

WEEK SIX

O THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE POOR IN SPIRIT – THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

BIG IDEA

Jesus chose to be poor in this world but

RICH IN GOD'S WAY SO HE COULD LIVE LIGHTLY AND **FREELY**

PREP

- Find four buckets or containers and in each put several toys, DVDs, soft toys, books or other 'stuff' your children own and value.
- Cut up pieces of paper (at least two per person) and write \$5 on each of them (or use play money).
- Cut out pictures of lunches from the appendix.
- Cut out a paper heart for each person.
- Find a couple of tins that are empty (a lolly or biscuit tin, a jewellery box).

WHAT GOES IN THE BOX?

- Paper money – see above (or use monopoly money etc).
- The pictures of lunches from appendix.
- Paper hearts.



GAME

- Place the four buckets (or piles) of things around the room.
- Start with the child whose birthday is nearest today. When you press the hooter they must run to the first bucket, choose one thing, hold on to it in some way (they can stuff it in their shirt or pockets), then run to each of the next three buckets and pick something out of each.
- When you have your four things, then run to the end of the hall, turn around twice and come back to the beginning, and do a star jump without dropping anything. (Time each child)
- When everyone has had a turn repeat the route, only this time without picking anything up from the buckets.
- See how much more quickly the children can run the race without having to pick up and carry all the extra stuff.

Questions

- Which was easier? To run the course holding on to the things you picked up, or without them?
- Do you think that having lots of stuff is what makes a person rich?
- How many toys/things make a person rich?
- How many toys/things make a person happy?

Remember how the Beatitudes tell us that we are blessed or happy if we live the way

“ IT IS REALLY ONLY THE POOR IN SPIRIT WHO CAN, ACTUALLY, HAVE ANYTHING, BECAUSE THEY ARE THE ONES WHO KNOW HOW TO RECEIVE GIFTS. FOR THEM, EVERYTHING IS A GIFT. ”

- SIMON TUGWELL -

Jesus lived. He chose to be poor in this world but rich in God's way. Living that way means that God's will is done here on earth as well as in heaven. This week's Beatitude is "Blessed are the poor in spirit because theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

● **What do you think poor in spirit means?**

People who are poor in spirit realise their own helplessness; they also know that material things don't really matter. The kingdom of heaven belongs to people who put their whole trust in God. It belongs to us when we put our whole trust in God.

Note to parents:

NB: It is interesting to note that the Greek here for the term "poor" refers to actual material poverty, not just an attitude toward riches. It is a real challenge to the way we choose to live our lives. "In spirit" reminds us that it is the choice as to how we live. Being destitute and living without reputation or power means our whole trust rests in God.

OUT OF THE BOX

- Give each person a different amount of money e.g. one person gets \$5, two people get \$10 and one person gets \$20.

Questions

- **Tell me - who is the richest?**
- **Who is the poorest?**
- Lay the pictures of the lunches on the table.
- Using your paper money, choose what you can afford to buy for lunch.
 - A sandwich and water bottle cost \$5
 - Roast chicken and dessert cost \$10
 - 3 burgers, 2 large fries and a large bottle of lemonade cost \$20

Questions

- **How do you feel about the meal that you bought?**
- **Which was the best meal?**

Some people in our world get no food at all –that is never a blessing from God.

There is enough food in the world to feed everyone, but some take more than they need, and others don't get enough.

We are blessed when we know what enough is, and are content with that.

Then we can give our surplus to others, and know true riches here on earth, as well as building riches in heaven.

READ

Listen to what Jesus said about how he cares for us:

“ Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it... But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that is safe, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ”

Luke 12:15, 29-33 (NIV)

FAMILY TALK TIME

- **What do you think Jesus was saying to his disciples?**

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READ

A well-known Christian hero who chose to be poor, just as Jesus did, is St Francis of Assisi. Listen to some of his story:

Francis was born to a rich family around 1181 in Assisi, Italy. He had six brothers and sisters and as a young handsome man he loved parties, and enjoyed spending money and wearing beautiful clothes. He really didn't think much about other people's feelings or needs. However one day Francis saw a beggar and, as usual, refused to give him anything. But this time his conscience worried him. He felt bad, and later ran back to give the poor and homeless man some money. A little while later Francis got very sick and, as he remembered this incident, he realised he was wasting his life. He decided the best way he could use his life was to follow Jesus. He began to pray, and give his clothes and money to the poor. He helped care for the sick in hospitals and lived humbly and simply.

His father became very cross with him, because he wasn't important in society anymore, and he refused to give Francis any more money. So Francis became a beggar, just like the man he had helped. He begged for food but he also begged people to turn to God, and give their lives to help others. He loved the outdoors and the animals, and people were amazed the way that the animals and birds loved him back and seemed to obey him.

Many people turned their hearts back to God because they saw Jesus in Francis. Soon Francis was joined by others and that is how the Franciscan order of brothers began. The Franciscan order of brothers is committed to helping the poor and sick, and preaching the gospel.))

EXPLORE

- Bring out a couple of tins the children know usually have good things inside e.g. biscuit tin; jewellery box; money box. (Make sure they are empty)
- Ask what they think is going to be inside each container.
- Let the children open them.

Questions

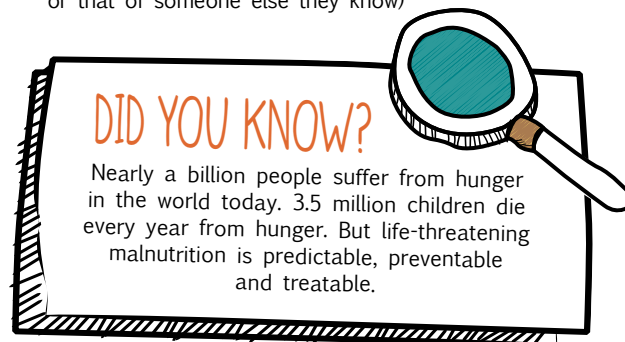
- **Is that what you expected? i.e. being empty?**
- **Is it ever good for something to be empty? When? (an empty tummy before dinner; the empty tomb!)**

When we are poor in spirit, we know we are empty without Jesus. Jesus taught that owning many things will not make us happier. He wants us to know that when we are empty of all the things we sometimes think are important, like our possessions, we make space to be filled with the important things – things like God's love.

When we realise we are helpless and put our trust in God, not in things, we become his children and our real treasure is kept in heaven – with God.

Question

- **Is there someone we know who has let go of things in order to trust and serve God?** (Maybe Mum and Dad might share their own story, or that of someone else they know)



PRAY

- Hand out the play money (This time give everyone the same amount). Invite everyone to place their money in the Faith Box, and trade it for a cut out heart. Everyone hold their paper heart as they pray.

“Dear God Thank you for all the love you have given us. Please give me a humble heart and make me a blessing to others. Help us to remember when we are poor that you have riches in heaven for us.”

LIVE

Talk together this week about how we store away treasure in heaven. Take some time to go somewhere special outdoors and read together The Prayer of St Francis:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

Amen



Make a Sand Timer; it empties itself to be filled. Recycle 2 small plastic bottles (you can make them smaller by cutting out the mid section and taping the two pieces back together. Drill a hole in one lid and leave the second bottle with no lid. Pour some sand into one bottle, about $\frac{2}{3}$ full, then tape the two bottles together neck to neck.

This craft reminds us to be empty (poor in spirit) so God can fill us with his love. You may want to use the sand-timer to see if you can remember the Beatitudes memory verse.

Talk together about the issue of pocket money in your family. How much might we give to those who are poorer than us? Set up a scheme so everyone lives by this principle: give some, save some and spend some.

Make St Francis' favourite recipe – little Italian honey almond cakes !

Ingredients

- 1 pound (about 500g) blanched almonds, ground.
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon, or 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 egg whites, lightly beaten
- Approximately 1 cup of flour

In a bowl combine the nuts, honey, cinnamon, and egg whites. Mix thoroughly. Gradually stir in enough flour to form a thick paste.

On a lightly floured surface, knead the paste until smooth and stiff. Roll out to about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Cut into diamond shapes, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. Place the diamonds on a lightly buttered and floured baking sheet. Let dry for 1-2 hours.

Bake in preheated 250°F oven for 20-30 minutes or until set. Do not let brown.

Recipe from "A Continual Feast" by Evelyn Birge Vitz

**CHECK OUT WHAT YOU
NEED FOR NEXT WEEK...**



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