



THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Life & Ministry of Jesus • U6#3 1st-3rd Grade • Dec.17, 2023

Concept

God invites all people to enter His Kingdom through Christ's forgiveness.

Goal

Students will learn about the Kingdom of God and grow in their understanding of who can enter and how.

Passage

Matthew 22:2-14

Key Verse: "Many are invited, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:14

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
Learning Activity #1: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>4 scrolls with clues to the kingdom, 1 set/class</i>• <i>Ribbon/yarn to tie scrolls</i>• <i>Keys to decode messages, 1 set/class</i>• <i>Generic "Adventurer's" hat, 1/class</i>• <i>Velcro strip, 1/class</i>• <i>Hand mirror, 1/class</i>• <i>Gray construction paper for "stepping stones", 6/class</i>• <i>Yard stick or broom, 1/class</i>• <i>Spray bottle, 1/class</i>	Activity Station: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 pieces of cardstock• Large and miniature marshmallows, 1 bag of each/class• Toothpicks, 1 box/class• <i>Crown & cross patterns printed on cardstock, 25 patterns of each/room</i> Learning Activity #3: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Printed invitations, 1/student</i>• <i>Crown & cross patterns from Activity Station</i>• <i>Envelope pattern, 1/student</i>• Crayons

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information/Teacher Helps

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“During this period in His ministry Christ had to face the reality of His rejection even though the covenanted kingdom had been offered and that offer adequately authenticated by both His words and works. The leaders influenced the nation to reject both Christ’s person and offer.

“The question persisted as to what would happen to the generation that was guilty of the sin of rejecting Christ. Another question was, Who will be accepted into the kingdom that will be instituted after the time of the postponement has passed?

“Christ had addressed Himself previously to such questions (Matt. 21:33-45). Now He once again gave an answer in the parable of the king who prepared a wedding banquet. Christ was using familiar Oriental wedding customs to teach an important lesson. At the time of the betrothal an announcement was sent to the bridegroom’s friends to inform them of the forthcoming wedding... Customarily, twelve months intervened between the betrothal and the wedding itself; therefore, the invited guests had ample opportunity to prepare themselves to attend the wedding banquet. In His parable Christ commenced the story when the king, the father of the bridegroom, ‘sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come’ (Matt. 22:3). This would have been the second invitation... In Christ’s symbolism of the parable, those who had been invited refer to the nation with which God had made a covenant, promising them a Messiah who would institute the kingdom of peace and righteousness in which they were privileged to have a part. The response of the guests to this second invitation was quite unexpected, for ‘they refused to come’ (vs.3).

“The invited guests were preoccupied with their own affairs... Thus we see that preoccupation with the pursuit of material things prevented these people from heeding the invitation to attend the banquet. Some who received invitations used violence to remove any further pressure to attend...

“The parable goes on to give the response of the king to the rejection. ... the king ‘sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city’ (Matt. 22:7). The king recognized that the refusal to respond to the invitation was a rejection of him and evidence of disrespect for his person.[1]

1 The Parables of Jesus, J. Dwight Pentecost, 1982, Zondervan, pp. 139-142.

Set Up

Set up obstacles around the perimeter of the classroom. (See attached diagram and instructions).

Roll up scrolls with key to decoding scroll in each one. Tie with ribbon/yarn.

Incorporation Lg. Group

Activity Stations:

- **Craft – Construct a kingdom**
 - **Instructions:** Divide the students into 2 or 3 groups. Give each group a piece of cardstock. Have students work together to construct a kingdom on the cardstock using the marshmallows and toothpicks.
- **Craft**
 - Begin to cut out the crosses and crowns for the craft. Each class, please leave the crosses and crowns for subsequent CT classes.

Introduction Lg. Group

You worked together to build a kingdom. Have you ever thought about what a kingdom is? A kingdom is a region or country where a king or queen rules. The Bible talks about the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus told many parables about the Kingdom of God. Parables are stories that use situations with which we are familiar to illustrate a biblical truth. In the Kingdom parables Jesus gave His hearers understanding about the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. The Jews had a certain expectation of the Kingdom and what it would look like when the promised Messiah appeared. The parables taught who can enter the Kingdom of God and how.

Transition

Let's have some fun and search for clues to this kingdom. The most excellent and experienced Adventurer (*give name*) is here to lead us on this search. We'll need a Bible to decode the messages.

Learning Activity#1 Lg. Group

Game -- Obstacle Course – “Follow the Clues to the Kingdom”

Instructions: The Adventurer (*think of a current example of one- i.e. Moana, Dora the Explorer, Indiana Jones, etc.*) enters. The Adventurer should be very dramatic, secretive and intense as he/she tells the class about this search. He will take the class through various obstacles to look for the scrolls with descriptive biblical clues to the Kingdom of God. Because the Adventurer doesn't know these truths, he will read the biblical verse clues and ask the children to explain to him what each verse on the scroll means. The children will probably not know. Some may figure it out from the verse, but most will have the same questions as the Adventurer. Keep moving on with the idea that the answers will be discovered eventually.

Obstacle #1

We must cross **Black Canyon** to find our first scroll. Mad River is wildly rushing below so we must carefully walk across the rope (velcro).

Learning Activity#1 Continued

Hold tightly on to the rope handrails. It is terribly dangerous. You are up higher than a tall building and don't want to fall hundreds of feet into the turbulent waters below. So **be careful!!** (*READ First scroll Matthew 22:2-3 Scratch head as if confused*) What is a kingdom? (*It's a place where a king lives.*) What is the king doing in this kingdom? (*He's planning a feast for a wedding and inviting people to come.*) Who is the king in the Kingdom of heaven? (*God.*) How is this a picture of the Kingdom of heaven? (*God is inviting people to come.*) Let's find another clue to tell us more about this kingdom.

Obstacle #2

Crocodile Creek is loaded with dozens of **very hungry** crocodiles. You must step on the stones **quickly** and **carefully** to get to the other side of the creek and to the next scroll. (*READ Second scroll Matthew 22:9,10*) I don't understand what this means. Who was invited to the feast? (*Everyone, good and bad.*) What does that have to do with God's Kingdom? (*Everyone is invited, good and bad.*) This is really interesting, let's hunt for the next clue about this kingdom.

Obstacle #3

We have to get through **Madman's Tunnel** to get the next scroll. But you must know that there have been reports that a madman lives in this tunnel. No one knows when he will appear or what he will do if he does appear. So we will stick close together as we crawl through and hope we don't run into this guy. (*READ Third scroll Matthew 22:3,10-12*) I'm really confused now!! I understand that the people who accepted the invitation went to the wedding feast. But what about that man who was not dressed for the feast? Why was he kicked out? (*He didn't have the clothes the king gave him.*) Does this mean we have to get some fancy clothes from God to be in His kingdom? (*No, we have to accept the offer of forgiveness He wants to give us.*) I think there's one more clue.

Obstacle #4

We must cross this **high cliff with a large waterfall** spraying down over it. Stay as **close** to the wall as possible as you **tiptoe gently** across this cliff. The waterfall is coming down fast and hard and will sweep you down in to the raging waters if you don't stay close to the wall. (*Have another teacher spray the children with the water in the spray bottle. READ Fourth scroll Matthew 22:14*) I understand that everyone was invited to this wedding feast, but why wasn't everyone allowed to stay? (*Only those who came dressed with the clothes the king gave them were the chosen ones.*) So, you mean that we can only enter the Kingdom of God if we accept God's invitation of forgiveness for our sin? (Yes.)

Let's sit down so we can read this parable about the Kingdom, who is chosen to enter it, and how they are chosen.

Let's read **Matthew 22**. Jesus told this parable during the last part of His ministry when He had to face the reality of His rejection. Even though His teaching and miracles made it clear that He was the Messiah, the Jewish leaders influenced their followers to reject Christ's teaching and offer of forgiveness. So this parable is in response to the questions: [1] what will happen to those who reject Christ, and [2] who will be accepted into God's Kingdom?

Let's read verses 1-14. In this parable Jesus used a familiar Oriental wedding custom to teach His point. According to this custom, an announcement was sent to the friends of the groom when the couple was engaged. This informed his friends that a wedding would occur, usually in about a year. Then when it was time for the wedding the friends would receive another invitation to the actual wedding banquet. This way the invited guests had plenty of time to plan and prepare to attend the wedding banquet. In verse 3 it says that the king sent his servants out to those who had been invited. This would have been the second invitation, the one to the banquet, but these guys did not respond as expected; they refused to come.

In verse 4 we see that the king sent the servants out again. He made every effort to make the banquet as attractive as possible so those invited would maybe change their minds and decide to come. "But they paid no attention and went off" (verse 5).

At the end of the parable Jesus said, "Many are invited, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). This is our key verse. Many people were invited to this wedding banquet. But only those who went to the banquet and wore the wedding clothes were chosen by the king to be included.

Good News

Being invited to the wedding banquet is like being invited to have a relationship with God and to live with Him forever in heaven. Who does God invite? Listen as I read 1 Timothy 2:4. (*He invites everyone everywhere.*) Look at verse 5. Why didn't these people accept the King's invitation? (*They were too busy, too involved with their things, didn't care about the King's invitation.*) Verse 6 even tells that some didn't attend because they hated the king.

One man in Jesus' story didn't accept the wedding clothes the King offered. He thought his clothes were good enough and he didn't need to wear the clothes the king gave him.

Lesson Continued

What happened to him? (*He wasn't allowed to stay at the banquet.*) Like that man at the feast who wanted to be with the king, some people want to have a relationship with God and be with Him in heaven. But some people think they are good enough on their own to have a relationship with God. Maybe they have done a lot of good things or they haven't done as many bad things as other people they know. So they think they are acceptable to God because of their good works. And like that man who thought that he didn't need what the king wanted to give him, they think they don't need what God has to give them. Who knows what that is? (*Forgiveness through Jesus.*)

God invites everyone to join Him in His Kingdom. However we can't because of our sin. The only way we can enter His Kingdom is to accept the gift He offers us. That is, Jesus' death for the forgiveness of our sin. When we accept the gift of forgiveness, the Bible says that God sees us as those who have accepted and put on the wedding clothes. God will tell those who don't come to Him by asking Jesus to be their savior that He doesn't know them.

Transition

Let's get into small groups.

Learning Activity# 2 Sm. Groups

Discussion Questions:

- What is key verse? Why is it that few are chosen? (They don't choose to accept the invitation of the gift of forgiveness.)
- What happened to the man who wouldn't wear the clothes the King offered? Do you think that was unfair? Why?
- **1 Tim. 2:4** - Who does God invite? What are some of the excuses people gave for not accepting the invitation? (They want to run their own life, too busy with this life to pay attention to what will happen after they die, hate God or afraid of Him.)
- Do you need God's forgiveness? Know people who don't think they need forgiveness?
- What is only way to join Him in His Kingdom? What is key verse?

Mission Prayer: Talk about and pray for Oasis Giving campaign.

Let's pray now and thank God that He invites everyone to enter His kingdom. Pray that He will remind you that His forgiveness is an incredible gift.

Transition

Now that we know the importance of accepting God's invitation of forgiveness for our sin, let's make some invitations to remind us of what that means.

Learning Activity#3 Lg. Group

Craft-- Invitations

Instructions: Give each student an envelope pattern, an invitation and 1 pattern each of the crown and the cross. Cut out the cross and crown patterns. Fold the invitation so the printing is on the inside and the front is blank. To make the crayon rubbing design on the front of the invitation, place the crown and cross patterns inside the invitation, arranged as you want them to appear on the front of the invitation. Rub the front of the invitation with the crayon. As the crayon rubs over the pattern, the outline will appear. Cut the envelope out and fold along the dotted lines, folding flap A in first, then flap B. Glue around the inside edge of flap C and fold and seal onto flaps A & B. Fold the top flap down to close the envelope. Place the invitation in the envelope.

Game Obstacles:

Obstacle #1: Black Canyon

Instructions: On the floor, run the Velcro strip on which the children will walk heel to toe with the goal of not stepping off of the Velcro in order to reach the other end!

Obstacle #2: Crocodile Creek

Instructions: Place stepping stones far enough apart that the students will have to really stretch their legs to make it from one to the other. Place the mirror a few feet from the last stone.

Obstacle #3: Madman's Cave

Instructions: About 4 feet from the wall, place 2 chairs, backs facing almost the broom handle's length apart. Put the broom handle through the top of the backs of the two chairs making a low "limbo-like" pole. Hang the opened scroll upside down on the wall about 30" from the floor.

Obstacle #4: High Cliff with Waterfall

Instructions: Make a path that is close to the wall. Put the 4th scroll at the end of the path.