



Make It Simple

A Resource for Stewardship Education and Annual Response

Facing the Truth (Based on Mark 4:37-41)

Background thoughts

From a young age, children learn the challenge of sharing. Sharing can feel particularly difficult because it's about taking turns. But as kids grow up and develop the skills of playing together, they learn that they can actually get both more toy time and more friend time by sharing what they have.

As children we all learned the word "mine." It's one of those words that we never seem to stop saying, no matter how old we are. But God teaches us new words. As people of faith, we must consider God's perspective on sharing. We can go back to our beginnings—to creation and to Jesus' ministry on earth. Here we find clues about what sharing looks like, for kids and adults.

Creation reflects God's gift-giving qualities. God could have hoarded a sunset, a breaching whale, the wing of a fly—but God created a host of beings to share and care for creation. Jesus shared and shared—his time, his possessions, his faith, his trust, his honest sense of God's truth. He could have kept a corner on the market of God's message, but that's not what he came for. And that's not what we're here for.

What about MAKE IT SIMPLE? Simple living and giving is sometimes not simple for kids because "it" includes sharing. "It" includes learning about generosity from adults who are also greedy and flawed; and "it" means learning to hear what God has to say (appealing, but not simple).

While kids (and adults) usually find it hard to share, kids also typically LOVE to help. The natural inclination to make a difference, get active, and see results resides in kids, alongside the strong "mine" attitude. In other words, sin and grace exist on a miniature scale in small children.

Children still live in a stage of dependence on their family for their basic human needs. Because of that, it may be simpler for them to accept what we say as people of faith, that we depend on God.

Reflections and questions

- In today's world, how do children learn about "sharing?" Who are their teachers?
- Age development theories are more understanding of the difficulty of teaching sharing and generosity.
- What's the difference between sharing and generosity? How are they the same?
- In these times, what are children afraid of? How do they learn those fears?

Preparing for the sermon

1. Find a volunteer "musician" who can play Middle C on his/her instrument, at your cue.
2. Read through the Children's Sermon here for timing of your remarks and your cues to the musician.

Sermon: Middle Sea

(Say aloud to the musician.) Before I begin, could I get a Middle C? *(After note sounds)*
Thanks.

One day, after giving people food, making sick people better, and telling people God's truth, Jesus got into a boat. "Come on in," he told his friends, the disciples. So the disciples climbed in the boat. Be careful; it's kind of tippy. *(Pretend to rock in a boat.)*

Hold on a second... *(To musician)* Could I get another Middle C? *(After note sounds)*
Thanks.

Everyone in the boat? Great. The boat started off to the other side of the lake on gentle waves. Let's feel those gentle waves. *(Rock with children, as though by waves.)*

In the middle of the night a horrible storm came up! *(Pause and look terrified.)* Hold on another second—you don't mind, do you? *(To musician)* Could I get another Middle C? *(After note sounds)* Thanks.

Where was I? Oh yeah, the storm raged on. The disciples awakened to ferocious winds and water pouring in. They tried to bail out the water with their hands, with their arms, with their feet, with their heads! *(Pretend to bail.)*

Now Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat. I mean, this guy could sleep! He slept through the waves; he slept through the wind; he slept through the water. But Jesus was God, of course, and God can even work in his sleep and God can definitely work in our sleep.

Did you know Jesus gave those disciples something before he even woke up? In the middle of the night, in the middle of the sea, he gave them “Middle Sea.” (Cue musician for a note, then continue.) Middle C was a prayer. (Chant the following at that pitch.) Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Help us Jesus, we are drowning.

Jesus gave the disciples a prayer and they prayed it louder and louder. (Chant together, at Middle C pitch.) Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Help us Jesus, we are drowning.

Finally, Jesus woke up. He looked sort of grouchy. But he reached out his arms and shouted above the storm, “Peace. Be still.” Instantly, there was silence. No more waves, no more wind. (Stop moving.)

Then Jesus looked at the storm inside the boat. He looked at the disciples’ scared eyes, he looked at the way they were all wet, he looked at the way their hands gripped the sides of the boat. And Jesus gave them Middle Sea Part 2. (Cue musician for pitch again.) (Chant the following at that pitch.) Peace, be still. Peace, be still. (Invite the children to chant together this new prayer.)

“We’re almost there,” Jesus told them. “When we get out of the boat on the other side, we’ll keep doing what we do. We’ll feed people and heal people and help people. And we’ll give something else after this trip. We’ll give them Middle Sea for their storms.” (Without seeking the pitch again, chant the entire prayer, inviting children to join you.) Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Peace, be still. Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Peace, be still.

You know, some people say that the church is like a boat. (Look up and around your worship space.) Some churches have a ceiling shaped like an upside down ark. We travel the seas in this boat. We journey with Jesus here. We go through some big storms outside of this boat and even sometimes inside this boat. And just like he promised, Jesus gives us Middle Sea here. (Chant the prayer, now inviting everyone in the congregation) Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Peace, be still. Amen!