

Parable of the Vineyard

Lesson At-A-Glance

Scripture Reference
Matthew 21:33-46

Church Season
Pentecost

Lesson Focus
**God sends us
messengers.**



Tear here for easy use!

Gather (10 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
<p>Arrival Time Kids make a classroom welcome mat and do an Activity Page.</p>	<p>Activity Pages </p>	<p>Pencils, poster board, markers, masking tape</p>
<p>Circle Time Kids gather in a circle to greet each other, hear about the lectionary season, and find out about some of God's messengers.</p>	<p>Leaflet, Spark Story Bible</p>	<p>Hand mirror</p>
<p>Prayer Time Kids pray the Lord's Prayer.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
<p>Parable of the Vineyard Storytelling Leader or kid reads aloud from the Spark Story Bible and kids demonstrate listening versus ignoring God's message.</p>	<p>Spark Story Bibles</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Grapes, Grapes, Grapes! Kids retell their part of the Bible story by singing a song.</p>	<p>Leaflets, Lesson Stickers</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>I'm a Messenger Kids choose a message of God's love and ways that they can deliver it.</p>	<p>Leaflets</p>	<p>Markers</p>

Lesson At-A-Glance

Activate Faith (15 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Mystery Message Kids complete a maze to find a message from God.	Leaflets	Pencils
Great Grape Facts Kids learn all about grapes.	Leaflets	None
Writing with Raisins Kids use raisins to form message words from God.	None	Raisins, paper towels, whiteboard, dry-erase marker

Tear here for easy use!

Send (5 minutes)

	Spark Resources	Supplies
Good-bye Time Kids select what they will do at home this week, say the lesson focus statement, and gather to say good-bye.	Leaflets	Pencils, scissors
Prayer Time Kids receive a blessing.	Leaflets, Family Pages 	None



Visit www.sparksundayschool.org for more Spark content! Watch a short Lesson Prep Video that will prepare you and give you confidence to explore this Bible story with the kids you are leading. You will also find four downloadable resources for this lesson: an Activity Page, a Family Page, and two additional in-class activities.

Gather (10 minutes)

Arrival Time

Set out copies of the Activity Page for this lesson and pencils on a table.

Before kids arrive write the word WELCOME in large open letters on the poster board.

Make a point of welcoming each kid by name with a big smile and with a personal message. Here's an example: **Welcome, [Name]! It's so good to see you today. What a great smile!**

Today I welcomed you with words and a smile. What are some other ways we can welcome people? Affirm responses. **We can shake hands or give a hug to welcome someone. We can offer a treat or something to drink. Some people put welcome mats outside their front doors to welcome people. How many of you have a welcome mat at home?** Pause for responses. **We're going to all work together to make a beautiful welcome mat. You may color in the letters and draw whatever else you think people might like to see.** If you have a large class, make two mats. While kids are coloring, ask them about times and places where they have seen a welcome mat. Place the mat on the floor, right outside the entrance to your classroom. Secure in place with a masking tape border all around the outside of the mat.

Invite kids to do the Activity Page.

Spark Resources

Activity Pages



Supplies

Pencils
Poster board
Markers
Masking tape

Tear here for easy use!

Circle Time

Invite the kids to stand in a circle facing out. Hold each other's hands up high. One at a time, turn 180 degrees to the left, crossing your arms so that you are facing into the circle, your right arm over your left. Each person says, **"My name is [name] and I'm in God's family!"** Invite the next kid to your left to turn in to the circle in the same manner. Go around the circle until everyone is facing in. If you do this each week, make sure the kids stand in a different order so that no one is last every week.

Gather kids to sit in a circle, in a small group on the floor, or at tables.

If the kids in your class tried the Faith on the Go! activities from last week's leaflet, be sure to invite kids to share what they did. Ask everyone how they showed love to someone or helped another person during the last week.

Hold up the leaflet, and point to the road and tree on the green background. **What does this little symbol mean?** *(It's the season of Pentecost.)* **Today when you arrived we made a welcome mat. It's been a long time since we first welcomed Pentecost. Pentecost arrived many Sundays ago. But we have lots of Pentecost**

Spark Resources

Leaflet
Spark Story Bible

Supplies

Hand mirror

Sundays left. Pentecost is a growing season. That's why this little square is green, like a growing grape. It takes a long time to grow at church. We keep growing and growing for God.

Today we welcomed Pentecost again. And we welcome something else—God's messengers. What does a messenger do? (*delivers packages, messages*) **What does a messenger deliver for God?** (*messages of love and hope, tells us what God expects*) **Who does God pick to be a messenger?** Pause. **Let's look at some pictures in our Spark Story Bible and find out.** Open the Spark Story Bible and turn to page 35. Show the kids the following pictures. **See those three strangers? God sent them as messengers to Abraham and Sarah.** Turn to page 281 in the Spark Story Bible. **Who's in this picture?** (*Jesus*) **God sent Jesus as a messenger to teach us about love. I have one more messenger to show you. This one is not in the Bible.** Pass the hand mirror around for kids to look at themselves. **We are God's messengers. God sends us to bring a message of hope and love in this world. And when God sends us out as messengers, God says, "I'm always with you!"**

Tear here for easy use!

Prayer Time

Remind me what messengers do. (*deliver messages*) **I'm going to say a prayer we say often at church. It's called the Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught the disciples this prayer. Listen to me pray or pray the prayer aloud with me if you know any of the words. When you hear the word deliver, raise your hand.** (Note to Leader: If this is not the version of the Lord's Prayer that you pray, please substitute the one you pray most often in your church.)

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
None

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen.**

Open the Bible (15 minutes)

Parable of the Vineyard Storytelling

Tear here for easy use!

Today's Bible story is called Parable of the Vineyard. We learned about vineyards a couple of weeks ago. What is a vineyard? Accept responses. **A vineyard is a place where lots and lots of grape vines grow. And what grows on grape vines?** Pause. **Sweet, tasty grapes! Before we read our story, though, let me tell you a little bit about the Pharisees. The Pharisees were a group of powerful people who didn't like what Jesus said. They treated Jesus badly. But Jesus never stopped trying to teach the Pharisees about God's love. Jesus told this story to teach the Pharisees, and us, about God's love.**

Pass out the Spark Story Bibles and invite everyone to find Parable of the Vineyard on pages 302-303. Wait until all kids have found the story, assisting those who may need help. Encourage kids to follow along as you read or ask for a volunteer to read out loud.

God sends us messengers. God's messengers bring messages of love. What do you have to do to hear a message? (*listen*) **Let's pretend to be the Pharisees and cover our ears while Jesus tries to give us a message.** Read the parable a second time starting on page 302 with "Jesus said." **What can we do to find out what Jesus teaches us?** (*listen*)

Have a brief conversation about the story. Ask the kids these questions:

- 1. Why didn't the Pharisees listen to Jesus?** (*They didn't think they needed God's help.*)
- 2. What did Jesus want the Pharisees to do?** (*listen and learn more about God*)
- 3. Who teaches you or brings you messages about God's love?** Affirm all responses.

Spark Resources
Spark Story Bibles

Supplies
None

Grapes, Grapes, Grapes!

If kids are not already seated at a table, move to one for this activity. Give each kid a leaflet.

Spark Resources
Leaflets
Lesson Stickers

Let's look at the first page of our leaflet. We can see two of the grumpy workers who wanted to keep all of the grapes for themselves. But someone from our story is missing. Can you guess who it is? (*one of the vineyard owner's servants or the owner's son*) Hand out large stickers to kids. Pause to give kids time to place their large stickers.

Raise your hands high if you know the tune for the song *Three Blind Mice*. Pause for a show of hands. **Let's hum it together.** Hum the tune together. **On page one of our leaflets we are going to sing a song to the tune of *Three Blind Mice*. I'm going to read all of the words printed in brown. Together we will sing all of the words printed in green.** Begin by reading aloud the first paragraph in brown. Sing the kids' part with the kids. Sing the verse twice so kids get used to the words. End by reading aloud the closing paragraph.

Leader: **Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Listen and wait!
I'll tell you a story so you get this straight.
A man built a vineyard with grapes everywhere.
He hired some workers. They gave him a scare!"**

Kids: **"Grapes, grapes, grapes! We want the grapes.
Grapes, grapes, grapes! We want the grapes."
The servants showed up, and they asked for the fruit:
"Just give us the grapes and we promise to scoot."
The workers were awful, and gave them the boot.
Grapes, grapes, grapes!**

Leader: **"The vineyard owner didn't know what to do.
So he sent his own son. But they hurt him, too."
The Pharisees listened, but still had to learn,
That Jesus is with us, wherever we turn.**

Let's look at the bottom of this page and read about where we can find this story in the Bible. Today's Bible story, Parable of the Vineyard, is from the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew wrote a book to tell us about Jesus' life. It is filled with stories that Jesus told. Grapes and vineyards are in some of his stories.

Give kids the three word stickers. **Now look at the bottom of the third page in your leaflet. It has the same words that we just read, but it's missing some important words. Use the word stickers to fill in the blanks. Which word do you think goes where?** (*vineyard, Matthew, stories*) After attaching the stickers, read the statements together.

Tear here for easy use!

If you are interested in teaching your kids a Bible Memory Verse from this story, use this one. Teach it to them by inviting them to echo what you say, one phrase at a time.

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that [Jesus] was speaking about them. Matthew 21:45

I'm a Messenger

Invite kids to open to the second page of their leaflets. **Jesus was God's messenger. He came to bring the news: "God loves us!" But the Pharisees didn't listen to Jesus. God wants us to be messengers, too. God wants us to deliver words and acts of love. Let's pick some messages and ways we can deliver them.**

First, let's read the messages aloud together: God loves you! You are my friend! Come to church with me! Let's read a Bible story! Here's a high five for you! Hmmm. Those are all good messages. Which one do you like the best? Why? Affirm responses. **Use your favorite color to draw a circle around your favorite message.** Pause for kids to complete this.

Now let's look at the second part—the pictures! All of these pictures show ways we can deliver a message. What is the first one? (on a bicycle) And the next one? (on foot, walking) Jesus walked and walked to tell his messages about God's love. Walking is a good way to deliver a message. Let's look at the next three: a computer, a cell phone, and by mailing a letter. Which one of these ways could Jesus have used to deliver a message? (a letter) Now it's time for you to draw a circle around the best way to deliver the message that you circled. Give kids time to do this.

Messengers can share God's love through their words and their actions. We've chosen a message and a way that we can deliver it. The third and last part on page two is drawing a picture of something you can do to share God's love. Any ideas? Affirm responses. If kids need some hints you may suggest ideas, such as giving a hug, comforting someone who is sad, helping a younger brother or sister, delivering a plate of cookies to a neighbor, visiting someone in the hospital, and helping at home. Give kids time to draw. Invite them to share their drawings with the class.

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
Markers

Tear here for easy use!

Activate Faith (15 Minutes)

Mystery Message

Let's look at the third page of the leaflet. God sends us messengers—like Jesus! Let's help Jesus get through the maze with a special message from God. I wonder how Jesus will get through this maze. And you can help him by finding the right path and picking up the letters along the way. Give kids time to complete the maze and check to make sure they have found the correct path.

Now it's time to pick up letters! What is the first letter we come to in the maze? (L) Write an L in the first blank. Who can call out the second letter? (I) Now let's write an I in the second blank. Continue in this way, helping the kids to fill in all the blanks. (*Solution: Listen to Jesus.*) **Let's read the special message from God together: Listen to Jesus! How can we listen to Jesus?** Affirm responses. **We can listen to Bible stories that people read; we can listen to and watch movies about Jesus; we can listen to people who sing songs about Jesus; we can listen to people tell stories about how they share God's love; and we can listen to kind words people say to each other. Now turn to the kid on either side of you and say "God loves you!"** Pause to do this. **Thank you for being God's messengers!**

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
Pencils

Great Grape Facts

Turn to the back page of your leaflets. Grapes were a popular food in Jesus' time. That's why he told stories with grapes and vineyards in them. Grapes are a popular food today, too! Raise your hand if you like to eat grapes. Pause for a show of hands. **Which color of grapes do you like the best—red, green, or purple?** Affirm responses. **Let's learn more about grapes!** Invite kids to take turns reading each sentence about grapes.

Grapes grow on vines.

Grapes grow in bunches.

Grapes are green, red, and purple.

Grapes are good for you!

People have been growing grapes for over 8,000 years. Wow! That's a long time.

Grapes dried in the very hot sun for three weeks turn into raisins.

Can you make your face look like a grape? Demonstrate by puffing out your cheeks and opening your eyes wide. **Now let's look like a raisin. Wrinkle up your face like this.** Wrinkle up your face as an example for kids to follow. **Let's play a quick little game. Whenever I say "grapes," stand up and all move to one corner of the room, crowding together like a bunch of grapes. Don't forget to make your "grape" faces. Whenever I say "raisins," sit in your chairs, tilt your face up like you are sunbathing, and make your "raisin" face. If I call out "raisins" two times in a row, then you have to trade chairs. If I call out "grapes" two times in a row, then you have to bunch together in another part of the room.** Call out a variety of patterns of "grapes" and "raisins" to give kids time to move around a little. Play the game for a few minutes and keep the pace quick.

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
None

Tear here for easy use!

Writing with Raisins

Before serving any food, check with caregivers for kids with food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

We're going to write with raisins today. Before we begin, let's all wash our hands. Give everyone time to do this.

Give each kid a paper towel to work on. Place a small handful of raisins on each paper towel. **Let's begin by using our raisins to form the first letter of our first names.** Give kids time to do this. **Good job! Let's try making a cross next.** Pause. **Try making a heart shape now.** Give kids time to work. **Now for our biggest challenge—write the word GOD.** Write G-O-D on the board. Have kids copy the letters using their raisins. **Finally the fun part: Make whatever you'd like.** Have kids create, then show their results to the class. **It's time to clean up our raisins. So you may eat them!** Pray this prayer before eating:

**Thank you, God, for giving us grapes—green, purple, and red;
And for creating food so that we may be fed.
Amen.**

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
Raisins
Paper towels
Whiteboard
Dry-erase marker

Tear here for easy use!

Send (5 Minutes)

Good-bye Time

Thank you for coming to class today! We learned that God sends us messengers. In our Bible story today we found out that God wants us to listen to God's messengers. We made a welcome mat to welcome God's messengers into our classroom. Now it's time to go home and become God's messengers in our everyday lives.

Direct attention to the back of the Faith on the Go! slip on the bottom of the back page of the leaflet, and have the kids fill in the blanks with the name of someone they want to give this slip to, their own name, and today's date. Encourage them to mark one or more of the ideas or add their own. Have kids cut the slip off on the line, ready to give to someone else.

After class, give this slip to someone you want to do the activity with. It's like a coupon for time with you. Next week, we can tell each other what we did to share God's love and remember our Bible story!

It's time for our closing circle. Give kids time to stand with you in a circle facing in. Ask everyone to cross their arms, right over left, and hold hands with the person beside them. Squeeze your right hand, and then invite the kids to squeeze their right hands one at a time. (You will be going clockwise.) Say, **"God gives**

Spark Resources
Leaflets

Supplies
Pencils
Scissors

(name each kid as their hands are squeezed) **a squeeze and a hug today!"** Then shout together, **"God sends us messengers!"** Lift your arms up together, turn 180 degrees to the right, and now you will all be holding hands in a circle facing out.

Prayer Time

When God sends us out as messengers, God helps us. Receive this blessing as you go out into God's world. Let's be silent while I bless each of you. Place a hand on each kid's head in turn and say, **"May God go with you, [Name]. Amen."**

Be sure to send leaflets and Family Pages home with kids.

Spark Resources

Leaflets

Family Pages



Supplies

None

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