Jesus calls us to remain faithful in tough times.

In today’s gospel about the end times, Jesus counsels his followers to stand firm.

For young children, we turn to the source of our faith by exploring today’s psalm of joy in our creator God, whom even the sea monsters praise!

Today’s session invites children to make a joyful noise to the Lord through storytelling, games, art projects and music.

Question of the Week

Amidst difficult sayings, Jesus offers encouragement: “Not a hair of your head will be harmed.” How do those words give you hope?
**Getting Started** (5-15 minutes)

Children sing songs as a prelude to hearing Psalm 98, a song from the Bible.

Sit in a circle with the children. Ask:

◆ What songs do you know?
◆ What songs could we sing together?

Sing the songs that the children suggest, if they seem to be known by at least half the group. Include any songs the children know well from *Singing the Good News*, for example, “Kum Ba Yah” (p. 9).

Close by saying:

◆ The Bible has songs, too.
◆ Today’s story is a song from the Bible.
◆ We will make streamers we can use in chanting today’s story together.

**Craft**

**Handled Streamers**

Show how to staple or tape crepe-paper streamers to cardboard tubes. (The tubes become handles.) Ask the children to use felt markers and stickers to decorate the streamer tubes.

Children can also make “megaphones” to use. For each child, cut out the bottom of a plain paper cup. Children can use felt markers and stickers to decorate these, too. Show how to use the cups as megaphones: speak into the smaller opening to make our voices louder.

Ask the children to bring their finished streamers and megaphones to the story area.

**Scripture Story** (5-10 minutes)

**Sing with Joy**

**Story Focus:** If time allows, invite children to make streamers. You can also use inexpensive children’s cheerleader poms.

Explain that today’s story is actually a song from the Bible called a psalm. Explain that you don’t know the way to sing this psalm, so you will say it. After you read each verse, ask the children to shake their streamers and chant the verse again with you.

Sing, sing, sing!
Sing to the Lord.

Play, play, play!
Play music to the Lord.

Shout, shout, shout,
Shout to the Lord.

Clap, clap, clap,
Clap to the Lord.

Be happy, happy, happy,
God rules the world.

**Make a Joyful Noise** (5-15 minutes)

Ask the children what can make sound or noise. Accept the children’s answers, and invite the children to make the sound named, for example, motorcycles or barking dogs. For each answer, say aloud:

◆ Praise God, all you noisy *name the object*.

Encourage the children to make the sound together until you hold up a signal. (We suggest slightly lowering your head while you gently hold up one hand and use the other hand to put a silent finger to your lips. Yelling over the noise will just make the children louder.)

**Praying Together** (5 minutes)

Repeat today’s story as today’s closing prayer, encouraging the children to accompany you again.

**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 children will find a “finish-the-picture” activity based on today’s story. Encourage them to draw their own versions of instruments to play or roaring monsters to swim in the sea.

On page 2 of Discover the Good News you’ll find illustrated suggestions for “instruments” found in an ordinary kitchen. One of the sweetest instruments you can add to these suggestions is a metal kitchen bowl struck with a wooden spoon.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News, sing together:
◆ “Sing with Joy” (songbook p. 15, also available as an MP3)
◆ “I Will Serve God” (songbook p. 8)

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.

Craft/Music (10-20 minutes)
Making Instruments
Children make instruments to use in today’s session. We suggest several instrument-making projects. Choose as many as your materials and time allow. Use the finished instruments to:
◆ retell today’s Scripture Story
◆ accompany the Music activity below

You can also use these instruments in the session for the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Tambourine Rattles
Show children how to put beans, rice or pebbles between the paper bowls. (On easy way to do this is to have the material in a bowl with a large soup spoon; each child puts one or two spoons of material into a paper bowl.) Help children tape or staple the plates together so that the beans will stay inside. Invite children to use markers to draw colorful designs on the tambourines. You can also pierce holes around the plate rims and invite children to thread the holes with colorful pieces of yarn.

Bell Bracelets
Each child strings the chenille wire through the end of one bell, then twists the wire to wear as a bracelet or hold both ends of the wire to shake the bell.

Shakers
Show children how to glue a muffin cup on one end of a cardboard tube. (You may like to reinforce the glue with a strip of colored fabric tape.) Children put a spoonful or two of beans or rice into the tube and attach a second muffin cup. Invite children to decorate the tubes with markers.

Rhythms in Wood
 Invite each child to pick out two pieces of wood with which to clap out rhythms. Children can use felt markers to decorate their blocks or sticks with colorful designs.

Cardboard Kazoos
Children decorate the cardboard tubes. They can glue scraps of construction or tissue paper to the tubes, use crayons or felt pens to draw designs on the tube, or glue streamers and sequins or glitter to the tubes.

Help each child fit a square of waxed paper over one end of a decorated tube. Secure the paper with a rubber band.

Children play the kazoos by humming into the open ends of the tubes.

Music and Artist
“We Are Singing, for the Lord Is Our Light” is a South African freedom song. The original lyrics are in Zulu, the language of the 9 million Zulu people who live mainly in South Africa.

Freedom songs are songs that were used to gather support for the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. They were sung at rallies, meetings, fund-raisers and demonstrations, not only in South Africa, but around the world.
Here are the Zulu words (phonetic spelling) that you hear in the song:

See yah hahm buh koo kah nyah nee kwen kohs.

The English paraphrase you hear in the song is by Hal H. Hopson:

We are singing, for the Lord is our light.

The remaining words Hopson based on Psalm 27:1-4:

The Lord is the strength of our lives;  
Of whom shall we be afraid?  
Though foes may be near to destroy,  
The Lord will be our light.

One thing have we asked of the Lord,  
Yes, this is the thing we seek:  
To dwell in the house of the Lord;  
To live with God forever.

When burdens are heavy to bear,  
Our shelter is God alone.  
Our feet are lifted high;  
Yes, high upon a rock.

We walk in the strength of the Lord,  
God’s love is ever sure.  
We shout that the world may hear,  
We sing a joyful song.

We Are Singing For The Lord Is Our Light Words: South African,  
Tr. & Original Verses Hal Hopson. Music: Zulu melody; adapted by Hal Hopson © 1994 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream,  
IL 60188 (ASCAP) All Rights Reserved. Used By Permission.  
From the recording, “We are Singing for the Lord is Our Light”,  
C-5330C, (P) Hope Publishing Company.

*Apartheid was South Africa’s official policy of discrimination against nonwhites. South Africa’s new constitution in 1993 ended legislated apartheid, and their first all-race elections in 1994 resulted in a government with a black majority.

The changes in South Africa during this period turned this once-oppressive country into one of the world’s leading governments in the work of freedom, equality and healing for its people. One of the chief architects of the reconciliation work in South Africa was Desmond Tutu, Nobel prize winner and Archbishop of Cape Town from 1986–1996.

**Young Children and the Gospel**

Today the psalmist gives us a beautiful song, calling on God’s people to join with the whole creation in praising God. When this song was originally performed in ancient times, it was probably accompanied by loud, brash instruments and vigorous singing. Ancient Israel’s worship did not confine itself to “small, still voices!” Sometimes our adult worship and church activities can leave children with the impression that God has something against sound or noise.

Today’s session invites children to join in joyful shouts of praise. If your space allows, welcome the chance to affirm for children that God can be praised with all the joyful noise so many of them love.

**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 Scripture Story for use at home (to distribute or e-mail to families).
  — An alternate music activity, We Are Singing, for the Lord is Our Light.
  — A Teaching Tip describing how to adapt activities for a quieter room.
  — A Special Needs Bibliography of publications related to Autism Spectrum disorders and religious education, drawn from our special needs offering Rhythms of Grace.
  — 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.
  — A helpful article on viewing and discussing art titled First Impressions.
  — An article for catechists and/or parents further exploring The Psalms.
  — The Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News.
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings call us to remain steadfast in the faith. Malachi the prophet assures us that healing and restoration will come only to those who cling to God’s name. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul proclaims that the Christian life has no room for laziness but calls for enduring faithfulness. Unimpressed by the temple’s beauty, Jesus redirects his disciples’ attention to the end of the age.

Malachi 3:19-20a

Very little is known of this prophet. Even the name Malachi (1:1, literally it means my messenger) may be a title rather than a personal name (2:7; 3:1). Malachi, concerned for the purity of worship and worshipers at the temple and for the fulfillment of the responsibilities of the priesthood, condemns moral and religious abuses. He probably prophesied after the temple was rebuilt, around 500–450 BCE.

Malachi frames his teaching in a question and answer form. The problem is posed: since the wicked prosper, God must not care about evil (2:17). The truth lies in the future. On the day when the Lord acts, those whose names are written in the “book of remembrance” (3:16) will be spared, accomplishing justice for all.

God, “the sun of righteousness” (3:20 NAB; 4:2 NRSV), will bring not only destructive heat but healing warmth. The book ends with a commentary on 3:1, identifying the messenger to come with Elijah. Much later, John the Baptist was identified with this figure.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

The problem of idleness in the Thessalonian Christian community had been noted before in 1 Thessalonians 5:14. It may have been a reaction to the expectation of an imminent end to human affairs, or a consequence of the belief that “the day of the Lord is already here” (2:2). The context would seem to indicate that such idleness was a misunderstanding of mutual support in a community largely composed of the poor.

Paul reminds the community both of the tradition he taught them (perhaps the statement in verse 10), and of his own example. The idle, whom Paul describes in a wordplay as busybodies instead of busy, are exhorted to earn their own living, while the community is encouraged to persevere in doing good.

Luke 21:5-19

Today’s reading is taken from the first part of the end-times discourse (21:5-36). Luke has already included teaching on readiness for the Son of Man’s return (12:35-48; 17:20-37) and the destruction of Jerusalem (19:41-44). Here Jesus redefines the end-times as a process begun with the birth of the Church.

To a question about the destruction of the temple, Jesus responds with a series of sayings. The first are signs of the age (21:8-11), as borne out by events in Acts. The disciples will be imprisoned. They are not to prepare a “defense in advance” (v. 14, literally, to practice gestures, as a professional Greek speaker would), for the Lord will guide them.

Despite betrayal by family and friends, they will win eternal life through endurance. Jesus’ intent throughout is not merely to let his disciples in on an apocalyptic secret, but to encourage them to be prepared and steadfast; his tone is one of triumph rather than of warning.
Reflection

One thing the gospels of this season do is turn our assumptions upside down. The attractive, accomplished person isn’t necessarily the best pray-er; the annoying widow persists in winning. And today, as a final straw, Jesus undercuts those who are admiring the temple. What could be more innocent? Haven’t we all been in awe at the art treasures of the Vatican, the beauties of Westminster Abbey, or the lofty spires of medieval cathedrals? What’s wrong with that?

“Be careful what you trust,” Jesus might respond. Don’t place all your faith in marvelous buildings, efficient plans or clever designs. Furthermore, don’t even be terrified by wars and those things you naturally dread. Nothing is as it seems. Even your most trusted relatives and friends will betray you; people will hate you vehemently.

At this point, we might be tempted to throw in the towel. Why be Christian if it gives us so little security?

“Ah,” the wily Jesus might answer. Faith brings the ultimate security: “not a hair of your head will perish.” Humans created by God and born for eternal life needn’t be tossed about by currents of admiration or fear. They have the one sure thing: a God who preserves them despite all disaster.

The Scriptures and the Catechism

The Day of the Lord describes the coming of Jesus the Judge (CCC, #678–79) for the final judgment of everyone according to the way in which each has lived (CCC, #1038–41). Just as Jesus identified signs that indicated the end of the temple, so there will be signs and wonders prefiguring Jesus’ glorious return. Since the timetable for this is known only to God, we must be prepared and live as if this will happen soon. In fact, it happens to each of us individually at the moment of our death. Today is also a good time to examine our attitudes toward our work, to which we devote so much of our lives, so that we make sure that they are in keeping with our basic Christian attitudes (CCC, #2426–30).

The World of the Bible

A New Creation

Unlike ourselves, biblical people did not think the world was progressing but always regressing. From the Garden of Eden onward, God’s original vision for creation had steadily declined as it was disfigured more and more by sin. But since God alone rules creation, the only way things could really be better was through a new creation by which God would re-order the world without sin and everything would finally be perfect.

Paul believed that God had begun this re-ordering in Jesus and so a new creation had actually taken place. He also believed that the whole world would soon be transformed by God’s power, but we realize that this transformation did not happen as fast as he wanted but continues even today.