



## Welcome to the 2020 Fall Sunday School Family Devotional

The Children's Ministry Team at University Lutheran Church of Hope invites your family to a Fall Devotional experience. The readings are ones that will be heard in church this Fall. We hope you can find some time during the week to read the passage and then, as a family, discuss how it can help your faith to grow. Below are the FAITH5 steps which gives you a simple way to spend your devotional time together. There are also more ideas on the FAITH5 website – [www.faith5.org](http://www.faith5.org)

Many of you have a Spark Story Bible, but if you don't, please contact Nick or Pastor Jen to receive one from the church.

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# **The Vineyard Worker**

## **Sunday September 20, 2020**



**Matthew 20: 1-16, Spark Bible p. 298**

**Read the” Parable of the Vineyard Workers”.** While you are reading think about some I wonder or “I noticed” statements.

I assume that this landowner needed to harvest his vineyard before the crop, of whatever he was growing, spoiled. So, he went to hire some people to do this and after they agreed to the pay, they started to work. This happened at least three times, in the morning the afternoon and late in the afternoon. At the end of the day, he began to pay them. The landowner started with the last ones hired first and ended with the ones who were hired in the morning. Every person received the same amount.

1. Do you think this was fair? Why or Why not? Think about some of your “I wonder” statements, do we actually know why he chose to pay everyone equally? What could be some reasons?
2. What did the landowner say to the workers as to why he paid them the same amount? Do we need to know why he decided to do it this way? Do we know why God chooses to do things a certain way?
3. Was there ever a time when your parents ask you to do something to help them and you answered, “How much will you pay me?” But if you went to a friend’s house and they ask you to do something and you immediately started to help. Why is it more fun to do it at someone else’s house and the pay is not important?
4. Imagine, you had company coming, and your parents told you and your siblings that all needed to pick up the playroom right now, or the teacher told the whole class to clean up. Would the three -year old be able to do as much as the ten or eight-year old? Would the child in the wheelchair be able to pick up things off the floor? Should they be paid less if there was pay involved? Why or why not?
5. What do you think would be the true reward other than money?

Again, in this parable, who do you think is the landowner? Who are the workers? God is answering the question, how it will be in the Kingdom of Heaven? God is merciful in that he will treat everyone the same in the Kingdom of Heaven and everyone helps each other to make the kingdom a peaceful place. It doesn’t matter so much when a person starts ,but that they start willingly to make our Kingdom on Earth a better place, so that it is more like the Kingdom of Heaven.

***Prayer: Dear God,***

***Thank you for your steadfast mercy and loving kindness. Help us to mend our disagreements and work together to make this world a better place. Amen.***

# Jonah & the Big Fish

## Sunday September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020



1. Read the story – Jonah 1-4, Spark Bible p. 190
  - a. *Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God.*
  - b. Add a little theatre to the reading of this story. Pretend you are on a boat. The winds are blowing. Waves are rocking the boat. Now you know how Jonah felt.
  - c. Build a blanket fort that can represent the stomach of the big fish. Imagine what it was like for Jonah to spend three days in there! What else might be inside the stomach of a big fish?
2. Discuss
  - a. Why do you think Jonah did not listen to God?
  - b. Why did God want Jonah to go to Ninevah?
  - c. What do you think Jonah was thinking from inside the stomach of the big fish?
  - d. What do you think Jonah was feeling when the fish finally spit him out?
3. Pray
  - a. Oh God, thank you for loving us and for guiding us. Help us to listen to your Word and to follow where you call us. Teach us to be kind and loving to all of our neighbors and help us to serve you in everything we do. Amen
  - b. Pray the Lord's Prayer together.

# Parable of the Vineyard

## Sunday October 4, 2020



### 1. Read the story – Matthew 21:33-46, Spark Bible p. 302

Early in the morning, Jesus goes to the temple courts to teach (21:23). The chief priests and leaders wonder who this Jesus is. They wonder if he should be teaching. Should they believe what he says? Jesus is careful to not let them control the conversation, so he tells this story called a Parable.

### 2. Discuss

- What is a parable? It is a simple story with a moral (what is right or wrong) or a story told to teach a lesson.
- Who do you think the Master of the House represents? (God or Jesus?)
- Who do you think the tenants represent? Have you ever rejected anyone?
- What seems unfair about the story?
- What does it mean to be faithful to God?
- What does it mean that God will love us unconditionally?

### 3. Pray

- Dear God, help us to see when we are selfish and want something just for ourselves. Help us to be generous as Jesus was. Thank you for your love and always being there in our lives.
- Pray the Lord's Prayer.



# Psalm 23 The Lord is my Shepherd

## Sunday October 11, 2020



1. Read the story – **Psalm 23**, Spark Bible p. 160

A man named David wrote the 23rd Psalm. David was an important person in the Bible who lived many years before Jesus. He started out as a simple shepherd boy and ended up being king!

The good things in David's life would not have happened without God's love and care. It is the same way for us. God loves us and watches over us every day of our lives.

2. **Discuss the parts of Psalm 23**

### ***The Lord is my shepherd***

*God loves us and watches over us like a shepherd caring for his sheep. How do you feel God's love?*

### ***I have everything I need***

*We are children of God and know that we will always have God's love. What other things has God provided for you? Look around you and give thanks for all your blessings.*

### ***He lets me rest in green pastures and leads me to still waters***

*We can let God lead us and know that He will care for us. Who do you go to when you feel troubled? Is there a place you go to when you need to relax and feel at peace?*

### ***He gives me new strength***

*God's power makes us strong. Can you think of a time where you needed help or felt sad and you prayed about it?*

### ***Even if I walk through a very dark valley, I will not be afraid because you are with me***

*God helps us overcome our fears and keeps us safe. What can you do when you are afraid?*

### ***You prepare a meal for me in front of my enemies.***

*God surprises us with blessings. Was there a time when everything seemed to be going wrong and then you had a surprise that turned your day around?*

***Your goodness and love will be with me all my life and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.***

*We can trust that God will always be with us. How does it make you feel to know that God is always watching over you and protecting you?*

3. **Activity** - *Draw a picture of a shepherd and the sheep. Give each sheep a name and a problem. Then tell how the shepherd/God helps the little sheep. For example, Whitey is hungry - The shepherd brings him to a field for food. Lola has a hurt leg – The shepherd carries her to safety.*
4. **Pray** - **Dear God, thank you for your wonderful and powerful love. Help us to reach out to you when we need your help and your comfort. We know that you are always with us to guide us and keep us safe.**  
\* Pray the Lord's Prayer together.

# Paying Taxes

## Sunday October 18, 2020



### 1. Read the story – Matthew 22:15-22 Spark Bible p. 306

### 2. Discuss

The Pharisees were strict church leaders who tried to trick Jesus all the time. Jesus knew how to answer in a way that was so smart. He didn't say "Yes", and He didn't say "No". He had the perfect answer; one the Pharisees never even thought of.

Jesus asked them to please show Him, and everyone around them, some money. They didn't really know what was going on, but they pulled out a coin. Just like our money, there was a picture of someone on the coin; and on this coin, it was a picture of Caesar, and it even had his name on it!

When you see something with some's name on it, what does that usually mean? That it belongs to that person. So Jesus's answer was simple. He instructed them give Caesar what is his, and to give God what was God's.

The trick question didn't work. It actually just made people listen to Jesus even more! Everyone was amazed with Jesus' wisdom, and His ability to provide a right answer when there wasn't one.

Sometimes there are questions we can't answer. Maybe the answer is too difficult for us to understand. And sometimes, we really just believe there is no right answer.

When we are faced with those tough questions, we can remember that Jesus always knows the answer.

- a. Is there anything that is confusing to you? Who do you go to when you are confused?
- b. Sometimes it is OK not to completely understand something. There are some things about God that are a mystery. What we do know is that all we have belongs to God and that in all things, God loves us. Perhaps you can put a coin somewhere in your room, to remind you of God's love and mystery.

### 3. Pray

Oh God of mystery and love, help us to know that all that we have, we are to be thankful for. Help us when we are frustrated and don't understand something. Give us patience to wait.

# The Ten Commandments

## Sunday October 25, 2020

### The Ten Commandments

1	Love God more than you love anything else. Don't make anything in your life more important than God.
2	Always say God's name with love and respect.
3	Honor the Lord by resting and going to Mass on Sundays.
4	Love and respect your mom and dad and all the adults in your life.
5	Never hurt anyone through your actions or words.
6	Always be faithful and respectful to yourself, your family, and your friends.
7	Don't take anything that is not yours.
8	Always tell the truth.
9	Be happy with the relationships you have. Don't be jealous of other people.
10	Be happy with the belongings you have. Don't wish for other peoples' things.

Picture Source: [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)

#### 1. Read the story – Exodus 20:1-17 Spark Bible p. 94

Moses went up the mountain and God told him about the “ten best ways to live” our lives. He then went down the mountain and shared what he had learned with the people.

#### 2. Discuss

- Why do you think it is good to have some rules to follow?
- Which of the Ten Commandments do you think are the hardest to follow? Which ones do you think are the easiest?
- What rules does your family have. Talk about why they are important.

#### 3. Pray

- Oh God, you are like a mom and dad to us. Thank you for giving us good rules to live by. Help us to know the best way to treat ourselves and each other and to take care of each other's needs.
- Pray the Lord's Prayer



# Be Humble

## Sunday November 1, 2020



### Matthew 23:1-12, Spark Bible p. 312

This is a story about the Scribes and Pharisees. Now the scribes knew the law of the Bible well and the Pharisees very strictly followed all the religious practices of the church. They believed it was very important and dutiful to follow all these traditions if one wanted to get into heaven or be accepted by God. They preached to others, and thought they were better than anyone else through their dress and actions and also expected to be seated in a place of honor at events.

Let's see how Jesus said we should handle the Pharisees.

READ Matthew 23:1-12, or the Spark Bible story.

1. Jesus told the crowds, "The Scribes and the Pharisees are learned men of God. Therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it, but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach." What do you think he meant?
2. Without using any names, can you think of a situation, where someone thought they were better than everyone else? *ex. "That is a nice piece of art but the colors aren't right. See I know how to draw because my mother is an artist and she says I use the best colors together"* or, You want to join a club or baseball team, but before they will accept you, they expect you to do certain things first  
(Perhaps you could speak and act out what this person would be like?)
3. How did you feel about these people? How did they make you feel?  
The Pharisees were very proud of themselves, and did everything for show. When they prayed, they wanted everyone to see them doing it. They tried to bring people to God, but did not do it from the heart.
4. In verses, 9-10, What is the second piece of advice Jesus gives us?  
Can you think of someone who you know who does a lot of work behind the scenes, helps people and will say,  
"Oh I did not do much, just did my job!" When we know they do a lot and do it well.  
Some examples: the custodian, a church secretary, a person who brings a meal to someone healing, or shares, etc. They do good deeds not for show but because it needs to be done, or someone needs help.
5. Finally, who does Jesus say "is the greatest among us"? (verses 11-12). What does that tell us as children of God what we should do?

Dear God,

Teach us to humbly serve you and to do what is right, and to have the self-control to not call attention to our deeds. Help us to know we can uplift more people with word and deed rather than trying to raise ourselves up to put others down. We ask this with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

# The Battle of Jericho

## Sunday November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020



1. Read the story – Joshua 6:1-20, Spark Bible p. 102
  - a. *On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.*
  - b. While you read the story, roll up a piece of paper to make a shofar (trumpet) and blow it while you march around your house or your room seven times.
  - c. After the story, play a game of musical chairs!
2. Discuss
  - a. What do you think the people in Jericho were thinking when they saw the Israelites start to march around their city?
  - b. Do you think you could have marched and played an instrument for seven days?
  - c. What do you think the Israelites felt when the walls of Jericho fell down?
  - d. God kept God’s promise to the people of Israel, by bringing down the walls of Jericho. How can we remind ourselves that God keeps God’s promises to us too?
3. Pray
  - a. Holy One, we thank you for keeping your promises and for always being with us. Teach us to listen to you, to pray thanksgiving, and to bring our worries to you. We know that you are faithful and that you love us more than we can ever know. Help us to love others, just as you love us.
  - b. Pray the Lord’s Prayer Together.

# Parable of the Talents

## Sunday November 15, 2020



Matthew 25:14-30 Parable of the Talents  
Spark Bible p. 316

Read the text.

Reflection:

To me, this parable is all about God honoring love and generosity as a way of life, and not fear as a way of life. In the story, the slaves' master praised the slaves who traded the talents (money) so that they doubled the money and gave all of it back to their master. We can do that same kind of thing when we use God's gifts (our hands/minds/skills) to take something and make it greater, and then give it away.

When we operate out of fear, and hide valuable things, their greater purpose cannot be fulfilled and they cannot be shared with the world.

Activity:

As you consider this parable, plan a way to make something greater and give it away or somehow share it with the world. For example, buy some lemons, make lemonade, and then donate the money (which will be worth much more than the original lemons and sugar) to a good cause! Or take some ingredients, make something much more delicious, and give it to someone in need of a delicious treat!

Prayer:

Heavenly Creator, thank you for the talents and skills you have given us. Please help us to magnify your gifts and live with generous hearts so that we can make the world a better, safer, more just home for all of us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

# **The Sheep and The Goats**

## **Sunday November 22, 2020**



### **1. Read the story – Matthew 25:31-46 Spark Bible p. 318**

When you read the story, think about which you would rather be, a sheep or a goat. God is giving us guidance all of the time. This is a story that helps us learn about what God wants us to do. We always have the choice to follow God's guidance or to choose not to.

### **2. Discuss**

- a. How do you decide whether or not you are going to help someone? Is it because it seems scary, is it because you feel there is not enough time, does it cost money? What else keeps you from doing God's work?
- b. Look at these verses and if you have a personal story that is like the example, share your story. OR share an idea of what you could do and then plan to do it!

<sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

### **3. Pray**

- a. Oh God, who listens to our every prayer, help us to feed the hungry, clothe the stranger, visit the sick and work for justice for those who are in prison.
- b. Pray the Lord's Prayer

