

“PROMISES, PROMISES”

Using the Gospel of Matthew with Children

INTRODUCTION

We are ministers of the gospel with children and so, like all ministers of the gospel, we need to reflect on scripture, and receive training. Every Church Year a different ‘synoptic’ Gospel (Matthew, Mark and Luke) forms the main stay of the lectionary. The beginning of a new year provides the opportunity to engage afresh with the year’s Gospel – to get excited about it at our own level, then convey our excitement by working on the Gospel with our children at *their* level. Accordingly, today’s session begins with material aimed at an adult level, then moves to examples of activities for children.

BACKGROUND

Why do the Synoptic Gospels vary in content? If individual members of a group, were asked to choose three scene from the Nativity story which illustrated the most important things they believed about Jesus, they might well choose different scenes because they wanted to emphasise different things. Is this what is happening in the Gospels when they differ from each other?

What happens when you want to emphasise a belief about Jesus, and you don’t have any material? Might it be possible that the Gospel writers used some imaginative illustrations of belief in places where they lacked information, and that this accounts for some of the distinctive material they contain?

What other factors could account for differing content in the Gospels?

- when the Gospel was written (compare the difference in a piece of writing about the first world war written whilst it was going on, and one written 50 years later in the flower power 60s);
- the people the Gospel was written for (we have already noted the importance of audience by dividing this session into a part ‘for adults’ and one ‘for children’);
- the comprehensiveness of the writer’s sources (if we had only ever read Luke, no one in this group would have been able to include the Wise Men as one of their illustrations – and if you had only ever read Mark, you would have to ‘make up’ the Nativity.)

What do we know about when The Gospel of Matthew was written? One approach is to look at similar passages in Matthew and other gospels to see what is distinctive about The Gospel of Matthew's telling. Compare Matthew 22:7&8 with Luke 14:21. The writer of The Gospel of Matthew has added the sending of troops and destruction of the city. This has led to a suggestion that The Gospel of Matthew was written after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70AD. In the 80s AD the Christians were expelled from the Synagogues in the context of the Jamnia Reform movement within Judaism. Compare Matthew 10:17 with Mark 13:9, Matthew 12:9 with Mark 3:1, Matthew 13:54 with Mark 6:2. Matthew adds 'their' to the reference to synagogues. This has been taken as a hint that the Gospel was written after the expulsion from 'their' synagogues ie some time in the 80s. Ignatius of Antioch cites Matthew 3:15 in a letter of 115AD, so the Gospel must have been written before that. Most modern critics accept a date of between 80 and 90AD – in other words 50+ years after the events described.

What do we know about the people for whom the Gospel was written? They may have been feeling alienated from 'mainstream' Judaism, but compare Matthew 12:22-24 with Luke 11:14-15 and Matthew 21:9 with Mark 11:9&10 and Luke 19:38 – The writer of The Gospel of Matthew has added 'Son of David', a phrase used 10 times in Matthew. Compare the genealogy which begins The Gospel of Matthew with that beginning Luke – Luke traces back to Adam, Matthew to Abraham. The audience of The Gospel of Matthew clearly did not want to see themselves as totally divorced from their Jewish background.

However, which were the special characters added by the writer of Matthew to the Nativity? The Wise Men – representatives of the world beyond Judaism; and Matthew 28:19 – the commission to the world – has no parallel in the other Gospels. So the writer of The Gospel of Matthew was not solely concerned with maintaining Jewish links. We can see that the audience of the Gospel could be regarded as being 'in transition' – looking back to Judaism yet forward and outward to the world.

What do we know about the author of The Gospel of Matthew and his sources? Works such as *GOSPEL PARALLELS* (Burton H Throckmorton Jr, 5th Edition, Nelson 1992) and *A DIAGRAM OF SYNOPTIC RELATIONSHIPS* (Allan Barr, 2nd Edition, T&T Clark 1995) help show how The Gospel of Matthew shares material with those of Mark and Luke. How did this happen? How many possibilities are there? The main suggestions are that the writer of The Gospel of Matthew used: Mark + Q; Mark + Luke; or Mark + Q + a source unknown to Luke (Q = 'quelle' – the German for 'source' and is used to stand for a source containing material common to Luke and Matthew but not Mark).

In any of these cases the writer of The Gospel of Matthew used Mark (92% of Mark's verses are in Matthew – see Barr's chart). From this it is argued that the writer of The Gospel of Matthew could not have been an eyewitness to the events he describes, otherwise he would not have used someone else's writing as a source (especially someone who is not even regarded as having been an eyewitness himself). In other words, this argument suggest that The Gospel of Matthew could not have been written by Matthew the tax collector. It is possible, however, that the disciple gathered together a collection of 'sayings of Jesus' which were edited by a later author.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to consider the special characteristics which the date of composition, audience and authorship have given to The Gospel of Matthew.

We have noted that the audience of the Gospel did not wish to abandon its roots, and one notable feature of The Gospel of Matthew's content is its use of 'Fulfilment Quotations' linking to Old Testament prophecy. Matthew contains 130 references to the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament); and 43 quotations, 11 of which are accompanied by a 'fulfilment formula' (1:22; 2:5,15,17,23; 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 13:35, 21:4, 27:9). Did these events really occur? Did Jesus do what he did with the intention of 'fulfilling prophecy'? (He clearly could not have done this with regard to the events ascribed to his infancy). Did the author of Matthew, believing Jesus to be the Messiah, 'write in' events which would reflect prophecy?

Look at Matthew 21:1-7. What is odd? Why two animals? Look at Zechariah 9:9 – this is poetic repetition which is being taken literally by the writer of Matthew. Perhaps Jesus sent for a donkey, being mindful of Zechariah, and the writer of The Gospel of Matthew 'over-egged' the telling in his eagerness to insist that Jesus fulfilled THE OLD PROMISE of the Hebrew scriptures. Compare Matthew 27:34 with Mark 15:23 and Psalm 69:21: has the author of Matthew changed Mark's 'myrrh' (a sedative) to 'gall' (the Greek for 'poison') to reflect the Psalm?

The second key characteristic of The Gospel of Matthew is its use of five substantial teaching passages called 'discourses', inserted into the narrative of Jesus's life. These are chapters 5-7; chapter 10; chapter 13; chapter 18; chapters (23)24 & 25. Together they form teaching about the NEW PROMISE of the Kingdom – an outward-looking promise which reflects the transitional nature of the audience for whom the Gospel was written.

To summarise: The Gospel of Matthew represents a selection, arrangement, and treatment of Jesus's teachings and material about his life designed to reflect the beliefs of Christians poised between the Jewish world, and a mission to the world at large: the book takes the Old Testament promise of a Messiah and reinterprets it by showing the Messiah as the Saviour of the whole World and ruler, not of a renewed Kingdom of Israel, but of a Heavenly Kingdom which is a promise to all.

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

Matthew 13:52 emphasises the new and old treasures which teachers must bring out. Our analysis of what is special about The Gospel of Matthew has identified an old and a new promise. Perhaps our work with children during the coming year should highlight these promises.

THE OLD PROMISE

1 GOD IS WITH US

Read Matthew 1:22 & 23 and its source Isaiah 7:14. Which of the two key words is more significant in terms of God's promise to humanity: 'virgin' (which may be a mis-translation into Greek of the Hebrew for 'young woman') or 'Immanuel' (Hebrew for 'God is with us')? For our work with children we should certainly concentrate on the latter. This might be particularly appropriate in Advent.

- Ask the children to think of someone they like but don't see very often. Do they ever write to/e-mail/text the person? Do they get replies? Suggest the children bring examples of letters/e-mails to share. Invite them to describe what they did together the last time the person visited. Which do they prefer – correspondence or a personal visit? Why?

Suggest that the Old Testament could be seen as correspondence from God, and the arrival of Jesus as a personal visit.

- Play a 'passing on' game such as 'whispers' where an originator passes on a message to a second person (without being overheard by anyone else in the game); the second person then has to pass on in a similar way to a third, and so on. The last person and the originator then repeat the message to the group to see what distortions have occurred. This 'passing on' can be done with a mime or with a sketch (in the latter case, only give a limited amount of time – say five seconds – for the recipient to look at the sketch before having to draw it themselves).

Suggest that since the nearer to the original message you can get, the more accurate it is, it was better for God to come as near to us as he could, in Jesus, to give humanity his message.

- Get the children to create a story together in which an individual child is in a difficult situation. Use a 'story starter' such as: *'You're in charge,' she said. 'I'll be back in an hour.'* As the main character encounters various difficulties, ask the children to describe how the character feels and record the feelings in detail. Redraft the story with *two* children – best friends – being left in charge. Run the storyline through the same events, but this time allow the two characters to support each other and ask the children to describe how the characters are feeling. Note differences in feelings and outcomes of crises between the two versions. Talk about times in the children's own experience when they have been glad of a friend's presence.

Make the link with Jesus's presence in the crises of human life, as a friend/companion/support.

- Ask the children to name their favourite celebrity. Ask them to enter an imaginary competition in which they have to give six reasons why they would like to meet the star in question.

Discuss which of the reasons for wanting to meet the celebrities might also be applicable to people's desire to meet God. Point out that the whole of humanity won the prize of meeting God when Jesus came to earth.

2 A GREAT LIGHT

Read Matthew 4:13-16 and Isaiah 9:1 & 2. The image of 'Jesus the Light of the World' is enduring because it is so powerful. Its power surely derives from the fact that it is so physical in its appeal to our senses. A good way to explore the image with children is through the use of their own senses. This topic might be appropriate in Epiphany as we step out into the dark unknown of a new year.

- Construct a 'safe' obstacle course in your room ie 'obstacles' should be such that if they are bumped in to they will not cause injury. An individual volunteer child is blindfolded and guided round the obstacle course – either by verbal instruction or physical guidance from an adult leader or another volunteer child. The rest of the group form a human barrier round the edges of the course to gently prevent the volunteer straying from the area of the game into hazardous parts of the room. (NB if an adult leader is not guiding the blindfolded child, than one should certainly be 'shadowing' the child so that they can intervene swiftly if the possibility of an unforeseen accident arises. Needless to say, the blindfolded child should be instructed to move slowly at all times!)

Discuss the way that being blindfolded is like being in the dark and the ways that light helps us decide where to go and what to do. Point out that Jesus came to help us make decisions in our life, to make things more clear, and that's why he is often referred to as a light for the world.

- Use a 'feely bag' to get children to appreciate the confusion and uncertainty which can occur when you can't see things. Be inventive – and safe! – with the things you put in the bag. Try to find things which are difficult to identify by touch alone, and others where you might be able to make a partial identification eg you can work out what it *is* but not what colour it is, whether it's new or old, what it's made of. Get the children to draw what they have felt, then reveal all and see how many things they got right and how many they got wrong.

Again make the link between not being able to see and being in the dark. We 'know more' about the things in the bag once we can see them: explain that Jesus came to help us know more about life, and so we often call him a light.

- There are many poems about the dark. You could read some out and make a collection, as well as getting the children to write their own. Give a framework to those who need it – a succession of couplets in which the first one describes something as it really is eg *The street light shines on my flowers* and the second says what the thing looks or sounds like eg *they look like tiny heads* (cf ‘In The Dark’ by Jane Pridmore).

Share stories of being afraid of the dark and relief when the lights get turned on. Explain how knowing Jesus helps people when they are anxious, not least by making clear some of the things in life we don’t need to worry about: this is another reason Jesus is often referred to as a light.

- Paint a nice bright picture – perhaps of a summer scene – using all the colours available. Paint the same picture again – as near as possible the same shapes etc - but this time use only black, white and grey. To make exact repetition easy, and for those who like ‘colouring in’, you could provide photocopied outline drawings for the children to paint over.

Discuss how much more cheerful the colourful picture is and how the difference is like the world seen by moonlight and by sunlight. Explain how knowing Jesus makes life more cheerful (if it wouldn’t destroy your ‘street cred’ you could play a snatch of the song ‘You Light Up My Life’ and talk about the way people sometimes refer to people they love as ‘light of my life’).

THE NEW PROMISE

In dealing with the new promise of the Kingdom, as redefined by Jesus, we could use the structure of the 5 teaching sections in The Gospel of Matthew.

1 “YOUR KINGDOM COME” (chapters 5-7)

The ‘Sermon on the Mount’ is clearly a rich source of Christian teaching. It will last us a lifetime, so we don’t have to cover it all with our children – pick those aspects which seem to connect most easily with children’s experience and concerns.

- ‘Happy are the peacemakers’: if peace was a cake what would the ingredients be? Ask the children to make up a recipe for a ‘cake of peace’ (is it a ‘piece of cake’ making peace?!) Not only the ingredients (eg ‘a teaspoon of thoughtfulness’) can be meaningful, but also the process of mixing etc (eg stir with care). The recipes can be presented decoratively.
- ‘Your Kingdom come, your will be done’: what do you think God’s Kingdom is like, and what does he want to be done there? Classrooms, especially for younger children, often have special corners and areas for different activities: get the children to draw a map to show their thoughts about God’s Kingdom and label special areas for specific activities (eg Field of Friendship). You could make a summary of the children’s ideas and turn your meeting room (or even the church!) into a little model of the Kingdom for a day, with signposts and illustrative displays.
- ‘Teach us to pray’: it has been reported many times that older Christians, having gone through a lifetime of prayer using different materials, end up in their later years finding they need only the prayer our Saviour taught us. The Lord’s Prayer is one of the few texts we would still expect our children to learn, but we can also give them a glimpse of its amazing richness if we take time over it and look at it bit by bit over a number of sessions. The children could make a little book of paired pages – on the first page would be a part of the prayer (eg ‘Our Father in heaven’) and on the second a picture and perhaps a few words to record the points which had emerged from discussion (eg a picture of people holding hands with the caption ‘we are all one family’).
- ‘Treasures in heaven’: what would go in a heavenly treasure chest? Obviously not silver and gold, from what Jesus said. Get the children to consider things that do not get rusty, dirty, mouldy, broken – perhaps things like thoughts, memories, feelings. They could share some of their own thoughts, feelings etc that they think they would like to save in the ‘heavenly treasure chest’. Can they make or collect things to represent these thoughts and feelings? If so, you could make a big group ‘heavenly treasure chest’ (or the children could make one each) in which to deposit their representations. They could say a prayer of thanks to God for these things, and ask that he will keep them safe for them in heaven.

2 “THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN HAS COME NEAR” (chapter 10)

- How is the Church following the example of those first Christian missionaries? Do a project with the children to find out how their church – locally, nationally, and internationally - is spreading the Christian message. With older children, you could begin to explore the implications of our multi-faith society for the concept of ‘mission’. What *is* the message anyway? What do we think God wants us to say to today’s world? Can the children themselves help in any way (eg telling their classmates about their church as part of an RE lesson at school).
- ‘Preach the Gospel everywhere. If necessary use words’ – St Francis of Assisi. Discuss with the children how they could give people a sense of what God’s Kingdom is like without using words – or at least without *talking* about God and his Kingdom – showing, rather than telling. The children could illustrate their thought with mimes or statue groups which could then – with some brief explanation to the congregation – be presented in church.
- Our faith is incarnational – in every age God uses the stuff of the times. In our age mission is bound to have some aspects of the ‘promotional campaign’. Collect lots of magazine adverts and look at images and slogans which could be used or adapted to help promote the Kingdom of Heaven. Make an advert for the Kingdom, using this material.

For older children, a ‘spin off’ of this activity could be a discussion of the fact that if advertising images and slogans *can* be used in this way perhaps the things they promote are in danger of replacing the ‘heavenly treasure’ Jesus came to tell us about.

- Ask the children to tell each other about the best present they’ve ever had, the best place they’ve ever been, the best treat they’ve ever had – any ‘best’ they can think of. Some children could be invited to tell the whole group, perhaps bringing in the present, or some other ‘visual aids’ to help talk about some other experience.

Discuss with the children whether they enjoyed hearing about the good things that have been described by the group. Did they share some of the excitement? Did they wish they’d ‘been there, done that’ too? Ask them how it felt to tell others about their special thing – did it add to their enjoyment in any way to share with others? Ask them to think what they did just after they’d got the present, had the treat etc. Did they rush off to their best friend to show them the present, tell them the story of the event? Did they look forward to being able to do this? Why? Did the disciples feel like this about telling people about the Kingdom of Heaven? Do we?

3 “THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE ...” (chapter 13)

The parables were a distinctive teaching tool for Jesus. Of the 25 Sundays after Trinity this coming year, 12 have parables in their lectionary readings. We should therefore be ready to make good use of the parables in the year ahead.

- The Parable of the Sower. Get the children to make a square ‘envelope’ with four triangular flaps folding down into the centre:

On the outside of each flap illustrate one of the kinds of ground on which the seed fell. Discuss the significance of these kinds of ‘ground’ in terms of life today and *underneath* each flap draw an illustration of a contemporary situation which corresponds to it eg beneath the ‘seed amongst thorns’ could be a picture of someone with a desk piled high with papers, a telephone in both hands and steam coming out of their ears! On the back of the flaps the children could write a brief explanation showing why they connected the image from the parable with the contemporary picture.

- ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like ...’ Explore similes with children (many will have done this at school in *Literacy Hour*). Play a guessing game: pick a topic – eg animals – and get each child to choose an example and make up 3 similes about it eg ‘it looks like ...’ or ‘it moves like ...’ or ‘it makes a noise like ...’ Each child reads out their similes and the rest of the group try to guess what animal the child has in mind.

Finish by getting the children to make up their own similes for the Kingdom of Heaven.

- The Parable of the Mustard Seed (1). Show the children an apple and ask them to guess how many seeds it contains. Cut the apple open and count the pips. Now show them a pip and ask how many apples it contains. Discuss how one pip can make a tree which goes on making apples for years, each of which in turn can produce a tree of its own and so on. Make up a story of consequences together in which someone does something good for someone, which encourages/enables them to do good to someone else and so on (*Acknowledgements to Christian Aid for these ideas – from their 2001 Christian Aid Week Pack*)
- The Parable of the Mustard Seed (2). Discuss the way one thing leads to another, and that though what we do as individuals might not seem to amount to much, it can all go to build the Kingdom – even more so if one good action leads to *two* more. Show the children a chess board and a jar of lentils. Explain that you are going to put one lentil on the first square, two on the second, four on the third, eight on the fourth etc. Take a vote on whether there will be enough lentils in the jar to do the job. The answer is no – if you start to do it, the children will soon realise that there won’t even be enough room on the individual squares

to fit the lentils required. If they just do the maths (a calculator might help!) they will quickly see that they would need whole wagon loads of lentils to finish the job!

Make up a story of consequences in which each good act leads to two or more others – illustrate this on a ‘tree of consequences’ in which two or more branches spring from the original act, and each subsequent act leads to further multiple branching. You could illustrate each act by a fruit hanging at each point of branching. You will soon have a very big tree – big enough for the birds of the air to nest in its branches!

4 THE KINGDOM COMMUNITY (chapter 18)

- Get the children to list all the differences between adults and children, moving from the obvious physical differences through differences in the things they do to more abstract things like their general behaviour, how they relate to the world and other people. You could play a guessing game to give some prompts: read out a series of statements such as, “he started crying because he had lost his way” and “she instructed him to have the work finished by 4pm” and ask the children to say whether it is more likely to be about an adult or a child.

Read an appropriate version of Matthew 18:1-5 to the children and ask them what they make of it. Jesus seems to be saying adults have to be like children. What special things about children do they think Jesus has got in mind and why?

- Tell the Parable of the Lost Sheep using ‘Godly Play’ techniques.

“The STORYTELLER gathers the children in a circle around him. He takes his shoes off and sits in the circle with them. He places a beautiful gold-painted box at the centre of the circle. Slowly he opens it. He takes out a green cloth, carefully unfolds it, and lays it out at the centre of the circle. ‘I wonder what could be so green?’ he asks.

‘Grass’ a child suggests. The storyteller agrees. ‘Yes, it could be grass; but then again it could be a lily-pad or perhaps a giant leaf.’

The storyteller now places a patch of blue cloth on the green. Again his movements are measured. ‘I wonder’ – those two words are the ground bass of this story – ‘is it a drop on the leaf? Is it a piece of fallen sky? Is it a pool?’ Two or three darker patches are added: these, the storyteller suggests, are scary. Now some brown strips of cloth are laid down to form a square. ‘What can this be, I wonder?’

All becomes clear when, with the same deliberation, a little wooden sheep is placed on the cloth. Then more sheep. Then the wooden figure of a shepherd. So the story takes its quiet course. Until at last we hear

about the Good Shepherd who says, ‘I count each one of my sheep as they go into the fold and if any are missing I go out and look for them.’

The storyteller reflects, ‘I wonder if you are searching for the good grass? I wonder if you have ever been lost? I wonder if you have ever been found?’

The narrator tells his story with respect for the simple but beautiful artefacts he is using. There is not an old yoghurt pot or the inside of a lavatory paper roll in sight. The materials are handled as if they are sacramental. These are ‘the things of God for the children of God’.

At no point in the story does the storyteller look at the children. This is important. The focus is not on the teller but on the tale in which all in the charmed circle are imaginatively engaged. The storyteller’s voice is slow and soothing, almost mesmeric. His every move is studied.”

(from *PLAYING IN THE CITY OF GOD*, an article by Dr John Pridmore, Rector of Hackney, in *AYCE Journal*, October 2001)

(For more information about ‘Godly Play’ see *TEACHING GODLY PLAY*, by Jerome W. Berryman, Abingdon Press 1995 – available for loan from the Board of Education Resource Centre at Church House)

- The design of church buildings, their furnishings, and the artefacts used in them have often been used down the ages and in different traditions to try and give the worshippers a sensory hint of the heavenly. Consider with the children what aspects of their own church building and what is used in it are designed to provide ‘glimpses of heaven’. Investigate examples from other churches, either by visiting or looking at photographs/videos.

The children could design their ideal church building to reflect some of the things they think about heaven.

- Look at ‘Mister Men’ characters and notice the way that something about their appearance gives a clue to their character. You could get the children to match up pictures with names. They could then design cartoon style illustrations of their own to go with a series of prepared character names (Miss Bossy, Mr Generous etc) and get the rest of the group to guess which name goes with their picture.

Ask the children what Mr and Mrs characters they would have in their ideal Church and which they would definitely *not* have! Illustrate each of the character types mentioned: it may be necessary to be more elaborate than the Mr Men cartoons to illustrate some characters – costume, facial expression, and body language can all come into play. You could turn the activity into a mime exercise, getting children to create statues or short mimes illustrating character types, and then record with photographs rather than drawings (remember which photo was which character though!)

5 READY FOR KINGDOM COME (chapters (23) 24&25)

The Last Judgement is a difficult topic for *adult* Christians, and one which generates a great deal of theological debate. It may not, therefore, be the most appropriate subject to deal with in your children's group, although as the first example below shows, C S Lewis did not avoid it in his *Chronicles of Narnia*. A more positive approach might be to concentrate on the 'be prepared' theme running through Matthew 25, and this is the emphasis of the last three examples.

- Read from 'The Last Battle' by C S Lewis: the first part of Chapter 14, 'Night Falls on Narnia', up to the point where Aslan first shouts, "Come farther in!"; and the very last page of the book, from the point where Aslan says, "You do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be."

Facilitate an open discussion allowing the children to explore their thoughts about the end of the world. If it seems appropriate to consider the 'separation' at the doorway, try to highlight the way that Lewis emphasises the role of the individual's own response to Aslan in determining their fate. Make sure that at the end, the discussion is steered towards the fact that Lewis sees the doorway as an opening onto a new existence – a new story 'in which every chapter is better than the one before'.

- Invite representatives of the fire or ambulance service, or the police force to describe to the children how they keep themselves 'prepared' for action at all times. Ask a member of a local football team or other sports person to tell the children about the training regimes they follow to keep themselves 'match fit'.

Discuss how a Christian should keep themselves 'match fit' and 'ready for action' for the day of Jesus's return. Produce a 'be prepared' poster for Christians.

- Celebrate the positive by getting the children to think about what each member of the group is good at. This can include intangible talents, such as "making people smile" as well as more obvious skills such as "good at drawing". Collect positive statements about the children by safely attaching a sheet of paper to each child's back, and asking the children to 'circulate' and write one 'talent' on each child's sheet. Alternatively, a sheet for each child – marked with their name at the top – could be scattered around the room, and the children could write on each sheet. Whatever method is used, the aim should be to ensure a reasonable degree of anonymity to the comments. It is important, of course, to ensure that everyone understands that they can only write *positive* comments on the sheets!

Each child collects their sheet and thinks of ways in which they could use the talents which others say that they have in serving Jesus.

- Play a game of 'killer' in reverse. The children circulate, and one child who has been secretly nominated in advance tries to wink at individual children without anyone else noticing. Every child has been supplied with a smiley sticker and instead of 'dying' when they are winked at, they stand still and put the sticker on themselves in a prominent position. Anyone who thinks they have seen the winker shouts out his/her name. If they are wrong, they sit the rest of the round out. The game can be repeated to give several children a go.

It was hard to spot the winker. Ask the children if they think they could pick Jesus out in a crowd. 'Treat the next person you meet as if they were Jesus' – discuss with the children whether this suggestion would be hard to carry out and why.

Revd Steve Dixon
Manchester Diocese
Board of Education
5th Floor
Church House
90 Deansgate
Manchester M3 2GH

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