

CHILDREN'S SERMON, LESSON & ACTIVITIES: SOWING SEEDS OF HOPE AND CARE

Rev. Tanya Lopez, edited
by Week of Compassion

Both Children's Sermon/Lessons start with the same script. This one, *Sowing Seeds of Hope and Care*, continues with two related Children's Activities to put the theme of compassion and new life into an active form. An additional Sermon/Lesson, *How Does It Feel When...*, moves into exercises of empathy, using Week of Compassion illustrations and captions to engage children's imagination and feelings.

We suggest using this **Children's Lesson** as the primary teaching during Sunday School or other gathering time, with the two **Children's Activities** that follow as extensions of the lesson and activity started there.

You might also use the Lesson as a Children's Sermon during worship, with the two Activities then used during Children's Church or Sunday School to help make the connection from the Message they just received in the worship service.

While the second Activity includes mention of the Week of Compassion **coinbox**, that isn't the only place to make the connection! If your church is using the Week of Compassion coinboxes for children to collect money and return for Week of Compassion, be sure to hand them out (we suggest folding and taping/sealing the side and bottom in advance!) so that children have a few weeks to take them home and bring them back.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Seeds (can be sunflower, or any variety of flower seeds, or even vegetable seeds)
- Small snack size Ziplock bags to put the seeds in
- Paper cups
- Potting soil
- Print out of large seed
- Pencils, crayons, markers, etc.

You might also want to see the Mission Moments included with the 2023 Special Offering online resources for additional stories that could be told in child-friendly detail as examples of how Week of Compassion works in the world.

THEME: LAMENTATIONS 3:21-23

*Yet it is because I remember all this
that I have hope.
YHWH's favor is not exhausted,
nor has God's compassion failed.
They **RISE UP ANEW** each morning,
so great is God's faithfulness.*

Week of Compassion is an incredible ministry of our church that allows us to be active parts of God's new mercies, or God's love and care made new each day. Even when there are so many people and places in the world that are experiencing pain, suffering and despair, we can hold onto and cling to the promise that God's love and care for the world never ends.

God's love and care will **RISE UP ANEW** each and every day. God is with us always, and together we can be a part of bringing hope, love, care, compassion and healing to the world.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Good morning friends! Hmmm... good morning. Have any of you ever wondered why we say "Good morning" to each other to say hello? Is every morning actually good? I know sometimes when I wake up, things are sometimes just "okay." Or sometimes when I start the day, I'm still feeling tired. My mornings can feel like sleepy mornings or even groggy and slow mornings.

How else can you feel other than good in the morning, or any time of day?

(Pause for responses)

What are some of the other ways we feel sometimes?

Allow for children to respond. If they are a little shy, you can offer examples of other feelings and ways we can feel. Grumpy, Sad, Angry, Lonely, Sick, Worried, Happy... etc.

We can feel so many ways for so many reasons. We may be sick and feel discomfort. We might at times feel disappointed. We can feel scared or worried. Sometimes mornings or even entire days aren't good because things and feelings don't always change right away. Have any of you ever felt like it's

hard to focus on the good or on the bright side when for you, things might not be going well, or they don't feel good?

(Pause briefly)

I'm going to tell you something. Sometimes days, weeks, even months can feel hard, heavy and like there's not a lot of goodness going on in our lives or around us. And we need to be able to say how we really feel. We need to be honest and not feel pressured to pretend that things are all good when they just aren't. Sharing and expressing how we really feel helps us. Sharing the truth of how hard things can be helps us feel heard and it also allows others around us to understand our experiences. It makes us want to do what we can to help make things a little easier for each other.

There is a book in the Bible, called Lamentations, that is full of poems and writings that express the deep hurts that we can all feel sometimes for many different reasons. In Lamentations we read of people experiencing great need. Their land has been forcefully taken from them, there has been war, many people have died, others have been taken—there is a lot that has happened that has caused people to lose hope and yet—

There is a verse where the writer states that even though it's hard to not think of all that is happening all around them that seems hopeless, they remember that God's love never ceases. God's mercies never end!

The writer remembers that God's love and care never end, and that every day brings with it new ways to see God's love at work in the world. Every day we can see God's work in the world rise up anew day after day.

But how can we see God at work when sometimes things seem to not change or get any better?

I wonder...

I'm going to hand you something that will remind us of how even when we can't see things changing there really is a lot going just beneath the surface.

Hand every child a seed and small Ziplock bag.

Who can tell me what this is? *(Pause for responses)*

Who thinks they know what kind of seeds these are? *(Pause for responses)*

When we plant seeds do they grow right away? No. By now many of us know that growing a plant, or a flower, or crops takes time. You need to give it the right kind of soil. You need to water the seed, you need to make sure that it gets plenty of sunlight and make sure the temperature is just right for that type of plant to grow.

Well sometimes it's hard to imagine that anything will ever grow when week after week we don't see anything sprouting out or rising up from the ground. But in reality, that little seed is doing a lot under the soil. It's breaking out of its outer casing, it's working hard to grow strong deep roots, it's taking in water and nutrients from the soil and it's pushing up against the weight of the soil to emerge from the ground.

That's a lot that's going on that we don't see on the surface. We don't physically see all the work and activity that this tiny seed is doing every day to sprout a brand-new plant that might grow into a beautiful flower or a strong tree that gives us shade and oxygen or that produces food that we can eat.

Phew... *(wipe your forehead as if wiping away sweat)*

Growing is hard work. Change is hard work but every day, with the right care, with sunlight, with water, and soil those little seeds grow.

We can imagine ourselves as those little seeds. Every day that we choose to do small things to help others, that we choose to use our gifts and time to help someone, and every time that we give, even a small amount of money or time to ministries like Week of Compassion we, like those small seeds, help to grow big change in the world.

There are churches like ours, they're called Disciples churches, all over the United States and Canada - that's a lot of churches! And when we all give to Week of Compassion, a lot of really cool work gets done:

- building houses after tornadoes and floods;
- helping people find homes and schools when they move here from another country;
- teaching people how to farm so their crops grow well, and how to take care of animals, and even how to care for bees so they can make honey to sell to their neighbors and in their towns;
- helping people start businesses like repairing motorcycles;
- making sure students have books and supplies for school, and medicine when they're sick.

When we give to Week of Compassion, we help others remember that God is with them, and that God is caring for them always.

No amount is too small. When you give or when you choose to help a friend or loved one, even in very small way, it makes a huge difference. You are planting seeds of God's love all around and you're helping to create a more hopeful world. I hope you'll put your seed into your little bag and keep it with you. You can plant seeds of hope and love and care that will help change the world. Take this with you and plant it *[or 'we'll plant it together later', or whatever your plan is]* and remember that God is at work in the world through you.

Let's pray: *Gracious and Loving God, thank you for reminding us that you are at work all around the world through the lives of people who choose to love, who choose to help, and who choose to share their gifts and resources with others. Help us*

to partner with you, through ministries like Week of Compassion, to be the seeds of hope and care in places that need it most. Help us to rise up anew every day to be agents of your love everywhere we go. Amen.

ACTIVITIES:

In our Lesson, we talked about how God's love rises up in the world, how it grows and spreads, and how we can be part of it, especially with partners like Week of Compassion. It's important to remember that even when things are hard, and people are hurt, or scared, or confused, or sad, that God is with us all the time. Every day when we wake up, God is right there beside us and inside us, loving us all. And God wants us to share that love with others, and especially to share it with people that sometimes get left out.

In our scripture from the Lesson, it says:

*Yet it is because I remember all this that I have hope.
YHWH's favor is not exhausted,
nor has God's compassion failed.
They rise up anew each morning,
so great is God's faithfulness.*

We're going to do *[an activity ... two activities]* to help us remember how God's love shows up for us - new every day.

ACTIVITY ONE

You have a seed in your bag *[from earlier this morning ... just a few minutes ago ... or however you're ordering things]* and now we're going to plant them in these cups of soil.

[If you have time, maybe they can color, use stickers, or somehow decorate the cups before you fill them with soil.]

Do you have plants at home that someone takes care of - maybe inside in a flower pot or outside planted in the ground? Remember when we talked about Week of Compassion helping people learn how to plant crops? This is your very own seed. I hope you'll take it home and keep it where you can see it, and where it can get sun, and be sure to water it sometimes.

It won't happen right away, but eventually a *[flower, plant, whatever it is]* can grow out of this. It takes time, so you'll have to wait a little while. Seeds do a lot of growing beneath the surface of the soil before they sprout. We're the same way! We can do small things, just a little bit at a time, small acts of kindness and generosity, and those make a big difference in the lives of people.

And when we do those little things to be kind and giving, we show others that God's love is all around us, and that it shows up every single day. We say that God's blessings **RISE UP ANEW**, all the time.

ACTIVITY TWO

[If your church is using the Week of Compassion coinboxes for children to collect money and return for Week of Compassion, this is a good time to hand them out.]

As we were planting our seeds, we said that small things we do every day that can make a big difference to someone else. One of the ways those kind actions grow is when we all do them together. This year *[like we have before, if you have]* we have coinboxes, and we'll collect money for Week of Compassion, and you'll bring these coinboxes back *[whenever]*. Maybe an adult in your house says they found some coins in the dryer after doing laundry. Can you put those in your coinbox for Week of Compassion? Maybe you get an allowance and you can put some of that money in the coinbox? Maybe you can ask your older siblings or your grandparents if they want to help you find extra change to add to the coinbox? When we bring them back to church *[next week, at the end of the month, etc]* I can't wait to see how much good we'll do together!

Before we take these coinboxes home, let's see if we can come up with a bunch of other ways we can be kind and thoughtful and caring.

Give time for responses.

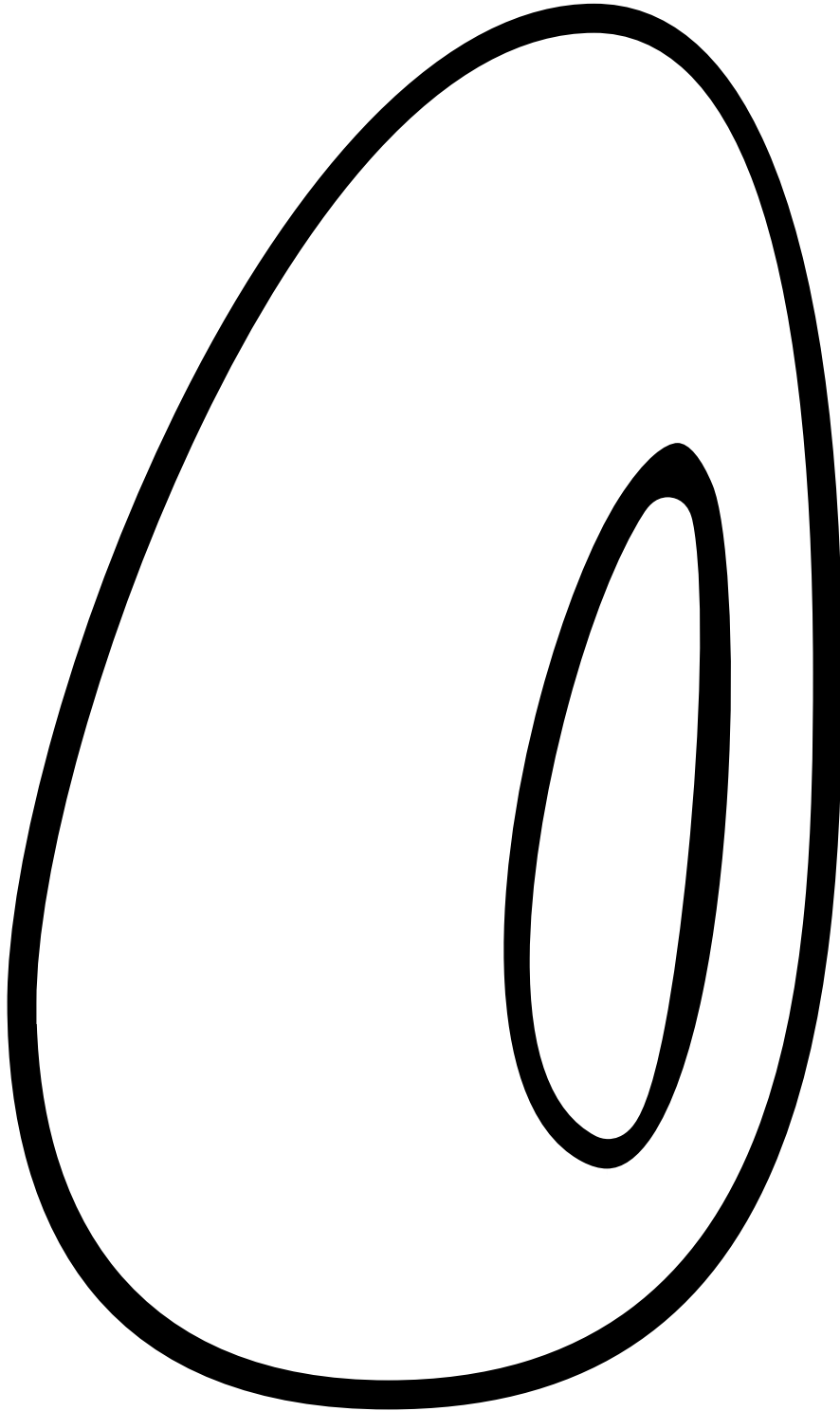
How can be helpful even to someone we don't know very well?

Give time for responses.

[Either give a copy of the seed graphic to each child, or maybe have a big poster-sized page they can work on together!]

Just like we planted our seeds in our cups of soil, let's write or draw on these seeds and show all of the things we just named, all of the ways we think we can make a difference and show God's love. Next *[Sunday, Wednesday, whatever]* I can't wait to hear about all of the ways you've planted these seeds of kindness by caring for the people you meet!

RISE UP ANEW



LAMENTATIONS 3:21-23