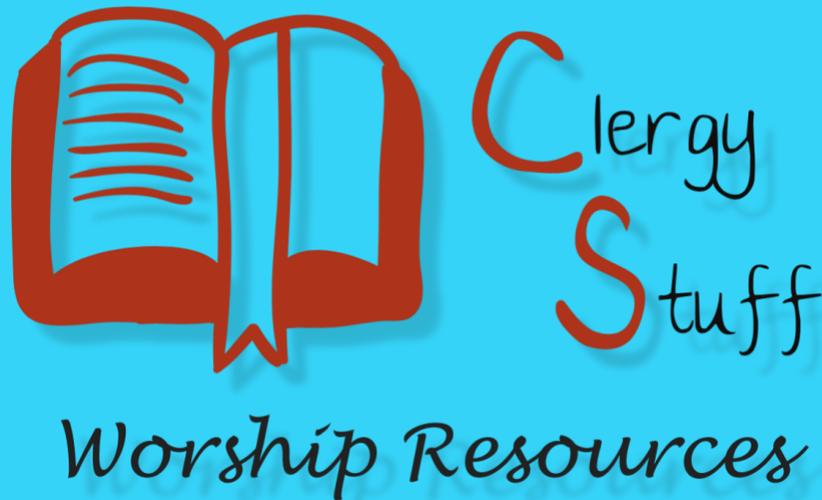


Narrative Lectionary Worship Resources



**Narrative Lectionary Worship Resources: Program 1 (Fall)
September 8, 2019—January 5, 2020**

Narrative Lectionary Worship Resources

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Scripture Readings

Text: Genesis 2:4b-25

⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; ⁶but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—⁷then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. ⁸And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹²and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.”

¹⁹So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the Lord God

caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.”

²⁴Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Secondary Text: Mark 1:16-20

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Alternate Secondary Text: Mark 10:6-8

⁶“But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh.”

Pronunciation Guide

Pishon: PEE-shawn

Havilah: HAV-uh-lah

bdellium: DEL-ee-uhm

onyx: AH-niks

Gihon: GI-hon

Cush: KUSH

Tigris: TI-gris

Assyria: uh-SIHR-ee-uh

Euphrates: yoo-FRAY-teez



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Lord, Man

Narrator 1: These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Narrator 2: In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

Narrator 1: And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Narrator 2: A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Narrator 1: The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man,

Lord: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

Narrator 2: Then the Lord God said,

Lord: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.”

Narrator 1: So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

Man: “This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.”

Narrator 2: Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Humans were created to be in relationship with others.

This is the second of the creation stories. Here, God has made a much rougher version of earth—in process, but not complete. (The earth was watered, for example, by steam rising from the ground rather than from rain.) In this story, God made humans first (before animals). Well, *human* anyway. God made Adam (in Hebrew, “to be red” like the ruddy complexion of a human) from the earth (also a play on words of the Hebrew “adamah,” meaning “earth”).

While it seems Adam is enough for God, Adam himself seems to be missing something. First God tries to give him a companion in the animals, but their company is not enough. Finally, God makes a woman from the man’s rib and the man has a suitable companion. (“Helper,” by the way, is the same Hebrew word “ezer,” which is the same word used to describe God as a “helper” of the people.)

The key focal point of this second creation story then, is not how or when God created plants and animals, but on God’s relationship with humanity. God places Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. God tells them they have dominion over all things and can do anything except eat from the tree of knowledge. It may be a test or it might just be an arrangement necessary for creating the relational characteristics of trust, interdependence, obedience, and free will.

Human beings are relational from the moment of their creation. Explore what it means to be a healthy, functioning, relational being in your context.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

God created a man from dust—from an earth that was yet incomplete. God created woman as a partner. From the first moment of creation we were created to be in relationship—with God and with others.

Call to Worship

L: We gather by the grace of God.

C: The God of our creation!

L: Who created us from love, for love.

C: The God of our creation!

L: Come, let us worship the Lord!

C: The God of our creation!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don’t last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

P: God’s covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Creator God,
You have given us every good thing on earth: all that we need to live, thrive and enjoy this life. Fill us with gratitude for the advantaged position in which we find ourselves, that we might use our powers in service toward you. In Jesus' our savior's name we pray, amen.

Offertory Prayer

All that we have and all that we are, O Lord, is given by and belongs to you. We offer ourselves and our lives as living testament to your goodness, and seek to live out your love on this earth which we inhabit. Accept these gifts we bring, an offering of ourselves to the one without whom we could not exist. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: O Lord, we are often more likely to see other people in our lives as a burden, a bother, or a curse, rather than the blessing you created them to be. Soften our hearts toward one another that we might accept both our own imperfections and theirs, enabling us to be vulnerable and compassionate with our fellow human beings. Creating God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You made all the creatures of this earth, O God, as companions, helpers, and fellow dwellers of one marvelous planet. Bless all those who share their lives, time, and homes with beloved animals, that all might benefit from the unconditional bonds of love they enable. Creating God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Bless all grandparents this day, as well as all who mentor, care for, and love children. We thank you for the generosity, assistance and wisdom they provide to the next generation of parents. We also hold in prayer all who are estranged from grandparents or grandchildren, all whose dreams of becoming grandparents were never realized, and those of us who have lost grandparents and miss them. Creating God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We were not created to live in isolation, loving God, and yet so many feel the pain of loneliness, separation and division among people and relationships. Heal our rifts and help us lay aside grudges. Move us to reach out to the lonely and outcast. We pray for those with specific needs, whom we lift up to you, (*especially...*). Creating God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Even though they are not present with us in body, we are still joined forever to all those who have served you faithfully and gone before us. Bless the memory of your saints and hold a place for us in their heavenly fellowship. Creating God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We entrust these things for which we pray to your faithful care and your promise to hear us always. Receive them in Jesus' name, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

As the grapes and grains which make this meal have come from earth, so we have also emerged according to our creator's will. Now gather us in the company of our sisters and brothers to be fed, filled, and sent far and wide to proclaim your gospel to a world which needs it. Let us join in the feast!



Liturgy

Litany

Higher voices: Bless the Lord our God,

Lower voices: Who made us to be together!

H: At first, there was nothing:

L: No plants and no animals.

H: The Lord formed a person

L: From out of the dust:

H: A creature,

L: A human,

H: With breath and with life.

L: Then planted a garden:

H: A place for the human,

L: With trees, food and fruit

H: For people's delight.

L: A rich land for tilling,

H: And growing and harvesting.

L: Good for survival,

H: But the human was lonely,

L: So, God made more creatures:

H: The cattle and field-dwellers,

L: Birds of the air,

H: Each one with a name

L: That the human invented.

H: And yet not a one of them

L: Made perfect company.

H: Then God had a notion,

L: A realization

H: That one was too few,

L: And there should be another.

H: So one became two:

L: One woman,

H: One man.

L: Alike,

H: But still different.

L: Formed from one bone,

H: And one flesh,

L: And one earth.

H: Perfectly made

L: And perfectly matched,

H: To suit one another.

L: And so, it was settled

H: That people were fashioned,

L: Alike, not identical,

H: One for the other,

L: And for all creation.

H: No longer alone,

L: No more to be lonely.

H: But joined—

L: And as partners.

H: To love

L: And be loved.

H: To care for all creatures,

L: The earth,

H: And each other.

L: To praise the creator

H: Who made us for fellowship.

L: Praise to our God!

H: Who made all creation

L: And made us a promise

H: To not leave us lonely.

L: Praise to our God:

All: We are never alone!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Adam, God, Eve

[Adam has just been created and together with God, realizes the need for a partner!]

Adam: [gasping his first breath] Ueehh!

God: Welcome to the world, young friend!

Adam: [coughs and sputters, and then] Thanks. Who are you?

God: I am God, your creator! I have made all that you see around you, and I thought it would be fun to make a person who could talk and think just like me! I'm so excited you are alive!

Adam: Thanks, I guess! What do you call me?

God: Hmm...that's a good question. You were made from mud...

Adam: [shocked] What? Mud?! That's so gross!

God: No, it's not. Mud is beautiful and natural. Let's name you after the word for earth—Adam!

Adam: I guess it's an ok name. Thanks for making me, God!

God: You're welcome, Adam!

Adam: So, what do I do?

God: You can cultivate plants.

Adam: Ok...

God: Or you could go play with the animals!

Adam: Animals sound fun! Do they talk and think like me?

God: Well, no they don't, Adam.

Adam: Oh...so I just have you to talk to?

God: As long as I'm not busy taking care of my Godly business...

Adam: Oh. So, I'm just here all alone? No other people like me? I suppose I can just play with the plants and talk to the animals. Not that they'd talk back to me.

God: You're really sad to be alone, aren't you?

Adam: Wouldn't you be?

God: Yes. That's the reason I made humans, after all. Ok, what about this? I can make you a partner to live with and make a life with. How does that sound?

Adam: It sounds awesome! Can I help make this partner?

God: I think you can! [God puts God's hand on Adam to make him fall asleep. God pantomimes taking a rib and making a second person. Eve shows up at the end of this.]

Eve: What is happening?

God: What about that! Another person made from the rib of my mud human!!

Adam: [groggily] What did you do, God??

God: I made you a partner! Adam, meet Eve. I assembled her from your rib. I put you to sleep so you wouldn't feel a thing.

Adam: Well that's just nuts. Where are my manners? Hello, Eve, it's nice to meet you.

Eve: It's nice to meet you! Can you tell me what's going on here? I just popped into being, and I don't have a clue what's going on.

Adam: Well, my name is Adam. This is God. God created us and everything. You and I are people. We can talk and think, and I think that means we are in charge of taking care of the animals and plants that are here in this garden.

Eve: Wow. That's a lot of information all at once. But you seem nice. I'm glad if I'm going to be here that I am here with you!

Adam: I'm glad that you are here, too. Thanks, God for such a good partner!

God: It's my pleasure!



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God made people to be in relationships.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Pictures of a trip or vacation you took

Setting the Scene/Background

While many people like to use this text to insist that ONLY men and women can be in a marriage, we can see that there is an even deeper message to this text. God built humans to be in relationship. Not only with life partners, but with families, friends, and all those we encounter. Help kids see the value of the people in their lives. God gives us people to love and to love us in return!

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Show kids pictures of a trip or cool thing that you have done.

If you took the trip with others, talk about how you shared experiences with them. Whenever you saw something interesting, did you share?

When you got home again, talk about who you shared the story with and how that sharing made your experience even better.

God created the first human and knew that they needed other people to share all the experiences of life with. We have that in our lives too—friends at church, people who love us, and God!

Reflection Questions

- What makes being with other people awesome? Who would you like to travel with?
- What is your favorite activity to share with others?

Stuff to Consider

Some children struggle with social interactions. Try not to make it normative that we all like spending time with others. For some, it's a lot of work! But even if it's work to interact with others, there are people that love each of us as we are.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Baby name book/app



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7

18 The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ²He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. ³He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” ⁶And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” ⁷Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. ⁸Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

⁹They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” ¹⁰Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. ¹¹Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. ¹²So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” ¹³The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴Is

anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” ¹⁵But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

21 The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. ²Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. ³Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. ⁴And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶Now Sarah said, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.” ⁷And she said, “Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Secondary Text: Mark 10:27

²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

Pronunciation Guide

Mamre: MAM-ree



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Abraham, Visitors, Sarah, Lord

Narrator: The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said,

Abraham: “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.”

Narrator: So they said,

Visitors: “Do as you have said.”

Narrator: And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said,

Abraham: “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.”

Narrator: Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him,

Visitors: “Where is your wife Sarah?”

Narrator: And he said,

Abraham: “There, in the tent.”

Narrator: Then one said,

Visitors: “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.”

Narrator: And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying,

Sarah: “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?”

Narrator: The Lord said to Abraham,

Lord: “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Narrator: But Sarah denied, saying,

Sarah: “I did not laugh”;

Narrator: for she was afraid. He said,

Lord: “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

Narrator: The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Now Sarah said,

Sarah: “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.”

Narrator: And she said,

Sarah: “Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God’s idea for life is one filled with joy and laughter.

Pure, deep-seated joy. That’s what this story expresses from beginning to end.

Abraham and Sarah had not had a perfect life to this point. They were wanderers without a home, often plagued by enemies seeking to kill Abraham and steal Sarah (Genesis 12:11-13; 20:1-2). They remained childless despite God’s promise to make Abraham and Sarah parents of a mighty nation (Genesis 22:17).

Despite it all, Abraham still owns a joy that runs deep. It is only with this kind of faith in God and joy of life that causes a person to go so far out of their way for a stranger. When three strangers traveled by, Abraham went above and beyond to welcome them. (Israel has a [long history of hospitality](#), with this story being one of the pillars of its tradition.)

When the strangers proclaim that Sarah will have a baby, the joy widens, including Sarah. Her initial joy at the news is more like glee at the sheer ridiculousness of their proclamation. She didn’t believe them, and it made her laugh. When called out for laughing, of course, she denied it, but the Lord was on to her, “Oh, yes you did laugh.” (I can almost hear the exchange—“Oh no, I didn’t.” “Oh, yes you did.”!)

But wouldn’t you know, they were telling the truth! Sarah did have a son, and she named him, “Isaac,” which means “he laughs.” I wonder—they may have been referring to God laughing!

Often people turn moral, upright (Christian?) living into a chore—serious and somber. But clearly God’s story includes a lot of joy and laughter. Joy of living. Laughter at the absurd. Laughter at the ridiculous, miraculous things God can do. Sometime life is somber. But it also can be wonderful, weird, unexpected, and delightful. God intended for our lives to be filled with joy.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Abraham and Sarah had no idea on this day that God would send a message that would get them laughing—that in their old age, they would have a baby!

Call to Worship

L: Come, worship the Lord:

C: The bringer of laughter,

L: The keeper of promises,

C: Promise of ages,

L: Who knows of no limits

C: And gladdens forever!

L: Come, worship the Lord:

C: The bringer of laughter!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don’t last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

P: God’s covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Joyous God,
You made Sarah laugh at your outrageous promises, and you delivered exactly as you said. Lighten our hearts with anticipation of what you are doing in our lives, and open us to possibilities far beyond what we ourselves could ever imagine. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Offertory Prayer

When we truly give ourselves over to you, O Lord, we allow your wondrous seeds to take root. Receive these gifts that we offer now before you, and receive also our whole lives, placed into your hands and entrusted to you, who keep all your promises and never cease to surprise us. In the name of our savior, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Teach us to marvel at the things we cannot understand, O God, and give us joy at the magnitude of blessings you have bestowed upon us, your children. Open our eyes to see in new ways. Lord of laughter,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: From the laughter of birds and creatures to the exuberance of streams and waterfalls, all of creation reflects the joy of the one who made it. Gladden us with the wonders of your world, that we might be moved to protect and preserve it in the best way we can. Lord of laughter,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: At all those times when we are tempted to take ourselves too seriously, prod us out of our dullness and surprise us with splashes of color and variety. May we, your joyful children, be the spreaders of mirth and cheer in a world which needs the hope of your gospel promises. Lord of laughter,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Heal and strengthen us with your precious gift of laughter, even when we can see no logical reason for it. Pierce the thick veil of grief, gladden us with unexpected kindness, and cause us to bring a smile to the face of another, particularly when life feels heavy. We pray for your healing spirit, (*especially for...*) Lord of laughter,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your saints, O God, are people of joy as well as faithfulness. Surely they, of all people, can inspire us to find hope and cheer in following you, especially knowing the eternal life which awaits us, one in which you always have the last laugh over death. Lord of laughter,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Hold us in hope, O God, of the fulfillment of all that you have promised. Receive these prayers and equip us to follow in the way which you have set before us. We pray in the name of Jesus, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

With you, O Lord, all things are possible. Feed us now on the bread of promise and the cup of fulfillment, that we might joyfully proclaim your goodness to a waiting world. Come and see that God's word is true!



Liturgy

Litany

L: When we say,

C: Impossible!

L: God says,

C: It's possible!

L: Like Abraham, wandering far from his home

C: And Sarah, with him, in the desert alone.

L: When we say,

C: Impossible!

L: God says,

C: It's possible!

L: Like numbered descendants

C: As many as stars.

L: When we say,

C: Impossible!

L: God says,

C: It's possible!

L: Like an elderly couple

C: Conceiving a child.

L: When we say,

C: Impossible!

L: God says,

C: It's possible!

L: Like fighting off giants,

C: Or taming wild lions.

L: When we say,

C: Impossible!

L: God says,

C: It's possible!

L: Like escaping from slavery

C: And surviving the wilderness.

L: When we say,

C: Impossible!

L: God says,

C: It's possible!

L: A frightened young woman

C: Receiving the spirit

L: And bearing a baby

C: To save all the nations.

L: When we say,

C: Impossible!

L: God says,

C: It's possible!

L: Take heart, all you weary

C: For it's not impossible!

L: With God as your power

C: No thing is impossible!

L: Rejoice and be happy

C: That all things are possible!

L: All things

C: Are possible!

All: With God!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Narrator, Abraham, 3 guests, Sarah

Props: All are optional, except the baby doll.

- Baby doll stashed somewhere
- 3 chairs and a footstool or 4 chairs
- Name tags on a string
- String
- Stuffed animal cow or large image of a cow
- 3 bowls
- Baking dish
- Oven mitts
- Serving spoon
- Large thought-cloud with a large question mark mounted on a stick
- Large speech bubble with “Ha Ha!” mounted on a stick
- Sticks
- Cue card #1: Won’t you stay for a while?
- Cue card #2: Abraham, where’s your wife?
- Cue card #3: Over there. I think she’s probably listening in.
- Cue card #4: We’ll be back in a year!
- Cue card #5: See you then!
- Cue card #6: And your wife will have a son!
- Cue card #7: What’s she laughing about?
- Cue card #8: Is anything too difficult for the Lord?
- Cue card #9: When I come back, Sarah will have a son.

Preparation: This is designed as a pop-up skit which doesn’t require any advance preparation by actors beyond Narrator. If you use volunteers, prepare the cue cards in advance.

Throughout, Narrator will function as a stage director, encouraging people through their role, shepherding them across the chancel/stage as needed. The tone is intentionally comedic. If the volunteers don’t follow what they need to do to play along, give them assistance by playing it broadly—gesture, move to where they are and help them up/down, etc.

Optional: If the congregation is cautious about volunteering, arrange for volunteers in advance. Otherwise, let the Spirit move during worship! If you want to do it more conventionally, you can run through the skit with your volunteers and dispense with the cue cards. This also works well as an interactive children’s moment.

Optional: Arrange the props in an accessible place. Position the casserole on the communion table or altar if your tradition allows.

Narrator: I will need some technical assistance in offering this morning’s reading. Who can be our Abraham?

[Solicit volunteer and invite them to come up. As they come forward, bestow upon them the appropriate name tag, with great ceremony. Seat Abraham on the chair.]

Narrator: And Sarah?

[Solicit volunteer and invite them to come up. As they come forward, bestow upon them the appropriate name tag, with great ceremony. Place Sarah standing some steps away.]

Narrator: We will also need three very special guests.

[Continue to solicit volunteers. Consider having them be from the older generation of the church, and give them honored seats in the front row.]

Narrator: [to volunteers] The good news is that you do not need to memorize your lines. As long as you can follow some very assertive stage direction, you have the skills to do this.

Narrator: [to congregation] The Lord appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he sat at the entrance of his tent in the day’s heat.

Narrator: [encouraging Abraham to play along] Abraham, is it hot today?

Abraham: Oh, yes! [or other ad-lib]

Narrator: [to congregation] Suddenly, Abraham noticed three visitors standing near him— [beckons to the three guests, taking their hand if needed to bring them close to Abraham] —leapt up to greet them, and bowed deeply. [make eyes/gestures at Abraham if he doesn’t play along]



Isaac Born to Sarah, Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7

Abraham: [gets up and bows]

Narrator: He said, [hand Abraham cue card #1 to read]

Abraham: Won't you stay for a while?

Narrator: And so, they took a seat [gesture] and waited while Abraham hurried off to see what Sarah could find for an unexpected crowd. [take Abraham over to Sarah]

Narrator: Anything in the cupboard, Sarah?

Sarah: [shakes head "no"]

Narrator: Abraham, perhaps you should go out to the herds and come back with something she can cook up. [point Abraham toward the cow, and hand the 3 Guests a bowl]

Abraham: [return with the cow]

Narrator: Sarah, being good with a casserole, soon sent him off to the guests. [have Sarah and Abraham trade cow for casserole and oven mitts]

Abraham: [carry casserole to the guests]

Narrator: [hand cue card #2 to one of the Guests]

Guest: Abraham, where's your wife?

Narrator: [hand cue card #3 to Abraham]

Abraham: Over there. I think she's probably listening in.

Narrator: Finishing up and preparing to leave, they offered a bit of surprising news. [hand cue cards #4, 5, 6 to the 3 Guests]

Guest 1: We'll be back in a year!

Guest 2: See you then!

Guest 3: And your wife will have a son!

Narrator: [hand the question mark thought cloud to Abraham or raise it over his head.] Which pretty much stopped poor Abraham in his tracks, since they were well beyond their child-bearing years. Of course, Sarah had been listening this whole time. She thought the whole thing was pretty funny. [hand the Ha Ha! speech bubble to Sarah or raise it over her head].

Narrator: Their guests said, [hand cue cards # 7, 8, 9 to 3 Guests]

Guest 1: What's she laughing about?

Guest 2: Is anything too difficult for the Lord?

Guest 3: When I come back, Sarah will have a son.

Narrator: Sarah lied and said she didn't laugh. But we all know the truth. She laughed her head off! What a ridiculous proposition.

Narrator: [invite applause and send the 3 Guests back to their seats] Let's have a hand for our 3 Guests.

Narrator: Abraham and Sarah, you don't get to go yet. Just as promised, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. It happened at the very time God had told them. [hand Abraham and Sarah the doll and position them in a tableau]

Narrator: Abraham named his son Isaac, and had him circumcised according to God's command, when Abraham was 100 years and Isaac was eight days old. Sarah, meanwhile, kept laughing.

Sarah: [raise the Ha Ha! speech bubble again]

Narrator: God had given her laughter. Who would have thought it? At her advanced age? At his? But truly, nothing is impossible with God. Amen?

Congregation: Amen.



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God invites us to celebrate joy in our lives!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Baby name book/app

Setting the Scene/Background

Abraham and Sarah were promised many children, yet they grew old without any babies. When they were told a son was on the way, Sarah laughed. Most of us would be surprised enough to laugh, too. God didn't punish her for it. They even celebrated that moment by naming their child Isaac, which means laughter!

Sometimes our blessings may seem laughable, but lucky for us, we have a God that celebrates joy and humor!

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Tell the story of Sarah laughing when she heard that she was going to have a baby. Tell kids the baby was named Isaac, but don't give away the meaning just yet.

Hold up your baby name book or app. Talk about what goes in to picking a name for a baby and ask if kids know what their names mean.

Open/search "Isaac". Find that the meaning of "Isaac" is "laughter". Talk about how the baby name shows the joy and humor Sarah had in realizing she'd have a baby at such an old age.

Babies are often a great joy to their families and their names were picked out with such love. Each child is a reminder of the joy we are gifted from God!

Reflection Questions

- Do you know what your name means? Do you know why it was chosen for you?
- Is it ok to laugh at God?

Stuff to Consider

Some parents might not have felt joy when their children were born. Be sure to talk about not just parents' joy, but the joy of God and of all the people who celebrate that these young people are with us today!

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A broken toy



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Genesis 32:[9-13] 22-30

⁹ And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good,’ ¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. ¹¹ Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children. ¹² Yet you have said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.’”

¹³ So he spent that night there, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau.]

²² The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴ Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, “Let me go, for the day is breaking.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.” ²⁷ So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” ²⁸ Then the

man said, “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.” ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. ³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.”

Secondary Text: Mark 14:32-36

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. ³⁴ And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” ³⁵ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.”

Pronunciation Guide

Jabbock: JAB-uhk

Peniel: PEHN-ih-ehl

Gethsemane: geth-SEM-uh-nee



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Jacob, Man

[**Narrator:** And Jacob said,

Jacob: “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good,’ I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children. Yet you have said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.’”

Narrator: So he spent that night there, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau.]

Narrator: The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said,

Man: “Let me go, for the day is breaking.”

Narrator: But Jacob said,

Jacob: “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.”

Narrator: So he said to him,

Man: “What is your name?”

Narrator: And he said,

Jacob: “Jacob.”

Narrator: Then the man said,

Man: “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.”

Narrator: Then Jacob asked him,

Jacob: “Please tell me your name.”

Narrator: But he said,

Man: “Why is it that you ask my name?”

Narrator: And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying,

Jacob: “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.”



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Sometimes it's ok to fight with God, and sometimes we may prevail.

Jacob is still one more story that proves God works with people who are neither wholly good nor wholly bad. Jacob is clearly a man of faith—he attributes his wealth and happiness to God, even asking God to preserve them for him. At the same time, this is the man who tricked his brother out of his birthright and tricked his father for his brother's blessing (Genesis 25:29-34; 27:18-29).

On this night, Jacob was intending to return home to face his brother. He had been gone for decades—would Esau forgive him or kill him? He set out to be alone in preparation for the events of tomorrow. There he encountered a man (angel?) who he wrestled with 'til daybreak. We don't know exactly who this is or how Jacob knows it's a messenger from God. We do know Jacob believed that a blessing from this man would help protect him from Esau, or at worst, grant him favor in God's eyes. He prevailed, and the man/angel blessed him, giving him a new name, "Israel."

Israel's new name suggests that striving "with God and with humans" is something we all will face, probably many times in our lives. We might feel guilty for being angry with God sometimes, but Jacob was not cursed for fighting with God, he was rewarded for his persistence with a blessing. Maybe God's ok with us fighting with God. Maybe that's how we get through the tough times. Maybe it's how we grow to become new people with new blessings and new perspectives. We might get bruised along the way, but life is going to bruise us anyway. Maybe fighting with God is just another way we can communicate with God—perhaps God would prefer fighting to silence. Go ahead, have it out with God—God can take it, and so can you.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Jacob was on the eve of a bittersweet and precarious reunion with his estranged brother. Maybe wrestling with God might result in a blessing and perspective he'll need.

Call to Worship

L: When we fear the future,

C: Faithful God, deliver us!

L: When our fate seems uncertain,

C: Faithful God, deliver us!

L: When a new day brings dread, not promise,

C: Faithful God, deliver us!

L: You can do anything through us,

C: Faithful God, deliver us!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don't last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus' name. Amen.

P: God's covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Dear Lord,
We often struggle in our lives and in our faith. Assure us that you will never let us go, and teach us to long for the blessings which result from seeing challenges through. In the name of your son, amen.

Offertory Prayer

You have promised good things to your people, O God, even when they aren't readily visible to us. Take these gifts which we offer in faith, and bless them for use in your vast kingdom on earth, for the sake of Jesus our savior, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Our life as disciples is not always an easy one. Strengthen us by your Spirit to face the obstacles we encounter and to find encouragement in following the example of those who've gone before us. Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The future of this planet is at the mercy of those who have been entrusted with its care—your faithful children. Unite our will and redouble our efforts to preserve all that you have created good. Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We pray for those who struggle with their everyday tasks: schoolchildren with difficulty learning or making friends, workers in grueling jobs which don't make

ends meet, those suffering with chronic pain or facing other insurmountable hurdles. Be the hope of the hopeless, and make us ever more vigilant to improve the lives of those within our influence. Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Jacob was injured by his struggle, but was not defeated by it. Encourage those who bear the scars of struggle and suffering, but who don't have to be defined by their history. Send your Spirit of hope and healing to all those who need it, (*especially...*). Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: When we consider the struggle of your saints, our own troubles may seem minor by contrast. Nevertheless, draw us all together as your children, that we might know life abundant on earth, and life eternal in your kingdom. Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Hear all our prayers, O Lord: those which we ask this day and those which we dare not speak aloud. May we so trust in you that we never fear to ask anything, and never doubt that it is your will to listen and to answer. In the name of Christ, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You have promised us a life of blessing, O God, but not one without hardship. Feed us now with this meal of the Spirit, that our hopes might be renewed and our bodies refreshed to serve you once more. Come and eat at your master's table!



Liturgy

Litany

Left side: Trust in the Lord

Right side: With all your might.

L: Trust in God

R: With all your strength.

L: God is faithful;

R: God is good.

L: And yet we struggle,

R: Yet we fight.

L: Yet we feel ignored,

R: And mocked,

L: Excluded

R: And judged.

L: The nations fight,

R: And children die.

L: Wars continue,

R: Lands destroyed,

L: The earth is damaged,

R: Crying for healing,

L: The greedy prevail;

R: Ambitions fail.

L: We cry to God,

R: In all our pain.

L: We long for God

R: To bless the earth.

L: We pray for healing,

R: For those who suffer.

L: We cannot see

R: An end to strife.

L: Yet God is good.

R: We cannot see it.

L: God is good.

R: But where is hope?

L: The hope is buried,

R: Hidden, absent,

L: Buried within us,

R: Our eyes are blind.

L: We carry the seed,

R: What seed is this?

L: The seed of hope,

R: But where is hope?

L: Within our hearts,

R: Our broken hearts?

L: Our wounded, hopeful hearts.

R: And what of God?

L: God is faithful.

R: When we doubt?

L: In every struggle.

R: God is there?

L: With us forever.

R: Praise to God!

L: Trust in the Lord

R: With all your might.

L: Trust in God

R: With all your strength.

L: God is faithful!

R: God is good!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Pastor Lindsey, Sonora

[Sonora approaches Pastor Lindsey in her study]

Pastor Lindsey: Oh, hey Sonora! What brings you to visit today?

Sonora: I have a question for you, Pastor Lindsey. But I don't want to bother you.

Pastor Lindsey: You aren't a bother! I'm a pastor, I've always got time to listen!

Sonora: Ok. Well, I think I might be feeling a call to ministry.

Pastor Lindsey: Ok.

Sonora: That's it?

Pastor Lindsey: What do you mean that's it?

Sonora: Everyone else has had such a strong reaction to that statement. My mom was excited, my friends are confused, but all you said was ok. Why is that?

Pastor Lindsey: I'm not sure. Maybe the way you said it. It didn't sound like a, "yay I'm going into ministry, let's celebrate!" kind of statement, but more like a, "I'm really wrestling with this idea," kind of a statement.

Sonora: Wow. That's exactly it. I really do feel like I'm wrestling with this.

Pastor Lindsey: I know what you mean.

Sonora: Oh, come on. You're such a great pastor. There's no way it was a question for you.

Pastor Lindsey: Oh, Sonora, it really was! You didn't know me before I got my call here at this church, but I struggled with the idea that I could be a pastor.

Sonora: Wow, I didn't know that.

Pastor Lindsey: Well, I'm on the other side of the struggle, obviously, but there were so many questions. How would a life in ministry work? Fighting with family who thought that women shouldn't be in ministry didn't help.

Sonora: Really? That seems nuts.

Pastor Lindsey: Looking back, it does. While I was wondering if God was really calling me, having people doubt me didn't really help me out. A lot of my seminary friends had similar experiences. People told them they were too young or too old, too dumb or too academic. There are lots of reasons people struggle with their call.

Sonora: How did you get through it?

Pastor Lindsey: I found people to talk to. I asked questions. I did the wrestling with God and this call by naming all my worries and wonderings and finding people who could listen well—not just try to convince me of what they thought. Because in the end, it didn't matter what they thought as much as what God thought.

Sonora: I feel like I know what God thinks about my call.

Pastor Lindsey: And?

Sonora: And I really don't want it to be what I do. I am afraid that being in ministry will be way too hard. Can I reject God's call? What happens if I do??

Pastor Lindsey: I think you can reject it. Though, in my experience, God can be pretty persistent. But God won't judge you for it. But I can say from experience that you probably will wrestle with that feeling forever, whether or not you choose to pursue ministry.

Sonora: Well, that sounds frustrating.

Pastor Lindsey: It can be! But it can also be rewarding.

Sonora: I guess I have a lot to think about.

Pastor Lindsey: We all do. But God will be with us every step of the journey. Not only that, but God will send people your way that will help you as you wrestle with this idea.

Sonora: I'm glad God sent me you!

Pastor Lindsey: So am I.



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

We can struggle with God.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A broken toy

Setting the Scene/Background

Jacob had a strong faith in God, and he was not afraid to wrestle with God.

When it comes to our faith, we may sometimes feel like we are not allowed to question, doubt, or wrestle God. But stories like this show us God can handle a challenge.

Help kids learn that even if they grow frustrated with God, God loves them all the more for it!

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Ask kids to name a favorite toy.

Ask what would happen if it got broken? Would you cry? Scream? Throw a tantrum?

Show the broken toy you have. Tell kids you accidentally broke the toy, and you needed to apologize to the person who owns it.

Talk about being scared that you have to apologize. Talk about being angry that God didn't keep you from breaking the toy. Ask kids if it's ok to get angry at God. Talk about wrestling with the difficult challenge of apologizing.

Jacob was worried because he needed to apologize to his brother for something he did, but he was afraid to do it. As he wrestled with his apology, he also wrestled with God. In the end, God blessed him!

Remind kids that God doesn't think any less of us when we are angry with God. God can take it!! God loves us no matter what.

Reflection Questions

- What's the best way to share when you are angry?
- Is it ok to be mad?

Stuff to Consider

Don't shame children for having angry feelings. We are allowed to have all the feelings that occur! We can choose how we respond to our feelings. We can choose to express our anger or our worry in a healthy way. Sometimes apologizing can go a long way toward healing our own hurt. It might not be a bad idea to talk about how we can handle our anger.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Dry plant or bush
- Colorful paper to represent flames (optional)



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Exodus 1:8-14 [15—2:10]; 3:1-15

⁸ Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. ¹³ The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, ¹⁴ and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

[¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶ "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." ¹⁷ But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. ¹⁸ So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" ¹⁹ The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." ²⁰ So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. ²² Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

² Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ² The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. ³ When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

⁵ The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"

⁸ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹ Pharaoh's daughter said to

her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰ When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."]

³ Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³ Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." ⁴ When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

¹³ But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you':

This is my name forever,
and this my title for all generations."



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Pharaoh, Midwife, Pharaoh's Daughter, Moses' Sister, Moses, God

Narrator: Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people,

Pharaoh: "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

Narrator: Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

[**Narrator:** The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah,

Pharaoh: "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live."

Narrator: But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them,

Pharaoh: "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?"

Narrator: The midwives said to Pharaoh,

Midwife: "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them."

Narrator: So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because

the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people,

Pharaoh: "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

Narrator: Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him.

Pharaoh's Daughter: "This must be one of the Hebrews' children,"

Narrator: she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter,

Moses' Sister: "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"

Narrator: Pharaoh's daughter said to her,

Pharaoh's Daughter: "Yes."

Narrator: So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her,

Pharaoh's Daughter: "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages."

Narrator: So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses,

Pharaoh's Daughter: "because,"

Narrator: she said,

Pharaoh's Daughter: "I drew him out of the water."



Scripture Readings (continued)

Narrator: Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said,

Moses: “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.”

Narrator: When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush,

God: “Moses, Moses!”

Narrator: And he said,

Moses: “Here I am.”

Narrator: Then he said,

God: “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

Narrator: He said further,

God: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

Narrator: And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said,

God: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the

Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

Narrator: But Moses said to God,

Moses: “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

Narrator: He said,

God: “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

Narrator: But Moses said to God,

Moses: “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”

Narrator: God said to Moses,

God: “I am who I am.”

Narrator: He said further,

God: “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

Narrator: God also said to Moses,

God: “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.”



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God's divine plan often comes with twists and turns.

Moses' story is filled with serendipity—seemingly unrelated events that are woven into an epic story of deliverance and redemption.

People in Egypt: Joseph's story of how he brought his family to Egypt in the first place is also epic and unexpected. If not for Joseph, none of this would even have taken place.

Pharaoh's Disdain: It's easy to see how the pharaohs over 400 years would forget what Joseph had done for Egypt and strive to enslave the Hebrews. Pharaoh's short memory led to centuries of horrendous conditions for the Hebrews.

Cleverness of the Midwives: Despite Pharaoh's order to kill the Hebrew babies, two brave midwives disobeyed Pharaoh to obey God. Their deception and bravery made it possible for Moses to be born and to live.

Cleverness of Moses' Mother: Moses' mother's bravery and cleverness also played a critical role. Not only did she hide him for 3 months, but she also placed him in a spot where Egyptian royalty was known to bathe. Maybe she knew his best shot at life was to be loved by an Egyptian with power.

Cleverness of Moses' Sister: Moses' sister had the wisdom to keep an eye on the baby to see what would become of him. When Pharaoh's daughter scooped him up, she immediately offered to bring a Hebrew wet nurse—Moses' own mother! Clever girl.

Egyptian Royalty: Moses was born a Hebrew and raised an Egyptian. Who better to save the people than Moses? He had a heart for his people and a knowledge of Egyptian politics as well as personal relationship with the house of Pharaoh. He was perfectly positioned to deliver them.

Shepherd: When God contacted Moses, he had fled Egypt for killing an Egyptian taskmaster and was shepherding with his new family. The serenity and solitude of shepherding would have given Moses plenty of time to clear his head, follow his heart, and listen to his God.

Sometimes our own lives can twist and turn, and it can be hard to see any rhyme or reason for the random events that come at us. But often, God has a divine plan that comes together just when we're least expecting it, and in ways we never could have imagined. When we remain open to the seeming randomness of our life events, sometimes we get glimpses into the divine plan behind it all.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Moses' story is filled with serendipity—seemingly unrelated events that are woven into an epic story of deliverance and redemption.

Call to Worship

L: For saving us from all that threatens:

C: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel!

L: For sending help in our hour of need:

C: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel!

L: For giving us hope and a purpose:

C: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don't last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus' name. Amen.

P: God's covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O Lord

The events of our lives don't always make sense to us. Show us how you are guiding us, day by day, to be the people you have created us to be, faithful followers and willing servants. In Jesus' name, amen.

Offertory Prayer

You accept our gifts, great and generous God, both of riches and of ourselves. Now make something beautiful of our offerings, that your will might be known and fulfilled upon the earth. In the name of the one who cares for us, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: As you watched over Moses, preparing him for his role in his people's history, so guide us in our lives of faith and service. Send us helpers to point the way and speak your words of encouragement when we most need them. God our Guide,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your work, O Lord, is carried out in reeds and rivers, bushes and mountains. All creation is useful and good, and deserving of preservation. Grant us the wisdom to continue our efforts to protect and sustain the environment upon which we all depend. God our Guide,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The nations persist in conflicts, and the powerful misuse their potential to oppress others. For our shortsighted mistreatment of our fellow humans, forgive us O Lord, and teach us a better way. God our Guide,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Comfort all those who mourn the loss of children, and protect those whose families abandon or abuse them. Bring reconciliation and healing where it is most needed, and send your Spirit's presence to those we name today (*especially...*). God our Guide,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: On this commemoration of Saint Michael and All Angels, we give you thanks for all the ways you protect and lead us through the twists and turns of our lives. May we also be a light that helps others find their way. God our Guide,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: In strength and in weakness, you hear our every prayer, O God. Receive now these for whom we offer petitions, enfolding them in your love and imparting them with your wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You have heard our cries, O Lord, and have come to deliver us. May the food of this holy meal be healing and sustaining as we continue our journey as disciples. We don't know where our path may lead but we do know that you are always with us. Come, join in the feast!



Liturgy

Litany

L: Baby in the river,

C: What's your name?

L: Who has left you here?

C: Who is hiding on the bank?

L: Your mother fears you will not live.

C: Your sister watches, close at hand.

L: And who will come?

C: The daughter of a king,

L: Kind-hearted girl.

C: She will take you home

L: And raise you up.

C: You will live to grow,

L: And God will have a plan,

C: Just for you.

L: Young man in the field,

C: Pay attention!

L: All the quiet of the night

C: Is just about to break.

L: And what has happened to that bush?

C: Why does it glow so bright?

L: You'd better pay attention

C: To the one who speaks your name.

L: Moses, man of God,

C: Remove your shoes.

L: The ground on which you're standing

C: Is a sacred place.

L: For here you meet your maker,

C: And the giver of a mission,

L: Here appears your God

C: With a message.

L: Shepherd on the mountain,

C: Do not fear.

L: Do not hide your face,

C: God is here.

L: You will be protected,

C: But must seek your maker's courage;

L: For a crucial task awaits you

C: Which will liberate your people,

L: All the tired, suffering people.

C: You will be the one to lead them

L: And to guide their weary footsteps

C: From this land.

L: Baby in the river,

C: Do not fear.

L: God will guide your pathway

C: And will give you all that's needed

L: For your life,

C: And your journey.

All: God is here.



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Julio, Gary

Props: litter to clean up

[Julio and Gary are cleaning a room at their church.]

Julio: Thanks for helping me straighten up, Gary!

Gary: Yeah, you promised it was for a good cause. I'm just waiting to see why it's so important to clean these random classrooms.

Julio: Oh, it's very important! It's the most important thing that we can be doing for the church!

Gary: [Skeptically] Oh it is, is it? Cleaning?

Julio: Yes!

Gary: How is cleaning important?

Julio: Well, when the church building is clean, we are more welcoming to visitors!

Gary: Ok.

Julio: And it's safer, too. If there isn't any garbage laying around or things to trip on, parents don't have to worry about their children, and nobody has to worry about stepping on something. Plus, it's all part of God's plan, for you and me to clean today.

Gary: I really doubt that, Julio.

Julio: It is, Gary!

Gary: Stop trying to make me feel better about cleaning. I'm helping without complaining. Don't try to make it seem like it's some, grand, amazing thing that we are doing here!

Julio: Don't you think that God has a plan for everything?

Gary: Meh, I suppose there are some things God has a plan for. But cleaning? I really don't think that's part of God's plan.

Julio: [has gone from cheery to disappointed] Oh. Ok.
[silence while they both clean]

Gary: [after a pause] I don't mean to hurt your feelings, I just don't think that every little thing is part of a great plan, know what I mean?

Julio: I do. It's just that—naw, forget it.

Gary: No. Tell me. How is cleaning up part of the plan?

Julio: It's not about the cleaning.

Gary: Ok, now I'm totally confused.

Julio: It's about spending time together, getting to know each other better.

Gary: [feeling sheepish] Oh! Sorry. I get it now.

Julio: I don't know if you have noticed, but I don't have a lot of friends around here. I'm still kind of new and trying to get involved in projects. But it's hard to make friends when everyone already knows each other.

Gary: I think it won't be too long before you have a ton of friends, Julio.

Julio: What makes you say that?

Gary: There's something magical about you—everyone will want you to be their friend!

Julio: Magical??

Gary: Yeah! Not only did you convince me to help clean up garbage, you convinced me that it was part of God's plan, and I'm totally on the same page now. Something about you is filled with the Spirit, buddy, and that's a great quality in a friend. My new friend, Julio!

Julio: Aww, thanks, dude! Don't forget that stuff in the corner.



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God's plan is sometimes mysterious!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Dry plant or bush
- Colorful paper to represent flames (optional)

Setting the Scene/Background

Moses first encounters God in a bush that burns and does not get consumed. It's wild!

God is mysterious even today. Help kids imagine the wonder that Moses felt in that moment and encourage them to feel the wonder throughout all of God's creation.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Invite your kids to look at the bush/plant that you have with you.

Ask, "What would happen if this bush was on fire?" (It would probably burn up!)

God came to Moses as a fire inside a bush and it didn't burn up! How is that possible? (Was it fake like this paper?)

God is mysterious, and not just in ways that seem like magic. Think of all the things God is up to. For example: Why were you born? Why do some leaves fall off the trees, and others stay on? What other miraculous things happen thanks to God's creation?

Reflection Questions

- Does God show up in bushes as fire today? Why or why not?
- What things are mysterious and wonderful to you?
- If science can explain things, can they still be a miracle of God?

Stuff to Consider

Any time you talk about fire, it's a good idea to cover fire safety. We never play with matches, and we never play with fire. Perhaps check with families if they have a fire safety plan for their homes. Encourage kids to get out if there is a fire but to know where to meet.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Deuteronomy 5:1-21; 6:4-9

5 Moses convened all Israel, and said to them:
Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. ²The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³Not with our ancestors did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. ⁴The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire. ⁵(At that time I was standing between the Lord and you to declare to you the words of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:
⁶I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ⁷you shall have no other gods before me.
⁸You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁹You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, ¹⁰but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.
¹¹You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.
¹²Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. ¹³Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁴But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. ¹⁵Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

¹⁶Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹⁷You shall not murder.

¹⁸Neither shall you commit adultery.

¹⁹Neither shall you steal.

²⁰Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.

²¹Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife.

Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

6 ⁴Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Secondary Text: Mark 12:28-31

²⁸One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" ²⁹Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Pronunciation Guide

Horeb: HOH-reb



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Moses, Lord

Narrator: Moses convened all Israel, and said to them:

Moses: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. Not with our ancestors did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire. (At that time I was standing between the Lord and you to declare to you the words of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

Lord: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

Lord: You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Lord: You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Lord: Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, or

your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

Lord: Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Lord: You shall not murder.

Lord: Neither shall you commit adultery.

Lord: Neither shall you steal.

Lord: Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.

Lord: Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife.

Lord: Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Moses: Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Commandments to honor God, others, and self can be written on our heart, soul, and mind.

God's commandments are a gift to a weary community, newly freed from slavery, and inexperienced at governing themselves. In the wilderness, they would need to learn how to live as a community in safety and with respect for God, others, and themselves. God's commandments were the cornerstone of the laws God established to help them live and grow as a nation.

God's commandments were also given out of love and for the sake of love. When people strove to follow them, others could live in relative safety and order. But God didn't just want people to be familiar with God's laws—God wanted people to know them to the core of their being—heart, soul, and might. What we practice regularly soon becomes habit, and habit becomes part of our being.

These ten commandments can be categorized in many ways—I see them as commandments to honor our relationship with God (1-3), with others (4-8), and with self (9-10).

God:

- God began the discourse on God's laws first with what God had already done for the people. God was not about to demand that the people honor God without first indicating that God honors people, too. God freed the people from slavery and delivered them on their journey toward the promised land.
- In return, God wanted the people to put away the gods of Egypt many had adopted and follow only God.
- Second, God asked that no one curse God. Perhaps God knew there would be days when people wanted to curse God. But God asked that we have faith that God will be faithful to us, and so we ought not lose our faith in God.
- Finally, God asked that we set aside time to nurture our relationship with God.

Others: The next commandments serve to nurture our relationships with others. It lays out who and how we honor those we love and those we don't even know.

Self: The final two commandments not to covet discourage the turmoil we put ourselves through when we desire what others have more than what we have. When we do so, we fail to have faith in our own success, our own person. This commandment reminds us that we are enough.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

God gives God's commandments and laws as a gift to help us honor God, others, and self. These gifts can be written on our heart, soul, and mind.

Call to Worship

L: Hear, O Israel:

C: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!

L: Who brought us out of slavery:

C: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!

L: Let us love and worship our God!

C: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don't last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus' name. Amen.

P: God's covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Dear Lord,
You long for us not only to know and to follow your ways, but to love them as well. Fill our hearts with the spirit of your law, that we might live each day as you would have your people live, for the sake of our savior Jesus, amen.

Offertory Prayer

You show your steadfast love, O God, in ways too numerous to mention. In gratitude we bring these gifts before you, asking that you bless them for the work of your kingdom on earth. In Christ's name we pray, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: When we are tempted to throw the letter of the law at our brothers and sisters, remind us that the greatest and most difficult commandment you ever gave was to love others as we have been loved by you.
Compassionate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: When we follow your will, the world begins to work as you designed it. Teach us wisdom in dealing with the environment and all the creatures which inhabit it. Show us that we are truly part of all that lives, and that we thrive or suffer as does creation. Compassionate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Seasons change and time passes, but your word remains constant and true, O Lord. Focus our hearts and lives on the things that matter: treating you, others and ourselves with respect and love. Compassionate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: When we are out of balance, it shows up in our world as sickness of all sorts. Send your healing to those who suffer illness of body, mind and spirit. Heal all those we lift up this day (*especially...*). Compassionate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We remember William Tyndale and all who worked to bring your word to people in a language they could understand. May we constantly be striving to bring the truth of your law to the world, that all may know your love and liberation. Compassionate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We place into your hands all our prayers, with trust and hope in your promise to renew, forgive, and heal. In the name of Jesus our Lord, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You have remembered us in our hour of need, O God. Therefore, we remember you when we pray, when we gather, when we go about the work of our lives. Be with us now as we celebrate your holy supper, in a mystic communion of your children, both on earth and in the life beyond. Join us all as one and make us to love your commands. Let us come together and share this meal to which our savior invites us.



Liturgy

Litany

L: God is faithful,

C: Giving guidance.

L: Words for living,

C: Ways of serving.

L: Knowing our place

C: Within the creation.

L: But the greatest of these

C: Is love.

L: God gave laws,

C: Through Moses, the servant,

L: Laws to protect,

C: And laws to correct.

L: But the greatest of these

C: Is love.

L: Words on tablets

C: Full of wisdom,

L: Ways to remember

C: The purpose of living.

L: But the greatest of these

C: Is love.

L: Moses taught the people

C: Everything that God had said,

L: How to worship,

C: Whom to worship,

L: Commands of respect

C: For parents and elders.

L: But the greatest of these

C: Is love.

L: God made rules

C: For civil living,

L: Preserving life

C: And others' livings.

L: Laws to curb

C: And laws to limit,

L: But the greatest of these

C: Is love.

L: Hear, O people:

C: Your Lord has spoken

L: Faithful words

C: And just commands.

L: But don't forget

C: Your whole life long

L: That the greatest

C: Of all

All: Is love!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Malia, Samir

Props: baseball, baseball gloves, a baseball bat

[Malia is sitting discouraged with her glove and ball. Samir approaches to see what's wrong.]

Samir: Hey Malia—what's going on?

Malia: [diffidently] Nothing.

Samir: Why are you sitting over here?

Malia: Because.

Samir: I'm just trying to be a friend, Malia. If you don't want to talk I can leave you alone.

Malia: I'm sorry, Samir, I'm just really mad.

Samir: Why?

Malia: Because the coach keeps picking on me.

Samir: What?

Malia: She's singling me out and yelling at me. It's not fair. It makes me feel really bad.

Samir: I didn't even notice, Malia. I'm sorry. When did she single you out?

Malia: You didn't hear it? She did it for all the world to hear and see!

Samir: Wow, I must not have been paying attention.

Malia: Really not.

Samir: Ok, then tell me what she said. I can't believe she'd single you out—that's so uncool!

Malia: When I was pitching.

Samir: Oh man! In front of everyone?

Malia: Yes. She kept calling my pitches as balls. Like someone couldn't hit them! How unfair is that?

Samir: Oh. I guess I did hear that...

Malia: See? Isn't that just awful??

Samir: Well, I can see why that hurt your feelings...

Malia: But you don't think it was harsh???

Samir: Well, no.

Malia: What? I can't believe it. You're on her side, too! I'm going to quit baseball. I can't take it anymore.

Samir: Oh, Malia. I know that was hard, but she has to call the balls the way they are pitched.

Malia: You don't think she was harsh??

Samir: She's actually pretty fair on that. I agreed with her calls. Besides, I think—

Malia: [interrupting] I thought you were my friend!

Samir: I am, Malia, but she can't just call a pitch good when you are out of the zone. How would you learn?

Malia: I don't know...

Samir: And what about the batters? Is it fair to call something a strike that should have been a ball? They'd be out when the pitches were wild, and that's unfair to them.

Malia: Oh. I didn't even think about the batters.

Samir: See? The rules are there so we can all play together, fairly.

Malia: Yeah, but it still sucks to be called a bad pitcher.

Samir: She didn't call you a bad pitcher. She called balls as balls. So, it was a few rough innings. None of us is perfect. She's trying to help you learn—and I think you did—because you started throwing a little straighter at the end, right?

Malia: I guess you're right.

Samir: None of this is to hurt your feelings. It's about growing and about building a good team.

Malia: I guess you're right. I'm just a little sensitive about how I play I guess.

Samir: We all are, but it's ok. You get to try again!

Malia: You're right. [shaking off her funk] Ok, let's get back out there!

Samir: Wooot!



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God's commandments and other rules are not about proving how good we are. They are about how our behavior affects other people.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin

Setting the Scene/Background

Often, commandments are held up as standards for living, and if you break one, others might think you deserve shame. It can feel as if God might be angry at you about the commandment being broken, and you can feel defeated at the impossibility of keeping God happy.

However, God's commandments were not created just to make us follow the rules. They were created to help us live in relationship with others on earth.

Help kids understand that rules aren't all about making us look "well behaved" or "badly behaved". Rules are about keeping a community together.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Set your kids up to play Simon Says. Play a few rounds but change up the rules each time you play. Hopefully some of the kids will complain about the rules being confusing.

When you sit down, ask how everyone feels about rules. Why are they good? When can they be frustrating?

Point out that rules are not about measuring how good or bad we are but for helping us get along well with our neighbors.

Reflection Questions

- What rule at school or home do you think is most important? Which one is the hardest to follow?
- What would the world be like if we didn't have any rules?

Stuff to Consider

Kids with impulse control might struggle with rules and as a result, they might get chastised more often by their peers. Help the group to understand that breaking rules doesn't give us permission to ostracize someone.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Enough treats for everyone in your group



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Ruth 1:1-17

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. **2** The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. **3** But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, **5** both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

6 Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food. **7** So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. **8** But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back each of you to your mother’s house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. **9** The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.” Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. **10** They said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.” **11** But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? **12** Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, **13** would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me.” **14** Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 So she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

16 But Ruth said,

“Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go;

where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

17 Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.

May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!”

Secondary Text: Mark 3:33-35

33 And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?”

34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! **35** Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Pronunciation Guide

Judah: JOO-duh

Moab: MO-ab

Elimelech: ee-LIHM-eh-lehk

Mahlon: MAH-luhn

Chilion: KIHl-ee-ahn

Ephrathites: EFF-rah-thaits

Moabite: MO-ab-ait

Orpah: OR-puh



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Naomi, Ruth

Narrator: In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food. So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law,

Naomi: “Go back each of you to your mother’s house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.”

Narrator: Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. They said to her,

Ruth: “No, we will return with you to your people.”

Narrator: But Naomi said,

Naomi: “Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me.”

Narrator: Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. So she said,

Naomi: “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

Narrator: But Ruth said,

Ruth: “Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.
Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.
May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!”



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Ruth and Naomi both made difficult decisions from impossible choices; Ruth's love and loyalty toward Naomi blossomed into unexpected blessings.

Naomi had lost a great deal. First, her homeland when famine forced her family to move in Moab. Then she lost her husband. And then her sons. She had nothing left, or so she thought.

Ruth and Orpah had also lost a great deal. They were Moabite women who had married Israelites. Already they had lost the identities of their childhoods. Then they lost their husbands. Now they were faced with losing their mother-in-law, too. Orpah saw what she could regain by returning home. Ruth chose instead to stay with her mother-in-law, even though it meant losing out on the opportunity to remarry within Moab. Ruth left everything behind to follow Naomi back to Naomi's home.

All these women were faced with impossible choices. Each option held gains and losses. What makes Ruth's story so compelling is that she made her choice more for the benefit of Naomi than for herself. Truthfully, there was nothing in Naomi's homeland for Ruth (or so she thought). But Naomi had very little prospects for survival as a widow in a patriarchal land. With Ruth's youth and beauty, she at least had another person to care for her, to provide food, and to protect her from the dangers of isolation. In a delightful turn, we will learn later, God did have greater plans for both women, none of which would have been possible if not for the difficult decision Ruth made to stay.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Naomi and Ruth had lost so much already. Naomi was ready to walk away from the people who loved her. But Ruth was not willing to give up so soon.

Call to Worship

L: Sisters and brothers!

C: We gather together.

L: From different families,

C: And different places,

L: From different views,

C: And different backgrounds.

L: We gather! We're family!

C: Praise God

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don't last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus' name. Amen.

P: God's covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O God,
You are always present with us, even and especially when we're compelled to make difficult choices. Be at work in our hearts to find peace on our pathways, and look for the blessings you bestow upon us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Offertory Prayer

We offer our lives and all we have to you, the giver of all. Accept our gifts, set before you in gratitude for all that we have and continue to receive. Bless our efforts to serve you and lead us down ever deeper pathways of faithfulness toward you and your beloved son, Jesus Christ, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: When Ruth cared more for her mother-in-law Naomi's fate than for her own, you blessed her leap of faith and prospered her life. So give us a heart for others that our lives might also be a blessing to theirs. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The creatures who share our world are also our brothers and sisters. Bless all who share their lives with animal companions, that we might find comfort, protection and healing in one another's company. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We remember native peoples around the globe, those who have lived many centuries and befriended the land, and who have also suffered mistreatment at the hands of settlers. Make of our planet one great community of humankind, where none regard themselves as superior to others, and all strive for the good of everyone. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: It is never easy to say goodbye, especially when love is present and bonds are strong. Be with all who have lost love ones or who live far away from them, giving them the assurance that all are held together in your wide embrace. We lift up the names of those who need your special care this day, (*especially...*). Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: For all whose lives were cut short in their service to you, we give thanks. Bless their memories and may their legacy of faith and courage continue to inspire generations to come. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Receive our prayers and bless our living, that we might serve as your hands and eyes in a world which needs your good news more than ever. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You have promised to be with us always, O Lord. Now be present as we gather around your table as one family of faith. Unite us in purpose and teach us to offer our lives in service to one another. Come to the feast of life and love!



Liturgy

Litany

Left side: Who is my brother?

Right side: My sister?

L: My mother?

R: The ones who inhabit

L: My family home?

R: Who are the ones

L: I might call my relations?

R: My kindred,

L: My close ones,

R: Would these be my siblings?

L: Who shared my first memories,

R: My house,

L: And my parents?

R: Who is my parent—

L: The ones who gave life to me?

R: Are they the people who raised me from birth?

L: Or are they the wise ones who offered their nurture

R: And showed me the path

L: When far from my homeland?

R: Who are my family,

L: My cousins,

R: My children?

L: Would they be the people

R: Who live in my photographs?

L: Present for gatherings,

R: Meeting at holidays,

L: Sharing my history

R: And family name?

L: Who are my brothers,

R: My sisters,

L: My parents?

R: Must family be one blood,

L: Or all of one background?

R: Or—are they the ones

L: Who are joined by the fellowship,

R: Beloved communion

L: The brother- and sisterhood

R: Known as God's children?

L: Yes! These are my siblings,

R: My mother,

L: My father.

R: These loved ones who share

L: In the faith of my heart

R: And who carry God's will

L: In their souls, like a flame.

R: My sisters!

L: My brothers!

R: Rejoice in God's family!

L: Together we serve,

R: Together we're one!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Bart, Gabby

[Bart & Gabby are siblings, having a talk after worship on Sunday morning.]

Bart: Gabby, wasn't worship amazing today?

Gabby: It was fine.

Bart: It was more than fine. It was inspiring! I especially liked the Bible story.

Gabby: Ruth is one of my favorite books of the Bible.

Bart: I think it's my favorite too!

Gabby: It's short. I have actually read the whole thing. It makes me feel smart.

Bart: Oh, Gabby, you're funny. That's not why I like it, though.

Gabby: Oh really? Why do you like it so much?

Bart: I love love.

Gabby: Okay....

Bart: It's such an amazing love story.

Gabby: I mean...I guess...

Bart: There's such devotion in those words, "Where you go, I will go!" I can't wait to find a romance that is so deep and so full!

Gabby: Oh, Bart.

Bart: I know, I know. I'm a dreamer. I like all the wishy-washy mushy love stuff and that grosses you out. Don't judge me.

Gabby: I'm not judging you. At least not on that.

Bart: You don't think it's an amazing love story?

Gabby: I do. It's just not in the same way you are thinking.

Bart: Leave it to you to make things dry and clinical, Gabby. What clinical information do you have to destroy this love story for me? Do you not think it's about love at all?

Gabby: It is about love, Bart.

Bart: Well then why do you have to scoff? Do you think I won't have a great love like this one day?

Gabby: You already do, Bart.

Bart: What? Who is it? I can't wait to be in love!

Gabby: It's me.

Bart: Gross, Gabby! You're my sister!

Gabby: [laughing] I know that, goofy.

Bart: I don't want a romance with you.

Gabby: That's good. I don't want one with you, either. Lucky for you, that's not the kind of love that's happening in Ruth. I don't think you listened to the whole story.

Bart: No. It's so hard to pay attention with all that talking in worship.

Gabby: [laughing] Well get this. That devoted love that is happening in the end of the story, the "where you go, I will go" stuff? That's between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

Bart: What?

Gabby: Yeah. Not romantic at all. But definitely filled with love and devotion. And I have that for you!

Bart: Really?

Gabby: Yes. Even when you zone out during worship and misunderstand stories, I still love ya.

Bart: Aww, I love you too!



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Sometimes love means making tough choices.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Enough treats for everyone in your group

Setting the Scene/Background

Ruth showed great love and devotion to Naomi by staying with Naomi after her husband died.

Love looks like this: wanting more for the ones we love than for ourselves. God feels this way about us, and it can be hard for us to remember to show that kind of love towards others.

Use this exercise to show how we can love others in even simple ways, and how difficult that can be at times.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Have the one treat visible, and the rest hidden. Ask how kids show love: hugs, smiles, pictures, gifts, etc.

Ask if anyone has a family member who feeds them well. Talk about how much work it is to cook and feed someone. Like a grandma who barely sits during a meal to make sure everyone gets exactly what they want and need.

Share that you had this treat for yourself. You really want to show love for them by sharing your treat, but there's not enough for everyone. Ask who might be willing to give it up in order to show their love.

It can be hard to give something up for another person, but love means caring for others as much as ourselves.

Tell kids it's a good thing you planned for everyone to get a treat! Hand out hidden treats.

Reflection Questions

- Does anyone give up what they want so you can enjoy it? How can you show appreciation?
- Can you ever show too much love?

Stuff to Consider

Finding a treat that works for all can be tricky. It's a good idea to know your kids' food sensitivities and allergies before bringing a treat to share. Some options that work are gluten-free fruit snacks (usually produced in a peanut free facility) or even just fruit. Apples or clementines work well. Candy can also be ok, but again be mindful of those who can't have hard candy or may be allergic to chocolate, peanuts, or other ingredients.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Party supplies for a processional
 - Noise makers
 - Ribbons to wave
 - Hats
 - Other processional supplies



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: 2 Samuel 5:1-5; 6:1-5

5 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, “Look, we are your bone and flesh. ²For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel.” ³So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. ⁴David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. ⁵At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

6 David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. ²David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. ³They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart ⁴with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. ⁵David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

Text: Psalm 150

¹Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!

²Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
³Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
⁴Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
⁵Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
⁶Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!

Secondary Text: Mark 11:8-10

⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,
“Hosanna!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Pronunciation Guide

Hebron: HEE-bruhn
Baale-judah: BAY-uh-lee-JOO-duh
cherubim: CHER-uh-bim
Abinadab: uh-BIN-uh-dab
Uzzah: UHZ-uh
Ahio: ay-HI-oh



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text: 2 Samuel 5:1-5; 6:1-5

Readers: Narrator, Tribes

Narrator: Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said,

Tribes: “Look, we are your bone and flesh. For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel.”

Narrator: So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years. David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons

of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

Dramatic Reading of the Text: Psalm 150

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!

Reader 2: Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

Reader 1: Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!

Reader 2: Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!

Reader 1: Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

Reader 2: Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God deserves our dancing in the streets with reckless abandon.

The ark of the covenant had been stolen in battle and was in the enemy's possession for twenty years. Finally, King David fought the Philistines and recovered the ark. At first, David was reluctant to house the ark in his city; Uzzah, one of the men carrying the ark had reached out to steady it on route and the Lord struck him dead. Although it seems like a stiff punishment for an honorable intention, God had made it very clear that God was too holy for mortals to look upon, and the ark was too holy for anyone other than priests to touch. It's not that God punished him for his behavior—no, the ark was simply too powerfully holy for Uzzah to endure. Nonetheless, David was afraid of the raw power the ark contained, and he left it in the care of the nearby household of Obed-edom for three months.

But then, once David learned that Obed-edom's household was blessed because he housed the ark, David found the courage to bring the ark into his city. (Either that, or he just wanted the blessings for himself.)

Once the ark was in its home in David's city, David was so overjoyed, he danced in the streets in his underwear. (Yeah, that's basically what an ephod is.) When his wife, Michal (Saul's daughter who really hated David), scolded him for his vulgarity, David proclaimed that he would do even crazier things than that for joy of the Lord.

I wonder what it might take for me to be so overjoyed with the Lord that I would leap and dance in the streets in any clothing, much less underwear. What are those moments for me—those moments so beautiful and rare that rejoicing is necessary? The birth of my three children comes to mind. Do I need to limit my rejoicing to those rare moments? No, if I look, I can find moments worth rejoicing nearly every day. Dance. Sing. Rejoice. God is worth it.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

The ark of the covenant had been stolen and housed with enemies for over 20 years. After David became king, he recovered the ark and rejoiced by dancing in the streets with reckless abandon.

Call to Worship

L: Come with joy into God's sanctuary!

C: Let us praise the Lord!

L: With trumpet and pipe, strings and cymbals!

C: Let us praise the Lord!

L: Everything that is alive—

C: Let us praise the Lord!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don't last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus' name. Amen.

P: God's covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Holy God,
Your word is life and your blessings infinite. Fill us with such jubilation at your generosity that we cannot help but celebrate, and that all the world might know the joy that belongs to the children of God. In the name of Jesus, we pray, amen.

Offertory Prayer

With gratitude we place these gifts upon your table, O God. We ask that you bless them with your Spirit and send us out to proclaim your kingdom wherever we may go. All this we pray for the sake of Jesus, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Every day in your kingdom is a reason for celebration, dear Lord. Shake us out of our dullness and preoccupation with trivial and tedious things, to reawaken to the wonder of your blessings and the abundant life which is your gift to us. God of joy,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Nature is intricate, intelligent, vast and mighty. May we never lose a sense of awe at being part of it all, and may we cultivate respect and love for all that you have made, having been entrusted with its care. God of joy,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The horns, strings, drums and dancers praise you, O creator. Bless all musicians, writers, artists and performers who dedicate their lives to reaching people at the deepest and most profound levels of spirit and emotion. Inspire us to draw forth the unique creative powers you have placed within each one of us, that our lives might glorify you in all that we do. God of joy,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: There are times, it is true, when we genuinely cannot see any reason to celebrate: in suffering, mourning, hardship and pain. At these times, more than any other, bless us with your Spirit's deep peace, that we might be content to rest in your presence and lean on your promises. We pray for those in need this day, (*especially...*). God of joy,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The saints and martyrs before us truly knew how to praise you in every circumstance, faithful Lord. May we follow their extraordinary example and know the peace which they now share in your eternal presence. God of joy,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We rejoice that you hear our prayers, and thank you for your continued blessings, all made possible through the grace of our savior Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

We bring our praises and our joy to this table of celebration, as we join with sisters and brothers everywhere: one family, one Lord, one loving God. Come and share your creator's rich gifts!



Liturgy

Litany

L: Praise the Lord!

C: With voices!

L: Altos and tenors,

C: Sopranos and basses.

L: Praise the Lord!

C: Young and old!

L: And middle aged,

C: And young adults.

L: Praise the Lord!

C: With instruments!

L: Oboes, pianos,

C: Guitars and trombones,

L: Horns and harps,

C: Strings and woodwinds,

L: Drums and whistles.

C: Singers and players.

L: Praise the Lord!

C: With words and movement!

L: Dancers and acrobats,

C: Actors and speakers,

L: Painters and sculptors,

C: Poets and writers,

L: Praise the Lord!

C: With crafts and trades!

L: Builders and architects,

C: Stylists, designers,

L: Workers and cleaners,

C: Caregivers and growers,

L: Teachers and counselors,

C: Leaders and lawyers,

L: Buyers and sellers,

C: Students and seekers.

L: Praise the Lord!

C: In all that you do!

L: Waking or resting,

C: Coming or going,

L: Waiting or moving,

C: Longing for news,

L: Or happy reunions,

C: Awaiting results,

L: Or tidings of hope.

C: In joy or uncertainty.

L: Praise the Lord!

C: At every time!

L: By day and by night,

C: In winter or spring,

L: In old and new,

C: In death and life.

L: For God is here,

C: In all of life.

L: God is good,

C: At every moment.

L: Praise the Lord!

C: Praise the Lord!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Lenny, Carissa

Props: Party hats, noisemakers

[Open with Carissa celebrating, making a lot of noise with her noisemakers. Lenny walks in to find her having a great time.]

Lenny: Whoa, Carissa! What on earth are you doing???

Carissa: Celebrating! Want to join me?

Lenny: It's not New Year's Eve. What's with all the party supplies?

Carissa: I told you. I'm celebrating!

Lenny: What on earth are you celebrating that would need so much noise??

Carissa: I'm celebrating God.

Lenny: Oh! What did God do?

Carissa: [incredulous] What do you mean, "What did God do?" Don't you see it?

Lenny: I guess...I don't...

Carissa: Look around you, Lenny! Do you see the birds? The trees? How the leaves change color?

Lenny: Yeah.

Carissa: And all the people we have with us!

Lenny: I see it, but so what? The people are always here. And the leaves change every year!

Carissa: Doesn't that make you want to celebrate?

Lenny: Not really.

Carissa: Do you thank God for anything?

Lenny: [pausing to consider] Huh. I guess I don't really thank God for things. Do you think I should start?

Carissa: Of course! [makes some more noise on the noisemaker]

Lenny: [wincing] Ok, ok, that's enough. Do you really think your gratitude needs this much celebration?

Carissa: Why not?

Lenny: Don't you think it's kind of excessive?

Carissa: No. I don't. This is not enough for all that God has done. God has given us all we need to survive. God has given us beautiful nature to view. God has given us friends and family to help care for us and to enjoy all this beauty with. How can I keep from celebrating all the beauty God has given us?

Lenny: It just seems a little exuberant.

Carissa: Fine. Go quietly thank God for all you have been given. I'm going to have fun with my gratitude! [begins to dance and shout as she makes noise]

Lenny: [trying to look annoyed, but realizes it looks like fun.] Carissa?

Carissa: Lenny, if you think it's too loud, fine. Go somewhere else so I can keep celebrating. [gets ready to make more noise but stops at Lenny's words]

Lenny: I'm not going to tell you it's too loud.

Carissa: You aren't?

Lenny: No. I was just going to ask if you had some extra party supplies.

Carissa: Are you finally going to join me?

Lenny: Yes. I want to thank God for all those things. And for friends like you that help me remember to find joy in life.

Carissa: Awesome!

[Carissa hands Lenny some supplies, and they depart making noise and celebrating.]



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God loves when we celebrate!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Party supplies for a processional
 - Noise makers
 - Ribbons to wave
 - Hats
 - Other processional supplies

Setting the Scene/Background

Sometimes, church can feel like a place to be quiet and serious, and frankly, boring.

Help kids and adults see that God loves celebration. Invite them into a celebratory processional.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Ask if we are allowed to make noise in church. Sometimes we talk or sing, etc.

Talk about the celebration in this story. God was given a parade.

Share that a lot of churches (maybe even yours!) has a processional during worship to celebrate God being with us.

Pass out noisemakers, ribbons and invite kids to process and celebrate God with noise and fun! Invite adults to participate with a simple song.

Reflection Questions

- Sometimes it's good to be quiet and sometimes it's good to be noisy! Can you think of some examples of each?
- What has God done for you that we can celebrate?

Stuff to Consider

Processionals are fun but make sure your procession is fully accessible. Do you have a child in a wheelchair? Be sure your path will allow them to move. Do you have kids who aren't that great at holding objects or are missing limbs? Be sure to offer items that are easy to hold and use! Do you have kids with sound sensitivities? Invite them to lead the procession so the noise is behind them or invite them to remain at the front of the church holding a banner or ribbon as a guide for the procession.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A collection of small game pieces
 - Marbles
 - Poker chips
 - Dice



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: 1 Kings 12:1-17, 25-29

12 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. ² When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt. ³ And they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, ⁴ “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you.” ⁵ He said to them, “Go away for three days, then come again to me.” So the people went away.

⁶ Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the older men who had attended his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, “How do you advise me to answer this people?” ⁷ They answered him, “If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.” ⁸ But he disregarded the advice that the older men gave him, and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and now attended him. ⁹ He said to them, “What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father put on us?’” ¹⁰ The young men who had grown up with him said to him, “Thus you should say to this people who spoke to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must lighten it for us’; thus you should say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins. ¹¹ Now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’”

¹² So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said, “Come to me again the third day.” ¹³ The king answered the people harshly. He disregarded the advice that the older men had given him ¹⁴ and spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” ¹⁵ So the king did not listen to the people, because it was a turn of affairs brought about by the Lord that he might fulfill his word, which the

Lord had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.

¹⁶ When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king,

“What share do we have in David?

We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.

To your tents, O Israel!

Look now to your own house, O David.”

So Israel went away to their tents. ¹⁷ But Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah.

²⁵ Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and resided there; he went out from there and built Penuel. ²⁶ Then Jeroboam said to himself, “Now the kingdom may well revert to the house of David. ²⁷ If this people continues to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, the heart of this people will turn again to their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah.” ²⁸ So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold. He said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” ²⁹ He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

Secondary Text: Mark 10:42-45

⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Pronunciation Guide

Rehoboam: ree-huh-BOH-uhm

Shechem: SHEE-kuhm

Jeroboam: jer-uh-BOH-uhm

Nebat: NEE-bat

Ahijah: uh-HI -uh

Shilonite: SHAI-lo-nait



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Jeroboam, Rehoboam, Older Advisors, Younger Advisors, People

Narrator: Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt. And they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam,

Jeroboam: “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you.”

Narrator: He said to them,

Rehoboam: “Go away for three days, then come again to me.”

Narrator: So the people went away. Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the older men who had attended his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying,

Rehoboam: “How do you advise me to answer this people?”

Narrator: They answered him,

Older Advisors: “If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.”

Narrator: But he disregarded the advice that the older men gave him, and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and now attended him. He said to them,

Rehoboam: “What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke that your father put on us?’”

Narrator: The young men who had grown up with him said to him,

Younger Advisors: “Thus you should say to this people who spoke to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must lighten it for us’; thus you should say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins. Now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to

your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’”

Narrator: So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said,

Jeroboam: “Come to me again the third day.”

Narrator: The king answered the people harshly. He disregarded the advice that the older men had given him and spoke to them according to the advice of the young men,

Rehoboam: “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”

Narrator: So the king did not listen to the people, because it was a turn of affairs brought about by the Lord that he might fulfill his word, which the Lord had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat. When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king,

People: “What share do we have in David?
We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.
To your tents, O Israel!

Look now to your own house, O David.”

Narrator: So Israel went away to their tents. But Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah. Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and resided there; he went out from there and built Penuel. Then Jeroboam said to himself,

Jeroboam: “Now the kingdom may well revert to the house of David. If this people continues to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, the heart of this people will turn again to their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah.”

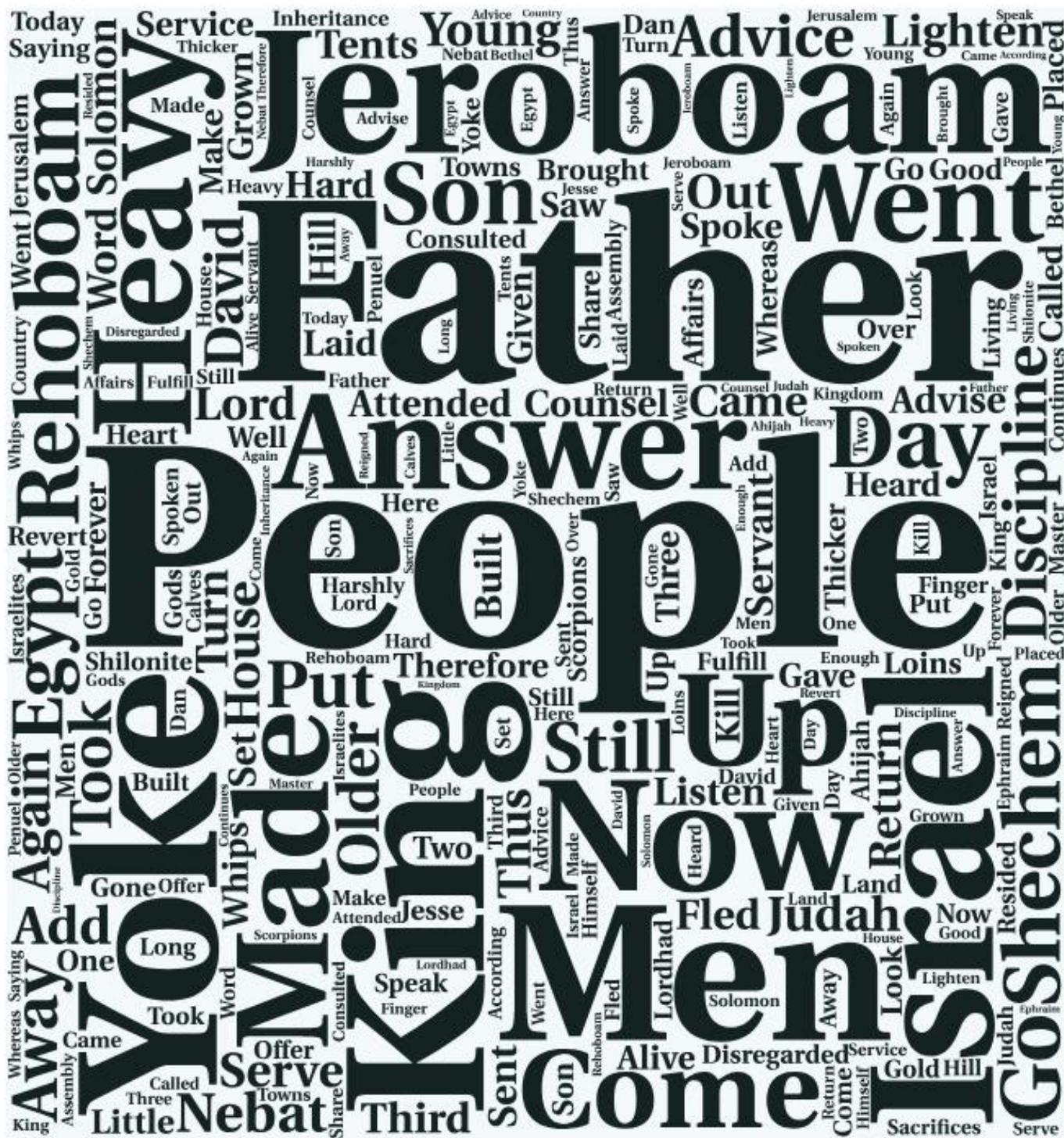
Narrator: So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold. He said to the people,

Jeroboam: “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”

Narrator: He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.



Tag Cloud





Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Rehoboam and Jeroboam, both hungry for power, divided the twelve tribes of Israel. Even God's chosen are only human.

Although we often recognize King Solomon as one of God's most impressive kings, his reign came with a dark side. King Solomon was a harsh task master, building his temple, wealth, and other public works on the backs of slaves.

[Jeroboam](#) was one of the men chosen by Solomon to direct the building of the fortress [Millo](#) in Jerusalem. He quickly became aware of the discontent of the people over the harsh conditions that contributed to Solomon's extravagant lifestyle. He plotted to become king over the ten northern tribes but fled to Egypt when Solomon learned of it.

Once Solomon died, Rehoboam became king and Jeroboam returned to Jerusalem. Jeroboam brought a delegation to Rehoboam to plead for the people that their workload and taxes be lightened. Rehoboam consulted with the elders who advised him to lighten their load. He wasn't happy with their answer, so he consulted the younger men he had grown up with. They advised him to make the workload even harsher, and he agreed.

When Jeroboam learned of Rehoboam's intent, he and the ten northern tribes revolted and withdrew to the north. The people made Jeroboam the first king of the northern kingdom, which [remained divided for nearly two centuries](#).

Once Jeroboam (who was in it for power, not for justice) became king, he realized his reign would fail if people followed the biblical decree to pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times each year. So, he forbade them from the pilgrimage and made two golden calves for the people to worship. He placed them in two strategic spots along with armies to stop his people from entering Jerusalem. He established his reign as progressive against the old ways of Judah (the southern kingdom). His militant division of the kingdoms was the end of the unity of the twelve tribes forever. Even God's chosen, from Saul, David, and Solomon, to Rehoboam and Jeroboam, are only human.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

After Solomon's death, successor King Rehoboam and newly anointed King Jeroboam divided the twelve tribes of Israel into two kingdoms. The division would last for centuries and would alter the Jewish landscape forever.

Call to Worship

L: The world is harsh, but God shows mercy.

C: Praise to our servant king!

L: The leaders of earth are hungry for power.

C: Praise to our servant king!

L: Let us follow the one who was subject to all:

C: Praise to our servant king!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don't last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus' name. Amen.

P: God's covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O God,
You know the greed and dishonesty which lives within our hearts. Humble us as Jesus was humble and show us the way to true power: surrender to your Spirit. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

Make these offerings which we bring acceptable in your sight, O God. Bless our efforts to work toward justice in the world and move us to rethink the ways we use and distribute the world's wealth and resources, so that none need suffer hunger or poverty. In Jesus' holy name, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Our history is strewn with fallible leaders who achieved noble goals using dishonorable means. Forgive us where we have been short-sighted, callous, even destructive, O Lord, and open us to new and more compassionate ways of leadership. God of justice,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Not only humans, but animals are also exploited in our desire for test subjects, labor, delicacies, and resources which we were meant to share with other inhabitants of this planet. Have mercy on our cruel past, and show us the pathway to progress without persecution, pollution and destruction. God of justice,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: On this day when our Hindu brothers and sisters celebrate Diwali, the triumph of light over darkness, remind us that love is always stronger than evil, even when we cannot immediately see an end to the suffering and ills of this world. God of justice,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: When we separate from and place ourselves above others, we cannot be truly well. Heal our divisions, our greed and self-centeredness, that we might come to know your desire to make us one. Bestow your healing upon all those who need it, (*especially...*). God of justice,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Those whom we call saints were not flawless and did not live perfect lives. But they found their hope and strength in you, and because of this we remember and hope to emulate their example. Unite us all in one family of faith, in this world and the next. God of justice,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: All that we ask, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, trusting that you are faithful, compassionate, and just. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Jesus showed us that whoever wishes to become great must first learn to serve. Feed us now as you did the first disciples on the night before you gave up your life for them. Strengthen us by your sacrifice; teach us your ways. Come and join your sisters and brothers at the table of mercy.



Liturgy

Litany

Left side: God is angry

Right side: At the mercy

L: We deny to our dependents,

R: Those who look to us for guidance,

L: Or rely on us for pardon.

R: God is angry

L: At the cruelty

R: So callously imparted

L: To the ones who aren't like us

R: Or to those within our debt.

L: God is angry

R: At the selfishness

L: We cling to, in our blindness

R: To the permanent connections

L: Which we share with every person.

R: God is angry

L: We've forgotten

R: How we first arose in love

L: Fashioned in our maker's image

R: Meant as allies for each other.

L: God is angry—

R: Should be angry—

L: That we've failed at living kindness,

R: And in sharing what we're given,

L: And forgiving,

R: And in blessing.

L: God is right

R: In being angry.

L: But is God truly angry?

R: Or is the one who made us

L: Simply grieved at all our blindness?

R: Does our maker long to punish,

L: Or to bathe us in forgiveness?

R: Is the God whom we call Love

L: Set on punishing our missteps,

R: Or on gathering all peoples

L: Back within the folds of mercy

R: And the dwelling of the Lord?

L: We who wander,

R: Veering sharply

L: From the one who gave us life,

R: Acting greedy,

L: Wanting power,

R: Needing praise,

L: Ignoring justice—

R: Just what is God

L: To do with us?

R: What does our savior do?

L: Seeks us out,

R: Picks us up,

L: Cleans us off,

R: Bears us home,

L: Shows us mercy,

R: Gives us love.

L: Not a punishment,

R: But love,

L: Showing us that

All: God is love!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Candy, Kyle, Mrs. Crayth

Props: A poorly constructed crown, optional cape, scepter, etc.

[Candy & Kyle are young students. The scene opens on Kyle, wearing a bad crown and looking very majestic.]

Candy: Kyle! You look so regal! Are you playing pretend? And you're royalty?

Kyle: No. I am royalty. I told Mrs. Crayth that I'm king today.

Candy: Wow! You are so fancy. I can pretend to be one of your loyal subjects, too.

Kyle: I told you, Candy. I'm not pretending. I'm really the king of the classroom.

Candy: Why do you want to be a real king?

Kyle: A real king can make the rules. A real king doesn't have to wait in line for snack or for recess. A real king doesn't have to do what anyone else tells them to do. A king is in charge and doesn't have to care about anyone else!

Candy: It sounds like it's good to be the king. I wish I could be king.

Kyle: No. You can't be the king. I'm in charge and nobody else gets to be in charge today.

Candy: That doesn't seem fair. Don't we at least get to take turns being the king?

Kyle: Nope. [sets jaw and looks firmly ahead] Attention, loyal subjects! My first decision as your king is to require that everyone gives a portion of their snacks to me!

Candy: [looks around to see if anyone else is going to share their snacks. Nobody else seems to come forward. Candy debates giving Kyle her snack when she decides against it.] I don't think I want to share my snack.

Kyle: Why not? I'm king!

Candy: Well, you don't seem like a very fair king. And I'm afraid you will just take all the snacks and the rest of us would be hungry.

Kyle: [angry] Mrs. Crayth! Mrs. Crayth!!

Mrs. Crayth: [approaches the pair] Kyle, please, inside voice. What seems to be the matter?

Kyle: Candy won't follow the rules I'm making as king!

Mrs. Crayth: Oh, are you playing king again?

Candy: Wait. I thought you said you told Mrs. Crayth you were king?

Kyle: [sheepishly] I forgot...

Mrs. Crayth: Kyle, what rule are you trying to enforce here?

Candy: He's trying to get everyone's snacks for himself!

Kyle: I like snacks.

Mrs. Crayth: Kyle, I know you like snacks but we all like snacks. You can't possibly eat all the snacks here today. And it's a bad idea to be greedy.

Candy: That's what I thought.

Mrs. Crayth: We need to work on sharing well, friends, and we should probably stop playing king. It's a bad idea to control other people. It usually just makes them frustrated.

Candy: I do feel frustrated.

Kyle: Ok, fine. I guess I was power hungry...

Candy: And just plain hungry, apparently!

Kyle: I'm a growing kid!

[They all laugh as Kyle takes off his crown.]



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

When we focus on power instead of God's plan, we make some bad choices.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A collection of small game pieces
 - Marbles
 - Poker chips
 - Dice

Setting the Scene/Background

Sometimes, even though we are given all the tools to make good choices, we let our greed and desire for power get in the way of doing the right thing. Even God's chosen rulers made these kinds of choices.

None of us are immune to the desires of power or fortune. With this exercise you can help kids start to think more critically about their choices and how they might affect others.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Scatter the game pieces out. Invite kids to circle around to play a game of pick up. Share that the winner (whoever gets the most pieces) can be the "Champion of the Day" and choose what song we sing next.

When you say go, lean in and take most of the pieces so you will win. When kids protest, say, "But I thought it was

really important for me to win so I can choose what song we sing."

Talk about greed. How it can sometimes cause us to make choices that are hurtful to others. Ask how it made them feel to see you "cheat." Talk about how even grownups make selfish choices sometimes.

Close in a prayer to ask God to help us follow God's will to avoid greed, and to make good choices that serve others!

Reflection Questions

- Is it hard to share? Why?
- How do you feel when others are selfish? How can you be more giving?

Stuff to Consider

For kids who have a hard time with grabbing things, they might feel extra frustrated with the unfairness of this and many games. Use this exercise to help teach about not being greedy and that winning isn't what is most important!

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Pile of flashy things
 - Toys
 - Money
 - Shiny things
- A simple wooden (not fancy) cross



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: 1 Kings 18:[17-19] 20-39

¹⁷ [When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?” ¹⁸ He answered, “I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father’s house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals. ¹⁹ Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”]

²⁰ So Ahab sent to all the Israelites, and assembled the prophets at Mount Carmel. ²¹ Elijah then came near to all the people, and said, “How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” The people did not answer him a word. ²² Then Elijah said to the people, “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal’s prophets number four hundred fifty. ²³ Let two bulls be given to us; let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. ²⁴ Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the Lord; the god who answers by fire is indeed God.” All the people answered, “Well spoken!” ²⁵ Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many; then call on the name of your god, but put no fire to it.” ²⁶ So they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, crying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no answer. They limped about the altar that they had made. ²⁷ At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” ²⁸ Then they cried aloud and, as was their custom, they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out over them. ²⁹ As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice, no answer, and no response.

³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come closer to me”; and all the people came closer to him. First he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down; ³¹ Elijah took

twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, “Israel shall be your name”; ³² with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed. ³³ Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, “Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.” ³⁴ Then he said, “Do it a second time”; and they did it a second time. Again he said, “Do it a third time”; and they did it a third time, ³⁵ so that the water ran all around the altar, and filled the trench also with water.

³⁶ At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. ³⁷ Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.” ³⁸ Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹ When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.”

Secondary Text: Mark 9:2-4

² Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Pronunciation Guide

Ahab: AY-hab
Carmel: KAHR-mel
Elijah: ih-LI -juh
Baal: BAY-uhl



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Ahab, Elijah, People, Prophets

Narrator: When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him,

Ahab: “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?”

Narrator: He answered,

Elijah: “I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father’s house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals. Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

Narrator: So Ahab sent to all the Israelites, and assembled the prophets at Mount Carmel. Elijah then came near to all the people, and said,

Elijah: “How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”

Narrator: The people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people,

Elijah: “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal’s prophets number four hundred fifty. Let two bulls be given to us; let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the Lord; the god who answers by fire is indeed God.”

Narrator: All the people answered,

People: “Well spoken!”

Narrator: Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal,

Elijah: “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many; then call on the name of your god, but put no fire to it.”

Narrator: So they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, crying,

Prophets: “O Baal, answer us!”

Narrator: But there was no voice, and no answer. They limped about the altar that they had made. At noon Elijah mocked them, saying,

Elijah: “Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.”

Narrator: Then they cried aloud and, as was their custom, they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out over them. As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice, no answer, and no response. Then Elijah said to all the people,

Elijah: “Come closer to me”;

Narrator: and all the people came closer to him. First he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down; Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, “Israel shall be your name”; with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed. Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said,

Elijah: “Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.”

Narrator: Then he said,

Elijah: “Do it a second time”;

Narrator: and they did it a second time. Again he said,

Elijah: “Do it a third time”;

Narrator: and they did it a third time, so that the water ran all around the altar, and filled the trench also with water. At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said,

Elijah: “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.”

Narrator: Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said,

People: “The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.”



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Like the northern kingdom, we also blend our allegiances to God and things not of God.

The kingdom was divided. Israel in the north continued to worship the gods of surrounding countries. Their kings were routinely assassinated, and they never quite gained traction as a formidable power. At the time of King Ahab and his queen, Jezebel, the people had fallen into terrible habits of idol worship, and the prophets that preached against it were all murdered.

Except for Elijah. When he was the only prophet remaining, he challenged the followers and prophets of Baal to a duel—Baal against God. In this duel, the god that lit the bull offering on fire would win.

Elijah showed up for the challenge with drama and flair. First, he mocked the prophets of Baal when their god failed to produce fire. Then, he doused his own altar with water three times to prove there was no trickery and that God was just that powerful. Of course, God prevailed, consuming everything from the bull to the altar—even the water in the trench—with fire. God was the one true God!

The people were convinced, but not for long. As is often the case with dramatic turn-arounds, unless there is significant follow-up, when the energy enthusiasm fades, so does the resolve. The people will once again fall to their old behaviors, and the kingdom would remain divided.

One of the reasons the northern kingdom struggled so much was that they continued to divide their loyalties between the God of the ancestors and the idols of nearby countries. Elijah sought to point out their ambivalence, but to no lasting avail. Wishy-washy won over commitment.

Ambivalence is often problematic, even for us today. We know the things of God, but we often disregard them for shinier, newer things like tech, money, prestige, relationships, spirituality. Like the Israelites, we don't necessarily eliminate the things of God from our lives. Instead, we blend the things of God with the things of the world, muddying our faith walks. (Don't beat yourself up—it's a human thing.) What might it look like to choose and commit ourselves to God?

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

The northern kingdom created their own blend of spirituality that included God and the gods of nearby countries. Elijah sought to put an end to their divided allegiances.

Call to Worship

L: Praise the one who hears our cries!

C: The Lord indeed is God!

L: Praise the one who shows true power!

C: The Lord indeed is God!

L: Praise the one whose might is love!

C: The Lord indeed is God!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don't last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus' name. Amen.

P: God's covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O Lord,
You alone are enough for us. Bring us back when we wander off along fruitless paths and follow ways which don't give life. Bear us home like our savior Jesus, in whose name we pray, amen.

Offertory Prayer

You don't require flaming offerings as proof of our faithfulness, yet you are pleased when we bring the true gifts of our hearts, O God. Bless these tokens of our gratitude at all the blessings we have been given and use them to further your kingdom on earth. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Forgive us, O Lord, when we take our focus off you and the promises you offer, choosing instead to fill our time with frivolous and pointless endeavors. Teach us that time is precious and that our days are better spent seeking your will for our lives. Powerful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Every minute we enjoy on this magnificent earth is a miracle, great Creator. So inspire us that we might long to pass this incredible legacy to those who come after us, in a healthier state than how we received it. Powerful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Sustain those who are tempted to heed false preachers who seek to glorify only themselves. May their followers find your Spirit's transformation, enabling them to choose what is true and eternal instead. Powerful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your refining fire can burn away all the impure things which make us unwell and impede our freedom. Touch us with your Spirit of healing and be with all those for whom we pray today, (*especially...*). Powerful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: In the spirit of Martín de Porres, we lift up all who serve with true humility, bringing healing to those who need it, and offering their lives in selfless devotion. May we aspire to be like them. Powerful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We give thanks for the promises of your kingdom and rely on your faithfulness to hear and answer our prayers. In the loving name of Jesus, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You are indeed God, and you turn your back on no one who calls out to you. Have compassion on your children this day, as we come forward to receive your living bread, given for all, to renew the world. Let us join as one family, at one table, to share the sacrament of life!



Liturgy

Litany

L: How long will we go limping

C: With two different opinions?

L: We say we're committed,

C: Yet wander away.

L: We say we're reliable,

C: Yet fail to come through.

L: How long will we go limping

C: With two different opinions?

L: We promise God our loyalty,

C: But then our hearts are led astray.

L: We offer up ourselves, our lives,

C: But life gets in the way.

L: How long will we go limping

C: With two different opinions?

L: We say we follow one true God,

C: While following the masses.

L: We want to be examples,

C: But doubt our own true motives.

L: How long will we go limping

C: With two different opinions?

L: We go to worship one day,

C: And the next, insult our neighbor.

L: We pray for our forgiveness,

C: While our minds begin to wander.

L: How long will we go limping

C: With two different opinions?

L: We long for riches for ourselves

C: But then neglect the poor.

L: We take the holy bread and wine,

C: But waste the food we're given.

L: How long will we go limping

C: With two different opinions?

L: Elijah knew his people,

C: How they longed for God's approval.

L: They sought to follow in the way,

C: But couldn't resist temptation.

L: The prophet was a solitary

C: Voice of truth and reason.

L: He built an altar to the Lord,

C: And showed who had true power.

L: We need not go on limping

C: With two different opinions—

L: Our God is one,

C: And all we need.

L: The Lord indeed is God.

C: The Lord indeed is God!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Commentator 1, Commentator 2, Elijah, Prophets – a group of flexible numbers.

Props: small table, 2 microphones, 2 headphones, one large sign that says, “Team Lord” and several large signs that say “Team Baal”, items for sports fans in two different colors (megaphones, fingers, pompons, etc.)

Optional: Video record this skit ahead of time and project it onscreen.

Optional: Have both Commentator 1 and Commentator 2 ad-lib around their parts.

Pin signs that say, “Team Lord” onto Elijah, and “Team Baal” onto the Prophets of Baal. Have Commentator 1 and Commentator 2 wear headphones and sit behind a small table with the microphones on it. Divide the congregation, left/right, into cheering sections for the different “teams.” Give the items for sports fans to members of the congregation on each team. Include the kids as much as possible.

Commentator 1: [speaking in the cadence of a sports commentator] Good morning, everyone! I am _____, and we are here for another thrilling installment of Prophets Throwdown. What an exciting day! We’re here on beautiful, sunny Mount Carmel, and the prophet, Elijah, has called us together for today’s throwdown. We have a full stadium with all the people of Israel [gestures to the congregation] here to watch.

Elijah: [all hyped up, takes the stage, shows off his sign and speaks to the congregation] How long will you go limping around taking two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow God; but if Baal, then follow Baal. [pause, expectantly]. Well? No answer? [goes to his corner]

Commentator 2: Elijah’s facing steep odds, one man against – wait, let me check, make sure I get this right – four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal! [prophets of Baal enter, to applause, and move to their corner] Quite the odds. It would take a miracle for him to prevail. [holds hand to ear, as if receiving a transmission in earpiece] Here it comes...Elijah’s about to set the terms of the challenge.

Elijah: I am the only one left, the only prophet of the Lord. But I’m not scared of the likes of you. Here’s the challenge: we each get a bull. You pick yours and prepare it for the altar. I’ll do the same with mine. Lay it on the wood, but don’t start the fire. Then you call on your god, and I’ll call on my God, and whichever god answers by fire is indeed God.

Prophets of Baal: [nodding, then shaking hands with Elijah] Agreed!

[Elijah and Prophets go offstage]

Prophets of Baal: [from offstage, vigorously] Baal, answer us!

Commentator 1: We have edited today’s broadcast for time, but nothing affecting the outcome of the competition has been affected. I can tell you the prophets of Baal have been shouting all morning, and it looks like they’re getting tired.

Prophets of Baal: [from offstage, sounding worn out] O Baal, answer us!

Commentator 2: They are about done for. I’m seeing limping—they might have to take someone out of the game. What a shame.

Elijah: [taunting] What, nothing?! Isn’t Baal a god? Maybe he’s meditating! Keep shouting! Maybe you’ll wake him up!

Commentator 1: The sun is at its peak and it looks like all the competitors might be delirious! I’m seeing open wounds, blood on the field, but they’re still going at it.

Elijah: [taunting] Maybe he’s on vacation!

Commentator 2: [touching earpiece] Our folks down on the field are not seeing any smoke or flame—no signs from the sky, no supernatural intervention. Maybe this Elijah guy knows something we don’t know.

Elijah: [to the congregation] You ain’t seen nothin’ yet. Just watch. [heads back offstage]

Commentator 1: The crowds are getting restless—looks like Elijah made a smart move by addressing them directly. It’s been a long day and not much to show for it. The score is zero-zero headed into the second half.



Commentator 2: Oh, wait, what's this—he's repairing the altar of the Lord. That's right, ladies and gentlemen, he has picked up twelve stones and cobbled this thing together. That's some strength, there, in the heat of the day!

Commentator 1: And now it looks like—like he's digging a trench, right around that altar. Whew! He'll have to call a time out for a water break after that!

Commentator 2: Yup, here they come, the water bearers—wait, what now? They are pouring the water on top of the wood. Have you ever seen such a thing? In the middle of a drought! Wasting all that water—what a crime!

Commentator 1: And again, he's calling for more water, ladies and gentlemen. Just how much water does one guy need? Three times now, he's called for the water bearers. What, is he building a swimming pool down there? Is this a sabotage? Is he trying to forfeit?

Commentator 2: Here it comes, he's about to pray. Quiet, now. Let's see what words he uses.

Elijah: [fervently] O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.

Commentator 1: I don't see anything happening yet. Perhaps he was a tad overenthusiastic with the water. Wait...

Commentator 2: Oh! Did you see that?!

Commentator 1: I saw it, but I don't believe it. It looks like the wood is on fire!

Commentator 2: Not just the wood...the bull has caught fire, too.

Commentator 1: What an upset!

Commentator 2: It can't be...It can't be...Yes! It is! The whole altar is on fire! Holy cow! Even soaking wet, Elijah's God managed to consume the whole entire scene!

Commentator 1: Unbelievable!

Commentator 2: Well, we've seen it all here today, folks. The final score: Prophets of Baal ZERO, Elijah, ONE. Elijah takes the match! In a thrilling scene, the fire of the Lord consumed the entire site—the offering, the wood, the stones, the dust—even all that water!

Commentator 1: The crowd is chanting, caught up in the moment.

Commentator 2: [touches earpiece] Ladies and gentlemen, stay tuned for our postgame commentary. And in case you missed it, we'll run the match in its entirety at 3 am Middle Eastern time. I'm _____,

Commentator 1: And I'm _____, and this has been the Prophets' Throwdown! Good night!



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God doesn't need anything fancy to be powerful—we believe not because God is popular, but because God is real!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Pile of flashy things
 - Toys
 - Money
 - Shiny things
- A simple wooden (not fancy) cross

Setting the Scene/Background

It can be hard to follow God. God doesn't always offer us the flashiest option. It can be very easy to go with what is popular and fashionable instead of what God wants us to do.

Jezebel and Ahab worshiped false gods and wanted everyone on their side. Elijah stood up to them and did what was right. Fortunately for him, God was there to start the fire.

Help kids understand that choosing God's path isn't always the most popular or fanciest, but it is rewarding.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Set out the pile of flashy or enticing items, and then set out the cross.

Ask if the students had to choose between having the best toys or the simple cross, what would they pick. Anticipate that a few will pick the cross—they've been listening in Sunday School, but assure them that there are choices we make that are not what God would want for us.

Talk about how God's way isn't always the most exciting but it's always going to serve us well!

Reflection Questions

- What might you put in front of God? Video games? Food? Toys? Money? How might that hurt you?
- Will God forgive you if you "worship" false idols?

Stuff to Consider

Here is a time not only to teach kids that they can choose God's path even when it's not popular. Assure them they are loved if they make a mistake. It can be hard to make the right choices. We as adults know that everyone makes mistakes. Work towards maintaining a balance.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Diapers
- Other baby care supplies (optional)



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Hosea 11:1-9

11 When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
²The more I called them,
the more they went from me;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.

³Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms;
but they did not know that I healed them.

⁴I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.
I was to them like those
who lift infants to their cheeks.
I bent down to them and fed them.

⁵They shall return to the land of Egypt,
and Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.

⁶The sword rages in their cities,
it consumes their oracle-priests,
and devours because of their schemes.

⁷My people are bent on turning away from me.
To the Most High they call,
but he does not raise them up at all.

⁸How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.

⁹I will not execute my fierce anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and no mortal,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath.

Secondary Text: Mark 10:13-14

¹³People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

Pronunciation Guide

Baals: BAY-uhlz
Ephraim: EE-fray-im
Assyria: uh-SIHR-ee-uh
Admah: AHD-muh
Zeboiim: ZEB-oy-eem

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader, Congregation

Reader: When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

Congregation: The more I called them,
the more they went from me;

Reader: they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.

Congregation: Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms;
but they did not know that I healed them.

Reader: I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.

Congregation: I was to them like those
who lift infants to their cheeks.
I bent down to them and fed them.

Reader: They shall return to the land of Egypt,
and Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.

Congregation: The sword rages in their cities,
it consumes their oracle-priests,
and devours because of their schemes.

Reader: My people are bent on turning away from me.
To the Most High they call,
but he does not raise them up at all.

Congregation: How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?

Reader: How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?

Congregation: My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.

Reader: I will not execute my fierce anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;

Congregation: for I am God and no mortal,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God treated Israel like a mother nurturing her child; God loved her and grieved for her.

Hosea prophesied at a time the northern kingdom was divided from its kin in the south. He expressed both the deep grief of a God losing God's beloved, but also the intense love God has for God's children.

Hosea's imagery in this chapter vividly describes God as a mother nurturing her young. She called to her child, but he wandered farther. She taught him to walk and cradled him in her arms. She nuzzled him to her cheek and nursed him.

The consequence of Israel's sin was on the horizon. They would be conquered by Assyria and exiled from their lands. Still, God could not let them go. Despite all that they had done and failed to do, God still loved them. God couldn't let them be wiped from the earth. One day God would forgive them and bring them home. Again, God would be their God, and they would be God's children.

This is a great opportunity to explore what it looks like for God to be a mother. While it would be fruitless to begin a debate about stereotypes of parenting roles, an exploration of some fairly widely accepted roles might open up this text. We could argue that nurturing, feeding, snuggling, and teaching—while not exclusive the role of mother—are certainly traits many mothers share.

There are also [other benefits infants receive](#) primarily from their mothers. Mothers are more likely to talk with their kids during activities, sometimes with a sing-song voice that little ones respond well to, encouraging socialization and language development. Mothers are more likely to explain the social consequences of misbehaving, while fathers will point out the concrete consequences. Some infants [have shown a preference](#) for their mother's face over that of father's or strangers'. They also become more distressed at an emotion-neutral expression than the absence of the mother, [showing they are more distraught](#) at emotional detachment than physical separation.

What might it look like for your community to explore the gifts of a mothering God?

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Hosea prophesied to the northern kingdom when it strayed from God's ways. What God expressed was grief and love, like a mother that nurtures her child.

Call to Worship

- L: Blessed be our God,
C: Who will not give us up.
L: Who loved us since we were young,
C: And covers us with kindness.
L: Who reaches out and feeds us
C: With the food of compassion.
L: Blessed be our God!
C: Who will not give us up.

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

- P: Creator God,
C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don't last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus' name. Amen.
P: God's covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O God,
Like a compassionate parent you care for us. May we learn to treat others with the same kindness, turning them to your grace and love, which knows no bounds. In Jesus' name, amen.

Offertory Prayer

You give us a multitude of riches, dear Lord, and never what we deserve. Teach us how to open up our hearts, to be generous as you are, and to bless the world with the gifts you have given us, for the sake of your children. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: As a mother loves her children, regardless of how they behave or what they become, so you give your grace without condition, Lord. Train us to see our sisters and brothers as you do—equally beloved as ourselves, and worthy of compassion and patience. God of gentleness,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Every species has an instinct to care for its own, and some even reach beyond and adopt other vulnerable ones into their broods. May we not so limit ourselves as to regard only humans worthy of love and care, and may our sphere of concern be wide enough to embrace all living things which are bound to us in one web of existence. God of gentleness,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We pray for all military veterans who have offered a period of their lives to serving their duty on behalf of others. May we be diligent and responsible in caring for all their needs—physical, financial, social, and medical—in an expression of gratitude for their willingness to serve. God of gentleness,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Sometimes your healing comes to us in unrecognized or unusual ways, O Lord. Make us receptive to the gifts we encounter in the generosity of others, and move us to be instruments of healing for those in need. We lift up today (*especially...*). God of gentleness,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: For all who care for your children on this earth, even those not their own, we give you thanks. Give us a sensitivity to the needs of others, to live as reflections of your divine love and care for all creation. God of gentleness,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Into your loving hands we entrust all these for whom we pray this day. We believe in your promises, and we live in your grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Even when all deserted you, dear Savior, you never stopped loving. You gather us still in blessing, no matter what we've done, no matter what we've neglected. Let us come now to this table of mercy where all will find a welcome in what has been prepared for the children of God.



Liturgy

Litany

Higher voices: I have loved you forever,

Lower voices: Since I was a child.

H: I delivered you safely

L: From what held me captive.

H: I called to you,

L: But I ignored your voice.

H: I gave you it all,

L: But I sought after others.

H: I taught you to walk,

L: But I wandered away.

H: I held you in healing,

L: But I didn't know.

H: I wrapped you in love

L: With a mother's compassion.

H: I reached down and fed you,

L: I never went hungry.

H: And now, when you suffer,

L: And feel under threat,

H: Now, when your troubles

L: Are starting to gather,

H: And hostile opponents

L: Begin to advance,

H: Now, what shall I do?

L: Have I earned protection?

H: How can I tune out

L: When I cry out for help?

H: Are you not my child?

L: Your only, beloved.

H: Have I not made a promise

L: To never desert me?

H: I cannot ignore you,

L: Though I don't deserve it.

H: My heart just grows warmer;

L: I feel your compassion.

H: I cannot be angry,

L: Although you have reason,

H: I know only mercy,

L: For this I am grateful.

H: You'll not be destroyed

L: By my own careless actions.

H: Your cries will be heeded,

L: And my life preserved.

H: For God is compassionate,

L: Patient and merciful,

H: Quick to show love,

L: And slow to be angered.

H: Praise God, who is love!

L: Praise God, who is love!

All: Praise God—we are loved!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Bill, Nick

Prop: Baby photo book or phone to “swipe” through old photos

[Bill is Nick’s father. Nick is about to leave for trade school, and Bill is a bit emotional about it.]

Bill: [wiping a tear away] Look at this one, Nick!

Nick: [groans] Dad!

Bill: Just look! Look how precious your little toes were! You had such teeny feet!! And now they are so big. [sigh]

Nick: Dad, I’m an adult. It’s weird to have you talk about teeny feet.

Bill: I can’t help it. It feels like yesterday we brought you home, that little scrunched up face. You’d cry if we put you down, so we just held you all the time. For months! Your papa couldn’t go back to work for an extra month because you were so needy!

Nick: I know, I was such a clingy baby. Can we move on now?

Bill: I just can’t believe you are going to school tomorrow! All your bags are packed and you’re just running off. What will we do without you here?

Nick: Drive Amy nuts?

Bill: Your sister is so old, too! Fifteen! When did that happen?

Nick: Dad, I’m starting to get worried about you. Why are you so emotional? This is normal right? Like, kids grow up and they go to school. I’m not leaving forever.

Bill: I know. I’m not just sad—some of these tears are happy. We raised you. We watched you grow. We taught you how to use a spoon and we helped you go to school. We were there the first time you were in a play at school. We helped you learn how to use tools. Now you’re going to school to learn how to use those tools to make a career. I’m so proud of you, buddy. We all are!

Nick: Oh, Dad.

Bill: You won’t understand until you are older and some little person you love and have watched grow goes off and does things. It’s a lot of feelings to have!

Nick: I guess so. I just kind of need you to calm down a bit. Can you lean on your faith? What would God do??

Bill: Oh, well I suppose it depends on the situation, but God has feelings too! God nurtured God’s chosen beloved and wept when they disappointed God.

Nick: I guess that’s right. But at least I’m not going off to commit a bunch of crimes, right??

Bill: This is true. [jokingly] I hope!

Nick: Dad! I really do appreciate everything you have done for me. I appreciate your support in pursuing everything I wanted to do.

Bill: We wanted you to be happy no matter what you did!

Nick: And I am grateful you forgave me when I made mistakes.

Bill: We love you! We knew the mistakes weren’t indicative of who you are.

Nick: And I’m grateful that you are letting me go to school instead of putting me up on a shelf to snuggle and look at for the rest of my life.

Bill: [sarcastic] You would just make the shelf fall off the wall anyways.

Nick: Hey now!

Bill: You know I’m kidding. But, seriously, know how much we love you and make good choices while you are at school. We are always here when you need us, too.

Nick: Thanks, Dad.

[They hug.]



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Often, we call God a father—but God has motherly qualities too! God doesn't have a gender. Think of God as a loving parent.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Diapers
- Other baby care supplies (optional)

Setting the Scene/Background

God is often spoken of as a father, but a lot of texts give God qualities some might call traditional mothering qualities: caring and nurturing.

Really, both mothers and fathers can have these qualities. God is a parent figure in our lives; loving us, watching us grow, grieving when we make bad decisions, and forgiving us without question.

Remind kids how much they are loved. God is the ultimate caregiver!

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Show kids the diapers and ask if they know what diapers represent. (You may hear some laughter and “poo” humor.)

Tell kids diapers represent love!

Someone cared enough about you to change your diapers, even when they were awful and smelly and messy.

God loves you as much as all the people who cared enough to help keep your bottom clean when you were a baby.

Diapers really are a symbol of love!

Reflection Questions

- What other unpleasant things have your caregivers done to show you love?
- Why aren't babies born potty trained?

Stuff to Consider

Some kids are living in adoptive or foster homes. Some kids have just one parent or parents in separate homes. Some kids live with aunts and uncles or their grandparents. Try to use language that is open to all ways that families can exist.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A plant that looks almost dead



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Isaiah 5:1-7; 11:1-5

5 Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.
² He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.
³ And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.
⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?
⁵ And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
⁶ I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.
⁷ For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah

are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!

11 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
² The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
³ His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

Secondary Text: Mark 12:1-3

12 Then he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ² When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. ³ But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed."



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader, Congregation

Reader: Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:

Congregation: My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

Reader: He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;

Congregation: he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;

Reader: he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

Congregation: And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,

Reader: judge between me
and my vineyard.

Congregation: What more was there to do for my
vineyard
that I have not done in it?

Reader: When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

Congregation: And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.

Reader: I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;

Congregation: I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.

Reader: I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;

Congregation: I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

Reader: For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,

Congregation: and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;

Reader: he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;

Congregation: righteousness,
but heard a cry!

Reader: A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

Congregation: The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,

Reader: the spirit of wisdom and understanding,

Congregation: the spirit of counsel and might,

Reader: the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Congregation: His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

Reader: He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;

Congregation: but with righteousness he shall judge the
poor,

and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

Reader: he shall strike the earth with the rod of his
mouth,

and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

Congregation: Righteousness shall be the belt around his
waist,

and faithfulness the belt around his loins.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Although Israel had sinned and would suffer the consequence of conquering and exile, God would send “a shoot...from the stump of Jesse” to redeem them.

With the kingdom still divided, the southern kingdom of Judah also fell away from the ways of God. Isaiah prophesied at a time when invading armies attacked regularly and the threat of conquer and exile was always looming.

Isaiah attributed the presence of enemies to the wickedness of Judah (southern kingdom). God told him Israel was like “wild grapes” instead of grapes worthy of harvest. God had done everything right to prepare and nurture Judah to be worthy of God’s claim on them, but they failed despite God’s efforts. The consequence would be conquering and exile.

But God could not remain angry with God’s chosen forever. One day God would send someone touched by the spirit, wise and godly. They would redeem all of Israel with just judgment and lead them to peace.

Christians understand this “shoot...from the stump of Jesse” to mean Jesus. His ancestral connection with David, his being touched by the Holy Spirit, along with the works and teachings during his lifetime are all consistent with Isaiah’s prophecy. The redeemer has come!

For pre-Christian readers, this text points to an Israel that has returned to its roots, that has become once again the child God desires: wise, just, righteous, and faithful.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Israel had turned from God like “wild grapes” in a tended vineyard. The consequence would be exile. But God would send someone to redeem them one day.

Call to Worship

L: O come, let us worship the Lord,

C: On whom God’s spirit rests,

L: Who judges with righteousness,

C: And upholds the meek.

L: O come, let us worship the Lord—

C: The faithful one of God!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don’t last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

P: God’s covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Lord God,
We have not borne the fruit you have desired of us, and yet you show us mercy. Plant the seeds of grace within us, that our lives might show forth your glory, for the sake of Jesus, amen.

Offertory Prayer

We offer you the harvest of our labor, the bounty of our blessings, asking that you bless it for your good. May your righteousness prevail on earth, that all may know your care and generosity. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: We give thanks that you are righteous and forgiving in dealing with us, O Lord. Give us this same spirit when we encounter those who have wronged, injured, or disappointed us. Heal our divisions and make us kind and tenderhearted with one another. Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You have created all things good and expect good returns from your efforts. And yet we have laid waste to this beautiful earth we were meant to protect and use wisely. Return us to our origins: faithful stewards of your blessings, and responsible caregivers for the planet and its inhabitants. Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The harvest is plentiful, but not all share equally in its

benefits, great shepherd. Empower those who strive for a more just distribution of resources around the globe, that their efforts might result in a truer representation of your vision for a peaceful world. Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: There can be no healing without confession, which opens the way for what is broken to be made whole again. Heal this aching world and forgive the multiple ways we inflict pain upon one another, which hurts us as much as it does our targets. Uphold the weak and suffering, (*especially...*). Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We celebrate Elizabeth of Hungary and her legacy of caring for the poor and the ill. Bless those who work in hospitals, care centers, and individually to aid in your ministry of healing. Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Open your arms to all in need, those for whom we pray today and all those whose trials we do not know. For we trust that you are merciful and will hear us, according to the compassion of Jesus our savior, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Gather together, O Lord, the wild grapes of your vineyard and make of us something pleasing in your sight. Feed us on the heavenly food from your harvest of mercy, that it might transform us into people on fire to spread your Gospel. Come to the table of grace!



Liturgy

Litany

Right side: I planted a vineyard,

Left side: A beautiful vineyard!

R: I dug it and cleared it,

L: And watered it too!

R: I hewed out a wine vat,

L: And built a watch tower,

R: Then waited for harvest.

L: What grapes it will yield!

R: I did all I could do.

L: What more could you do?

R: And what do you think?

L: There were grapes!

R: Grapes there were.

L: Luscious grapes!

R: *Wild* grapes!

L: Wild grapes?

R: Hard and bitter.

L: What sorrow!

R: Disastrous.

L: Now what will you do?

R: I have no alternative.

L: Tear down the vineyard!

R: My beautiful vineyard.

L: Of useless wild grapes!

R: But what of my labors?

L: They've all come to nothing!

R: Should I now destroy it?

L: What else can you do?

R: Perhaps there is hope.

L: What hope could there be?

R: A hope of renewal.

L: From where comes this hope?

R: An old, ancient promise.

L: How could it happen?

R: A shoot could emerge...

L: But from where?

R: From the root!

L: Of the ruined, wild vineyard?

R: From the hope that was planted.

L: And what of this shoot?

R: It is blessed by the spirit.

L: What spirit is this?

R: Wisdom and knowledge!

L: Could hope spring anew?

R: Look now, the Lord's promise!

L: Even out of the ruins?

R: A savior arises...

L: And how shall it happen?

R: With justice and righteousness,

L: What about judgment?

R: A merciful justice!

L: What hope has arisen!

R: Despair is defeated,

L: Disaster averted!

R: And all from our God—

L: Our merciful God!



Creative Expression

Spoken Word

Read this poem after the scripture and before the sermon as a meditative piece.

This plant I was given was a gift from a friend
Who knew I'd be sad when it came to the end
Of my grandfather's life on earth
This plant was a symbol of life everlasting
A shadow in the sun would be casting
Reminder of times filled with mirth
This plant was not gorgeous but strong
I kept it alive for so long
After his passing
This plant went outside for the summer sun
It thrived in the hot weather and won
Several more leaves
This plant stayed outside just one day too long
A day when it froze after hearing bird song
Too cold to survive
This plant covered in spots, clearly losing

The life and leaves it had gained
In the summer
This plant now a bitter reminder of seasons
Of life, losing loved ones without reason
Of death
This plant was too painful to see
But my baby pointed it out to me
There was a little green left on its stem.
This plant had some life in it still
It gave new shoots by the windowsill
As the flakes fluttered down
This plant still had life and joy to be given
A gift from God and the sun up above
A reminder of all of that love
This plant lives on even with all its scars
A reminder that love lives on in our hearts
Thanks to God.



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Even when the worst has happened and we feel hopeless, God can make something grow!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A plant that looks almost dead

Setting the Scene/Background

God's people had sinned badly enough to be put into exile. Even with such horrible history, God makes a promise to the people that there will be a new person who comes—a branch that comes from the dead stump of Jesse's family tree!

God can work some pretty awesome miracles with Jesus, and with plants. Use a plant to show how God can make some amazing things happen, even when hope seems dried up.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Show kids your almost dead plant. Ask what makes a plant alive.

Is there hope for this plant? (This answer will depend on how sad the plant looks.)

Talk about the hope that God gives us even when we are hopeless. Share the many examples of plants coming back from some awful looking situations.

If you trust your ability to grow a plant, show kids what you'll do to care for it, and check back with it later to show them how it's doing.

Reflection Questions

- How can plants grow roots from a regular leaf?
- What gives us hope when things feel bleak?

Stuff to Consider

Be careful not to equate a broken or dead plant with being not as good. Some with disabilities might hear that they aren't worthy of effort if they aren't "perfect." God still loves the plants that are filled with brown leaves and broken stems. It doesn't need to be "whole" to be loved!

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
 - Pen
 - Paper
- or
- Marker
 - Whiteboard



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: 2 Kings 22:1-10, [14-20]; 23:1-3

22 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ²He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

³In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the Lord, saying, ⁴"Go up to the high priest Hilkiah, and have him count the entire sum of the money that has been brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people; ⁵let it be given into the hand of the workers who have the oversight of the house of the Lord; let them give it to the workers who are at the house of the Lord, repairing the house, ⁶that is, to the carpenters, to the builders, to the masons; and let them use it to buy timber and quarried stone to repair the house. ⁷But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly."

⁸The high priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord." When Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, he read it. ⁹Then Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workers who have oversight of the house of the Lord." ¹⁰Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "The priest Hilkiah has given me a book." Shaphan then read it aloud to the king.

[¹⁴So the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. ¹⁵She declared to them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶Thus says the Lord, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked me to anger with all the work of

their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. ¹⁸But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, ¹⁹because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the Lord. ²⁰Therefore, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place." They took the message back to the king.]

23 Then the king directed that all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem should be gathered to him. ²The king went up to the house of the Lord, and with him went all the people of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord. ³The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant.

Secondary Text: Luke 24:30-32

³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

Pronunciation Guide

Josiah: joh-SI-uh
Jedidah: juh-DI-duh
Adaiah: ah-DAY-uh
Bozkath: BOZ-kath
Shaphan: SHAY-fuhn
Azaliah: ah-ZAY-lee-uh
Meshullam: meh-SHOO-lum
Hilkiah: hil-KI-uh



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, King Josiah, Hilkiyah, Shaphan,
[Huldah]

Narrator: Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the Lord, saying,

King Josiah: "Go up to the high priest Hilkiyah, and have him count the entire sum of the money that has been brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people; let it be given into the hand of the workers who have the oversight of the house of the Lord; let them give it to the workers who are at the house of the Lord, repairing the house, that is, to the carpenters, to the builders, to the masons; and let them use it to buy timber and quarried stone to repair the house. But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly."

Narrator: The high priest Hilkiyah said to Shaphan the secretary,

Hilkiyah: "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord."

Narrator: When Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, he read it. Then Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king,

Shaphan: "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workers who have oversight of the house of the Lord."

Narrator: Shaphan the secretary informed the king,

Shaphan: "The priest Hilkiyah has given me a book."

Narrator: Shaphan then read it aloud to the king.

[**Narrator:** So the priest Hilkiyah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. She declared to them,

Huldah: "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, Thus says the Lord, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the Lord. Therefore, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place."

Narrator: They took the message back to the king.]

Narrator: Then the king directed that all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem should be gathered to him. The king went up to the house of the Lord, and with him went all the people of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord. The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Even in the middle of turmoil, God can (and often does) give us moments of peace.

During the time of division of the northern and southern kingdoms, Josiah came to reign at the age of 8, following the murder of his father by courtiers. By the time Josiah was 20 he was already beginning to rid the land of places of idol worship and to rebuild the temple.

When the workers started work on the temple, they came across a long-forgotten scroll of Moses, indicating that God's displeasure in the people's wandering and idol worship led to disaster. Not wanting to anger God further, Josiah brought the scroll to a prophetess to determine if the scroll was real and accurate. The prophetess Huldah confirmed that the words on the scroll were correct. But she also indicated that the opposite would be true: if Israel walked in God's ways, they would be spared from disaster and would live in peace.

Josiah immediately redoubled his efforts to bring Judah back to its roots by following God. He gathered the elders and all the people of Judah to read the scroll in their hearing. He made a covenant before God that the people would keep God's commandments, walk in God's ways, and do all the things the scroll commanded of them. The people of Judah followed Josiah in his commitment to the covenant. Judah remained untouched all the days of Josiah's life.

This story shows that, even in the middle of turmoil (Judah's armies were quiet, but not absent during Josiah's rule), God can offer a moment of peace to those willing to seek God's peace and walk in God's ways. It's also a reminder that God can (and often does) put clues in our path (as God did with the scroll for Josiah) that can help us remember God is always with us, even when we have forgotten God.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Josiah was quite young when he ascended to the throne of Judah. But God knew this young man had the heart to bring a nation back to God.

Call to Worship

L: Blessed be the Lord,

C: The giver of law!

L: Blessed be the Lord,

C: The maker of promises!

L: Blessed be the Lord,

C: The author of peace!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Creator God,

C: We have given you so many reasons to grieve. We disrespect your creation. We long for personal glory, material riches and other things which don't last. We mistreat ourselves and each other. We forget the power of your promises. We ask your forgiveness, counting on your never-failing mercy, in Jesus' name. Amen.

P: God's covenant is eternal and the promise is trustworthy: you are forgiven and belong to communion of saints forever. Rejoice and be glad. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Holy Lord,
You rejoice when your people are faithful. Guide us in all wisdom and keep us close to your heart as we navigate these days and the challenges which come our way. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Offertory Prayer

Bless these gifts, O God, which we lay upon your table. Receive them as signs of our grateful response to your faithfulness to us, and the love which longs to embrace all of your children, for the sake of Jesus Christ, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Loving God, our world is not perfect and we are not always at peace. Still, you come to us with your promise of renewal and forgiveness. Ground us in your covenant and keep us faithful to your gospel mission. Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The world is full of reminders that you are always with us: the sun which rises daily, the endless oceans, and the tranquility of nature's grace. May we not forget that the one who created this vast universe also created us, to be partners in renewal and preaching compassion and mercy. Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Watch over all who travel this week and give them

joyful homecomings. Strengthen family bonds, and be with those without company during the holidays, whether by choice or not. Remind us that whether we are alone or with others, you are always present. Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Nations and peoples suffer from conflict, war, disasters and unjust leadership. Heal those who have been wounded or traumatized, and assist those who minister to them. We ask special prayers today (*especially for...*) Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We remember faithful pioneers of the church Justus Falckner, Jehu Jones, and William Passavant. Bless all those who made strides toward increasing the reach of your gospel and establishing new ways and new places to learn and worship. Steadfast God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Your word is trustworthy and true, and in your promises we find hope. Hear our prayers and make us part of the solutions we seek. In Jesus' holy name, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Our hearts burn within us as you offer us the bread of this holy sacrament, O Lord. Gather us as one around your table, and so unite us in purpose as your disciples. Come to the feast where all sinners are welcome!



Liturgy

Litany

L: I am your God.

C: And we are your people.

L: I give you my word.

C: The Word brings us joy.

L: My law is for all.

C: The law is a blessing.

L: My commandment is love,

C: For you and all people,

L: My love is for you,

C: For us and for all.

L: I've promised to save,

C: Protect and deliver,

L: From death and the grave,

C: From war and destruction.

L: The days may be hard,

C: The future uncertain,

L: But still I remain,

C: To help and encourage,

L: With promise and law,

C: To guide and give hope.

L: My words may seem harsh,

C: Both righteous and angry,

L: But love is my law,

C: And love never fails us.

L: My covenant stands,

C: A promise eternal,

L: A rock for my people

C: To hold and to cling to.

L: In days filled with peace,

C: And times of tranquility,

L: Forget not my words,

C: The laws meant to guide us,

L: For then you might stray,

C: When things seem too easy

L: And danger seems far,

C: With no threat forthcoming.

L: Keep watch at all times,

C: For nothing is certain

L: Except for my love,

C: And limitless mercy.

L: My presence is sure,

C: In bad and in good times,

L: No matter the season

C: Nor hour of the day.

L: My promise is permanent.

C: Praise be to God!

L: I am with you forever.

C: We are never alone!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Shanae, Vanessa

Props: Shoe that needs tying

[Shanae is frustrated that she can't tie her shoe. Vanessa is offering to help, but Shanae doesn't want help.]

Shanae: Over, under, loop—argh! [frustrated, untangles the laces and starts again]

Vanessa: Can I help?

Shanae: No! I'm going to figure this out!!

Vanessa: I know you will, it just takes time.

Shanae: [almost in tears] I'm the only one in my class who hasn't figured out how to tie my shoes yet. I'm never going to figure it out! [drops laces and puts her face in her hands]

Vanessa: I know it's frustrating, but I also know that you can figure it out!

Shanae: I can't. I'm just not smart enough or something...

Vanessa: Oh, I don't think that's the problem. You are very smart!

Shanae: Then why can't I figure out how to tie my laces?

Vanessa: Different people figure things out at different times. Remember how much longer it took me to learn how to ride a bike without training wheels?

Shanae: Yeah, but that's different.

Vanessa: How is that different?

Shanae: Riding a bike is actually tricky. Shoelaces are supposed to be basic. Everyone can do it. Everyone but me.

Vanessa: You will get it. You just have to keep practicing.

Shanae: Has anyone ever been a successful adult that couldn't tie their shoe laces?

Vanessa: [pauses to think] Jesus.

Shanae: What?

Vanessa: Well, Jesus wore sandals, so he didn't have to tie shoe laces.

Shanae: [can't help but laugh.] Hah.

Vanessa: It's true. Jesus went his whole life without tying shoes—and people still talk about him.

Shanae: Yeah, I guess shoe laces haven't always existed.

Vanessa: And you know more important things—like how to be a good friend!

Shanae: Aww, thank you.

Vanessa: You're welcome. Now will you let me help you?

Shanae: Ok, fine.

Vanessa: [she leans over to tie the laces as she talks] Ok, you make a triangle, and push the top lace through. Then pull tight. Then you make a loop, and another loop, and do the same thing. See?

Shanae: Let me try! [slowly, but she gets it]

Vanessa: I knew you could do it!

Shanae: Thanks for the help!

Vanessa: What are friends for?



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

You don't have to be old to be a good leader.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
 - Pen
 - Paper
- or
- Marker
 - Whiteboard

Setting the Scene/Background

King Josiah came to rule after his father was killed and he was only eight years old!

What would it be like to rule an entire country at such a young age?

Josiah made good choices. Rather than worship false idols, he chose to worship God faithfully, and he was rewarded with a moment of peace.

Help kids see that being young doesn't have to stop you from being a good leader.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Ask kids to help you think of what qualities make a good leader. Write them down as you hear them.

Ask how old a leader needs to be.

Share that Josiah was able to lead well at eight years old. We can all be good leaders and make good choices!

Talk about how you can lead as a kid: standing up for others, helping younger kids learn new things, offering to clean up after events, etc. There are so many ways to lead as a kid!

Reflection Questions

- Why do we think we need grownups to lead?
- What is the best age for following God? Why?

Stuff to Consider

Some kids will hit milestones early, and some will hit them later. If you talk about specific ages and milestones be sure to keep this open ended. Not everyone walks before they are one year old, not everyone can read by eight. Everyone develops on their own schedule and that's okay!

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A children's picture Bible



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Jeremiah 33:14-18

¹⁴The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

¹⁷For thus says the Lord: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, ¹⁸and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to make grain offerings, and to make sacrifices for all time.

Secondary Text: Mark 8:27-29

²⁷Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”

Pronunciation Guide

Levitical: lih-VIT-ih-kuhl

Caesarea Philippi: ses'uh-ree'uh fih-LIP-i

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader, Congregation

Reader: The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when

Congregation: I will fulfill

Reader: the promise

Congregation: I made

Reader: to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time

Congregation: I will cause

Reader: a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

Congregation: In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.

Reader: And this is the name by which it will be called:

Congregation: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

Reader: For thus says the Lord: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel,

Congregation: and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence

Reader: to offer burnt offerings,

Congregation: to make grain offerings,

Reader: and to make sacrifices for all time.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God fulfills God's promises, as God did for Israel, and will continue to do for us.

Jeremiah was among the last prophets to prophesy before Jerusalem was conquered by Babylon. Judah (the southern kingdom) had been slowly forfeiting their land and their freedom by failing to keep their covenant with God. Jeremiah prophesies that their impending captivity and exile were a natural consequence of their disobedience to God.

Captivity and exile, however, wouldn't be the final judgment on Judah. Jeremiah prophesied that God would send someone from the line of David to redeem all of Israel and sit on the throne of a united and free kingdom. This would fulfill God's promise that Israel would be ruled by the righteousness of the line of David.

Christians understand this prophecy to mean the coming of Jesus. Babylon, that captured Jerusalem, eventually fell to Persia. During this time, Jews were permitted to return to Jerusalem, but Persia remained in power. Persian eventually fell to Greece, which eventually fell to Rome. It was into this time of Roman rule that Jesus arrived. The Jews hadn't been truly free in centuries and were weary for a savior.

Jeremiah's prophecy once again shows that God is faithful, even when people aren't faithful to God. God promised a savior, and in this time of Advent we await the savior promised.

It can be helpful to remember what God does not promise. God never promised that our lives would be pain and hassle-free. God didn't promise that if we work hard enough and live righteously that we would be rewarded with wealth and good health. God didn't promise that life would be fair or just.

God did promise that whatever happens God will walk with us and offer us hope, courage, and strength to get through the difficult times. God promised that there would be justice ultimately. God promised eternal life in God's kingdom.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Judah was decimated—conquered and exiled by Babylon. Through Jeremiah, God promised an end to their misery. A savior from the line of David would come one day.

Call to Worship

L: We wait in hope,

C: The Lord is our righteousness!

L: We wait for a savior,

C: The Lord is our righteousness!

L: We trust in the promise:

C: The Lord is our righteousness!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Incarnate God,

C: You are with us always, and yet we live as though it is not the case. We neglect to show your love and compassion to ourselves and others. We get anxious about unimportant things, and apathetic about those which truly matter. We stop looking for your presence in our lives. Forgive us and guide us back to you, for the sake of our coming savior, amen.

P: God has heard our cries and has granted us mercy according to the promise. Receive our creator's forgiveness, and believe that it is true. Rejoice that we have been redeemed. Amen.



Liturgy

Advent Candle Litany: Hope Candle

Throughout the Advent season, use this litany with one, two, or multiple readers, or a call and response with the congregation.

Reader One: We yearn and we hope. We wait for God to fully realize God's promises.

Reader Two: So, too, did the prophet Jeremiah yearn and hope for Messiah to come.

Reader One: (*light candle 1*) We light this candle as a sign of the hope that others may know that we are watching and waiting, staying awake for God's sign yet to come.

Reader Two: And we see this light for what it is—a glimmer of light in a dark world yearning for the promise.

Prayer of the Day

O God,
You can be trusted to remember and fulfill your promises. We wait with hopeful anticipation for our savior, eager to spread the light of your coming kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Offertory Prayer

As ancient people once brought you animal and grain offerings, so now we place these gifts before you. May they be used for the work of building up your loving reign on earth, for the sake of our Lord Jesus, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Even when we are not faithful, you are, O Lord. Fill us with gratitude at the many ways you have refused to abandon your people, even when you were justified in doing so. Come, Lord Jesus,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The earth awaits the arrival of its savior, as lights emerge and nights grow colder and longer. Make us a part of your plan to redeem all of creation, from the widest ocean down to the smallest single-celled organism. For you truly love all that you have created. Come, Lord Jesus,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The signs of your presence are not always obvious, when we focus on all that is not right in this world. Train our eyes to notice love in all its forms, and make us carriers of your grace to others. Come, Lord Jesus,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Be with all those who spend these days away from their homes: in hospitals, rehab centers and nursing homes. Open our hearts in compassion, that we might take time to spend by their side, bringing your presence and love to them. We offer prayers for those we know, (*especially...*). Come, Lord Jesus,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Bless all the saints who have gone before us in life and death. Join our destiny with theirs as we anticipate being reunited with them in your eternal kingdom. Come, Lord Jesus,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: All of these things, and others which we do not say aloud, we entrust to your merciful care, praying in the name of Jesus our Lord, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Though we look to the future fulfillment of your promises, O Lord, we also know that you have never at any time left us on our own. Call us together once again as your people, gathered around one table of grace. Come to Lord's holy supper!



Liturgy

Litany

Older (20+): Does God make us promises?

Younger (19 and under): Yes!

O: Does God keep those promises?

Y: Yes!

O: Does God say we'll never be sad?

Y: No!

O: Or that we'll not have to work hard?

Y: No!

O: Does God promise life in abundance?

Y: Yes!

O: And what about peace?

Y: Yes!

O: And how about love?

Y: Yes!

O: And justice?

Y: Yes!

O: Will God see that we never struggle?

Y: No!

O: Or how about days without worry?

Y: No!

O: Will God give us piles of money?

Y: No!

O: Or make sure we're always in comfort?

Y: No!

O: But how about peace?

Y: Yes!

O: And mercy?

Y: Yes!

O: And what about courage?

Y: Yes!

O: And strength?

Y: Yes!

O: Will life always be fair?

Y: No!

O: Or perfect?

Y: No!

O: Or easy?

Y: No!

O: But will God be with us?

Y: Yes!

O: Is God always with us?

Y: Yes!

O: To love and to guide us?

Y: Yes!

O: Does that make us thankful?

Y: Yes!

O: Our God is with us!

Y: Yes!

O: Praise God!

Y: Praise God!

All: Praise God!



Creative Expression

Skit

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2, Reader 3

Reader 1: The days are surely coming...

Reader 2: We wait. We wait. And while we wait, we watch...

Reader 3: The news on TV. The wars. The fires. The floods. The mass shootings. Human Trafficking.

Reader 1: The days are surely coming, says the Lord...

Reader 2: The Lord speaks. We speak. The Lord listens. We speak.

Reader 3: When will our mouths quit and our ears open?

Reader 1: The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise...

Reader 2: The Lord promises...

Reader 3: Peace. Shelter. Safety. Presence.

Reader 1: The promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Reader 2: The promise for nations so long ago.

Reader 3: The promise for us. The promise for our children.

Reader 2: The promise of an earth that will sustain.

Reader 3: The promise of nations that will cease fire.

Reader 1: In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

Reader 2: A branch from a noble tree.

Reader 3: A leader from a just and righteous household.

Reader 1: In those days...

Reader 2: In these days...

Reader 3: Today...

Reader 1: Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.

Reader 2: The promises for Judah and Jerusalem will extend to all the world.

Reader 3: The promises for all the world will expand to all people in all times.

Reader 1: And this is the name by which it will be called:

Reader 2: This is the name.

Reader 3: This is the name.

Readers 1, 2, 3 together: The Lord is our righteousness.



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God keeps promises.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A children's picture Bible

Setting the Scene/Background

God promised that the people of Israel would get a savior and they did! It took many years, and many changes of government for Jesus to arrive, but God kept the promise God made to the people.

God didn't promise that life would be perfect or always happy, but God does promise to love us always. We can trust that God will do that because God keeps promises.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Ask if everyone can keep a promise. Then ask who has broken a promise. If there's time, invite them to share how. (I promised not to fight with my sibling, but we fought within 5 minutes.)

Show kids the Bible. The Old Testament is long, and God makes lots of promises, like the rainbow and that a savior would be born.

God keeps all promises. Show them a picture of the baby Jesus.

Remind them that God promises to love them, not that life will be perfect, but that God will always love them. We can believe that, because God keeps promises!

Reflection Questions

- What promises are easy to keep? What are harder?
- Are there ever bad promises?

Stuff to Consider

Sometimes, children are asked to promise something they shouldn't, like keeping a secret that could be dangerous. Help kids understand that not all promises are good to keep. Our safety is more important than keeping a promise. God would never ask us to make a promise that could hurt us or others.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A soft and comfortable blanket



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Isaiah 40:1-11

40 Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.

³ A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵ Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

⁶ A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹ Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;

lift up your voice with strength,

O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

¹⁰ See, the Lord God comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Secondary Text: Mark 1:1-4

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the
Son of God.

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming
a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader, Congregation

Reader: Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

Congregation: Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her

Reader: that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,

Congregation: that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.

Reader: A voice cries out:

Congregation: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the
Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Reader: Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;

Congregation: the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

Reader: Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Congregation: A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"

Reader: All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

Congregation: The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

Reader: The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

Congregation: Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;

Reader: lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;

Congregation: say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

Reader: See, the Lord God comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;

Congregation: his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

Reader: He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,

Congregation: and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God's promise of redemption is radical and certain.

Isaiah prophesied to Judah a generation before Jeremiah (who we learned about last week). Isaiah lived in Jerusalem at a time when Assyria was a constant threat, and the threat of Babylon was just on the horizon. (Assyria eventually fell to Babylon.) Isaiah repeatedly warned that if Judah didn't change their ways, soon they would be punished for their sin.

But God could never completely abandon God's people. Even in the middle of Isaiah's words of warning were words of comfort.

Second Isaiah (chapters 40-55) begins with a conversation in the heavenly court. The Lord commands that a word of comfort be spoken to Jerusalem, and an unnamed heavenly voice cries out—the salvation that is awaiting Jerusalem is so radical, it has the power to alter the DNA of creation, raising valleys and laying mountains flat.

The unnamed voice urges God's prophet, Isaiah to cry out as well. "What shall I cry?" the prophet asks. The promise is revealed. Even though people are as fragile and fleeting as the grass, they are like children to God. God comes both with power to defeat their enemies, and also with gentility to nurture God's people.

When John the Baptist came to proclaim the coming of the Lord, he quoted the prophet, Isaiah, to reassure the people that God's promises were real, that they were coming to pass soon. As we wait for Jesus this Advent season, we can hold tight to God's promise that the radical redemption of humanity has been made certain in the birth (and death and resurrection) of God's son.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

The Assyrian and Babylonian conquests and subsequent exile for the people are at the edge of the horizon. To a fearful and weary people, Isaiah proclaims a word of comfort.

Call to Worship

L: Prepare the way of the Lord—

C: In the wilderness!

L: Make straight a highway for God—

C: In the desert!

L: Lift up the valleys,

C: And level the mountains,

All: Prepare the way of the Lord!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Incarnate God,

C: You are with us always, and yet we live as though it is not the case. We neglect to show your love and compassion to ourselves and others. We get anxious about unimportant things, and apathetic about those which truly matter. We stop looking for your presence in our lives. Forgive us and guide us back to you, for the sake of our coming savior, amen.

P: God has heard our cries and has granted us mercy according to the promise. Receive our creator's forgiveness, and believe that it is true. Rejoice that we have been redeemed. Amen.



Liturgy

Advent Candle Litany: Peace Candle

Throughout the Advent season, use this litany with one, two, or multiple readers, or a call and response with the congregation.

Reader One: A voice cries out—a voice in the wilderness, but also voices from the cities, suburbs, and towns.

Reader Two: The cries come as a yearning for peace. The dramatic and prophetic change was so needed, then and today, too.

Reader One: (*light candle 1*) We light first the candle of hope, trusting that hope for a savior remains.

Reader Two: (*light candle 2*) We light the second, believing that God's Son might usher in a new order, where God's love will breathe new life into each of our lives.

Prayer of the Day

O God,
The world as we know it turns upside down in light of your redemption. Encourage us by the promise that all wrongs will eventually be made right in your eternal kingdom, for which we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

There is nothing, indeed, which we could do to repay you for all your generosity to us, O Lord. But accept these offerings which we bring before you now, and may they play their part in your plan to renew the face of the earth, through the mercy of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: As you comforted your people long ago, assure us of your desire to make all things new, as we continue to anticipate our Lord's coming. Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Creation cries to be redeemed from the pollution, exploitation and abuse which humans have imposed upon it. Make us your partners in restoring your world to a more balanced version of itself, where creatures and ecosystems may thrive, and people exist peacefully within the environment which shelters us. Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: When the world forgets why it's celebrating, make us joyful reminders of this season of anticipation. Give us generous hearts that share our time, energy and gifts with others, always looking to see where we might be most needed. Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: When wounds run too deep, we wonder how they can ever be healed. Repair ancient rifts, mend relationships and soothe old scars, that we might not be defined nor limited by past pain, but look with hope to the future you have in store for us. Please be with all in need of your healing, (*especially...*). Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Comfort all who mourn the loss of loved ones at this time of year, or who are painfully reminded of those no longer with them. Join us securely in a communion of saints which knows no limits of time or location, and which calls your eternal kingdom its home. Merciful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We lift up our voices without fear, knowing that you hear and respond to our every prayer, for the sake of your loving son, our savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

God, you feed us as a shepherd does a beloved flock. Gather us now in your arms of love, around this table of grace. Come and know your maker's care and provision: come to the feast!



Liturgy

Litany

L: John the Baptizer declared the good news:
C: Prepare the way, and make the paths straight!
L: His message was prophecy echoed from old:
C: Prepare the way, and make the paths straight!
L: His life the fulfillment of scriptural truth:
C: I'm sending my messenger, clearing a way.
L: John traveled the wilderness, preaching repentance:
C: Prepare your hearts and be made clean!
L: He spoke of the ancient promise of God:
C: The Lord of forgiveness is coming to us!
L: Isaiah spoke words of assurance and love:
C: Comfort my people who've suffered so long.
L: His message was hope for a nation worn out:
C: Your term has been served; your penalty paid.
L: The prophet desired to make known God's intent:
C: To raise up the valleys and make the hills low.
L: A promise to level the uneven ground,
C: And make what was rough into a smooth path.
L: Isaiah proclaimed that God's kingdom was peace:
C: A place to unite all the people as one.
L: For years they had suffered like withering grass,
C: Whose flower would fade with a breath of the wind.

L: And life was inconstant, with no lasting hope.
C: The payment for sin was a heavy affliction.
L: But now a good word was coming to light:
C: Which would last well beyond the impermanent days,
L: Tidings to herald a promising age:
C: Of peace and deliverance, offered to all.
L: So go to the mountaintops,
C: Lift up your voice!
L: Do not be afraid
C: To proclaim the Lord's news:
L: Our God is arriving
C: With power and might!
L: He brings a reward
C: To the tired and weary.
L: The promised one gathers
C: The lambs and the sheep,
L: Feeding and tending them,
C: Gathering them up.
L: Our God will show mercy
C: And pardon to us.
L: Rejoice, for he comes!
C: He is coming,
All: Rejoice!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Zanny, Dana

[Zanny is crying, alone. Dana comes to comfort her.]

Dana: Zanny! What's wrong??

Zanny: [wipes her eyes] Oh, [sniffing] nothing.

Dana: Come on—you've been crying. It's ok, you can trust me. You've helped me when I was upset so many times, let me be here for you.

Zanny: [feeling embarrassed] I suppose I can tell you...

Dana: I'm here.

Zanny: My parents are getting a divorce.

Dana: Oh Zanny. [Gives her a hug.] I'm so sorry.

Zanny: I didn't know they were unhappy. It's so surprising and upsetting.

Dana: I am sure it is. I'm so sorry it was a surprise. That probably makes it hurt worse.

Zanny: I think it does. Mom and Dad say it's not my fault and they still love me though.

Dana: Of course they do! I'm glad they are saying it out loud. That has to help, right?

Zanny: Maybe a little. What's worst is I'm afraid of what God will think.

Dana: What makes you afraid?

Zanny: I think that divorce is a sin. I mean that's what it seems to say in the Bible and I'm really afraid God has abandoned us.

Dana: Oh, Zanny. [Gives her another hug.] I can tell you are really hurting. Divorce is really hard for kids involved, even if your parents are being careful to tell you that you

are loved. I know why you are worried about God. So many people have such harsh beliefs about divorce, it would be easy to be discouraged and wonder if God has abandoned you. But God would never abandon you.

Zanny: How can you be sure?

Dana: It is written all over the Bible.

Zanny: [hopelessly] Like the stuff about divorce?

Dana: No, it's in there way more than divorce is even talked about. God loves us, no matter what.

Zanny: Then why are my parents getting a divorce?

Dana: I don't know that. Just because they are getting divorced doesn't mean that God doesn't love them.

Zanny: But the Bible says—

Dana: [interrupting] I know what the Bible says. God doesn't like divorce because it leads to pain. But I don't think God wants people to suffer in hurtful marriages, either. Life is tricky for adults, and sometimes things don't work. But God's love will never go away, no matter what.

Zanny: [wiping her eyes] I am really glad you found me today. I'm feeling a little bit better.

Dana: That's good. And you can use this as a reminder that God loves you. God sent me to you. I'm sure of it.

Zanny: Do you think so?

Dana: Yeah! I forgot why I came down this hall but here you are, needing a friend. I'm sure God sent me.

Zanny: Wow, God really won't let me be abandoned!

Dana: Not at all.

[They hug.]



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God will never abandon us! We can be sure that God's love will always surround us like a warm blanket.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A soft and comfortable blanket

Setting the Scene/Background

No matter how badly God's people behaved, God could never abandon them.

Help kids to trust that no matter what, God is always with them. They can trust that God's love is as real as a warm, fuzzy blanket we reach for when we are chilly.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Wrap yourself in the blanket.

Ask kids if they think God would ever leave us.

Tell them that even if times get rough, God loves us, and that love is like a cozy blanket always surrounding us. Even if we are scared or worried or feeling alone, we can remember that God is always with us!

Invite kids to find their own fuzzy blankets to wrap in to remind themselves that God loves them!

Reflection Questions

- When we're scared, we don't always feel God's love. How do we know it's there?
- What else reminds you that God's love is always there?

Stuff to Consider

Be careful not to get kids wrapped in the blanket with you. Maintaining good physical boundaries will help them to make good choices in the future if they are ever put in a bad situation.

Some kids don't like certain textures. If a fuzzy blanket isn't comforting, ask what might work better for them.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A cell phone, laptop or other piece of technology you can use to take a video



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-4, 10-13

1 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared:

²“Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah.

³Any of those among you who are of his people—may their God be with them!—are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem; ⁴and let all survivors, in whatever place they reside, be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods and with animals, besides freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.”

3 When the seventh month came, and the Israelites were in the towns, the people gathered together in Jerusalem. ²Then Jeshua son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his kin set out to build the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God. ³They set up the altar on its foundation, because they were in dread of the neighboring peoples, and they offered burnt offerings upon it to the Lord, morning and evening. ⁴And they kept the festival of booths, as prescribed, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the ordinance, as required for each day.

¹⁰When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the Lord with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel; ¹¹and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord,

“For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.”

And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. ¹²But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, ¹³so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.

Secondary Text: Luke 2:25-27

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law.

Pronunciation Guide

Cyrus: SI-ruhs

Persia: PUHR-zhuh

Jeshua: JEH-shoo-ah

Jozadak: JOH-zuh-dak

Zerubbabel: zee-RUB-uh-buhl

Shealtiel: shee-AL-tee-uhl

Asaph: AY-saf

Levites: LEE-vaits

Simeon: SIM-ee-uhn



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Edict, People

Narrator: In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared:

Edict: “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of those among you who are of his people—may their God be with them!—are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem; and let all survivors, in whatever place they reside, be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods and with animals, besides freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.”

Narrator: When the seventh month came, and the Israelites were in the towns, the people gathered together in Jerusalem. Then Jeshua son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his kin set out to build the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God. They set up the altar on its foundation, because they were in dread of the neighboring peoples, and they offered burnt offerings upon it to the Lord, morning and

evening. And they kept the festival of booths, as prescribed, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the ordinance, as required for each day. When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the Lord with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel; and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord,

People: “For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.”

Narrator: And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: When we look backward, we can learn; when we look forward, we can dream; and when we live in the moment, we can experience the presence of God.

Persia had defeated Babylon (who had conquered Jerusalem). The time of Babylonian exile was over. Although Persia continued to reign, King Cyrus allowed the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple.

Cyrus instructed that survivors of the exile be aided no matter where they live by people with the means to help them. Even with permission to rebuild and money to do it, the temple would never again live up to its former glory.

Once the temple was in a condition to worship, Jews gathered to celebrate and to bring their offerings to the Lord. They celebrated the festival of booths, which was both a harvest celebration and a remembrance that God's people were wholly dependent upon God during the time of the Exodus.

During the celebration, the young people shouted with joy, for they had never seen the temple except in a state of destruction. To them, the temple signified a bright future for Israel.

The elders, however, remembered what the temple used to look like. They grieved for what was when they saw how unimpressive the new temple was.

This story includes both a look back and a look forward. For the elders, looking back cause pain because of the regret over what was and what will never be again. For the young, looking back was a cause for celebration because they could dream of what their future might become. It can be good to look back—remembering our past helps us not to make the same mistakes again. It can also be good to look forward—dreaming of our future can motivate us to do what we need today to make a better tomorrow happen. It can also be good to be fully present right now. All the people, elders and young, engaged in the rituals and the celebration, acknowledging God's presence in the here and now.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

When Persia defeated Babylon (who had defeated the Jews), King Cyrus let the exiled Jews return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. For the young, it was a grand celebration. For the elders, a bittersweet reminder of the past.

Call to Worship

L: Enter God's house,

C: And give thanks!

L: For God is good,

C: And the Lord's love is forever!

L: Enter God's house,

C: And give thanks!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Incarnate God,

C: You are with us always, and yet we live as though it is not the case. We neglect to show your love and compassion to ourselves and others. We get anxious about unimportant things, and apathetic about those which truly matter. We stop looking for your presence in our lives. Forgive us and guide us back to you, for the sake of our coming savior, amen.

P: God has heard our cries and has granted us mercy according to the promise. Receive our creator's forgiveness, and believe that it is true. Rejoice that we have been redeemed. Amen.



Liturgy

Advent Candle Litany: Love Candle

Throughout the Advent season, use this litany with one, two, or multiple readers, or a call and response with the congregation.

Reader One: The exiled people, God's people, shouted in praise of their God when they once again rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem.

Reader Two: (*light candle 1*) We, too, sing God's praises knowing that God's hopeful promise will come through our Lord and Savior, Jesus. We light this candle as a sign that this hope never ends.

Reader One: (*light candle 2*) We light this candle, trusting God's peace will come.

Reader Two: (*light candle 3*) The third, the flame of love, points to God's unending love—the promise of God-with-us, the one to fill our lives with an unbounded love.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord,
You restore what has been destroyed. Rebuild our lives in the strength of your Spirit, and restore our joy in being your servants, in the name of Jesus, amen.

Offertory Prayer

As the Israelites offered daily sacrifices in your temple, so we bring these gifts of gratitude before your table. Bless them and use them for the work of your dawning kingdom. In Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Homecomings can often be a mixture of joy and grief, O Lord. Comfort us in our losses and gladden our hearts with the blessings which abound in our lives, as we help one another to move into a new future. Lord of hope,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You made the earth to renew itself constantly, wise Creator, even when it suffers misuse and destruction. May we marvel at the ways which nature survives and persists, making it our divine mission to preserve and protect whatever is within our power. Lord of hope,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: With Advent anticipation we look forward to all the ways in which you are renewing our lives, our world, and our future. Make us co-creators with you in the redemption of all things, that we might be true proclaimers of your gospel. Lord of hope,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You are the builder of dreams and the mender of hearts. When all seems lost, there may be something new around the corner. Lift our spirits with your promises and soothe our suffering with your presence. We live up today (*especially...*). Lord of hope,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your saints are the faithful who persevere without being able to see the outcome. Give us their courage and constancy, to follow wherever you are leading us. Lord of hope,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We bring our prayers before you in great anticipation of the coming of your son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

In your holy house, around your holy table, you gather your children. Fill us with your blessings of mercy, love, and peace at this meal. Let us come with glad hearts to the sacrament of our savior, whose coming is imminent. Alleluia!!



Liturgy

Litany

Left side: The old is a treasure,

Right side: Which cannot endure.

L: We long for the past,

R: And all that was lost.

L: We ponder the memories

R: And mourn what is gone.

L: We miss former things,

R: And desire their return.

L: We try to replace them

R: Without satisfaction.

L: For what has been lost

R: Will not come back again.

L: But here in the present

R: Is where we must live,

L: And the things of today

R: Are all that we have.

L: Our savior has given us

R: Blessings abundant:

L: Much more than we need

R: Or could ever request.

L: When Israel returned

R: To beloved Jerusalem,

L: The temple of God

R: Was their only desire.

L: They soon built a new one

R: From ruins of old,

L: And the house of the Lord

R: Was restored, once again.

L: But the elders were sad:

R: For it wasn't the same,

L: Didn't equal the glory

R: Or splendor of old.

L: They mourned at its opening,

R: Regretting the past,

L: For what had been lost

R: Could not be replaced.

L: But the young ones were joyous,

R: And cheered with loud voices

L: At what was re-built

R: And designed for the Lord.

L: They had no nostalgia

R: Nor lingering memory,

L: And only found hope

R: In the temple restored.

L: For God doesn't promise

R: To re-make our fortunes

L: Or give us exactly

R: What we had before.

L: Our God is creating

R: A wondrous new future,

L: Which we can't imagine

R: Nor hope to describe.

L: Praise God for the promise

R: Of hope and redemption,

L: Praise God for what's coming,

R: Halleluiah!

All: Praise God!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Kris, Corinna, Juls

[Kris, Juls and Corinna look at a picture of their new church. Kris remembers the old church before it burned down and doesn't like the new church. Corinna loves the new church and is frustrated with Kris. Juls just appreciates that there is a church to celebrate in!]

Kris: I just don't know—it's not as majestic as the old church!

Corinna: But look how beautiful the chancel is!

Kris: The old church had a pretty chancel!

Corinna: You and the old church. You have to stop!

Juls: Corinna, be patient with Kris. It was really hard to lose that church in the fire.

Kris: It was. That was the most beautiful space that ever was. It glorified the Lord and it made for an amazing house of worship.

Corinna: Sure, but did it have such amazing windows? Look at all these purples and blues!

Kris: I didn't need art deco with stained glass images of Jesus and the disciples.

Corinna: What about this pulpit? It's high so you can see the preacher no matter where you are in the worship center!

Kris: I didn't need to see the preacher—I could hear just fine. This new space with all its stone looks like it will echo and have terrible acoustics. I don't know why we had to design something so different.

Corinna: Because we hoped to have an even better worship experience. Maybe some of it is simpler, but isn't that a good thing?

Kris: [shaking head] You just don't understand. You never saw the old church.

Corinna: You are so frustrating!

Juls: You both are frustrating.

Kris: Say what?

Corinna: Why??

Juls: All you can talk about is old or new, old or new. Who cares about what was old or what will be in the new? Can't we just appreciate how nice it will be to have a worship space again?

Kris: I guess you're right.

Corinna: Yeah, that gym was smelly.

Kris: And cold!

Corinna: And we always had to set up chairs and clean them up afterwards.

Juls: Exactly. Now we have a space to worship that is just for worship. We don't have to worry about smells or set up or anything but being present with God and with our community. What a gift it is to have a space no matter how old or new, how historic or how modern!

Kris: I guess you are right.

Corinna: I'm sorry I wasn't more understanding, Kris. It must have been a real loss.

Juls: It was, kid.

Corinna: I didn't know you worshiped in the old space, too!

Juls: I did. And I miss it, but what matters most to me is that we have a home again.

Kris: Amen.



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Help kids understand change can be hard, but it can also be rewarding.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A cell phone, laptop or other piece of technology you can use to take a video

Setting the Scene/Background

Everyone faces challenges when introduced to something new and unexpected. Change can be hard and scary but not all change is bad!

God changes God's own mind many times in the Bible and some changes make it easier for us to spread God's love with the world.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Ask if kids like change. For fun, you can ask the adults to participate in the poll.

Change can be hard! If you had to move, or go to a new school, or adjust to a new sibling, it can be scary. But change is often good!

Talk about the changes in technology that you use in your congregation. Electricity itself is fairly new and so are your lights! What about your heat system? Sound equipment? All of those were changes, but how helpful were they to this church?

Hold up your device. Talk about how some people think we are too dependent on them, but that they can also be a way to help share God's love. Take a selfie video with kids all saying, "Jesus loves you!" Share as appropriate.

Reflection Questions

- What is something in your house you couldn't live without? Research how long ago it was invented and wonder with your friends what it was like to live without it.
- What do you do when you hear there is a change coming?

Stuff to Consider

Be sure you have permission to share videos of kids in your congregation. Don't share anything publicly without permission.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Megaphone (you can make one from paper if you don't have one lying around)



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Luke 1:5-13, 57-80

⁵In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. ⁷But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

⁸Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, ⁹he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. ¹⁰Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. ¹¹Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. ¹³But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John."

⁵⁷Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. ⁶⁰But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." ⁶¹They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." ⁶²Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶All who heard them pondered them and said,

"What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

⁶⁷Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

⁶⁸"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of his servant David,

⁷⁰as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets
from of old,

⁷¹that we would be saved from our enemies and from
the hand of all who hate us.

⁷²Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our
ancestors,

and has remembered his holy covenant,

⁷³the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,

to grant us ⁷⁴that we, being rescued from the hands of
our enemies,
might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and
righteousness

before him all our days.

⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most
High;

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.

⁷⁸By the tender mercy of our God,

the dawn from on high will break upon us,

⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the
shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace."

⁸⁰The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was
in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to
Israel.



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Gabriel, Elizabeth, People, Zechariah

Narrator: In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him,

Gabriel: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John."

Narrator: Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said,

Elizabeth: "No; he is to be called John."

Narrator: They said to her,

People: "None of your relatives has this name."

Narrator: Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote,

Zechariah: "His name is John."

Narrator: And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbors,

and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said,

People: "What then will this child become?"

Narrator: For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him. Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

Zechariah: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,

might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness

before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God,

the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Narrator: The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: A child (John) carried the hope of a weary nation, that they would one day soon be saved.

The time of waiting for Israel was nearly over. God had promised a savior from the line of David to redeem Israel. God had one more prophet to send to announce the arrival of the Messiah, and it would be Jesus' cousin, John.

The arrival of the Messiah's prophet was a big deal in itself. John's father, Zechariah, a priest whose duty was to serve in the temple, was chosen by lot to bring the incense offering into the temple, and while he was there he encountered an angel proclaiming that he and his barren wife would have a son, and the son would reunite the hearts of Israel toward one another and turn the wicked toward righteousness. What's not in today's selection of the story is that Zechariah doubted the angel's words, and so was struck mute until these things would come to pass.

When Elizabeth finally did conceive and bear a son, Zechariah's tongue was set free and he announced that the son would be named, "John," as Elizabeth (and the angel) had said. It was unusual to name a child outside the family name, but this was the name given to him by God. John would grow to become a prophet, preparing the way for the coming of the Lord.

This Advent, it is not the adult John that prepares the way, but the baby. (You'll remember, Mary and Elizabeth were pregnant at the same time.) Not only would they preach and teach at the same time, but they would also grow up together, observing the same world with the same challenges and the same hope for the future.

Hope is the gift of today's reading. A child (John) would carry the hope of a weary nation, that they would one day soon be saved and rescued from the tyranny of Rome. Little did they know they would be saved from much more than that.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Israel was weary and ready for a savior. A child would be born to proclaim the coming of the Messiah, and with this child was born a new hope.

Call to Worship

L: God has looked on us with favor,

C: Blessed be the Lord of Israel!

L: God has given us a savior,

C: Blessed be the Lord of Israel!

L: God restores the covenant,

C: Blessed be the Lord of Israel!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Incarnate God,

C: You are with us always, and yet we live as though it is not the case. We neglect to show your love and compassion to ourselves and others. We get anxious about unimportant things, and apathetic about those which truly matter. We stop looking for your presence in our lives. Forgive us and guide us back to you, for the sake of our coming savior, amen.

P: God has heard our cries and has granted us mercy according to the promise. Receive our creator's forgiveness, and believe that it is true. Rejoice that we have been redeemed. Amen.



Liturgy

Advent Candle Litany: Joy Candle

Throughout the Advent season, use this litany with one, two, or multiple readers, or a call and response with the congregation.

Reader One: Just as the first witnesses of Jesus' birth longed for a savior, we too long for a joy to stir our hearts. But soon, a savior will be given.

Reader Two: (*light candle 1*) A savior to bring hope...

Reader One: (*light candle 2*) A savior to deliver peace...

Reader Two: (*light candle 3*) A savior filled with love overflowing...

Reader One: (*light candle 4*) Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. For God has raised up a savior for us from the house of David, that we might share this joy with all, knowing that God's own desire is to live in this joy.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God,
The gift of John the Baptist gave his parents joy and his people hope. May their gladness be ours as we anticipate the arrival of our savior Jesus, in whose beloved name we pray, amen.

Offertory Prayer

As Zechariah was met by your promise while giving you offering, so might our lives be transformed as we dedicate these gifts to you and the work of your whole Church on earth. Bless them and us, that the world will continue to be renewed, for the sake of Christ our Messiah, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: The arrival of the prophet John means our wait will not be long now. May we rejoice as his parents did when he blessed their lives, and open our ears to the message he has for us all. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: With the longest night behind us, we strain to see a glow from the stable, signifying the coming of your light. Give us warmth in our hearts and toward one another, that we might live as the coming Christ child loves us. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: As final holiday preparations are made, we take a peaceful moment to reflect again upon your promises, and the hope which has brought us here in the first place. May we carry this peace throughout our week, never overlooking your presence among us. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The world may be on the brink of celebration, but there are still those who suffer on this day: from sickness, sorrow, conflict and other losses. Keep them in your tender embrace, that we would reach out to any and all whom we know are in need, (*especially...*). Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Elizabeth and Zechariah followed your guidance even when their neighbors thought they were odd for doing so. Give us their bravery to go forth in the confidence of your will, to do as you have commanded us, despite the reaction of the world around us. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Our hope is always with you, O Lord, and so we entrust these things for which we pray to your steadfast love and mercy, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore! We gather with joy at this holy sacrament, a living reminder of your eternal presence with us. Let us come to meet our savior in the bread and cup of blessing!



Liturgy

Litany

Higher voices: Another day,

Lower voices: Another promise,

H: Another child born of parents

L: Past their primes.

H: Another voice,

L: Another angel,

H: Foretelling how the child will live,

L: His name, his purpose.

H: Another town

L: Beset with blessing,

H: And all the shock that comes

L: With unexpected happenings.

H: Another son,

L: Another prophet:

H: This time the one to signal

L: Jesus' near arrival.

H: Another birth,

L: Another joy,

H: And another soon to follow,

L: With the Lord so close at hand,

H: And a prophecy unfolding:

L: Bless the Lord!

H: The God of Israel,

L: Who looks with favor on the people,

H: And bestows on them a savior.

L: Bless the Lord!

H: Who keeps the promise

L: That the people would be saved

H: From their enemies and foes.

L: Blessed be God!

H: For showing mercy

L: To the ancients—

H: And to us!

L: In remembrance of a covenant:

H: So that we might be servants,

L: And make space for God's anointed,

H: Making known the ways of justice,

L: Spreading word of peace and mercy,

H: Blessed be God!

L: Who brings forgiveness,

H: And who has made us all one people,

L: Showing light and granting peace—

All: Blessed be God!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Elizabeth

Prop: Toy baby wrapped in blankets

[This is a monologue that would be especially poignant for anyone who has hoped for a baby, and been given that gift. Elizabeth stands with her baby, telling her story.]

Elizabeth: An angel came to my husband and told him we'd be given a son. My husband laughed! I'm so old, how could I have ever gotten pregnant at this age?

God is funny, though! Here I am, with baby John, but what's even better is God took away Zechariah's ability to talk for not believing. I probably shouldn't laugh, but he's always so pious about his faith and lecturing me on it! It's nice to see he's not so perfect himself!

This baby—he's not just any baby—he's going to be a great prophet. He's supposed to preach and teach everyone about the messiah.

[tears up]

It's hard to believe this tiny little creature will be a great prophet someday. But God is so good, and with Zechariah losing his voice for not believing, it's probably best if I trust in God this time.

I think I already know the baby he'll be teaching about: my cousin is with child. Young Mary, still a virgin! God sent an angel to tell her that she would have a baby that would save the world.

Can you believe that? A virgin will have a baby. It's unbelievable.

She was as surprised to hear this news as Zechariah and I were to learn about John—but not half as surprised as her fiancé, Joseph! I heard he fainted, but he swears he just sat down really fast! Some people have too much pride for the truth, but I suppose it doesn't really matter. [chuckling to herself]

If the prophecy Zechariah spoke is true, this little one will be a messenger for the most high son of God.

I have hoped and prayed for a little one so long, and now that he's here I can hardly believe my blessing. To think of his future and his path is too much beauty for one momma to bear.

[Looks at baby, starts to rock as to comfort him.]

Oh, he's waking up.

[in a hushed voice] For now I shall care for him as he grows, and trust his future to our God.



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God was so excited for Jesus' arrival, God sent a messenger to spread the word. Now, we get to be the messengers for Jesus!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Megaphone (you can make one from paper if you don't have one lying around)

Setting the Scene/Background

Jesus' arrival was foretold in the Old Testament. Before Jesus was born, John the Baptist was born. His role was to prepare the world for the arrival of Jesus. After Jesus' death and resurrection, it became the job of all people to share the good news—Jesus loves us!

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Give kids the background: God wanted John to share the news that Jesus was coming. John went in the wilderness and cried out in a loud voice, (use megaphone to demonstrate) "Jesus is coming!"

Now that Jesus has gone to heaven, God wants all of us to share about Jesus! Ask what each kid could shout about Jesus. Offer suggestions, and if you are brave, let them take turns shouting the good news!

Reflection Questions

- Why did it change from special messengers to everyone being a messenger?
- What's the best way to share the news of Jesus?

Stuff to Consider

Some kids have sound sensitivities. Offer a warning to cover their ears or back away to help avoid discomfort.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Toy animals
- Farm set



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

2In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2**This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3**All went to their own towns to be registered. **4**Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. **5**He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. **6**While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. **7**And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9**Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10**But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: **11**to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. **12**This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” **13**And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

14“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

[**15**When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” **16**So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. **17**When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; **18**and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. **19**But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. **20**The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]

Secondary Text: Psalm 146:5-10

5Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
6who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;
7 who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;
8 the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.
9The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
10The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the Lord!

Alternate Secondary Text: Luke 1:46-55

46And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
50 His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
51 He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”



Scripture Readings

Pronunciation Guide

Augustus: uh-GUHS-tuhs
Quirinius: kwih-RIN-ee-uhs
Syria: SIHR-ee-uh
Nazareth: NAZ-uh-ruhth
Galilee: GAL-uh-lee
Judea: joo-DEE-uh

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Angel, Multitude, Shepherds

Narrator: In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,

Angel: “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

Narrator: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

Multitude: “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

[**Narrator:** When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

Shepherds: “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

Narrator: So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God became vulnerable, so we might learn to become dependent on a God who loves us.

Israel had been oppressed by Rome for long enough. (And by Greece, Persia, Babylon, and Assyria in the centuries before Rome.) They were tired and defeated. The greedy Emperor Augustus decided he needed more money, which meant higher taxes. The way to collect more taxes was to justify more people to tax. The way to justify more people was to call for a census, which is just what he did.

The census would not only impose a greater financial burden on people, but also required that they travel to the lands of their families. This would mean that those who had settled elsewhere would have to uproot their whole lives, travel, and resettle once again—new home, new job, new community. For Joseph and Mary, who were expecting a child, it would be an even more difficult and dangerous journey. But it was unavoidable, and so they went.

Funny, though, just as Rome squeezed Israel a little tighter, God stepped in to relieve the pressure. And boy, did God ever step in! God became human.

God stepped onto the earth as a baby, vulnerable and dependent on others for survival. God became dependent on humanity, so humanity could learn to become dependent on God once again. God taught us that when the pressure becomes too great to bear, our best course of action is not to fight, but to surrender to a loving God who desires an interdependent relationship with humanity. Our vulnerability is strength. Our surrender is power. Our interdependence is love.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Rome had oppressed Israel long enough. It was time for a savior to arrive. But this savior came as the paragon of ultimate vulnerability—an infant.

Call to Worship

L: Do not be afraid;

C: I bring you great joy!

L: A savior is born,

C: For you and for all!

L: Sing glory to God,

C: And on earth proclaim peace!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Incarnate God,

C: You are with us always, and yet we live as though it is not the case. We neglect to show your love and compassion to ourselves and others. We get anxious about unimportant things, and apathetic about those which truly matter. We stop looking for your presence in our lives. Forgive us and guide us back to you, for the sake of our coming savior, amen.

P: God has heard our cries and has granted us mercy according to the promise. Receive our creator's forgiveness, and believe that it is true. Rejoice that we have been redeemed. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O Lord,
The joy of this night comes to us new each year. Light the fire of the angels' midnight proclamation within our hearts again, that we might marvel beside the manger of our newborn savior, in whose name we pray, amen.

Offertory Prayer

We offer these gifts to you, O God, but Mary and Joseph gave their firstborn son so that the world might know your mercy firsthand. Bless this night and all who give of their lives so that others may live. In Jesus' name, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Jesus was born into an unjust world, to demonstrate the peculiar nature of your justice, O God. May the wonder of this gift shake us once more out of our routine, and amaze us with the depth of your love for us. Incarnate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: A bed meant for hay became your own, O Lord, and a shelter for animals was your first nursery. Give us humble hearts after your own, to live among your fellow creatures as sisters and brothers of one compassionate creator. Incarnate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: To young, unmarried, uncertain and expectant parents you were born, gracious Lord. Break into our world in unassuming places, at surprising times and in unconventional ways to remind us that your kingdom is anything but ordinary. Incarnate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We pray for the healing presence of your Spirit with all those who long for relief and release this night, (*especially...*). Incarnate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: For all your humble, unnamed servants who enable your work to be done and your will to arise in the furthest corners of the world, we give you thanks. Incarnate God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: With humility and hope we offer these requests, trusting in the mercy of an almighty creator who came to be like one of us, in the form of our savior Jesus Christ, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Happy are we whose hope is in the Lord our God! The promise has been fulfilled, and we are blessed to witness it. Come now and join your sisters and brothers at the table of mercy, where our Lord gathers us from the ends of the earth to share this holy meal!



Liturgy

Litany

L: God as a baby,

C: A child among us!

L: To show us humility,

C: Live in humanity.

L: God with no glory,

C: Or cradle of luxury,

L: Family uprooted,

C: Resigned to a stable.

L: This baby, born humble,

C: In modest surroundings:

L: A deity descending

C: To earthly proportions.

L: The one who made heaven

C: Now lives upon earth,

L: A name and a mission:

C: To show that God saves.

L: In David's fair city,

C: A prophecy brewing:

L: To gladden God's people

C: With tidings of justice,

L: Redemption and freedom,

C: Reversing the norms.

L: A kingdom of mercy,

C: Where hungry are fed,

L: And the prisoners freed,

C: And the blind begin seeing,

L: The grieving ones lifted,

C: The strangers kept company,

L: Orphans and widows

C: Receiving protection.

L: Praise God for this kingdom

C: That starts with a baby,

L: A meekly born baby,

C: With no earthly status

L: Or famous relations,

C: Who comes to be with us,

L: God's presence among us,

C: Emmanuel coming,

L: Our savior,

C: This night.

L: Praise to Emmanuel,

C: Savior,

L: God with us,

C: Tonight!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Goat, Sheep, Donkey

Props: Any small pieces of fur or costumes that help create the animal illusion for the humans—even a picture cut out on a stick would be great! If you can score some hay, even better.

[The Goat, Sheep and Donkey are reacting to the birth of Jesus. Insert animal noises as you see fit!]

Goat: Strange day in the stable, eh Sheep?

Sheep: Very strange. Can you believe these people are sleeping here?

Goat: Just plain weird. Didn't they get a reservation at the hotel in time?

Sheep: I guess not. It was really busy today. Something must be going on with those humans out there.

Donkey: Excuse me, I believe that the humans are doing a census.

Goat: A census?

Sheep: What's that?

Donkey: It's where they count all the people who are from here. I came with some people who are living in Nazareth—he's from here, so this is where they had to travel to be counted.

Goat: Wow! That's pretty far!!

Sheep: You must be tired.

Donkey: I am pretty sleepy, but not as worn out as that lady! Did you hear her crying earlier??

Goat: She wasn't tired. She was having a baby!

Sheep: Yes! Having a baby is hard work. Many mommas make noise. I know I did!

Donkey: That explains all the talk about two of them riding on me. [chuckles to himself]

Goat: I think that baby she had is an important one.

Sheep: Why do you say that?

Donkey: Can't be—these people are not wealthy or powerful.

Goat: I dunno, I just saw all those shepherds come visit the baby, and they were talking about angels...

Sheep: Ooooh, angels!

Donkey: What did the angels say?

Goat: Something about this baby being the messiah.

Sheep: What on earth is a messiah?

Donkey: Oh, I know! It's the one who is supposed to come and save all the humans!! But, is it really this baby who was born here??

Goat: Angels probably aren't wrong all that often, being able to talk to God and all.

Sheep: Wow! So that baby is the messiah!

Donkey: The messiah got a ride from me before he was even born! How cool is that?

Goat: Pretty cool.

Sheep: And we all got to see him the first day he was born!

Goat: I wonder what he'll do when he grows up.

Sheep: I guess we'll have to wait and see!



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Jesus was born and everyone, even the animals, celebrated!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Toy animals
- Farm set

Setting the Scene/Background

Many are familiar with the story of Jesus' birth—even those who don't attend worship.

Help make the story fresh and new by telling it from the perspective of the animals, using toy animals to think along with kids of what it might have been like to be with Mary and Joseph when baby Jesus was born.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Set up whatever animals you have as you share the story from their perspective. For example, the donkey was so tired from all that travel with Mary sitting on its back, and all the animals were confused when their food bin was taken for a small baby.

Ask kids what the animals must have thought of the visits from the shepherds or the angels!

Did the animals think that the family was going to have to check into a hotel after this? Did they know how important this baby was?

Reflection Questions

- Jesus was born in a stable/lower room of a house and he was surrounded by animal friends. Where were you born? How was it different from where animals sleep?
- What is your favorite animal?

Stuff to Consider

For those kids who have trouble discerning between fiction and reality it might be nice to mention that we are just playing pretend when we talk about the animals talking and reacting if we give them human attributes!

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Box
- Paper heart



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Luke 2:8-20

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” ¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Alternate Text: Matthew 2:1-12

2In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Secondary Text: Psalm 108:1-4

¹My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;
I will sing and make melody.
Awake, my soul!
²Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn.
³I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples,
and I will sing praises to you among the nations.
⁴For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens,
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text: Luke 2:8-20

Readers: Narrator, Angel, Multitude, Shepherds

Narrator: In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,

Angel: “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

Narrator: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

Multitude: “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

Narrator: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

Shepherds: “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

Narrator: So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Dramatic Reading of the Alternate Text: Matthew 2:1-12

Readers: Narrator, Wise Men, Herod

Narrator: In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking,

Wise Men: “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.”

Narrator: When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him,

Wise Men: “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of
Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Narrator: Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,

Herod: “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

Narrator: When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.



Tag Cloud: Matthew 2:1-12





Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Jesus experienced the fullness of humanity from a lowly state to an exalted one; from suffering to joy.

Israel had been waiting for someone to save them from oppression from Rome. They would wait no longer—a child has been born!

From the moment of his birth (conception, really), Jesus lived the experience of some of the most marginalized people. He was conceived out of wedlock. He was born to a migrant family—they had a home, but left it behind and were technically homeless. His father, although skilled, was at the time of his birth unemployed. Shortly after his birth, his family fled to Egypt to escape the decree to slaughter infants ordered by Herod—they were fugitives living primarily on the proceeds from a few valuable gifts—frankincense, gold, and myrrh.

This was not the first time they believed a god walked the earth—Greek and Roman gods often posed as humans. Zeus regularly came to earth and fathered many demigods (half god, half human) like Athena, Apollo, and Dionysus. (Accordingly, Jesus was not the first demigod, either.) But none of these experienced the fullness of humanity the way Jesus did. These other gods maintained their connection with the gods' world through their supernatural powers. Jesus, on the other hand, was very much human, wholly dependent on human to survive. Rarely were gods of Rome born into as lowly a state as Jesus.

Why does this matter? Other gods represented select groups of people. Some were gods of warriors; others of harvest; others of reproduction. Only Jesus was God that came for everyone—from the homeless migrants to the High Priests; women and men; Jews and Gentiles; poor and rich. By being born into a lowly human state, Jesus experienced the fullness of humanity. Jesus knows what it is to suffer. Jesus also knows what it is to have hope and joy. This tiny child would know the best and the worst of what it means to be human. For now, he would know nurture, food, snuggles, tears, trust, and love.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Jesus was conceived and born in as lowly a state as one could be. But this tiny, dependent, vulnerable child would change the world.

Call to Worship

L: Glory in heaven!

C: And peace on earth!

L: The favor of God,

C: Now lives among humans!

L: Awake, my soul,

C: And sing God's praises!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Incarnate God,

C: You are with us always, and yet we live as though it is not the case. We neglect to show your love and compassion to ourselves and others. We get anxious about unimportant things, and apathetic about those which truly matter. We stop looking for your presence in our lives. Forgive us and guide us back to you, for the sake of our coming savior, amen.

P: God has heard our cries and has granted us mercy according to the promise. Receive our creator's forgiveness, and believe that it is true. Rejoice that we have been redeemed. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Creator God,
The news of Christ's birth began with several terrified shepherds in a field. So move us with your news that we, too, cannot help but run and see for ourselves: the glory of God's love made real. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Offertory Prayer

We bring our gifts as we bring our praises on this joyful morning: with full and gracious hearts. Receive them as they are offered, as a witness to the love that was born this day, and a concrete sign of the hope that lives within us, for the sake of Christ, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: We give thanks for shepherds who didn't let fear get the better of them and went to see the promised Messiah. Give us their courage to answer when we are sent, so that we might not miss the blessings you have put in our path. Emmanuel,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We give thanks for creation, which glorifies you through its vast and intricate splendor: for quiet nights and blazing lights. Remind us whenever we are moved by the natural world: this is the place you chose to make your humble home. Emmanuel,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We give thanks for words and songs with which to praise you, so well-known that we need not read them from the page. May they echo throughout our celebrations and resonate within our hearts this Christmas. Emmanuel,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: For all who experience pain of any kind: physical, emotional, grief or conflict with loved ones. May we all know the healing power of the Christ child this day. We lift up (*especially...*). Emmanuel,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: As ordinary as shepherds and as extraordinary as angels, we give thanks for all the saints who have been touched by your presence in their lives. Join all of our songs of joy at the savior's birth. Emmanuel,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: May there indeed be peace on earth, O God, and may these prayers land softly in your arms of mercy, through the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

We dedicate to you these gifts of the season: the body and blood of this blessed sacrament. Feed us now with the food that fills us with joy and strengthens us for every future challenge. Come join our Lord at the table of love!



Liturgy

Litany

C: Look here—what’s this?

L: Behold, beloved!

C: What light, what voice?

L: Be not afraid!

C: What splits the night?

L: Good news I bring!

C: A vision bright!

L: No fear, good friends!

C: What could it be?

L: A message great!

C: What omen dark?

L: Be not afraid?

C: What’s happening?

L: I bring you something good—

C: What’s that?

L: Some news to bring you joy!

C: For us?

L: For you and everyone!

C: What news?

L: A child is born this day!

C: What child?

L: The one you call Messiah!

C: Where?

L: Right here in David’s city!

C: Here?

L: Not far from here,

C: But where?

L: In Bethlehem this day!

C: Just there?

L: Yes, go and you will see!

C: But how?

L: You’ll find him easily!

C: Where’s he?

L: Wrapped up in bands of cloth,

C: Just cloth?

L: And lying in a manger.

C: Oh!

L: Yes, go without delay!

C: Okay!

L: You cannot wait ‘til day!

C: Okay! We’ll go without delay!

L: Glory to God in the highest!

C: And peace to us on earth!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Abi, Malik, Bob

[These three are some of the shepherds visited by the angels telling of Jesus' birth. We join them as they react to the news and travel to town.]

Abi: Did that really happen back there?

Malik: I think it did.

Bob: I'm just going to pretend like it was all a dream.

Abi: Bob! How can you say that?

Malik: I know! We saw all that light...and those angels' voices when they sang! It was glorious! I'll never forget it.

Bob: I know! Dreams can be really weird, right?

Abi: Bob, you are in serious denial.

Malik: What are you doing to do if we get to this place in Bethlehem the angels told us about and there actual is a baby.

Bob: I'm not going to do anything. There won't be a baby. We aren't walking, I'm sleeping. I fell asleep on night watch and when I wake up, I'm going to be in trouble. No matter how awesome my dreams are, Abi and Malik are gonna be so mad that I fell asleep.

Malik: Get it together, Bob! This is not a dream! Those angels were real! A baby was born and we gotta go see!

Bob: Man, dream Malik is bossy.

Abi: This is getting ridiculous.

Malik: Just ignore him.

Bob: Sure, ignore the dreaming guy.

Abi: [groans] So, do you really think that baby will be there?

Malik: I think so. I mean, do angels lie?

Abi: Honestly, I don't know. I've never met one before! You'd think they would be pretty honest, though. Right?

Malik: They have to be!

Bob: [breaks his silence] But they weren't real.

Abi: Of course they were, Bob!!

Malik: Is he in shock?

Bob: Nope. I'm asleep, I keep telling you.

Abi: If you were asleep, how could you be walking right now?

Bob: Sleep walking.

Malik: If you were asleep, could you feel this? [grabs his arm and shakes it]

Bob: [shakes his head in surprise] Oh no! I am awake!

Abi: Told ya!

Malik: Those angels were real!

Bob: But...but...how is that even possible?

Malik: That's a good question.

Bob: I'm gonna pass out. [puts his arms out and wobbles, starts to sit down; the others help him and get him back to standing]

Abi: Pull yourself together, Bob!

Malik: Yeah! We gotta go visit that baby!

Abi: And nobody needs an unconscious visitor!

Bob: Ok, ok. I can make it!

Malik: Well that's what's important in all of this. That you will be ok.

Abi: Yup, it's all about you, buddy!



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Angels could have shared the news of Jesus' birth with anyone and they chose "lowly" shepherds. God cares more about our hearts than anything else!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Box
- Paper heart

Setting the Scene/Background

It's easy to forget that money, power, or status are not what matters, especially in our context in North America.

In telling the story today, make it clear that God didn't choose people who were wealthy or amazing leaders. God chose humble shepherds.

Notice also that Mary values their words. She knows the importance of all people and isn't worried about status, either!

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Tell kids how God must have chosen the shepherds to send the angels to visit. Was it because they were rich? Were they important leaders? Were they really good looking?

No! God didn't care about any of that. God cared about what was in their hearts.

Tell kids God cares about what is inside of the box you have. Open it up to reveal a heart. That represents love!

Reflection Questions

- If God doesn't care about money or power, why do people?
- What's the best way to show someone we love them?

Stuff to Consider

Many kids don't have a lot of money. Their families don't have power. Remind yourself that the shepherds weren't bad because they were poor and lived in a lower social strata, and share this with your kids. Help them understand that most people wouldn't have selected the shepherds as some of the first witnesses. God, though, would. And did.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Mark 1:1-20

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

7 He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. **8** I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. **11** And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. **13** He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, **15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. **17** And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” **18** And immediately they left their nets and followed him. **19** As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. **20** Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Secondary Text: Psalm 91:9-12

9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling place,

10 no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.

11 For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.

12 On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Prophet, John, Voice, Jesus

Narrator: The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

Prophet: “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

Narrator: John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed,

John: “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Narrator: In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens

torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven,

Voice: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Narrator: And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying,

Jesus: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Narrator: As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them,

Jesus: “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

Narrator: And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: The promises given to Jesus in baptism are promises to us, too.

Jesus came on the scene with a bang! In his early thirties, with almost no word about him until this point, his arrival was abrupt and noticeable.

First, his arrival was proclaimed by one of the most prominent prophets of Jesus' time—John the Baptist. The proclamation highlighted the Jewish prophets—Isaiah had indicated his arrival nearly 8 centuries prior. All signs pointed toward Jesus' coming.

When Jesus did arrive, his baptism shocked and perplexed many who were present. Not only was it a meaningful event, but it is an event that mirrors the meaning baptism has for us today. The things that happened in Jesus' baptism are what happen to us when we are baptized.

First, the heavens were torn apart. The heavens were a barrier between God and humanity. Similarly, the curtain in the temple represented the divide between God and people. When Jesus was baptized, the heavens were torn apart—the barrier that separated us from God was gone! God was loose in the world in a way God never had been before. (When Jesus was crucified, the temple curtain was torn also—another sign that the barrier between God and people was rent.) Just as in Jesus' day, our baptism is a promise that we will never be separated from God.

Next, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus. We too, are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is an advocate and a guide—a power line between God and us.

Third, a voice claimed Jesus as its own. We too, are claimed by God in our baptism. We are claimed as children of God—beloved and inheritors of God's kingdom.

Finally, Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tested and tried. Our lives are also filled with trials and temptations. Baptism does not promise an easy, challenge-free life. But it does promise we will never walk alone.

Jesus didn't walk alone, either. He began his ministry by gathering followers and friends. He created his community, and then he set to work.

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Jesus' ministry began with the voice of a prophet and a meaningful baptism. Then he was driven out into the world, where he gathered his community.

Call to Worship

L: Blessed be Jesus!

C: The chosen from God!

L: Blessed be Jesus!

C: The son, the beloved!

L: Blessed be Jesus!

C: God's faithful; our Lord!

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Living God,

C: You have given us all we need to follow you, yet we doubt ourselves, criticize others, grasp for meaningless pleasures and seek hollow assurances. Forgive us for refusing to see what is in front of our faces. Restore us by the power of your son, Jesus Christ, amen.

P: The Son of Man is powerful, yet compassionate. Take heart in the pardon that he offers: you are forgiven. You are beloved children of God. Your faith has healed you. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O God,
You poured out your Spirit upon your only Son, showing the people that he belonged to you. Send this same Spirit to us as a sign of our baptism and belonging as your beloved children, in the name of Jesus our brother, amen.

Offertory Prayer

As disciples left everything of value they had to follow Jesus, so give us perspective on how we manage our possessions, and how we offer our lives in your service. Bless these gifts as a sign of our willingness to follow in their footsteps, for the sake of our savior, amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: As John's life and witness pointed away from himself and toward you, so may our lives reflect our creator's glory and will in the world. Make us messengers of good news to all who need to hear it. God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The heavens parted to reveal your glory and pleasure at your son's mission begun. May we, along with all creation, honor our maker and make way for the word to be spread far and wide. God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: As another year draws to a close, we give you thanks for the joys we have experienced, and ask your forgiveness for all the ways we have fallen short these past twelve months. Remind us that every day is a chance to make a clean start with you. God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: May the gentle dove of your Spirit descend upon all who desire or need a special measure of your healing this day, (*especially...*). God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Bless all those who have gone before us in faith, whether known to us or not. Join us all in one great communion of your children, both here on earth and in your eternal heavenly kingdom. God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We know that you hear us, O Lord, and we ask that you hold closely all those for whom we pray today. We ask these things in the name of our savior Jesus, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You have blessed us and called us your own, O God. Now gather us around the table to which you have invited us, so that we might be fed and strengthened for the ministry you have in store for us. Come and eat your fill; all has been prepared for you!



Liturgy

Litany

L: The time is fulfilled!

C: What words do you speak?

L: The kingdom is near!

C: What kingdom is this?

L: The kingdom of God!

C: What shall we do?

L: Repent and turn back!

C: From what shall we turn?

L: Your sin and neglect!

C: What else should we do?

L: Believe the good news!

C: The news about what?

L: The kingdom of God!

C: We believe in the kingdom!

L: So come, follow me!

C: But how shall we follow?

L: Leave cares and concerns!

C: The cares of our lives?

L: Leave all your attachments!

C: We have no restrictions!

L: But what of your jobs?

C: Our income and work?

L: And what of your homes?

C: The place where we live?

L: And what of possessions?

C: All this that we've earned?

L: And what of your families?

C: Those whom we love?

L: Your attachments are many!

C: We've built up our lives!

L: So leave it behind!

C: Leave it and what?

L: Come follow my lead!

C: But where will you lead?

L: To healing and truth!

C: What else do you promise?

L: A life that's abundant!

C: Abundant with what?

L: Forgiveness and mercy!

C: But how can we leave?

L: It's always your choice.

C: A choice between what?

L: The safe and the saving.

C: But what will we gain?

L: You'll gain your whole life.

C: Could it be possible?

L: Come and discover!

C: And what could we lose?

L: Your shallow concerns.

C: It sounds like a risk.

L: To follow is risky!

C: Then why should we come?

L: To follow is joy!

C: Let us go and see...

L: Come follow me!

C: Then lead us to life!

L: You'll discover your life!

C: Lead us into life!



Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Crissy, Ben

[Kids Crissy and Ben discuss baptism—when is the right time, and what is the best method.]

Ben: So, when were you baptized?

Crissy: I think I was about a month old.

Ben: What?

Crissy: Yeah, my parents had me baptized in worship. My aunt Tracie was my godmother, and apparently, I cried really loud when the pastor poured water on my head.

Ben: Wow. That's crazy.

Crissy: Why?

Ben: Well, my church doesn't baptize people until they are old enough to choose.

Crissy: Interesting!

Ben: And they don't just pour water. We get totally dunked into water.

Crissy: Yeah, you probably couldn't do that with a baby.

Ben: Why would you even baptize a baby? I mean, they can't choose to be a Christian when they are so little.

Crissy: You know, I asked my mom that question when I was little.

Ben: What did she say?

Crissy: She said we baptize babies because we don't choose God. God chooses us. We don't earn our way to heaven. Jesus died and rose for us. When we get baptized as a baby, it's about that.

Ben: Oh, that is really interesting. I was taught that people have to be old enough to choose.

Crissy: I could see why that would be a good idea! Maybe I should get baptized again as a choice!

Ben: Oh—no—just one baptism is all you need!

Crissy: So, God takes care of it all even if we didn't do it right?

Ben: Maybe there isn't only one right way.

Crissy: Do you think there are options when it comes to baptism?

Ben: It would only make sense! There's immersion baptisms, baptisms with oil, babies get baptized, group baptisms, private baptisms; but there's one thing that is always the same.

Crissy: What's that?

Ben: Everyone is baptized in the name of God the creator, redeemer and sustainer. We all believe in Jesus and the promises of baptism enough to get baptized. I think that might be what matters most.

Crissy: I think you must be right! It's kind of awesome that there are so many ways to believe and be baptized.

Ben: God created us each to be who we are. Why wouldn't there be different ways for each of us to follow on the path of faith?

Crissy: Man, we should really tell that to some grown-ups. They get angry sometimes when there are differences in faith.

Ben: Yeah, that can get a little sad. If only they could listen to us kids!



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Jesus was baptized just like the rest of us!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A large basin of water/option to gather around the baptismal font

Setting the Scene/Background

We get baptized in the name of Jesus, but even Jesus was baptized! God said that God was pleased with Jesus and we were gifted with a savior who knows what the human experience is like.

Share that not only is Jesus divine, but Jesus lived a fully human life which included a baptism as the start to public ministry.

Use this time to remind everyone of their baptism and the call to public ministry.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Start by putting the basin in the middle of your group or moving to stand around the baptismal font.

Share that Jesus was not only God/fully divine but fully human. He was baptized just like we are!

Invite the children dip their hands in the water and to make the sign of the cross on their forehead to remind themselves of their baptism.

Remind them that baptism is special for everyone—and it's part of our call to ministry!

Reflection Questions

- Why do some churches baptize babies, and other churches baptize members as grown-ups?
- Do you need to be fully immersed in order to be baptized properly? Why or why not?

Stuff to Consider

Be careful not to splash on those who do not wish to get wet. It may not seem like a big deal, but to some kids it really is!

Some children's parents wait for them to be baptized until they can choose. If you aren't sure if everyone is baptized, be careful in the word choice and remind everyone in the congregation all are welcomed to be baptized.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Timer (you can use a phone app)



Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements



Scripture Readings

Text: Mark 1:21-45

²¹They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." ²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

²⁹As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹And he went throughout

Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

⁴⁰A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." ⁴¹Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!"

⁴²Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

⁴³After sternly warning him he sent him away at once,

⁴⁴saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." ⁴⁵But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Secondary Text: Psalm 103:1-5

¹Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.

²Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—

³who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Pronunciation Guide

Capernaum: kuh-PUHR-nay-uhm



Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Spirit, Jesus, People, Simon, Leper

Narrator: They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out,

Spirit: "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God."

Narrator: But Jesus rebuked him, saying,

Jesus: "Be silent, and come out of him!"

Narrator: And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another,

People: "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

Narrator: At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee. As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him,

Simon: "Everyone is searching for you."

Narrator: He answered,

Jesus: "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."

Narrator: And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons. A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him,

Leper: "If you choose, you can make me clean."

Narrator: Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him,

Jesus: "I do choose. Be made clean!"

Narrator: Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him,

Jesus: "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Narrator: But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.



Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: We can follow Jesus' lead to take time away to pray, recharge, and spend time with God.

The gospel of Mark is told with a sense of urgency. Events tripped all over each other, as Jesus' ministry flew into high gear. First, Jesus encountered an unclean spirit, which recognized him. Immediately Jesus became aware that the spirits knew him, and he commanded them to remain silent, lest the world discover his identity too soon.

After cleansing the man of his unclean spirit, he healed Simon's mother-in-law. (Did you notice Peter was married? It's not generally mentioned, but Jesus' arrival would have taken him from his family—more people than the 12 were affected by Jesus' ministry.) Word spread fast, and soon he was healing and casting out demons from people all over the countryside.

Then Jesus rested. He went out to pray—to recharge and be still.

But it didn't last long. Soon his disciples were on him once again, and he healed a man with leprosy. This time word about Jesus could not be contained. The man talked, and Jesus had to retreat to the countryside to find some peace.

Jesus' ministry in Mark was a whirlwind of activity—an explosion of fame and rumor. But even in the middle of it, Jesus withdrew to pray. Jesus knew he could not continue at this pace without that time and attention to God.

Why do we think we can do more with less? Jesus needed to recharge, and he needed to connect with God. We need at least as much. What might it look like if we took the time to recharge and spend some time alone with God?

For supplementary preaching resources, please [visit our website access point](#). (Link: bit.ly/proclaim-it-nl)

Scripture Summary

Jesus' ministry was fast and full. In the middle of his whirlwind tour, he took time to pray—to recharge and spend time with God.

Call to Worship

L: Come away to a quiet place,

C: To worship the Lord.

L: Come away to a quiet place,

C: To pray to the Lord.

L: Come away to a quiet place,

C: To be with the Lord.

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Living God,

C: You have given us all we need to follow you, yet we doubt ourselves, criticize others, grasp for meaningless pleasures and seek hollow assurances. Forgive us for refusing to see what is in front of our faces. Restore us by the power of your son, Jesus Christ, amen.

P: The Son of Man is powerful, yet compassionate. Take heart in the pardon that he offers: you are forgiven. You are beloved children of God. Your faith has healed you. Amen.



Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O Lord,
Even when crowds were pressing upon you, you still sought time to pray. Bring us back to the silence of our hearts, so that we too may be refreshed by your spirit.
Amen.

Offertory Prayer

As you were generous with your time and gifts of teaching and healing, Lord Jesus, make us open to the needs of others. Bless these gifts we bring and use them for the work of your inbreaking kingdom. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: You showed by example that resting is essential to working effectively, O Lord. Let us therefore not presume ourselves to be so indispensable that we can go on indefinitely without taking a break, without seeking you and taking refreshment. God of peace,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: All creation has cycles: of activity and hibernation, of gathering and nesting, of production and fallowness, of life and death. May we also attempt to match our own rhythms to the natural world, thereby becoming more connected with it and with ourselves. God of peace,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The beginning of a new year is a good time to take stock of what is and is not working in our lives. Help us to shed the self-doubt, preoccupations, and habits which no longer serve us, in favor of healing and nurturing practices which honor the way you created us to be. God of peace,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Many are in need of healing this day. Just as you laid hands on the sick and afflicted, so bless those we know with your spirit of healing, (*especially...*). God of peace,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: All the saints praise your name, from every time and place. Even the demons recognize you, O Lord, and are afraid. May we live to honor your name and show by our lives to whom we belong. God of peace,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We offer up a world in need, knowing you will hold it gently within your arms, even as you hold us. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask these things, amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You only need to speak the word, O Lord, and it is done. Bless now these gifts of your body and blood, which you offer freely to all who seek you. Come, join God's children at the sacrament of mercy!



Liturgy

Litany

Leader: Jesus went forth into cities and towns.

Group 1: Who is this man?

Group 2: With what power he acts!

L: He taught in the synagogue when it was Sabbath.

1: He speaks with authority!

2: Not like the scribes!

L: The demons could see that his power was God's:

1: What do you want?

2: Have you come to destroy us?

L: He silenced and banished them; all were surprised.

1: What could this be?

2: An amazing new teaching?

1: Even the spirits

2: Are forced to obey!

L: His followers made more demands on his time:

1: My mother-in-law—

2: She's in bed with a fever!

L: And Jesus would answer and heal their diseases.

1: Help me—I'm sick!

2: And I have a demon!

L: But early one morning he went out to pray.

1: Where is the teacher?

2: There's healing to do!

L: His followers found him, insisting he come:

1: Everyone's asking,

2: They're looking for you!

L: But Jesus moved on and continued his travels.

1: Come to our village!

2: We need you here too!

L: A leper approached him, begging for healing:

1: Jesus, please help me!

2: Come heal my disease!

L: And Jesus obliged, but requested his silence.

1: Look, I am healed!

2: It was Jesus! It's he!

L: He soon could go nowhere without being known.

1: Look! It's the master!

2: Please, Jesus—come here!

L: All spoke as though all his time was their own.

1: Everyone needs you!

2: You've answered our prayers!

L: And this we can learn from our savior's ordeal:

1: Take time for silence,

2: Find places for prayer.

1: Be thankful for sabbath,

2: And rest when you can!

L: For not even Jesus could work without ceasing.

1: Honor your body;

2: Refreshing your spirit,

All: And seek out some time with your God!



Creative Expression

Spoken Word

Read this spoken word piece after the text has been read. Offer a time for silence and reflection. Be sure to make this clear—many people get uncomfortable when there is unexplained silence!

Be still, be still, be still and know

Be still, be still, be still and trust

That I am your God.

Be still, be still, be still and feel

That love for you is true and real.

Be still, be still, don't fret, loved one.

There is rest and peace when day is done.

Be still, be still, don't run, run, run.

You can't earn a prize for a life well done.

Be still, dear child, be still and pray.

God has been with you all this day.

Be still, be still, be patient and still

Don't fear the world's harshness and chill.

Be still, I will warm you and be your guide.

If you turn to me, you won't have to hide.

Be still, be still, be still and hear

The laughter, the music, the joy and cheer.

Be still, and appreciate what I've done

In your life, in the world, for all and for one.

Be still and listen, be still and pray,

Not with words, but listen to me, I say.

Be still, quiet mind, quiet heart, just your breath.

Breathe in and breath out, forget the rest.

Be still just a moment, be still in this place.

When you are still, I will fill you with grace.

Be still, my love, be still I pray.

You will know you are loved each and every day.



Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Jesus worked very hard, but he was always sure to take time to rest and pray.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Timer (you can use a phone app)

Setting the Scene/Background

We're all so busy. We are always going to activities, or busy with games and fun things to do, or worse yet, chores!

Let's help our kids learn early. Rest and time to pray are not just good ideas, they are examples that Jesus set for us!

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Ask kids, "Who likes to rest?" Many children resist down time, especially naps or bedtime!

Talk about how important rest is for us.

Even Jesus took time to rest and to pray!

Some people pray by sitting in complete silence. Shall we try it?

Set your timer for whatever time is feasible. A minute is good to start with. If you have time, you can start lower and go higher.

Remind kids to take time to pray and rest, just like Jesus did!

Reflection Questions

- Why do we need rest?
- Why would Jesus need to pray?

Stuff to Consider

Sitting still and keeping silent is hard for everyone but especially hard for kids with ADHD. Try not to put a lot of pressure on absolute silence or stillness. Empower each person to attain the level of quietness that they are able.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin



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