

## **Monday- Lesson 1 - Christian Education - Begin With The End In Mind.**

### Introduction

**Welcome everybody to camp for the year and be generally excited.**

**Introduce the theme of camp - Begin With The End In Mind.**

**GROUPS 1&2:** Have you ever had a project for school to do or a toy to put together that had steps that you had to do in a certain order for the project to turn out well? Or have your parents ever told you, if you clean your room, I'll take you out for ice cream? Both of these things show how important it is to Begin with the End in Mind.

**GROUPS 3&4:** This is an important theme in many aspects in life. When we start homework projects, like essays, it's good to know what you want to accomplish within the framework of the project. Often teachers encourage us to make an outline before we begin writing because it serves our work well if we follow some structure while moving toward an already formulated conclusion. The paper will have cohesiveness, and we're sure to succeed in writing it. Same sort of thing with saving money. If we have something that we're putting money aside for, it makes it a lot easier to keep up with saving. For example, if you want to buy a car or a new iPod, it is important to know how much money you have to save if you want to be able to cash in and make the purchase of your dreams. Both of these things illustrate perfectly why it's important to Begin with the End in Mind.

**ALL:** Similarly, beginning with the end in mind is an important thing for a journey. Indeed, the very act of a journey necessitates an end, otherwise what we are doing amounts to nothing more than wandering. (It might be good to make sure that the campers understand the difference between "journeying"- MOVING TOWARDS A GOAL DESTINATION and "wandering."- JUST MOVING AROUND AIMLESSLY WITHOUT A SPECIFIC DESTINATION IN MIND. ) Ask the campers to consider their t-shirts and the logos that they have. Ask if anybody knows to what movie this might bring to mind?

**THAT'S RIGHT! The Wizard of Oz.**

### The Wizard of Oz.

Recap the movie or watch a clip. Establish in the minds of the campers what Dorothy's journey might be.

Dorothy has found herself to be a stranger in the land of Oz and she is heading to the Emerald City in order to speak to the Wizard who she believes has the power to send her back to her home in Kansas. She begins her journey knowing exactly where she is headed and precisely what she wants from the Wizard when she gets there. The instructions that she receives to reach the Emerald City are "Follow the yellow brick road." If she does so, she is guaranteed to reach the Emerald City, the Wizard, and ultimately go home.

It is true that the Wizard is IN the Emerald City, but the rest of the land of Oz is still under the reign of the Wizard, and his presence and power is known everywhere. Even though Dorothy has a long time to go before she meets the Wizard face to face, she still has to act in accordance with the guidelines that will lead her to him. If Dorothy strays from the path, she is guaranteed to face danger, and even worse, she can get lost. It is true that she can come back to path, but if she strays from it for long, the yellow brick road will certainly become harder to find.

### The Kingdom of God

Dorothy's story is a lot like our own. We are strangers in a foreign land, we have a true home, and in order to reach it, we must follow the guidelines that have been established by the Ruler. It's true that the analogy falls apart at some point, but the basics are pretty much the same. We journey here on earth in order to reach our true home, which is the Kingdom of God.

### **Discuss, "What/Where is the Kingdom of God?"**

Many of the campers are likely to say something like, "It's when you go to heaven." Stuff like this. The essential thing that we help the campers to understand is that the Kingdom of God is anything over which God is King.

As Christians, we are subjects of the King, and our entire life is to be dedicated to upholding the precepts of his kingdom. Christ, the King of all, dwells in our hearts and is our Lord. Indeed, in the lenten prayer of St Ephraim, we call him "Lord and Master of my life" as well, "Lord and King," and we ask him to grant us to humility

and love for our neighbors. The Lord gives us instructions and ways of pursuing his Kingdom while we are in earth. In fact, Christ himself says as much about the Kingdom of God. He says in Matthew 4:17, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and again in Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." This means that at any given moment, we are citizens of God's kingdom, and it is our call to act in a way that is consistent with who we already are. This is why it is important for us to understand that the Kingdom of God is not only our final resting place, but it is also our home on earth. God is our King both now and ever. His Kingdom is both in this world, yet not *of* this world. It is present, yet eschatological. It is temporal, yet eternal. So if the main issue of the Kingdom of God is that it is the territory over which God reigns, we should probably think about what kind of King God is.

### **God as King**

Is God a cold King that allows his subjects to live without purpose, or does he offer a satisfying way to live? Does he give precepts that should be followed and guidelines that promote joyful, healthy Kingdom living?

God is nearer to us than we are to ourselves, yet he is completely above and beyond us. He understands the depths of our hearts and longing, yet also knows how to raise us to fullness of life in him. He gives us instructions and guides through the life of Christ, the lives of the Saints, the services of the Church, the sermons of his priests, and of course, the parables contained within the Gospels. These are practical helps that allow us to understand living on earth as citizens of the Kingdom of God, for that is precisely what we already are.

### The Parables

In the course of the week, we are going to be learning about how to live on earth with our minds set on the eternal Kingdom of God. The parables offer some great guidelines for understanding how we might begin to live in such a way.

Now we can ask why the Lord would choose to teach in parables as opposed to just straight lecturing his disciples.

Ask who is engaged when a teacher tells a story that enlightens a certain aspect of their own lives. **Maybe it would be good to talk about some movies or books that people love and ask why these stories speak to them.**

Christ understood that people would be able to see what it means to live like the citizen of the Kingdom more clearly if he presented it in the form of a story. Could

We are studying the parables to look for new ways to understand our lives in Christ, and if we can understand what he is trying to teach us through the parables, we can unlock the key to living in the Kingdom today, and in this way, we successfully understand what it means to begin with the end in mind.

### Activity

Since we want all campers to understand what it means to begin with the end in mind and to live in such a way that is consistent with the Gospel of Christ, it is important to impress upon them the fact that "when we get to heaven" is not the thought of Christians. Rather, Christians are those who live under the reign of the King while they live their earthly lives.

### Groups 1 and 2

Have the children make "Passports" as citizens of the Kingdom of God. This reminds them that they are on a journey in this life and that they should live in such a way that is consistent with this life. They can make little stamps/pictures of the places they have been as a Kingdom citizen (i.e., home, church, school, etc) so they understand that they are children of the King wherever they go, not just on the Last Day.

### Groups 3 and 4

Break the group up into three groups and have them take the parable of the Marriage Feast and write their own modern version of the parable. Ask them to identify the truth that exists in the parable so they can really begin to understand the idea of a story/parable carrying the truth of the Gospel. **Give each group a copy of the following sheet with the Parable of the Marriage Feast.**

### Ultimate Goal of Session 1

Help the campers understand that we begin this earthly journey with a very specific goal in mind: the Kingdom of God. It is important to understand, however, that the Kingdom is not JUST the END goal, but it is the goal of every moment of every day. We are subject to the King as baptized, chrismated, believing Christians, and we must live in accordance with the Gospel of the Kingdom. We look to the parables to understand how we might live life in Christ most fully, walking in the joy of his light and love. The Kingdom of both beyond and within us. It is here and there. It is now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

- Matthew 22: 1-14

## TUESDAY- THE LOVE OF THE KING FOR HIS PEOPLE

- Yesterday we talked about how we are all travelers away from home, like Dorothy, and how in order to reach true home, we need to live under the direction of the King. Let's find out who this King is and who we are as citizens of His Kingdom.
- How many of you have heard your parents say: While you are under my roof, you must obey my rules? Living as God is your King today functions the same way. The Lord tells you the rules of His house and you can choose to live there or not. A child who decides to leave their parents' house and live life on their own quickly realizes the suffering that comes without your parents care and protection. So too does one who leaves the care and protection of God the Father.
- Let us see this parable live! This parable is called the Lost Son, or the Prodigal Son. Prodigal means to spend a lot of money on things you don't need and being very wasteful with what you have. As you are watching, think about the answers to these questions:
  - 1- Who does the Father represent?
  - 2- Who does the young son represent?
  - 3- Who does the older son represent?
- FOR THE TEACHER: PICK 5 PEOPLE TO ACT THIS SKIT OUT SPONTANEOUSLY. \*\*\*WHILE THE NARRATOR IS TALKING, THE ACTORS SHOULD BE PREPARED TO ACT OUT WHAT HE IS SAYING. FEEL FREE TO MAKE IT FUN AND ENTERTAINING!

## THE PRODIGAL SON

Narrator: There once was a father that had two sons. One day the younger son said to his father,

Younger Son: "Father, could you give me my inheritance?"

Narrator: So the father thought about it and decided his sons could have the money now, and he split it evenly between them. Very soon after the younger son received the money, he decided that since he had so much money he would move to a different country and have some fun with it. When he left, he left for good. He took every last thing he had and didn't plan on returning. He wanted to be grown up and spend all his money how he wanted with no one to tell him what to do. He left a big farm with many hired men with everything he needed, he left his family, and more importantly he left his father who trusted him enough to give him the money. This made his father very sad and he missed him very much. While the son was gone he spent all the money he had right away. He didn't think to save any of it. After he had spent all his money, the country he was living in became very poor and they hardly had enough food for everyone. It was even worse for people who had no money because food became even more expensive, so it was very hard for poor people to get any food. The son was in trouble. He had no money, no place to live, he had nothing to eat, so he had to get a job. The only job he could find was feeding pigs. He was so hungry he tried to eat the food that the pigs were eating but his boss caught him and told him if he ever saw him doing that again he would lose his job. The son went to bed hungry and when he woke up he "came to himself" and realized something. When he lived with his father even the hired men had more food than they needed, and now he was starving to death. At that moment he made a plan. He would go back to his father's house and say to him:

Younger Son: 'I have sinned against God and against you. I don't deserve to be called your son, so hire me and I will work for you.'

Narrator: He knew that if he became like a hired man on his father's farm he would still be better off than he was right now. He would always have a warm place to stay and food to eat. So he headed for home. It took the son a long time to get home, he was just hoping that his dad would let him work at the farm and let him be a hired man. The son was walking up the to farm but while he was still a long way off and he could see someone notice him and start to run towards him. He was

sure that they must have been expecting someone else, no one would be excited to see him. As the person got closer he realized it was his father and he was yelling:

Father: "My son! My son! You are finally home!"

Narrator: He couldn't believe it. His father threw his arms around him and kissed him. But the son quickly said,

Younger Son: "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I don't deserve to be called your son..."

Narrator: The son wanted to continue but the father said to one of his servants

Father: "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the biggest calf and kill it. Let's have a party and celebrate because my son was lost and is found!"

A little while later, the older son was working in the field and heard music and dancing. So he called to one of the servants and asked what was going on.

Servant: "Your brother has come home and your father is having a party for his return."

Narrator: This upset the older brother and he refused to go join the party. The father heard that he was upset, so he went to talk to him and invited him to join the party. But the son refused saying:

Older Son: "Look! I have been working for you all these years and I've never disobeyed you. Yet you never had a big party for me to celebrate with my friends. But now my younger brother has come home, spent all the money you gave him, and you kill the biggest calf for him!"

Narrator: The father said...

Father: "But my son...you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was lost and now he is found."

- So let's look at the main characters in the parable:
  - 1- FATHER- Who does the Father represent? *God.* What does God reveal about Himself to us in this parable? *That He will let us go if we want to, but will joyfully welcome us back if we want to come back. There are no grudges, no anger, no guilt with God. Just loving arms. That is why we must move forward as well, without anger at ourselves. Living in the Kingdom is like the Father's House- you will be safe, filled, taken care of. Danger is outside of the Father's house, or off the path to the Kingdom.*
  - 2- YOUNGER SON- Who does the younger son represent? *You.* What do the younger son's actions teach us about the Kingdom of God? *That we may think that we want to be free and on our own, but there is danger without that protection. We are not equipped to live under our own rules. But our freedom should guide us towards Christ, to freely choose Him at all moments and in all situations. God created us free in order that we may choose Him. True freedom is not independence, but recognizing our dependence on God. When the son learned that he and his father both rejoiced. This shows us God's joy when we return to Him, and also what will bring us true joy.*
  - 3- OLDER SON- Who does the older son represent? *You!* When looking at this parable, we usually focus on the younger son and what he has to teach us about ourselves. If we don't look at the Older Son as well, we are missing a valuable lesson. He wouldn't be in the story if God didn't want us to learn from him as well.

Often each of us is like that person who wants the reward of doing the right thing. We look at others who mess up and find joy in our own "goodness". How much greater is it to find joy in one who is lost being found? We shouldn't look for credit in God's eyes or anyone else's eyes for doing what we simply should do.

Remember that the Father tells the Older Son, "you have always been in my house...etc."

- God's love for us when we fall is depicted in this parable by the figure of the suffering father, who goes out to the road every day in the hope to see his son coming back. The parable of the lost son tells how **important and significant** it is to God for a man to be saved.
- This next parable shows God's generosity and love for all people, whether you are with Him from the beginning or come at the last hour:

### THE GENEROUS LANDOWNER (LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD)

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first, and the first last." -Matthew 20:1-16

- ASK: Who can give me a play by play of the events of the parable?

- To help us understand this parable, let's consider real life situations today that each of us think are not fair.  
 GROUPS 2, 3 & 4: Split them up into 5 groups. Give them each a topic and a situation to come up with that can easily be seen as unfair. The topics are: SCHOOL, HOME, FRIENDS, GOD, FAMILY.  
 GROUPS 1: Ask the children to tell you about things that happened to them that they think were unfair at: SCHOOL, HOME, FRIENDS, GOD, FAMILY.
- "NOT FAIR" STORY EXAMPLE TO USE IF NECESSARY:  
 Suppose you share a room with your brother/sister. Your room is a disaster. Clothes, books, toys and pieces of paper that you didn't put in the trash are everywhere. Your Mom says when you clean up your room you can go to your favorite restaurant and you can eat whatever you want on the menu. You agree to clean up the room and start thinking about where you would like to eat and what you might order. As you pick up your brother's dirty clothes that never made it to the hamper you wonder why he's not here helping you. He is downstairs in the kitchen working on a school project that is due the next day. You work hard for close to two hours to get the room cleaned up. When you are almost done your brother comes in to help finish. It takes about 15 minutes and finally your room is in perfect order. When your mom comes in to inspect the room she is pleased with the way your room looks. She tells both you and your brother to get ready to leave so you can go out to eat for lunch. When you get to the restaurant that you chose your mom tells both of you to choose anything you want from the menu. How do you think you would have felt seeing your brother get the same reward as you received and he only worked fifteen minutes? You may feel as though your brother doesn't deserve to have the privilege to eat anything off the menu as you do because you did all the work. You may feel like what your mother is allowing your brother to do is not fair.

- AFTER THE GROUPS PRESENT THEIR SITUATION: One point of the parable was to teach the disciples that God sees all of us as equally important to the work in His Kingdom, no matter how long we have worked and no matter what work we have done.
- Also, the point is not the reward for the work, but that you are doing the work faithfully. Most of the time when we envy someone getting a reward we want or when we get upset that someone hasn't noticed the good we have done, we are completely forgetting why we should be doing the work in the first place. "But that's not fair!" really means, "I did this thing and I am upset people haven't noticed," or "I want the reward that he got!" We should keep our minds focused on the reason for this work - that this work is our response to God's call to obedience and love towards His people.
- So, let us remember that, as God loves everyone unconditionally, and we should respond to this love by unconditionally loving our neighbors. Instead of grumbling at their "undeserved" rewards, we should rejoice at the love that God shows to the people who work with us in His vineyard.

## WEDNESDAY- LOVE OTHERS AS THE KING LOVES YOU

- As we saw yesterday, God loves you unconditionally and always welcomes you home with open arms if you choose to return to him. The parables we are going to look at today show us how we are called to love others as God loves us- unconditionally and united, never letting anything separate us from each other.
- Listen as I read this parable to you about a servant who asks to be treated a way that he is not willing to treat others.

### THE FORGIVING KING AND UNFORGIVING SERVANT

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." -Matthew 18:23-35

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What did the servant do for the master to forgive his debt? The servant fell down and worshipped the king, and begged him to have patience with him, promising to pay it all.
2. When the servant found someone who owed him money, what did he do? He grabbed the servant by the throat and told him that he must pay what he owed.

3. What did the servant do? He did not show him mercy and he had the fellow servant thrown into prison.

4. What did the king do when he heard what the servant had done? He had the unforgiving servant arrested, thrown into prison and tortured until the original debt was repaid.

5. Will God forgive us when we do wrong? Yes, if we are truly sorry.

6. What must we do to be forgiven? We must forgive others so God will forgive us.

- What makes it difficult for us to forgive? (allow for answers and discussion)
- It's important to remember that forgiving someone does not necessarily mean that you are saying that what they did was right. You are simply acknowledging that we are all sinners who all make mistakes. The parable of the Unforgiving Servant shows us that when God sees our mistakes, He forgives us fully because He knows the reasons for our wrong choices and has compassion on us. We also know from experience how often we regret our actions towards others. When someone offends us, we should think of the possible reasons for their actions and of the regret they might already feel. In this way, we will learn compassion and forgiveness.

**ACTIVITY- COMPASSIONATE THINKING.** Something that is helpful in forgiving others is making an attempt to understand why people make the choices they make. Ask the campers for examples of about 5 things that people do that are hard to forgive. After you have five, go through each one, identifying reasons that someone may make the choices they make that bring you to have mercy and compassion on them, rather than being angry.

## THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

- The next parable shows us how we must respond without hesitation to the needs of others, just as the Lord responds to our needs. It is necessary that we don't let anything separate us from each other.
- Here we see that God put the rich man in favorable conditions, so that without any trouble or inventiveness he could have helped the poor man lying at the door of his home. But the rich man was totally deaf to his sufferings. He was only fond of his feasts and caring for himself.

"There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he called out, `Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, `Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, `Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, `They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, `No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, `If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" (Lk. 16:19-31).

- **TEACHER: WHAT IS YOUR FIRST RESPONSE TO THIS PARABLE?** (Campers will most likely give answers such as: How could the rich man do that? Etc.) This is a common first response after reading this. But...
- **GROUP 1:** We don't always realize that we act just like the Rich Man at times. We are able to stop what we are doing and focus on the needs of others instead of ourselves, but we don't. We just sit there and watch something we can help with instead of responding. Let's look at these different situations and you tell me how you think you should respond.
- **GROUP 2-4:** St. John Chrysostom has a different response. Look at these reflections he has on the parable. Think about what he is saying to you about how you fit into this story.

**ACTIVITIES: GROUP 1: ASK FOR THE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS THAT EACH SKIT INDICATES. HAVE THE CHILDREN ACT OUT THE SKIT AND THEN ASK THE OTHER CHILDREN, "WHAT WOULD YOU DO?"**

**2 volunteers:** There are 2 children at home. One is 7 and lives there. The other is visiting and is 3 years old. The 7 year old is playing a video game and glued to the tv, but the 3 year old wants to play with him. What would you do?

**3 volunteers:** 2 children are at school on the playground playing a game. One of them sees a kid he doesn't know fall down and it doesn't look like he can get up. He wants to go help but the friend he is playing with wants to finish the game. What would you do?

**2 volunteers:** 2 kids are eating lunch at school. One kid looks over and notices that his friend doesn't have lunch. He asks his friend why and his friend says that they don't have enough money in their family to eat 3 meals a day. He says that he only eats dinner. What should you do?

**GROUPS 2-4:** Break the campers up into groups. Give each group one of these quotes from St. John Chrysostom. Tell them to think about what he is saying about this parable. Then bring everyone together and have one person from the group talk about the quote.

**“Therefore let us use our goods sparingly, as belonging to others, so that they may become our own. How shall we use them sparingly as belonging to others? When we do not spend them beyond our needs, and do not spend for our needs only, but give equal shares into the hands of the poor.” St. John Chrysostom**

**“So you likewise, when you see on earth the man who has encountered the shipwreck of poverty, do not judge him, do not seek and account of his life, but free him from his misfortune. Need alone is the poor man's worthiness.” St. John Chrysostom**

**“Let us pursue the virtue and joy which come from righteous actions; and let us, both rich and poor, emulate Lazarus. He was poor, he was ill, he had no one to help him. He remained in a house which could have relieved all his troubles but he was granted no word of comfort. He saw the man who neglected him enjoying such luxury, and not only enjoying luxury but living in wickedness without suffering any misfortune.” St. John Chrysostom**

**“In order to learn another reason why the teaching of the prophets is more worthy of belief than the report of those who rise from the dead, consider this fact, that every dead person is a servant, but what the Scriptures utter, the Master has uttered.”  
St. John Chrysostom**

**“A person is not loathsome if he has this kind of wounds of his body, but if he has a multitude of sores on his soul and takes no care of them. Such was that of the rich man, full of sores within. Just as the dogs liked the wounds of the poor man, so demons liked the sins of the rich man; and just as the poor man lived in starvation of nourishment, so the rich man lived in starvation of every kind of virtue.” St. John Chrysostom**

- **TEACHER:** After each group explains their quote to the rest of the class, ask the class: Now who do you think you are in the parable? (The rich man) What did the rich man lack that Christ demands of you? (compassion, love, response to others needs). This is the essence of Kingdom living... response, without question, to the needs of others.
- **END REFLECTING ON THESE VERSES FROM SCRIPTURE:**  
"In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin." - Sir 7:36. And again, "Prepare your work for your departure, and get everything ready for the road."  
- Proverbs 24:27
- Let us spend the rest of the day recognizing when you see someone jump to meet the needs of someone else. Also, recognize within yourself when you are able to be the first to respond and don't hesitate!

## **THURSDAY- GOD'S PATIENCE WITH US**

- In many parables, the Lord uses "seeds" to demonstrate the growth process that people go through once the "seed", or the Word of God, is sown in them by the Sower, who is Christ Himself.
- The following parable of "The Wheat and the Tares" shows the importance of being a watchful guardian of the Word of God within you, and also being patient with other people and the world around you.
- It is important to remember that we are all connected and that we survive together as one. It is only the Lord whose job it is as judge to separate us in His time. The following parable shows us that if we are separated prematurely, the good might be damaged.
- **ACTIVITY- HUMAN KNOT. PULL PEOPLE OUT WHO WILL DISTURB THE PROCESS IF THEY ARE TAKEN OUT.**
- Keeping in mind the "Human Knot" activity, have someone read this parable out loud and then guide the group to fill in, out loud, the underlined words in the explanation.

### **THE WHEAT AND THE TARES**

**Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the householder came and said to him, `Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?' He said to them, `An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, `Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, `No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"**

**EXPLANATION:** Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of

the weeds of the field." He answered, "He who sows the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world, and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom; the weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- Have someone sum up the parable in their own words.
- What verse in the parable shows us what happens when we are not watchful? **but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.**
- *Why is it so important that we are watchful?* It is easy at first glance to think that "The Wheat and the Tares" are just simple representations of the good and bad individuals in the world... but it is important to remember that good and evil both exist within each of us. Good and evil are mixed in us all, while we live in this world. As situations present themselves to us, we show Christ if He is our King by the decisions we make. Only He will decide in His time if we truly are wheat or tares.
- In the well-known poem *The Road Less Taken*, Robert Frost meditates upon the consequences of the direction one chooses to go in life: "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I — I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." For Frost, choosing one road over another made all the difference. **Can you think of a time in your life when choosing the wrong road really brought you bad consequences?**
- Jesus teaches that there are two roads in life — a broad road that leads to destruction and a narrow road that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). It is not always clear who is on which road, because each of us, at times, has gone our own way and served ourselves instead of serving God through our love for others. This is why God's patience with us is a gift.
- Here are 3 important points that show us that we must leave the separation of the wheat and tares to God in His time:

## 1. Patience Is Essential (Matthew 13:24-30)

Jesus' parable teaches the principle of patience. Specifically, Jesus' parable illustrates God's sovereign patience towards us as we grow and mature. The reality of this parable is that we cannot look around and even begin to identify the wheat and the tares. What we must do instead is focus on our own life in Christ and be mindful that we are being true to Him in all the choices we make.

It is also important to not be so quick to name ourselves one of the "Godly" and put ourselves above others. Not everyone in the church is truly a Son of the Kingdom. As we said before, each of us, at times, has not been watchful and produced an action or thought that was not of the Kingdom. There are even times when something that looks "good" on the outside is in fact not truly good. A poor woman once kissed the Lord. Judas once kissed Him. Why was one kiss good and the other not? In the same way, we may do things to help at home, because we want to be useful, or just because we want to get some reward for it. So it is not for us to identify the tares and the wheat in this world. What our task is to identify, within ourselves, if we are living as God is our King. We have to work on the things in our lives that don't match up with being sons of the Kingdom and turn our eyes away from making judgments on the people around us.

As the heirs of God's promises, we must not passively wait around; we must proactively await Christ's coming. We proactively await Christ's coming when we care for the hurting and share hope with the hopeless.

FOR DISCUSSION: IF THE LORD CAME RIGHT NOW, WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD BE? NOW THINK OF A TIME IN YOUR LIFE...1,2 YEARS AGO THAT WAS A BAD TIME FOR CHRIST TO COME AS JUDGE. HOW DID HIS PATIENCE WITH YOU HELP YOU TO GROW?

## **2. Trust is Necessary (Matthew 13:36-39)**

As followers of Christ, we can firmly trust that God's judgment will be just and his timing will be timely. We can and should reserve our judgment of others for the Lord and entrust the task of Judgment to the righteous Judge. We are unworthy and incapable of judging the actions of others. Further, our criterion for judging the behavior of the others is flawed. We often desire to judge based on what our perceptions of people are. The Lord will judge based on the true meaning of their thoughts and actions.

FOR DISCUSSION: HAVE YOU EVER TAKEN THE JOB OF JUDGE AWAY FROM CHRIST? WHY ARE WE INCAPABLE OF BEING JUDGES?

We must remember God's patience with us in these moments where we find ourselves being impatient with others.

## **3. Rewards Will Come (Matthew 13:40-43)**

You and I must live with a healthy perspective of the Day of Judgment. A healthy perspective of the Day of Judgment is defined by both a joyful heart and a burdened heart. We can and should rejoice in Christ's righteousness and passionately anticipate the precious words, "Well done my good and faithful servant." We should equally understand the full reality that each of us might hear the words, "Depart from me, for I do not know you."

- The following parable of "The Seed Growing in the Ground" reminds us that we must be patient with each other because we all are in the process of growing towards Christ:

## THE SEED GROWING IN THE GROUND

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he know not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he put it in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mk. 4:26-29).

- A plant, coming out of a seed, undergoes various stages of growth and development; in the same manner, a man who accepts Christ's teaching and receives baptism undergoes an internal transformation, and grows step by step, through the work of God's grace.
- When a seed first begins to grow, the plant is weak and easy to destroy. It takes time, nurturing, and care for the plant to truly take root and grow to maturity. The Lord does not enslave us by His All-Mighty power but allows a certain time for a man to work towards becoming mature and rooted in Him.

### ACTIVITY: GROWING TREE/PERSON

Ask for a volunteer. Have the child lie on the floor. He is a trunk of a tree and his arms and legs will serve as branches. The teacher should call out the following things and have the campers decide if this would make a person grow and mature in Christ or not. Your challenge as the teacher is to help the campers to question whether or not something is clearly bad or good. \*\*\* THEY MAY THINK THAT SOMETHING IS BAD, BUT IT REALLY COULD HELP THEM GROW. If it is good, it will grow! If it is bad it could be cut off, become mangled, twisted, however the child chooses to creativity demonstrate it. Once the first camper's arms and legs are all grown, add another camper by having the first one wrap his hand around the ankle of another, and so on. KATRINA WILL DEMONSTRATE THIS. ☺

## **FRIDAY- THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND!**

**ACTIVITY:** Begin by choosing 10 campers to face off against each other in a **QUIZ GAME!** They will be in teams of 5. The catch is that only 1 team will be allowed to study for the quiz. The other team will have to see how well they can answer the questions without knowing what the quiz will be on. ☺ So allow 5 of them to review the following information for the quiz.

### **FOR THE TEACHER:**

Choose 5 questions to ask from the following information.

Give one group the separate sheet with the info to review.

### **ORTHODOX WORDS TO KNOW!**

**PASCHA-** This is a Greek word that means "Passover". The day that America calls "Easter" we, as Orthodox Christians, call "Pascha". On Pascha, Christ passes from death to life. When He did that, He made it possible that after our death on this earth, we can begin our life in God's Kingdom with Him!

**BRIGHT WEEK-** The week after Pascha.

**FORGIVENESS SUNDAY-** The Sunday before Lent begins.

**ORTHROS-** This is the morning service that is celebrated before Liturgy. It is the service of rising up in the morning. At Vespers it is as if Christ is going into the tomb. During Orthros, we sing hymns about His rising up!

**GREAT ENTRANCE**- When the clergy brings the bread and wine out of the altar in a procession. This represents Christ's walk from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, where He was born to where He died.

**EUCCHARIST**- The proper word to call "communion". It means thanksgiving. We give thanks for Christ's sacrifice when we partake of His body and blood.

**NAVE**- The main part of the church where the people are.

**ICONOSTASIS**- The icon screen that separates the nave from the sanctuary.

**TABERNACLE**- This is the castle looking structure in the center of the altar table. It holds the reserved sacraments that the priest brings to the sick and elderly that aren't able to come to church to receive the Eucharist.

**PROTHESIS TABLE**- The table on the left side of the altar where the gifts (bread and wine) are prepared.

- After the quiz, read this parable, having the campers keep in mind how important it is to always be ready for the coming of the Lord.

**Scripture:** *Matthew 25:1-13*

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. 11 Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

**Explanation:**

- Being unprepared can lead to disaster! What good is a forgotten life-jacket, when the boat is sinking? *Ask the children for some of their own examples of how bad it can be to be unprepared.*
- Wedding customs in ancient Palestine required extra care and preparation for everyone involved. To show up for a wedding party at night without proper attire, such as a lamp and a wedding garment, is like showing up for an important event today which requires a reservation and a ticket. You just don't get in without the proper pass.

- Can you imagine the frustration one experiences in traveling abroad and finding out you can't get into some country because you don't have a valid passport or visa? Jesus warns us that there are consequences for being unprepared. There are certain things you cannot obtain at the last moment. For example, a student cannot prepare for his exam on the day of the test. A person cannot build a house unless he is trained to.
- Our eternal life depends on our hearing, which means that we respond to God's call. We will not be prepared to meet the Lord, face to face, when he calls us on the Day of Judgment, unless we listen to Him today. The Lord invites us to feast at his banquet table. Are you ready to meet Him when he calls?

## **ORTHODOX WORDS TO KNOW- REVIEW THIS FOR YOUR QUIZ**

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