King of Compassion

Scripture
Matthew 25:31-40

We are to serve others with the compassion of Christ.

- Jesus tells us how he’ll come again as King of those who serve others.
- Children today have no automatic knowledge or experience of kings. We acknowledge this as we offer beginning information about our beloved King Jesus as one who loves those who serve.
- Today’s session celebrates Christ our King through roleplay, storytelling, games and art.

Question of the Week
How do we help each other every day? How do we help when there’s a special need?

Core Session
- Getting Started
- Gospel Story: When Did We Do That? (Crown Pattern)
- Praying Together

Enrichment
- Welcome the Good News
- Singing Together
- Banners for the King (Crown Pattern, dowel; optional: one 9” x 12” muslin rectangle per child, fabric crayons or markers, fabric dye in squirt bottles, fabric glue, felt, stapler, tacks or sewing materials)
- Bible Skills for Third Graders
- Lord’s Prayer
- Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists
- More about Today’s Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- Liturgy Link: Christ the King
- The World of the Bible: A New Creation
Getting Started (5-15 minutes)

Children play a variation of Detective to remember that Jesus is always with us.

Sit in a circle. Explain:
◆ Today we remember that Jesus is our King.
◆ We can’t see King Jesus, but he promises that he’s with us.
◆ Imagine that you could see King Jesus today, right in this room. What would you do or say to welcome him? (Encourage many different ideas from the children.)

While still sitting, invite children to play a game that reminds them Jesus is always with us. Directions:
◆ Close or cover your eyes.
◆ I’ll walk around the circle and secretly touch one of you on the head or shoulder. That person will be King Jesus.
◆ Here’s the important part: When I tell you to open your eyes, only King Jesus can wink at other people.
◆ When I say, “Open your eyes,” look around and watch the other kids; see if you can be the first person to guess who King Jesus is.
◆ King Jesus, you try to wink at one person at a time, without anyone else seeing you. You might have to be patient.
◆ If King Jesus winks at you, you must stand up and say, “King Jesus is here.” Remain standing, but don’t tell us who winked at you.
◆ If you think you see King Jesus wink at someone else, put your hand up in the air quickly. When I call on you, you get to guess who King Jesus is; if you guess wrong, you have to stand up, too.
◆ The first person to correctly guess who King Jesus is becomes the winner. That person gets to walk around the circle and secretly choose the next King Jesus.

Repeat the game several times. Then say:
◆ Someday, we will see the real King Jesus, just as we see each other here today.
◆ Today’s story is about that special day.

Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)

Note: You may wish to tell this story with audience participation. Ask a volunteer to be Jesus. Before the session print a Crown Pattern attached to this document. Tape or glue together the ends to make a wearable crown for Jesus.

Sit in a circle. Whenever you say “Come on in,” Jesus takes one or more kids by the hand and brings them into the circle. Whenever you say, “When did we do that?” the children in the circle act puzzled, shrugging their shoulders and raising their palms to the ceiling. Practice these responses before beginning.

When Did We Do That?

Someday, Jesus will come again as King. Everyone in the world will come before him.

He’ll say to some, “Come on in! Come into God’s kingdom, because I was hungry and you fed me.”

He’ll say, “Come on in! Come into God’s kingdom, because I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.”

He’ll say, “Come on in! Come into God’s kingdom, because I was cold and you gave me warm clothes.”

He’ll say, “Come on in! Come into God’s kingdom, because I was sad and lonely and you came to see me.”

Then these people will say, “When did we do that? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you?”

They’ll say, “When did we do that? When did we ever see you thirsty and give you something to drink?”

They’ll say, “When did we do that? When did we ever see you cold and give you warm clothes?”

They’ll say, “When did we do that? When did we ever see you lonely and come to see you?”

And King Jesus will answer, “I saw you do these things for other people—for children, grown-ups and strangers, too. Whenever you did this for someone else, it was the same as doing it for me!”

Praying Together (5 minutes)

You’ll find a sheet that shows the Lord’s Prayer in American Sign Language, attached to this document.

Using sign or simply speaking aloud, close by praying together the Lord’s Prayer.

Note: If you use At Home with the Good News, distribute this week’s paper to the children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.
Welcome the Good News (5-10 minutes)
On page 1 of today's Welcome the Good News, children will find a condensed, illustrated version of today's gospel story.

On page 2, they can work together to complete the Welcome God's Word scripture activity. They'll also find a With Your Family activity about helping those in need.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News, sing together:
◆ “Live in Harmony” (songbook p. 4, also available as an MP3)
◆ “The Great Commandment” (songbook p. 8, also available as an MP3)

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

Banners for the King (15-25 minutes)
Children make a banner in honor of King Jesus. This banner can be carried in a worship procession. We offer directions for two banners—paper and felt. The paper banner can be made with common art supplies. The felt banner requires special materials.

Before the session you may wish to print a Crown Pattern, attached to this document, for each child.

Explain:
◆ Today we remember Jesus as our King.
◆ In today's story, how did Jesus say that we could feed him? give him a drink? give him clothes? come to him when he was sad or lonely? (Some children will understand Jesus' invitation; others won't. Affirm all responses.)

Ask children to think of new ways to welcome Jesus; encourage them to recall ideas from the Getting Started discussion, as well as those from today's story. Invite them to use their ideas to decorate a banner that honors King Jesus.

Paper Banner:
Give each child a sheet of construction paper.

Directions:
◆ Use the crown pattern to trace on the construction paper first, if you want. Then cut a crown-shape from the paper.
◆ Use crayons or felt pens to draw your picture onto the paper crown or make a picture by gluing paper shapes onto the crown.
◆ Glue your crown onto the strip of butcher paper.
◆ You can use crayons, felt pens or paper scraps to add words and decorations to the banner, too. (Children may also want to choose a title for the banner.)

Finish the banner by folding the top of the banner over the dowel. Glue or staple the fold in place.

Cloth Banner:
Give each child a 9” x 12” rectangle of muslin.

Directions:
◆ Use the crown pattern to trace on the fabric first, if you want. Then cut a crown-shape from the muslin.
◆ Next, use fabric crayons to draw your picture onto the cloth crown.
◆ Glue your crown onto the long felt strip.
◆ You can use the squirt bottles of fabric dye to add words and decorations to the felt banner. (Children may also want to choose a title for the banner.)

Finish the banner by folding the top of the banner over the dowel. Glue, staple, sew or tack the hem in place.

Bible Skills for Third Graders (10-20 minutes)
Third graders pantomime scripture verses.

Before the session copy these sentences onto separate slips of paper:
◆ I was hungry and you fed me.
◆ I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.
◆ I was a stranger and you received me in your homes.
◆ I was naked and you clothed me.
◆ I was sick and you took care of me.
◆ I was in prison and you visited me.

Help the children use the table of contents to find the book of Matthew. Show them how to use chapter and verse numbers to find Matthew 25:35-36. Read aloud as they follow along.
Divide the children into six pairs or small groups, if possible. Give each pair one slip; some slips may remain unused.

Directions:
◆ Read the scripture verse written on the slip. (Offer help with reading, if necessary.)
◆ Plan a pantomime for your scripture verse. This means to act out the verse without using words.

After the designated time, ask for volunteers who want to perform their pantomime. Ask the other children to try and guess what verse is being portrayed. Encourage them to consult the text and read the words.

☐ Lord’s Prayer (10-20 minutes)
Children finish a book illustrating the Lord’s Prayer.

Note: The first three activities in this project will be found in the sessions for All Souls, the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica and the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Review the lines of the Lord’s Prayer learned in the previous weeks. Write the final words of the prayer that you’ll teach today on the board or newsprint:

   For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Explain that Jesus invites us to praise God with words like kingdom, power and glory that remind us of God’s greatness. Ask:
◆ What words would you use to describe something or someone who’s great? (List these.)
◆ What are ways that we can praise God?

Write the final words of the prayer on a sheet of poster board. Invite the children to decorate the sheet. Suggestions:
◆ Draw pictures of what God’s kingdom might be like—either in heaven or here on earth.
◆ Write or draw ways to praise God for being great.

Invite children to join all the posters into a book illustrating the entire Lord’s Prayer. Show them how to place the posters in a stack, then punch holes across the top and thread yarn through to finish the book. Display the book in the room or elsewhere in your church, as desired.

Note: When working with the Lord’s Prayer, always use the version used in your church’s worship.

INFO
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.
   — Today’s Gospel Story, to distribute or e-mail to children and their families.
   — A Crown Pattern to be used in the Gospel Story and also Banners for the King.
   — An optional activity titled Our Parish, which invites kids to notice art in the church. Note: You will also need a print-out of Paliekara’s Suffering Servant, also attached to this Session Plan.
   — An optional information piece titled To Parents, which gives families ideas for serving others.
   — A printable copy of the Lord’s Prayer in American Sign Language.
   — Today’s At Home with the Good News, to distribute or e-mail to families after the session.
◆ Open your Fall-A Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Seasonal Articles to find:
   — Information on Fall-A’s Models of the Faith.
   — A printable article further exploring The Feast of Christ the King.
   — A reproducible handout exploring Thanksgiving Day.
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings celebrate Christ our compassionate King. Ezekiel pictures God as our Shepherd who rescues and watches over us. Paul pictures Christ as reigning triumphantly over all his enemies, including death. In today’s gospel, Jesus presents a vision of final judgement, in which the Son of Man welcomes into God’s kingdom those who have treated others with compassion and mercy.

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
In the ancient Near East, the king was often pictured as a shepherd. But the pre-exilic kings and leaders were false shepherds, exploiting and neglecting their flock. Now God will act as the good shepherd, searching out God’s people scattered among the nations and gathering them back to their own land. The reestablished monarchy will act only as God’s faithful regent (vv. 22-24).

Ezekiel reveals God’s nature as one of both compassion and judgment. God’s mercy extends to the lost and injured—who have suffered from the injustices of others as well as from their own wrong choices.

God’s judgment reaches the sheep as well as the shepherds. As the shepherds have been judged, so also the sheep must be judged for their behavior to one another (vv. 17-22).

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28
In chapter 15, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the resurrection traditions he has passed on to them. He then points out that their doubts about the resurrection of the dead are logically incompatible with their belief in Jesus’ resurrection and their experience of its power in their lives.

In today’s reading, he goes on to show that Jesus’ resurrection is the basis for the resurrection of all and for the ultimate redemption of the universe. Christ is the first fruits of the dead; the offering of the first fruits of the harvest symbolized the dedication of the whole harvest to God.

Matthew 25:31-46
Today’s reading, the last of Matthew’s three end-time parables, is more a vision of the last judgment than it is a parable. Here the Son of Man, Jesus’ title for himself, is clearly identified as the King and Judge of all people, roles traditionally attributed exclusively to God.

The King offers only one criterion of judgment: deeds of compassion. Verses 35-45 list six representative good works, five of which are found in standard Jewish lists. The sixth service, visiting prisoners, was an issue of concern for the early Christian communities.

Here is Jesus’ unmistakable revelation of God’s true nature. As Son of Man, Jesus associates himself not with the brilliant, the pious, the famous or the powerful, but with the least—the hungry, thirsty, lonely, sick, naked and imprisoned. Jesus clearly delineates the values of the kingdom of heaven. Those who suffer are close to the heart of God. Those who minister to the suffering receive the Father’s blessing.

The hearts of the righteous in the vision are as pure as their actions; their surprise betrays the selflessness of their motives. The righteous did not serve those in need in order to score points with God; the accursed would certainly not have neglected the poor if they had known what they would have gained by deeds of mercy. Good intentions are insufficient; what counts are actions, not words.

Reflection

Most kings in Jesus’ day were warlords, but he refuses to do violence. The king’s subjects were expected to follow him, fighting bravely. In today’s gospel, Jesus proposes a different paradigm. He asks his followers to recognize him in the least majestic people, the unpalatial places and unglorious tasks.

Then he asks us to follow him, not into battle, but into the ordinary, almost unconscious tasks of cooking, providing clothes and drinks, welcoming strangers and visiting prisoners. Kathleen Chesto offers a wonderful

“We must find the Lord not only in the table of the Eucharist, but in the table of the world around us. If we do not see Jesus in this table of the world, we will really not find Jesus in the table of the Eucharist; and if we do indeed find Jesus in the table of the Eucharist, we should leave the Eucharistic celebration with eyes of faith that allow us to find Jesus throughout the table of the world.”

—Kenan B. Osborne
Sacramental Theology

“...and to those who are merciful, God will show mercy.”

—Matthew 25:46
take on this parable (Family Centered Intergenerational Religious Education, Sheed & Ward, 1980, p. 29-30), in which parents voice their bewilderment about where they've met or nurtured Christ. To “when did I see you hungry?” he replies: “How could you ask? You of the three and a half million peanut butter sandwiches?”

To “Naked, Lord, homeless?” he responds: “I was born to you naked and homeless and you sheltered me, first in wombs, then in arms… And you spent the next twenty years keeping me in jeans.”

To “But imprisoned, Lord?” he says: “I was imprisoned in my littleness, behind the bars of a crib. I cried out in the night and you came…”

Perhaps we should all rewrite the parable to appreciate our own life works.

**The Scriptures and the Catechism**

We await Jesus’ return in glory (CCC, #668–70), but Jesus has been hidden among us all the time in the poor and needy. In today’s parable, Christ the Judge (CCC, #440, 668–79) evaluates all communities on their behavior to those in need. By responding to these needs, we share in God's work to transform our world into the kingdom of God (CCC, #2046, 2443–49, 2186)—a kingdom of justice rather than domination, held together by love and respect for life not violence, and providing peace rather than conflict, hatred and war (CCC, #671–77).

**Liturgy Link**

**The Feast of Christ the King**

As we come to the end of the Church year, we focus on Christ our heavenly King and on the kingdom he proclaimed. This kingdom is embodied in the community of people who live in a new and different way because of God's presence in their lives.

Following Jesus’ royal guidelines, his kingdom is the foundation of a new order—a new creation—that would be free from oppression, injustice, violence and suffering. In it, persons would finally return to the original ideal of relationships characterized by justice, rooted in love and bringing peace for everyone.

Christ robed as King and reigning from the cross, the Christus Rex, was for a number of centuries one of the dominant images of Christ shown in art. In the early centuries, looking at Good Friday from the perspective of Easter, Christians did not depict the crucifixion. It was not until the 13th century that the crucifix became a common motif.

This theme of the reigning King was emphasized once again when the Feast of Christ the King was established in 1925 by the Catholic Church. The feast was first held on the last Sunday of October. After Vatican II, the desire grew to integrate the feast within the context of the liturgical calendar. Thus the celebration was moved to the last Sunday of the Church year, which has always had a strong eschatological (end-time) flavor. This puts the celebration of Christ's kingship in its proper biblical setting, connecting it with the return of Christ and the final defeat of evil.

As King, Jesus calls us to become his new kingdom people—a community that will always stand in contrast to the values of earthly political and social systems. We cannot disconnect our relationship with God from our relationships with others.

As the bishops gathered at Vatican Council II reminded us, “This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age” (The Church in the Modern World, #43). Jesus’ twin commands to love God and neighbor challenge us to discover what it takes today to become a kingdom community living according to the mind of Christ.

**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 deteriorated. But since God alone rules creation, the only way things could really be made better was not by human effort but through a new creation by which God would re-order the world without sin and in which 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.