

Sunday School Lesson (Matthew 25:31-46) The Least of These

 ministry-to-children.com/the-least-of-these-lectionary-lesson-from-matthew-2531-46

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This free Bible lesson is based on **Matthew 25:31-46** where Jesus describes the separation of sheep and goats. It is designed for children's church or Sunday School. Please modify as best fits your ministry.

Lesson Introduction & Opening Activity:

The Least of These – What's the Word?

Supplies – small container, paper, writing/coloring utensils, play-doh, blocks, pipe cleaners, other misc. art or building supplies

Before class write the following on slips of paper and place them in a small container. If you have more than 15 kids, assign some the same word. If you have less than 15 students, assign similar words to some children.

When the kids arrive, have them choose a slip of paper, and any art or building supplies they wish, to help them illustrate their word. This could be through writing about it, drawing or building it, silently acting it out, etc. Encourage them to use their creativity!

- Jesus
- God
- King
- Inheritance
- Heaven
- Hungry
- Thirsty
- Invite
- Clothes
- Sick
- Prison
- Brothers
- Sisters
- Eternal Punishment
- Eternal Life

(If the space allows, sit in a large circle so everyone can see each other.)

So today I am super excited for you to tell me a story! Did I forget to tell you? Oops!

Don't worry too much, I know you will do just fine. No, you won't do fine, you will do fantastically. brilliantly, crazily, wonderfully, amazingly, awesome!

So I'm going to get us started, and when it's your turn, I want you to show us whatever it is you came up with earlier. Ready?

JESUS was talking to a big crowd one day about being saved and going to **HEAVEN**. He said that when it came time, we would all be separated into two groups. One group would get to go to **HEAVEN**, and the other group wouldn't.

GOD would say to the first group, "Come join me in **HEAVEN** and enjoy your **INHERITANCE**! When I was **HUNGRY**, you fed me. When I was **THIRSTY** you gave me something to drink. When I was alone and a stranger, you **INVITED** me in. When I was naked you gave me **CLOTHES** to wear. When I was **SICK** you took care of me. And when I was in **PRISON** you visited me."

The people in this group were super excited. They were going to get to go to **HEAVEN**! But they were also really confused. They didn't remember doing any of those things. You would think you would remember if you happened to meet **GOD** one day, and you definitely remember if He was **NAKED**!

But that wasn't what **GOD** was talking about. He said, "What ever you did for the least of your **BROTHERS** and **SISTERS**, you did for me. So accept your **INHERITANCE** of **ETERNAL LIFE** and join me in **HEAVEN**."

GOD doesn't need us to feed Him dinner, or wipe His runny nose, but there are people who do. And when we help them, it's like a gift to **GOD**. He loves it when we love each other.

But don't forget that there were two groups.

GOD would say to the second group, "Go away from me, you have **NO INHERITANCE**! When I was **HUNGRY**, you wouldn't feed me. When I was **THIRSTY** you never gave me a drink. When I was alone and a stranger, you didn't **INVITED** me in. When I was naked you wouldn't give me **CLOTHES** to wear. When I was **SICK** you wouldn't care for me. And when I was in **PRISON** you ignored me."

The people in this group were super upset. And they were also really confused! They never would have ignored **GOD** like that! They would have loved to cook **GOD** dinner, or buy Him a new pair of shoes. But they never had that chance. They never met God in person form, so how could they!?!

But that wasn't what **GOD** was talking about. He said, "What ever you didn't do for the least of your **BROTHERS** and **SISTERS**, you didn't do for me. So you have no **INHERITANCE**. And instead of **ETERNAL LIFE**, you will have **ETERNAL PUNISHMENT**."

GOD doesn't need us to do any of those things Him, but there are plenty of people who do. Each and every one of us need help sometimes, *and* each and every one of us can be that help. **JESUS** tells us many times that we should love our neighbor just like we love ourselves, which includes making sure that others have food and clothes and love. And when we do those things for others, it's just like doing them for **GOD**.

Activity A – The Least of These – Bible Verse Challenge

Supplies – Bibles

Verse – Matthew 25:40

Pass out Bibles to students. Bibles should be closed and sitting on the table face up in front of each child. When you say go, have the kids look up this week's Bible verse. As each child finds the verse, have them stick one finger on the verse and quietly raise their other hand. The first one to find the verse gets to read it to the rest of the class.

Help younger kids and new kids find the verse by following these steps.

1. Look in the Table of Contents for the book you are looking for. Make an effort to show them if it is found in the Old Testament or New Testament to help them in the future. Then open the Bible to the page number listed in the Table of Contents.
2. Show them the large numbers in the text, known as the chapters. Flip through pages until you find the large chapter number you are looking for.
3. Then scan through the text with them pointing out the smaller verse numbers until the correct number is found.

Activity B – The Least of These – Loving Letters

Supplies – paper, writing/drawing utensils, scissors, glue, embellishments

Ask your church office for a list of people in need of some extra love or encouragement (sick, death in family, job loss, military, etc.) and have the kids draw pictures, make cards, or write letters to send them. You can even make some generic cards to keep on hand for the next time someone is in need.

Closing Prayer – The Least of These

Ask for a volunteer to pray for the class before leaving, and encourage them to thank God for the opportunity to love Him by loving others.

Matthew 25:31-46 New International Version (NIV)

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” **New International Version (NIV)**

“Serve One Another”

Bible Craft Ideas on Matthew 25:31-46, the Sheep and the Goats

The lesson accompanying these crafts is based on the story of judgment and the separation of the sheep and the goats, referenced in Matthew 25. While it might seem a bit works-based or worrisome, the emphasis of the message is that we want to serve and love others as a response to the love Christ shows us. When we do that, we honor God and ultimately serve Him. Two of these crafts serve as prompts to help and serve other people, as the treat bag is meant to give away and the plate is intended as a decorative reminder to care for others. The puppet is a nod to the story itself, recognizing that we should aim to be “sheep” and not “goats.”



Bible Verses or Craft Captions to Consider... (Main Text: Matthew 25:31-46)

And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

-Matthew 25:40

Don't be a baaaaad goat! Be a sheep! Follow Jesus!

Serve others....serve Jesus! Today I am serving...

I hope I get to see “s’more” of you!

More Teaching Ideas for this Scripture Passage

- You can watch a teaching demonstration of this [children’s sermon](#) on our [YouTube](#)
- Don’t miss the [Bible craft ideas](#) for this same passage
- We post new [sermons for kids](#) every week with video demonstrations to help you prepare or to send to your church families
- See our full [Sunday School Lesson on Matthew 25:31-46](#)
- Compare [“Sheep and Goats” from Sermons4Kids](#)
- Compare [Matthew 25:31-46 Children’s Sermon from rfour.org](#)



Craft one: “S’More Service Project”

You will need:

- Construction paper or card stock
- Markers, stickers, or other decorating materials
- String, yarn, or pipe cleaner
- Scissors
- Graham Crackers
- Ziplock or cellophane bag
- Chocolate (bar or kisses)
- Marshmallows (any size)



Procedure:

1. Place items for “s’mores” into a special bag: graham crackers, chocolate, and marshmallows.
2. Alternatively, place another treat or fun item into a decorative bag or Ziploc.
3. Add a string or ribbon , along with a fun card or caption for the recipient.



Craft Two: “Sheep or Goat Puppet”

You will need:

- Google eyes
- Paper (construction)
- Paper bags
- Markers or crayons
- Glue and/or tape
- Cotton balls
- Scissors



Procedure:

1. Decorate one side of the paper bag to be a “goat”, adding eyes and horns, as well as color and hooves, if desired.
2. To the other side, add cotton balls and eyes for a “sheep.”
3. Add captions to both sides of the puppet.
4. Decorate with extra colors or verse captions. Enjoy your puppet show!



Craft Three: “Serving Plate”

You will need:

- Paper plate of any size
- Paper (construction) (optional)
- Scissors
- Cupcake liners (optional)
- Glue or tape
- Decorative supplies (stickers, glitter, etc.)
- Crayons or markers
- String or ribbon (if desired to hang)



Procedure:

1. Decorate paper plate with pictures and captions.
2. Add a piece of paper, envelope, or cupcake liner to the center of plate.
3. Place names of people that you wish to serve or pray for inside the cupcake liner. You can also place names of those who have recently been served.
4. Add plastic forks, paper cut-out “food”, or a decorative hanger, if desired. Remember to love and serve others!



“Serve Others”

Children’s Sermon on Matthew 25:31-46, the Sheep and the Goats

Main Objective: This message reminds us that God uses people to do His work. We are charged with passing Christ’s love and service on to others, just as the Great Commission invites us to be part of God’s plan. The story that occurs in Matthew 25 reminds us that Jesus endured hunger and shame while He was on Earth. We obviously do not live in first century Middle East, and cannot change the life of Jesus as a human. However, when we take care of others, we do it as though we do it for Christ, because it is for Him! This message invites kids to love and serve the Lord by what they do for other people.



Law/Gospel Theme: This passage can potentially seem a little nerve-racking, as it entails the judgment of the Second Coming and seems to convey a sense of works-based righteousness. However, the emphasis is not on what we do, but on who we do things for. We serve others not out of obligation, but out of love for God. We have a blessed opportunity to communicate the love of Jesus because when we care for one another, we recognize all people are made in God’s image. We hope for the return of Christ because we know He has done more for us than we can ever do for others.

Optional Materials: Pictures of people in need (refugees, homeless, imprisoned, sick, etc.); optional items with which to serve or engage others (sporting equipment, supplies, clothing).

Bible Passage: Matthew 25:31-46

- You can watch a teaching demonstration of this [children’s sermon](#) on our [YouTube](#)
- Don’t miss the [Bible craft ideas](#) for this same passage
- See our full [Sunday School Lesson on Matthew 25:31-36](#)
- Compare [“Sheep and Goats” from Sermons4Kids](#)
- Compare [Matthew 25:31-36 Children’s Sermon from rfour.org](#)



Matthew 25:31-46 Children's Sermon: Serve Others, Serve Christ

Greet children and begin with a few questions:

Hello, children of God! Here's a question: If Jesus showed up here today, how do you think we might treat Him? What would we do to make Him feel welcomed and loved? If He asked for something, would we provide it? Well, I have another question: have you ever seen Jesus? What do you think He looks like? (*Take some answers, maybe holding up a picture of Jesus that kids are familiar with.*)

We aren't exactly sure what Jesus looked like, and people have said different things about what He might have worn and been like in appearance. But I have a few other pictures here. Do you think He looked like....This? Or maybe this? Or this? *Display several pictures of people in need, perhaps including refugees, homeless people, people in prison, or a few of "average"-looking people.* It might seem like these would be people we try not to think about too much, or maybe we feel sad for them, but ignore them if we saw them out and about. We certainly wouldn't think of Jesus when we saw these types of people, right? Would we help them?

Did you know that Jesus told us when we do things for other people, it's like we are doing things for Him? It seems crazy, but it's true! In the Gospel today, Jesus was describing for people what it might be like someday, when He comes back to Earth. He said that He would gather everyone together, and look at how our lives have been lived. Jesus promised to bless those who had served and cared for Him, but He said it would not go well for those who ignored Him when He came. The people listening to this message were confused, since they didn't remember seeing Jesus or giving or denying help to Him. Jesus would tell the people that whatever they had done to help others, they actually did to help Him. We might be a lot more motivated to help people in need if we recognized that in doing so, we were helping Jesus!

But what does this mean for us? Does it mean we'll get in trouble if we don't do enough to help every needy person we see? Well, of course we can't help everyone that asks. And we know that we are saved by the grace of God and the blood of Christ, not by anything that we do. However, it is important to take care of other people, because it shows that we love God. He has loved us and given us all we could possibly need. Because of that, we want to share His love with those around us. God lets us be part of His plan to serve people. He sends people our way



who need God's care, and then we have opportunities to help them. Sometimes this means giving to people who don't have much. Sometimes it means just showing someone that we are willing to listen if they need to talk, or saying a kind word to someone who is sad. We know that all people are made in God's image, and even people who might seem hard to love are His. Even people who are hurt, or sad, or stinky! They all belong to God, and we recognize His Lordship when we take care of them. So keep your eyes open! There are chances around us all the time to love and serve Jesus by loving and serving His children. We are special agents of His work. We can be joyful and hopeful about His eventual return, and meanwhile we love Him and His people. Why don't we say a prayer to thank God for that, and we can ask Him to help us take care of His people?

Children's Prayer Moment

(Have kids repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for letting us be part of your work

When we serve other people, we serve you

Help us look for ways to do that

And to care for those around us

Help us to share your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!



Bible Verses/story to Reference:

Matthew 25:31-36

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

-Matthew 25:31-46





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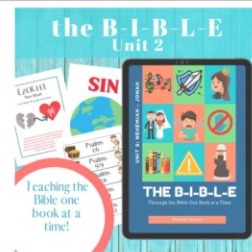
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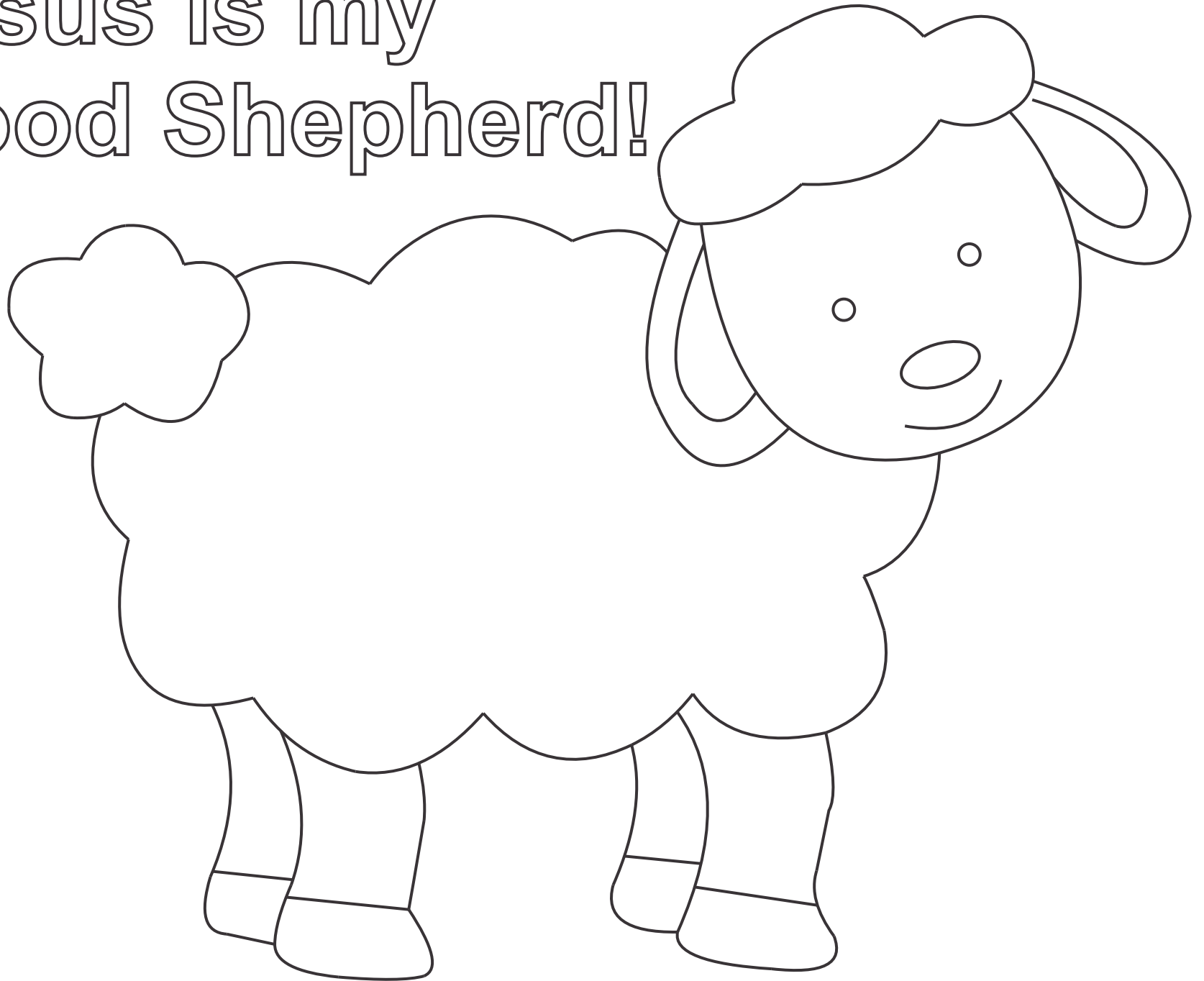
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Jesus is my
Good Shepherd!



Jesus is the Good Shepherd!



