2026-06-14 Jesus Receives Childlike Sinners

Introduction

In this lesson, children will learn that Jesus loves childlike trust and welcomes every sinner who knows they need Him. Through two short stories (Jesus blessing the little children in Mark 10:13-16, and Zacchaeus the tax collector in Luke 19:1-10), children will see that Jesus loves to be near people who know they cannot save themselves. Little children do not pretend to be strong. They depend on their parents for everything. Jesus wants every person, children and grown-ups, to come to Him like that: helpless, trusting, happy to depend on Him. Zacchaeus was a grown man, but he was childlike enough to climb a tree just to see Jesus, and Jesus honored that by going to his house. Everyone needs Jesus, and only those who come like a little child will enter the kingdom of God.

Main Ideas:

- **Children Welcomed:** Jesus loves children and welcomes them. He is never too busy for them.
- **Childlike Trust:** Jesus wants every person to come to Him with a humble, dependent heart, like a child.
- **Not Too Big for Jesus:** Grown-ups need Jesus just as much as children do. Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Him.
- **Only Jesus Saves:** Nobody, big or small, can fix their own sinful heart. Only Jesus can.

Praise and Worship (15 mins)

> **Parents:** The parent and child scheduled for this week will lead us in singing on Sunday. Please take time to practice the songs together at home, helping your child feel confident and joyful as they prepare to lead.

https://www.youtube.com/embed/oBNGHccTyaE

https://www.youtube.com/embed/vAaQS0poL-Q

Prayer and Offering (5 mins)

> **Parents:** Please encourage your children to bring an offering to church. You may help your child prepare by setting aside a coin for them to bring on Sunday. This is a great opportunity to teach them about giving to God with a thankful heart and trusting Him to provide.

> ### What is Offering?
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> Offering is when we **give something to God** to show our love and thankfulness. In church, we often give money as an offering, but we can also give our time, talents, and kindness to God and others.
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> ### Why Do We Make an Offering?
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> **To Thank God** – Everything we have comes from God! Giving back is a way to say, “Thank You, God!”
> **To Trust God** – When we give, we show that we trust God to take care of us.
> **To Help Others** – Offerings help the church teach about Jesus, help people in need, and share God’s love.
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> The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9:7,
> *"God loves a cheerful giver!" That means God is happy when we give with a joyful heart!*

Prayer for Offering

> “ Dear God, thank You for giving us everything we need. We want to give back to You with joyful hearts. Please use our offering to help others and share Your love. Help us to always trust You. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

Review Verse from Last Week

John 6:35a

[Jesus said,] "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger,"

Bible Story (10 min)

Introduction (2 min)

Props Needed:

- A sign that says "TWO YEARS OLD" (or a little toy, sippy cup, or baby blanket)
- A sturdy chair (to be the tree for Zacchaeus)
- A "Zacchaeus" paper sign (with a small, short-looking person drawn on it)
- A "Jesus" paper sign
- A Darkened Heart and a Shiny Heart from past lessons

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> *(Pick a child volunteer to come forward. Put the "Two Years Old" sign on them and ask them to kneel down to look smaller.)*

> **Teacher:** "This is my friend [child's name]. Today they are pretending to be TWO years old. Okay, let's pretend I am their mom. We are walking to the store. And we come to a BIG busy street. Cars are zooming by! What should [child's name] do?"
>
> **Interaction:** "Raise your hand if you think they should hold Mommy's hand!"
>
> **Teacher:** "YES! They should hold my hand. Why? Because a little two-year-old can't read the stop lights. They can't see over the cars. They don't know when it's safe to cross. So what do they do? They TRUST Mommy. They hold on tight."
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> **Interaction:** "Pretend to grab onto Mommy's hand. Squeeze tight!"
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> **Teacher:** "That is called TRUSTING. Children trust their parents because they know: 'I am little. I need help. Mommy loves me. Mommy knows what to do.' Children are GOOD at trusting."
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> *(Thank the volunteer and have them sit back down.)*
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> **Teacher:** "Now, sometimes grown-ups forget how to trust. They start to think, 'I am big. I am strong. I can do it myself.' But the Bible says EVERYONE, even grown-ups, needs to trust Jesus like a little child trusts Mommy or Daddy. Today we will hear two stories about that."

Story Telling: Jesus Receives Childlike Sinners (8 min)

Props / Visuals Suggested:

- "Jesus" paper sign
- "Zacchaeus" paper sign
- Sturdy chair (tree)
- Darkened Heart and Shiny Heart

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> ### Part 1: Parents Bring Their Children to Jesus (2 mins)
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> **Teacher:** "One day, Jesus was teaching a BIG crowd of people. And many moms and dads had brought their children. They said to themselves, 'We want Jesus to bless OUR kids! Let's go bring them to Jesus!'"
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> **Interaction:** "Everyone wiggle in excitement. Pretend a parent is taking you by the hand to go see Jesus!"
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> **Teacher:** "But the disciples saw all these little children coming, and the disciples got GRUMPY. The disciples said, 'No no no! Stop! Jesus is too busy! Jesus is too important to talk to LITTLE kids! Go away!'"
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> **Interaction:** "Put a stern face on and wag your finger. 'No! Go away!' How would that make you feel?"

Teacher: "That would make the kids SAD. It would make the parents SAD too. They wanted Jesus, and the disciples were pushing them away."

Teacher: "But then Jesus heard what the disciples were saying. And Jesus was NOT happy with them at all. Jesus said, 'Let the children come to Me! DO NOT stop them! For the kingdom of God belongs to people like them!'"

Interaction: "Stand up tall and say it like Jesus: 'Let the children come to Me!'"

Teacher: "And then Jesus took the little children in His arms. Jesus held them. Jesus put His hands on them and blessed them. Even the littlest, smallest child was not too small for Jesus. Jesus had time for every single one of them."

Interaction: "Cross your arms over your chest like a big hug. Jesus loves little kids!"

Part 2: What Jesus Means by Childlike (2 mins)

Teacher: "Then Jesus said something very important. Jesus said, 'Whoever does NOT come to the kingdom of God like a little child will not enter it.'"

Teacher: "That is a BIG deal. Jesus was saying: everyone has to come to Me like a CHILD comes to their parent. But what does that mean? Does it mean grown-ups have to start crawling on the floor?"

Interaction: "Shake your head NO! That's silly!"

Teacher: "No! Jesus is not saying grown-ups need to act like babies. Jesus is talking about the HEART. A child comes to a parent and says:"

- '"Mommy, I'm hungry, can you feed me?' (Children KNOW they can't feed themselves.)"
- '"Daddy, I'm tired, can you carry me?' (Children KNOW they can't do it on their own.)"
- '"Mommy, I fell, can you fix my boo-boo?' (Children KNOW they need help.)"

Interaction: "Reach out both arms like a little child wanting to be picked up. Say, 'I need You!'"

Teacher: "A child DEPENDS on their parents. A child TRUSTS their parents. A child does NOT say, 'I can do it all by myself, I don't need you!' That is how Jesus wants us to come to Him. Not proud. Not saying, 'I'm pretty good!' But saying, 'Jesus, I need You. I cannot fix my own heart. Please save me.'"

(Hold up the Darkened Heart.)

Teacher: "None of us, no matter how big or how small, can clean our own hearts. We all have to come to Jesus with open hands, like a little child, and say, 'Please help me. I trust You.' Everyone needs Jesus."

Part 3: Zacchaeus Climbs a Tree (2 mins)

(Bring out the "Zacchaeus" sign.)

Teacher: "Here is a story about a grown man who had a CHILDLIKE heart. His name was ZACCHAEUS. Can you say that with me? ZA-KEE-US!"

Interaction: "Everyone, say it loud! 'ZACCHAEUS!'"

Teacher: "Zacchaeus was a grown-up, but he was VERY short. And Zacchaeus was a TAX COLLECTOR, just like Levi. He cheated people out of money. Everybody HATED him."

Interaction: "Make a sad face for Zacchaeus. Nobody liked him."

Teacher: "One day, Jesus was walking through Zacchaeus's town. And Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming. He was SO excited. He REALLY wanted to see Jesus. But there were so many people, and Zacchaeus was so short, that he could not see over the crowd."

Interaction: "Jump up on your tippy-toes! Can you see? No! Too many heads in the way!"

(Motion to the chair.)

Teacher: "So Zacchaeus did something that grown-ups usually don't do. Zacchaeus ran ahead, and he CLIMBED UP A TREE!"

Interaction: "Pretend to climb a tree! Hand over hand, up, up, up!"

Teacher: "A grown-up, with a fancy coat, climbing a tree like a little child! Did Zacchaeus care if people laughed at him? No! Zacchaeus did not care if he looked silly. He just wanted to SEE JESUS. That is a childlike heart. Zacchaeus knew: 'I need Jesus more than I need to look important.'"

Part 4: Jesus Calls Zacchaeus Down (2 mins)

Teacher: "When Jesus got to that tree, Jesus STOPPED. Jesus LOOKED UP. And Jesus said, 'Zacchaeus! Hurry down! I must come to your house today!'"

Interaction: "Gasp! Jesus knew his name! Cover your mouth in surprise!"

Teacher: "Zacchaeus was SO happy! He climbed down the tree as fast as he could. He ran to Jesus. He brought Jesus to his house for dinner. And Jesus and Zacchaeus ATE together."

Interaction: "Sit down and pretend to eat a meal. Mmm!"

Teacher: "The other people grumbled. They said, 'Look at Jesus, eating with a sinner!' But Jesus did not care what they said. Jesus came for sinners. Jesus came for Zacchaeus."

(Switch the Darkened Heart for the Shiny Heart.)

Teacher: "And Zacchaeus's heart was CHANGED. Right there at dinner, Zacchaeus stood up and said, 'Lord! I'm going to give HALF my money to the poor! And if I cheated anyone, I'll pay them back FOUR TIMES more than I took!' Jesus had changed his heart. Zacchaeus trusted in Jesus and was saved."

Teacher: "And Jesus said, 'Today, salvation has come to this house.' Because the Son of Man (Jesus) came to seek and to save the LOST. Zacchaeus was lost, but now Zacchaeus was FOUND."

Interaction: "Everyone say with me: 'Jesus came to seek and to save!'"

Teacher: "Zacchaeus came to Jesus with a childlike heart. He knew he needed Jesus. He did not try to look too important. He climbed a tree to see Him! That is the kind of faith that enters the kingdom of God. And that is what Jesus wants from every single one of us, children AND grown-ups."

Review with Actions

Teacher: "Let's remember the stories with actions!"

- **Teacher:** "Parents brought their kids to Jesus." *(Kids pretend to take a hand and walk.)*
- **Teacher:** "Disciples said, 'Go away!'" *(Kids wag finger sternly.)*
- **Teacher:** "Jesus said, 'Let them come!'" *(Kids beckon with open arms.)*
- **Teacher:** "Come to Jesus like a little child." *(Kids reach up like wanting to be carried.)*
- **Teacher:** "Zacchaeus was short and sinful." *(Kids make a sad face and crouch down.)*
- **Teacher:** "Zacchaeus climbed the tree to see Jesus!" *(Kids climb in place.)*
- **Teacher:** "Jesus said, 'Come down! I'm coming to your house!'" *(Kids wave 'come!')*
- **Teacher:** "Jesus saved Zacchaeus." *(Kids hand on heart, big smile.)*

Teacher: "Now faster!"

- "Go away!" *(Wag finger.)*
- "Let them come!" *(Arms open.)*
- "Trust like a child!" *(Reach up.)*
- "Climb the tree!" *(Climb.)*
- "Come to my house!" *(Wave.)*
- "Jesus saves!" *(Smile, hand on heart.)*

Wrap-up & Discussion (4 min)

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> *(Gather children close for reflection.)*

Discussion Questions:

Teacher: "Let's think about what we learned today."

Question: "Why did the disciples try to stop the children from coming to Jesus?"

Teacher Key: They thought Jesus was too busy and too important for little kids. But they were wrong. Jesus is never too busy for children.

Question: "What did Jesus say when He saw the disciples pushing kids away?"

Teacher Key: "Let the children come to Me! Do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God." Jesus was actually angry with the disciples for shooing the kids away.

Question: "What does it mean to come to Jesus like a little child?"

Teacher Key: To come humbly, knowing we need help. To trust Jesus the way a child trusts a loving parent. To not pretend to be strong or good enough on our own.

Question: "Why did Zacchaeus climb the tree?"

Teacher Key: He was short, and he really wanted to see Jesus. He did not care if he looked silly. He knew he needed Jesus more than he needed to look important.

Question: "What happened when Jesus came to Zacchaeus's house?"

Teacher Key: Jesus saved him! Zacchaeus's heart was changed. He wanted to give back the money he had stolen. He became a new person.

Question: "Do grown-ups need Jesus too?"

Teacher Key: YES! Everyone, children and grown-ups, needs Jesus. No one can fix their own sinful heart. We all come like little children, helpless and trusting.

Teacher: "The good news today is that you are never too little for Jesus. If you are small, Jesus welcomes you. If you are a grown-up, Jesus welcomes you, but you have to come with a heart that knows it needs Him, just like a child. Helpless. Trusting. Grateful."

Closing Thought & Prayer

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Teacher: "Jesus never turns away a sinner who comes with a childlike heart. Even the biggest, toughest grown-up has to come the same way: trusting, small, holding on tight. What a kind Savior we have, who picks up little children in His arms and calls tax collectors down from trees."

> *(Fold hands and bow heads.)*
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> **Prayer:** "Dear Jesus, thank You that You love little children. Thank You that You are never too busy for us. Help us to always come to You with trusting hearts, knowing we need You. Help grown-ups to remember they need You too. Save and change every heart in this room, just like You changed Zacchaeus. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Memorizing Verse: Mark 10:14b

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> **Mark 10:14b**
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> [Jesus said,] "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."
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> **Hand Gestures:**
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> - **"Let the children come to me;"**: Open both arms wide and beckon with both hands, welcoming people in.
> - **"do not hinder them,"**: Shake head firmly and wag a finger "no" (do not stop them!).
> - **"for to such belongs..."**: Point out to everyone around you, pointing at different people.
> - **"...the kingdom of God."**: Point up to heaven with both hands, or form a big crown over your head.
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> **Teacher Tip:** Focus the memorization on the first short phrase: "Let the children come to Me." Ages 4-6 can all master that easily. Make it a victory cheer: "Let the children COME TO ME!" said with arms wide open. The second half can be call-and-response with the teacher saying it first.

Craft & Game (10 mins)

Game: "Red Light, Jesus Light"

A twist on Red Light, Green Light. Children start far from the teacher (who plays Jesus). When the teacher says, "Let the little children come to Me!" the children run three steps forward. When the teacher says, "The disciples said, 'Go away!'" the children take two steps back. The game ends when all children reach Jesus, and they say the memory verse together.

? **Time:** 5 minutes

? **Age Group:** 4-6 years

? **Lesson Connection:** Reinforces that Jesus invites children to come, even when others try to send them away.

? Setup & Materials Needed:

- Open space at least 10-15 feet long
- A paper "Jesus" figure the teacher holds, or the teacher plays the role of Jesus
- Optional: a small chair or starting line marker

? How to Play:

Step 1: Line up all the children at one end of the room. The teacher stands at the other end holding up the Jesus sign.

Step 2: Teacher calls out: "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me!'" Children take three big steps forward toward the teacher (arms open, like rushing to Jesus).

Step 3: Teacher calls out: "The disciples said, 'Go away!'" Children take two steps back, making a sad face.

Step 4: Alternate the commands. Eventually the "come to Me" wins out and children reach the teacher.

Step 5: When everyone has reached Jesus, the teacher opens arms wide and says, "Welcome! Jesus is never too busy for you!" Then everyone says the memory verse together with gestures.

Craft: "Jesus Loves Little Me" Heart Photo Frame

Children make a heart-shaped frame that can hold their photo or a drawing of themselves, with the memory verse around the border. A take-home reminder that Jesus welcomes every child.

Materials: Pre-cut heart-shaped cardstock frames (big heart with a smaller heart cut out in the middle for a photo/drawing), crayons or markers, glue sticks, optional stickers, the memory verse printed on a curved strip, a small self-portrait drawn in class or a small photo.

The Activity:

- **Step 1:** Give each child a heart frame. Have them color and decorate it with bright colors and stickers.
- **Step 2:** In the middle (where the small heart is cut out), have them draw a picture of themselves, or glue in a photo if available.
- **Step 3:** Around the edge of the heart, glue the memory verse: "Let the children come to me." (Mark 10:14b)
- **Step 4:** On the back, write: "Jesus welcomes me!"
- **Step 5:** Decorate with more stickers if time allows.
- **Take Home:** Children show their family: "Jesus says, 'Let the children come to Me!' That's me! Jesus loves little me!"

Response Song

https://www.youtube.com/embed/lmgUKoFKM60

Closing Prayer & Snack Time (10 mins)

> "Dear Jesus, thank You that You welcome little children. Thank You that no one is too small or too sinful to come to You. Help us to trust You the way a child trusts a loving parent. Help us to know we need You every day. In Jesus' name, Amen."
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> Now, let us thank You for the snack we're about to enjoy.
> We fold our hands.
> We bow our heads.
> We thank You, God,
> for this daily bread.
> Amen.

Free Time & Children Pickup (15 mins)

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