Avoiding Spiritual Complacency

Jesus encourages us to listen while we have the opportunity.

- Jesus tells the parable of Lazarus and the rich man who neglects to help him.
- This story introduces young children to the gospel’s urgent concern for the poor.
- In today’s session, children explore Jesus’ story through art, games, and craft activities.

Question of the Week
What affects you most about today’s parable?

Core Session
- Getting Started (old magazines, poster board)
- Gospel Story: Lazarus and the Rich Man
- Gospel Skits (doll or stuffed animal)
- Praying Together

Enrichment
- Discover the Good News
- Singing Together
- Craft: Lazarus Banks (paper cups, clear tape, craft knife for catechists only, fabric scraps)
- Game: Story-Review
- Info: Young Children and the Gospel
- Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists
- More About Today’s Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- The World of the Bible: A Great Chasm
Getting Started (10-20 minutes)

Activity Soundtrack: Play “Magic Penny.” (Open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Companion Music for options on obtaining this music.)

Children make a collage of food and clothes to introduce the rich man in today’s story as a man who had too much food and too many clothes.

As the children arrive, ask each child to tear or cut out at least one picture of food and one picture of clothing. Help the children paste the pictures on the poster board. Ask children to fill the poster with as much food and as many clothes as they can.

Gather in front of the finished poster. Say:
◆ Look at all that food! Look at all those clothes!
◆ But I’m going to tell you a story about a rich man who had even more food and clothes than in your picture! He was so rich he had too much food and too many clothes.

Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)

Lazarus and the Rich Man

Story Focus: You can put the collage made above in the center of the story circle or tell the story using a story board and figures.

Once there was a very rich man. “I want to own everything,” he said. He said to his servants, “Bring me clothes to wear.” And his servants brought him new clothes to wear. But the rich man wanted more.

He said to his servants, “Bring me plenty of food to eat.” And his servants brought him good food to eat. But the rich man wanted more. He said to his servants, “Bring me too much food to eat.” And his servants brought him too much food to eat. The rich man ate and ate, dropping food right on the floor.

Nearby lived a poor, hungry man named Lazarus. He didn’t have a home. He didn’t have new clothes. He didn’t have good food to eat. “I’m hungry,” said Lazarus. He went to the rich man and said, “Can I have clothes?”

“Oh,” said the rich man.

“Can I at least have the food that dropped on the floor?” asked Lazarus.

“No,” said the rich man. So Lazarus was still hungry.

One day the rich man died. God said to him, “I’m not happy with you. You should have given Lazarus some of your food to eat. You should have given him clothes to wear. I wanted you to do good things for other people. That would have made me happy!”

When Lazarus died, the angels carried him to heaven to feast on tasty foods forever.

Gospel Skits (5-15 minutes)

This short follow-up activity is intended for catechists with short sessions of about 20 minutes. For longer sessions, choose from the Enrichment activities on pages 3-4.

Gather children in a circle. Tell them that God asked the rich man to give to Lazarus. God is glad that there are people who give to us. Invite the children to recall some of these people. Ask:
◆ Who gives you a snack when you’re hungry?
◆ Who gives you stories at school or day care?
◆ Who gives you help tying your shoes?

Then invite children to act out ways to give to others. Place a doll or stuffed animal in the center of the circle. Invite children to name the figure. Begin a skit by offering a problem, “Oh, Sam is hungry. What can we give?” Ask each child to act out giving something to the hungry one. You can also say that the figure is cold, thirsty, tired or sick. Encourage children to act out many different answers to the question, “What can we give?”

Praying Together (5 minutes)

Sit in a circle with the children. Help each child turn to the next child and say, “I can help you, (name of child).”

Close by praying:
◆ Dear God, thank you for helping poor, hungry Lazarus. Teach us to help others, too. Amen.

Note: Distribute this week’s At Home with the Good News to group members as they depart (or e-mail it to families after the session).
Discover the Good News
(5-10 minutes)
On page 1 of today’s Discover the Good News you’ll find an illustrated version of today’s story. You can reread the story to the children, asking them simple picture-based questions:
◆ Where’s the rich man?
◆ What could the rich man give to Lazarus?

On page 2 of Discover the Good News you’ll find more questions to use in the “Who Gives to You” skits in the Core Session.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News, sing together:
◆ “I Will Serve God” (songbook p. 8)
◆ “Kum Ba Yah” (songbook p. 9)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

As you sing “Kum Ba Yah,” you can include such verses as:
◆ Someone’s hungry, Lord...
◆ Someone’s helping, Lord...

Children can also listen to and sing along with the song “Magic Penny.” (Open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Companion Music for options on obtaining this music.)

“Magic Penny,” a song by the late Malvina Reynolds, celebrates the importance of love over money.

Craft (10-15 minutes)
Lazarus Banks
Children make coin banks to collect money to donate to parish outreach ministries.

Show the children how to make coin banks by taping two paper cups together, rim to rim. Cut a slot for coins in the bottom of one of the cups. (The slit cup becomes the top of the bank.) We recommend that catechists only use a craft knife to make the slits.

Directions to the children:
◆ Use felt pens (or crayons) to make your bank look like Lazarus, the poor man in today’s story.
◆ Draw eyes, nose, mouth, buttons and clothes on your bank.

You may prefer to let children “dress” their Lazarus banks in clothing cut from fabric scraps and glued to the banks.

Invite children to take their banks home. Say:
◆ Use your bank to save coins for poor people like Lazarus—people who don’t have a home or enough clothes to wear or food to eat. In a few weeks, you can bring your coins back and we’ll give them to people who need them.
**Game** (10-15 minutes)

**Story-Review**

Children review today’s story with a musical game.

Teach the children to sing the words below to the tune of “The More We Get Together.” (This is the same tune as “Did You Ever See a Lassie?”) When you teach the song, use the word *we* rather than *names* in the places marked with italics. We provide a handout titled *Story-Review Lyrics* with these words attached to this document.

*The more that we help others,*
*Help others, help others,*
*The more that we help others,*
*The happier God is.*

*For (name) can help others,*
*And (name) can help others,*
*The more that we help others,*
*The happier God is.*

Stand in a circle with the children. When you sing the verse, “The more that we help others,” circle right with the children. Then stand still for the next verse. Name two children, one at a time, as you sing the second verse, for example:

*For Juan can help others,*
*And Tam can help others,* (etc.)

These children can sit or stand in the center of the circle as you continue the song, this time circling left. Let the two children you have just named each name one child each to join them in the center.

Continue until all the children have been named and have joined the children in the center.

**Young Children and the Gospel**

In today’s gospel Jesus tells the story of Lazarus, the poor man who begged for crumbs, and the rich man who ignored Lazarus. Through such stories, God calls us to respond to the needs of the poor. We share this story with preschoolers and kindergartners that they might begin to hear God’s call to God’s people to participate in the struggles of our sisters and brothers in need.

But storytelling alone only presents God’s call to us. Young children will best learn how to answer that call as they participate in the ongoing ministries of their faith communities.

Consider what part outreach ministries will play in the religious education experiences you plan for the children. Effective experiences:

- allow young children to participate directly in well-supported, ongoing ministries
- bring young children into direct contact with the people served by the ministries
- offer young children the opportunity to work side-by-side with members of other generations

**Where You’ll Find Everything Else**

- Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled *More about Today’s Scriptures.*
  - A printable version of today’s *Gospel Story* for use at home (to distribute or e-mail to families).
  - The recipe to *Make Your Own Gorp,* appropriate for use in this session.
  - A full page sheet of *Story-Review Lyrics* to use in the Game found in left column.
  - Instructions on *Making a Felt Story Board* and felt figures for storytelling and free play.
  - A family paper, *At Home with the Good News,* to print and distribute or to e-mail to families for use at home.

- Open your Fall-C Seasonal *Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
  - Information on Fall-C’s *Models of the Faith.*
  - An article exploring ways of *Reaching Out Beyond Your Church.*
  - An article for catechists and/or parents exploring *Lectionary-Based Faith Formation.*
  - A reproducible handout for parents titled *Parents as Helpers with Faith Formation.*
  - The *Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News.*
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings warn of the dangers of spiritual complacency. Amos cautions that indulgence and apathy will lead to terror and loss. Paul urges Timothy to eagerly embrace eternal life and the riches of Christ Jesus, enduring until Jesus returns. The rich man in today’s gospel story exchanges his comforts for torment, while Lazarus exchanges his tormented life for paradise.

Amos 6:1a, 4-7
By 800 BCE, the Assyrians were weakened through battle and indecisive leadership, allowing the northern kingdom, Israel, a respite from constant pressure from the north. Beginning about 745 BCE under the leadership of Tiglathpileser III, the Assyrian empire roused itself and, in its conquests, later destroyed Israel in 721 BCE.

About the time that the new king was coming to power, the prophet Amos saw the signs of approaching disaster. This was not merely astute political analysis, but rather a religious insight into the instability of a society that had forgotten its covenant commitment to justice.

The 9th and 8th centuries BCE saw the beginning of a class of urban poor. Archaeological excavations of Samaria show great differences between rich and poor urban dwellings in comparison with the relative uniformity of the 10th century. Oblivious to the needs of the poor, Israel’s wealthy enjoyed their private luxuries. But Amos sees clearly that neither wealth nor territory will save an Israel corroded by injustice.

1 Timothy 6:11-16
Today’s reading consists of a solemn exhortation in liturgical language. The encouragement to “fight the good fight” (v. 2) is a metaphor not from warfare but from athletics. The “good confession” (v. 2) probably refers to the confession of faith made at baptism (from which the later baptismal creed developed).

Paul uses the word manifestation or appearing (Greek, epiphany) both for Jesus’ incarnation and for his second coming. This term was also used in the rites of emperor worship. Paul seems to have deliberately appropriated it to contrast Christ to the emperor. The terms that describe God (vv. 15-16) emphasize God’s sovereignty and complete holiness.

Luke 16:19-31
The story of the rich man and Lazarus is a double-edged parable. The first part (vv. 19-26) was popular in rabbinic literature, usually told as a story about a rich tax collector and a poor student of the law. At this time the idea of Sheol (Greek, Hades), the place of all the departed who led there a shadowy quasi existence, had developed into two places, one of torment (usually called Gehenna) and one of bliss, Paradise. The chasm reveals the irreversibility of the situation.

This first part is a parable of reversal, indicating the changes to take place in the kingdom as declared by Mary in 1:52-53. Lazarus, whose name means “God helps,” illustrates God’s special concern for the poor.

The second part of the parable adds a second point: Moses (the law) and the prophets give a sufficient call to repentance. This part of the story is a parable of warning; its theme is “too late!” Those whose hearts are closed to compassion will have minds closed to revelation.
Reflection

Today’s parable about stunning reversals of fortune has such power it persuaded Albert Schweitzer that Africa was a beggar at Europe’s gate. So he set up his hospital at Lamberéné.

Its rich detail still affects those who probably won’t become missionary doctors. As St. Augustine pointed out, Jesus names the poor man, suggesting his importance in the divine plan. The name Lazarus means “God helps.” The rich man, on the other hand, remains anonymous: his name isn’t recorded in heaven. Later he was given the name Dives, Latin for “rich man.” How would we like to be named?

“At the gate” is another significant detail. Note that the rich man didn’t do anything obviously wrong: adultery or murder. Instead, his crime is self-absorption. He fails to notice an atrocity close to home. Some commentators say he was even crueler than the dogs, who soothed Lazarus’ sores as they would their own.

It’s also important that Lazarus’ reward is rest in “Abraham’s bosom.” Abraham too chose the hope of things to come over enjoyment of the present. Exiled, wandering among strangers, he clung to God’s lavish promise.

Jesus shows here how choices made in time affect eternity—we may be so sunk in luxury, we lose our taste for heaven. Each time Lazarus refused bitterness, he built his eternal home. Each time Dives wore his blinders, he increased his readiness for hell.

The Scriptures and the Catechism

We reflect upon our attitude toward the poor in order to enkindle the burning passion for the poor that God has (CCC, #2443–49). Our comfort, which can come at the expense of the poor whom we often exploit without realizing it, will be reversed by God’s presence in our world, as signified by Christ’s resurrection (CCC, #988–1004). Our new life in Christ reverses the world’s values that we often work so hard to realize.

The World of the Bible

A Great Chasm

In today’s gospel, the rich man is reminded that “a great chasm” (19:26) prohibits the passage of persons between heaven and earth. The ancients envisioned the universe to be multi-layered, generally recognizing the three levels of heaven, earth and the netherworld (meaning under or below the earth).

These physical areas are also distinguished by those who dwell in each: God in heaven, mortals on earth, and the dead in the underworld (in Hebrew, Sheol). These realms are not only distinct, but separated by such distance that only God (and those whom God sends as messengers like the angels or Jesus, who comes from heaven to earth and then returns at his death) can move from one level to the other.