been estimated that about \$1.2 million worth of pennies a year are simply thrown away! That's a lot of pennies and that's a whole lot of money!!

Just like this penny, when Jesus died on the cross and was buried, it seemed to most people like he wasn't worth any more than the little penny that gets thrown away. But, for those few disciples... especially the women who came to his tomb that Sunday morning, they knew that Jesus was more than simply a religious teacher that could be killed and thrown away to be forgotten.



And, because of their faith, they were the first ones to see the Risen Lord! Jesus had taught his followers that He was the resurrection and the life, and anyone who believes in him... even though they might physically die someday, they too will be raised to new life forever with God!

That's amazing!! Jesus was the first resurrection on Easter morning, but since then millions of Easter morning miracles have happened to those that have trusted in Jesus and have new life as a result.

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: John 20:1-18 (NIV)

The Empty Tomb

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its

place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.