

TEACHER BIBLE STUDY

Parable of the Vineyard Workers

Matthew 20:1-16

The religious leaders who listened to and watched Jesus had some problems with the things He said and did. He taught about a righteousness that comes by faith rather than works, and He was friends with tax collectors and sinners. So Jesus told a parable to make clear that entering God's kingdom was not a matter of merit but of grace.

The parable of the vineyard workers is about a landowner who hired workers to work in his vineyard. The first group agreed to work for a denarius, a fair wage for a day's work. Throughout the day, the landowner hired more groups of workers. At the end of the day, the landowner paid every worker one denarius. The workers who had put in 12 hours did not think it was fair that those who worked just one hour were paid the same.

In Jesus' parable, the second, third, fourth, and fifth groups of workers represent people who are not a part of the nation of Israel. The Israelites had been following God for generations. They faced trials, paralleling the men who worked through the heat of the day. God promised blessings to Abraham's family, Israel. (See Gen. 12:2-3.) God kept His promise, yet He also poured out blessings on tax collectors, sinners, Gentiles.

Like the landowner and his wealth, God is free to share His grace as He desires. Jesus gave salvation to the criminal who was crucified next to Him and to Saul, who persecuted believers. Does God act fairly in saving people who have not followed Him their entire lives? The reward—eternal life—is God's grace to those who believe, whether they believe at the first or at the last.

God is generous; He gives good gifts. Jesus' parable teaches about God's grace. God does not owe us anything, yet He pours out blessings on us. He makes salvation possible for us, regardless of our abilities or efforts. The last will be first, and the first last. This gospel does not make sense to the world, but it is good news for sinners. We deserve to die for our sins, but God gives us what we don't deserve—salvation through His Son, Jesus.

YOUNGER KIDS BIBLE STUDY OVERVIEW

Session Title: Parable of the Vineyard Workers

Bible Passage: Matthew 20:1-16

Big Picture Question: Why does God give good gifts? God gives good gifts because He is generous.

Key Passage: Matthew 13:10-11

Unit Christ Connection: Jesus taught in parables so His followers would understand how to live in anticipation of His second coming.

Small Group Time

Welcome time
Activity page (5 minutes)
Session starter (10 minutes)
Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Bible story review (10 minutes)
Activity choice (10 minutes)
Journal (5 minutes)
Prayer (5 minutes)

THE BIBLE STORY

Parable of the Vineyard Workers

Matthew 20:1-16

One day, as Jesus was teaching, He **told a story about some men who worked in a vineyard**. A vineyard is like a farm where grapes grow. Jesus told this story to teach the people about God's kingdom.

Jesus said, "This is what the kingdom of heaven is like. **A man who owned a vineyard went out early in the morning and hired some workers. He told the workers that he would pay them each one denarius** (dih NEHR ih uhs). A denarius was a silver coin worth one day's work. **So the workers went to the vineyard.**"

Then Jesus said, "**A few hours later, around nine in the morning, the landowner went out again. He saw some men standing in the marketplace.** They did not have any work to do. **So the landowner said, 'You can work in my vineyard too, and I will pay you what is right.'** So these men went to the vineyard to work.

"The landowner went out three more times, a few hours apart. Around noon and around three o'clock, **he hired more men who did not have jobs to do. These men went to his vineyard to work.** At five o'clock, the landowner found more men standing around.

" 'Why have you been standing here all day doing nothing?' the landowner asked.

" 'Because no one hired us,' they said. So the landowner invited the men to work in his vineyard.

"At the end of the day, the landowner told the man in charge of the workers to call them together and pay them, starting with the workers who arrived last and ending with the workers who started early in the morning.

"The men who were hired around five o'clock came to be paid, and they each received one denarius. The men who had been hired early in the morning saw what those workers received, so they expected to be paid more. But when it was their turn to be paid, they also received one denarius.

“ ‘These men have only been working for one hour, and you paid them the same as us,’ they complained to the landowner. ‘We have been working all day in the heat!’

“The landowner said to one of the men, ‘Friend, I have been fair with you. You agreed to work for one denarius, right? Take your pay and go. I want to give this last worker the same as I gave you. I can do what I want with my own money. Are you jealous because I am generous?’ ”

Jesus ended His story by explaining, “So those who are last now will be first, and those who are first now will be last.”

Christ Connection: Jesus’ parable teaches about God’s grace. God is generous, and He loves us. We deserve to die for our sins, but God gives us what we don’t deserve—salvation through His Son, Jesus.

SMALL GROUP OPENING

Session Title: Parable of the Vineyard Workers

Bible Passage: Matthew 20:1-16

Big Picture Question: Why does God give good gifts? God gives good gifts because He is generous.

Key Passage: Matthew 13:10-11

Unit Christ Connection: Jesus taught in parables so His followers would understand how to live in anticipation of His second coming.

Welcome time:

Arriving Activity: Same prize

- small prize, 1 per kid

Provide tasks as kids arrive. Explain that kids will get a prize if they complete the task. Make sure some of the tasks are much harder than others. Consider tasks like sharpening the pencils, sorting the markers, straightening up the room’s resources, wiping the tables, and so forth. You may even choose to allow a kid to sharpen 1 pencil while another sharpens 10. Right before beginning the session, give each kid the exact same prize.

Say • Do you think some of you deserved a bigger prize than others? Why or why not? In today’s Bible story, we’ll discover a similar situation.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Vineyard Coins” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils

Guide boys and girls to complete the activity page.

Say • In a few minutes, we’ll learn about a parable Jesus told about a man who chose to pay his workers the same amount, even though some worked fewer hours.

Session starter (10 minutes)

Option 1: Gather the workers

- paper
- marker
- scissors
- basket or other container

Write the numbers 1–3 on several small pieces of paper. Choose two volunteers and declare one area a vineyard for one volunteer and another area a vineyard for the other volunteer. Place a basket or other container with the pieces of paper inside it between the two vineyards.

At the start signal, a vineyard owner must run to the basket and pull out a piece of paper. He must then choose the number of kids on the paper to come help him in his vineyard. Once they are in his vineyard area, he will return for another piece of paper. The game continues until all the kids are in a vineyard. The winner is the vineyard with the most kids.

Say • In today’s Bible story, Jesus told a parable about a vineyard owner who hired workers throughout a day but paid them the same. Do you think that is fair? We’ll see what Jesus said about it.

Option 2: Grape snack

- raisins or gummies in fruit shapes
- grape juice or grape-flavored water (optional)
- Allergy Alert

Provide kids with raisins or gummies in fruit shapes. Invite the kids to eat the gummies or raisins as a snack. Consider serving grape juice or grape-flavored water.

Say • Today’s Bible story centers around a parable about an owner of a vineyard. A vineyard is a grape farm. We’ll find out this story’s special message.

SMALL GROUP LEADER

Session Title: Parable of the Vineyard Workers

Bible Passage: Matthew 20:1-16

Big Picture Question: Why does God give good gifts? God gives good gifts because He is generous.

Key Passage: Matthew 13:10-11

Unit Christ Connection: Jesus taught in parables so His followers would understand how to live in anticipation of His second coming.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- dry erase board and markers (optional)
- box
- wrapping paper
- tape
- bow
- marker

Make sure the key passage, Matthew 13:10-11, is visible for each child, either as the slide, printed poster, or written on a dry erase board. Read the verses together.

Say • Jesus told stories called *parables* to teach His disciples. Why? He wanted them to understand more about God and God's kingdom. Wrap a box of any size, and securely tape a bow on top. Write a number on all sides but the bow. Use a different number between 1 and 5. Repeat the key passage together several times. Form two or more groups. Allow one group of kids to roll the box. Whichever number lands facing up is the number of hints they will get as they read through the key passage.

Choose one volunteer to say the verses, but the volunteer can get help from her group. She can only get the number of hints the team rolled. If the group completes the key passage successfully, that group gains a point. Give each group an opportunity play. Continue as time allows. The group with the most points wins.

Bible story review (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Small Group Visual Pack
- Big Picture Question Slide or Poster
- coin or token, 1 per kid

Encourage the kids to find Matthew 20:1-16 in their Bibles. Help them as needed.

Say • Matthew is the first book in which division of the Bible? (*Gospels, New Testament*) Who was Matthew? (*a disciple of Jesus*) Matthew is the first book of the New Testament, but it also quotes more of the Old Testament than any other book in the Gospels.

Use the small group visual pack to show kids where today's Bible story is on the timeline. Review the Bible story provided using the bolded text, or summarize the story in your own words. As you retell the story, invite a group of kids up each time you talk about the owner hiring workers. Give them a specific place to stand. By the end, all of the kids should be chosen. Close by giving them all a coin, a penny, or a token of some kind. Invite them to keep the coin as a reminder of all that God has given them.

Say • The vineyard owner had the right to choose how he paid his workers. The first workers could have been happy that the owner was generous to the other workers. Instead, they were jealous. God wants His people to be happy when He blesses others. Nobody deserves God's goodness, but God gives it anyway.

Show the big picture question slide or poster.

Say • *Why does God give good gifts? God gives good gifts because He is generous.*

Activity choice (10 minutes)

Option 1: Grape art

- purple, blue, red, or green finger paint or washable markers
- paper

Demonstrate how the kids can use fingerprints to make a triangle-shaped bunch of grapes. Provide a piece of paper and purple, blue, red, or green finger paints. If you don't have finger paints, provide the same colors in washable markers. The kids can color their fingertips and press their fingers to the paper. Once the kids finish their grape pictures, invite them to draw a stem and leaves above the grapes. Encourage the kids to write the Bible story reference at the bottom of the page.

Say • Jesus used the parable about the vineyard workers to show that some of God's chosen people, the Jews, didn't understand God's grace. God gives good gifts to people of all nations. *Why does God give good gifts? God gives good gifts because He is generous.*

Option 2: Grape game

- purple (or red) and green balloons
- green foam or paper
- scissors
- tape

Provide a purple balloon to half of the kids in the room and a green balloon to the other half. Each kid should cut a leaf out of a piece of green foam or paper. Cut a slit in the leaf cutout. Slide the leaf over the end of the balloon and inflate it about halfway. Tie the balloons. Then tape a line on one side of the room and another line on the opposite side.

Encourage those with purple balloons to line up behind one line and those with green balloons to line up behind the other. When given a start signal, each kid must bat her balloon into the air as she moves toward the opposite line. The first team to get all of its members across that line wins. If a balloon hits the ground, that kid must start over. If someone hits a balloon from the opposite group, he must start over too. Consider allowing the kids to take their balloon home.

Say • The first vineyard workers didn't understand why they didn't get more for working longer. The owner wasn't punishing them; he was being generous to the others. ***Why does God give good gifts? God gives good gifts because He is generous.***

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

- Journal Page, 1 per kid
- markers or crayons
- Bible Story Coloring Page

Distribute each child's journal page provided with this session. Instruct the kids to draw a picture of something God has given them. Writers can write a list of good things God has given them.

Say • It's time for our last review of the big picture question and answer. ***Why does God give good gifts? God gives good gifts because He is generous.***

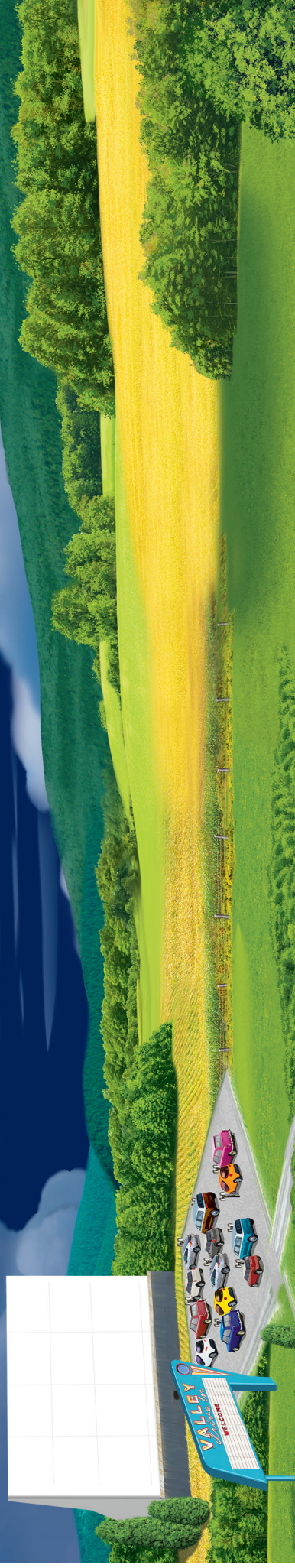
If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for all His good gifts. Pray for each child by name, asking God to allow the kids to understand God's love for others in a way that makes them want to be generous as well.

Dismiss to parents – Make sure to check security tags when dismissing children.



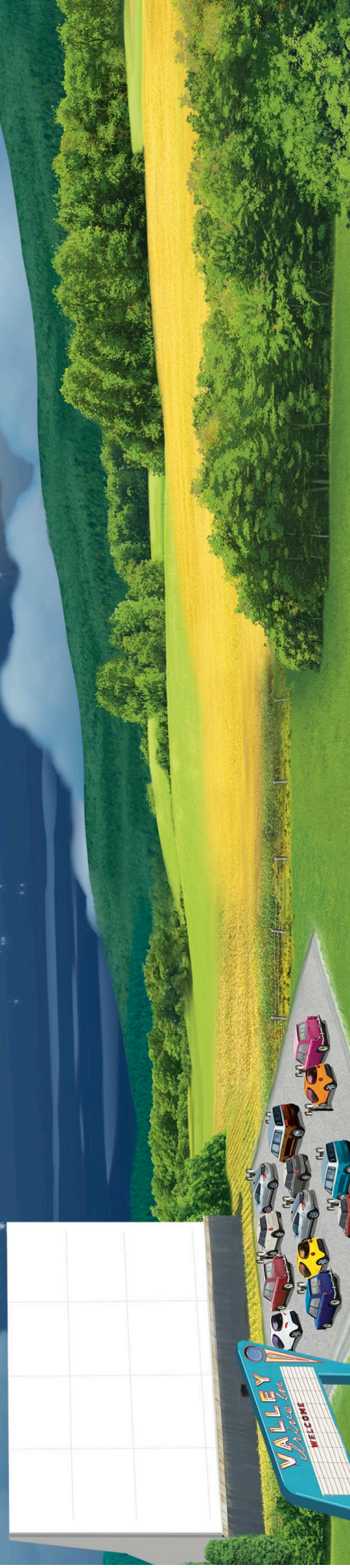
**The disciples came to him and asked,
“Why do you speak to the people in
parables?” He replied, “Because
the knowledge of the secrets of the
kingdom of heaven has been given to
you, but not to them.”**

Matthew 13:10-11



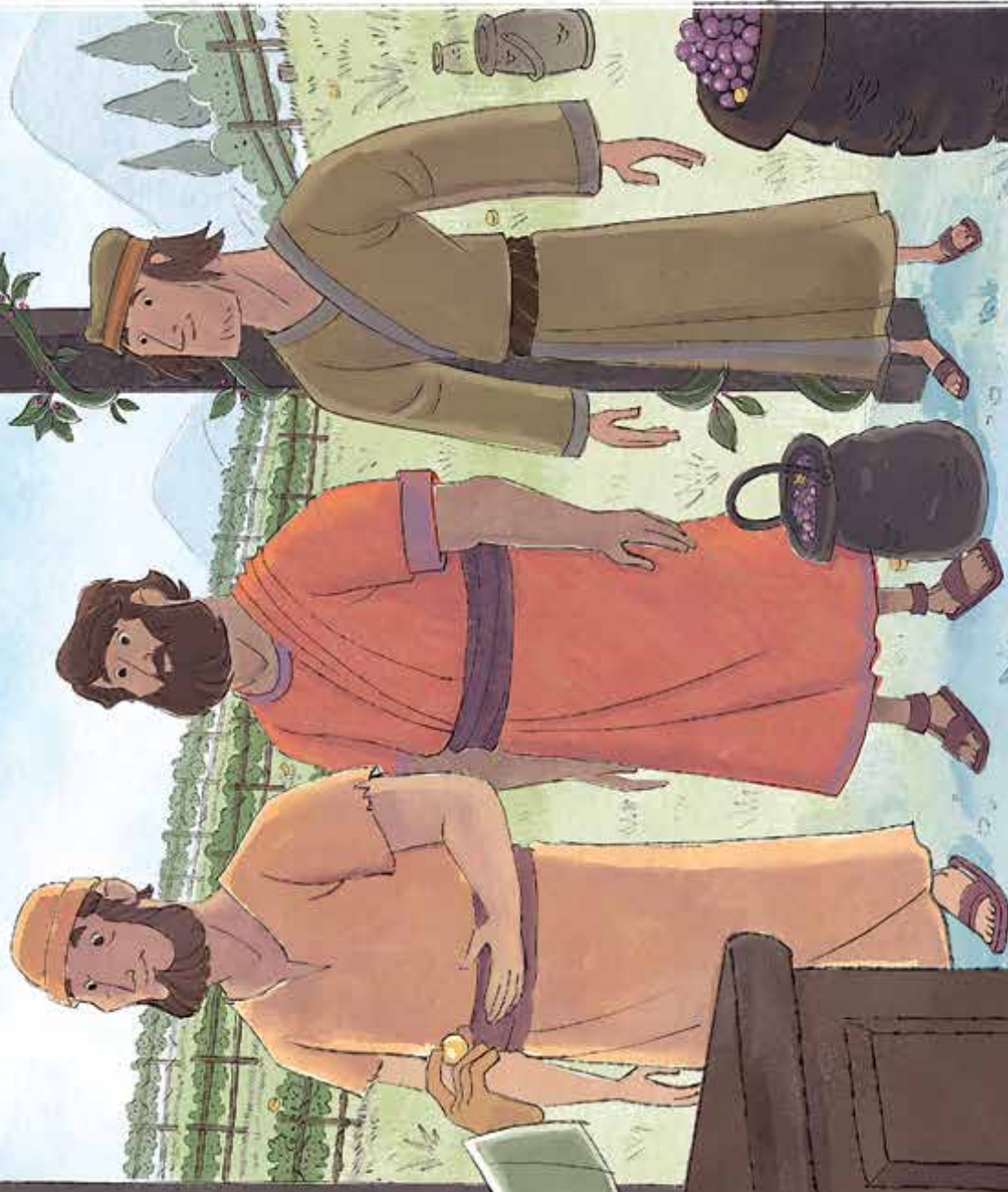
**Why does God give
good gifts?**

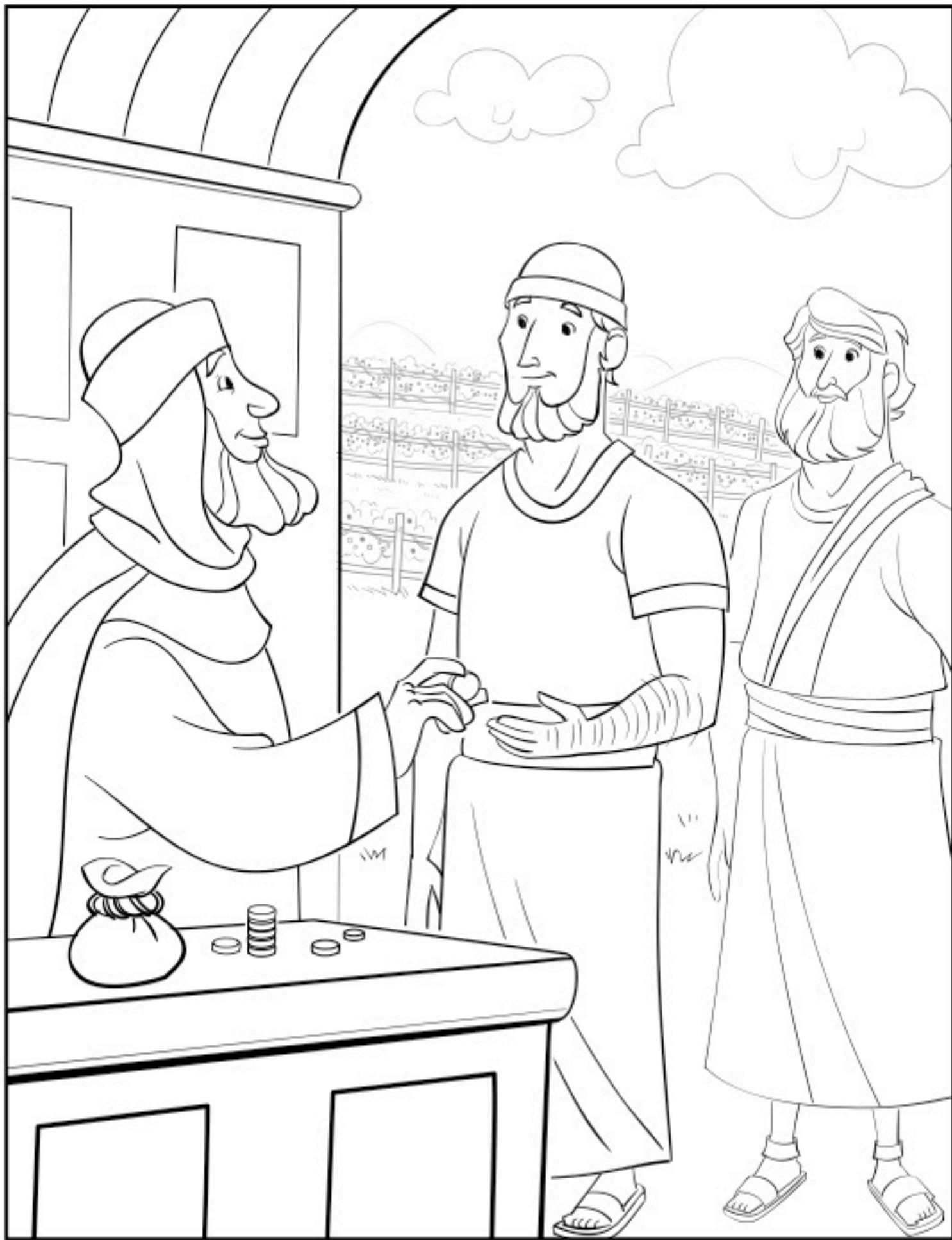
**God gives good gifts
because He is generous.**



Vineyard Coins

Instructions: Find the 10 hidden coins needed to pay the workers at the vineyard.





ALLERGY ALERT



Today we will be tasting/
touching/sniffing:

Please notify the leader
if your child should not
participate.

Instructions: Print this poster. You may laminate it and reuse it throughout the quarter. Use a dry erase marker to fill in the necessary information. Display the poster where parents and kids can see it before class.

the

GOSPEL

GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

gos-pel – *noun*. good news. the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation.



GOD RULES.

The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything. *Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16-17*



WE SINNED.

We all choose to disobey God. The Bible calls this sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. *Romans 3:23; 6:23*



GOD PROVIDED.

God sent Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. *John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9*



JESUS GIVES.

He lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! *Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:8-9*



WE RESPOND.

Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus. *John 14:6; Romans 10:9-10,13*

Jesus Taught with Parables

Give kids grapes to eat as a snack. Explain that grapes grow on vines in a vineyard. Review the Bible story. The landowner hired men to work his fields. At the end of the day, the landowner paid all the workers what was fair or more than they deserved. Ask the big picture question and lead kids to respond with the answer. List below ways God has been generous to your family.

Parable of the Vineyard Workers

Matthew 20:1-16

Preschool

Key Passage: Matthew 13:11

Big Picture Question: What does God give us? God gives good gifts.

Christ Connection: Jesus told a story to teach people about God. God loves us and gives us good gifts. No one can earn a gift. Everyone sins, or disobeys God, so everyone deserves to be punished. But God gave a good gift: His Son, Jesus. People who trust in Jesus will live with God forever.

Kids

Key Passage: Matthew 13:10-11

Big Picture Question: Why does God give good gifts? God gives good gifts because He is generous.

Christ Connection: Jesus' parable teaches about

God's grace. God is generous, and He loves us. We deserve to die for our sins, but God gives us what we don't deserve—salvation through His Son, Jesus.

