

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Today's Gospel reading is not an easy one for young children to grasp. You may want to talk over some of its vocabulary and background in order to share its message with your child.

Two crucial words in today's reading are *prophet* and *Messiah*. A good way to explain the idea of a prophet for children is to say that a prophet's job is to *tell the people what God plans for them*. This phrasing characterizes the prophet both as predictor of the future and as interpreter of God's will. These ideas overlap, of course, and they are intimately connected in the Hebrew mind. The prophet does not tell us, like a Delphic oracle, what God will inevitably do, whether we accept it or resist it. The prophet tells us God's *desire*, and it is left to us to help bring it about—or, perhaps, to frustrate it utterly. *Messiah*, or “anointed one,” (*Christ* in Greek), is the *special chosen leader that God promised to send to his people*, to save them from their enemies and set them free. Help your child to understand that for many years before Jesus came, the prophets spoke God's plan to the people; their words were written down and collected as one part of the Bible—a part that was already in written form before Jesus was born. We read about Jesus in “the Bible,” but there was already a “Bible”—though a shorter one—when Jesus was growing up.

The hope for a Messiah was the hope for someone who would lead the nation and set it free from its enemies and from its own corrupt and self-destructive ways. The popular image of the Messiah was that of a warrior and king. Long before Jesus, however, some of the prophets understood that it is not aggression and conquest that set us free, but suffering love. The figures on the reverse of this page show varying degrees of power, goodness, aggression, love, and sacrifice. There is no “right answer” as to which one is the most like Jesus. All of them, including the politician and Superman, have some features in common with him; but some come closer than others to what he saw as his mission. Talk with your child about these different models of a Saviour. Together, can you think of any better examples than those given in the pictures?

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THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year B
PROPER 19
TRACKS 1 and 2

Jesus asked his friends,
“Who do you think I am?”
Peter answered,
“You are the MESSIAH!”
MARK 8:29



GOD'S PEOPLE WERE WAITING AND HOPING FOR THE MESSIAH!

Long ago, the prophets promised that God would send his people a special leader - the MESSIAH.



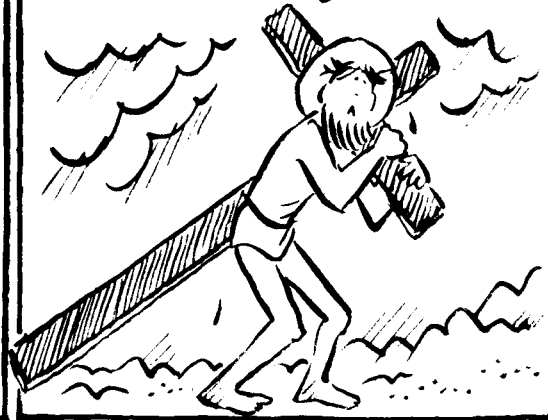
Many people thought that first God would send a new PROPHET, to say the Messiah was coming.



People hoped the Messiah would be a great king, and smash their enemies.



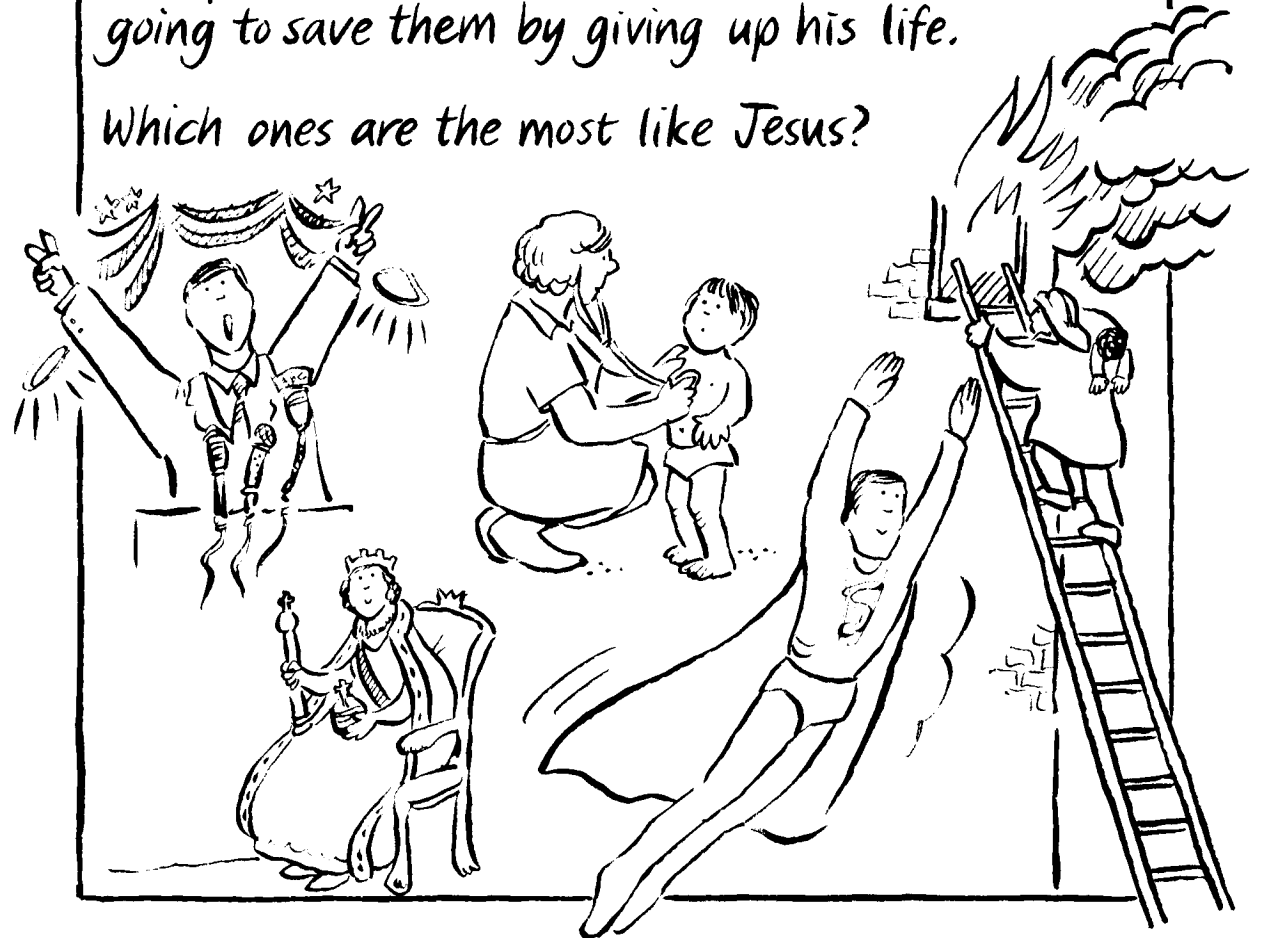
Jesus said, "The Messiah is coming to show you God's love. The Messiah will die to set you free."



The wonderful things that Jesus did made people hope he was the Messiah or a prophet who could tell them when the Messiah was coming.

Jesus said he was the Messiah. But he said that hardly anybody understood what God wanted the Messiah to do. He was not going to be famous and powerful and smash their enemies. He was going to save them by giving up his life.

Which ones are the most like Jesus?



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PROPER 19
TRACK 1

One of the most important things that people had to figure out about Jesus was, "Who is he?" Is he a good man who does wonderful things, or some kind of magician that nobody should trust? Is he an ordinary person with interesting ideas that might be true, or is he a dangerous person with crazy ideas? Or is he a PROPHET, someone God has sent to us to tell us what he wants for us? Or is he the MESSIAH, the very special leader we have waited for for so long?

WHO IS THIS MAN?

Mark 8: 27-38

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WERE IN A PLACE CALLED CAESAREA PHILIPPI!



When people tried to understand who Jesus was, they turned to their Bibles for help. But they did not agree about what the Bible meant. Jesus told Peter to beware, because most people did not understand the real ways of God!

PROVERBS 1:33

"Those who listen to God's wisdom will learn the way of safety"



PSALM 19:7

"God's law is perfect, and gives wisdom to the innocent"



JAMES 3:8-9

"Be careful how you talk! Talk can be either good or evil, either truth or lies"



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What does Jesus mean by telling his followers to *be like children* instead of jockeying for position like so many jealous, ambitious status-seekers? Everyone knows that children do plenty of just the kind of bickering the disciples must have been doing: “I got there first!” “It’s mine!” “I want the blue one!” “No fair, it’s my turn!” “I won’t play if I have to play with *her*.” This kind of thing is so typical of kids of all ages, starting with the one-year-old who yells “Mine!” and hangs on like grim death, that we call it *childish* or *immature*. So why did Jesus tell them to be more like children? Why didn’t he tell them to *grow up*? Was he simply dealing in sentimental clichés? But that is so unlike what we know of him. Nearly anything he said that looks at first like a cliché, turns out to have an odd twist about it, and to be very much his own.

It is not only the disciples’ bickering that concerns Jesus here; it is the whole matter of his Messiahship. He wants them not only to stop competing with each other for places in the coming Kingdom, but also to understand what that Kingdom is made of. It is not made of power and strength, but of vulnerable love. And here, perhaps, may be where we can learn from our children.

Anna Freud, working with English children during World War II, found that the children who were sent to the countryside to be safe from the bombs suffered many more emotional problems than the ones who remained in London with their families. The nightmare of air raids, as long as the family remained together, was less than the nightmare of separation, even if separation meant physical safety. Children, it appears, need the presence of a loved and trusted person more than anything else—even more than the conviction of being safe from external danger. And of this is the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus comes, not to protect and defend us from all risks, as the adults might wish, but to be the loved and trusted Person that the children know they need. We cannot always protect our children. But we can and must receive them in his Name—show them that love, and help them to know the One from whom it comes.

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THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year B
PROPER 20
TRACKS 1 and 2

*Jesus's friends were arguing about
which of them was the most special
and important.* MARK 9:34



Jesus told his friends that he was the Messiah. So they thought that soon he would become king!



They were excited. They were expecting to become rich and famous and powerful.



But Jesus said, "I am a different kind of king. I will give up my life, to give new life to God's people."

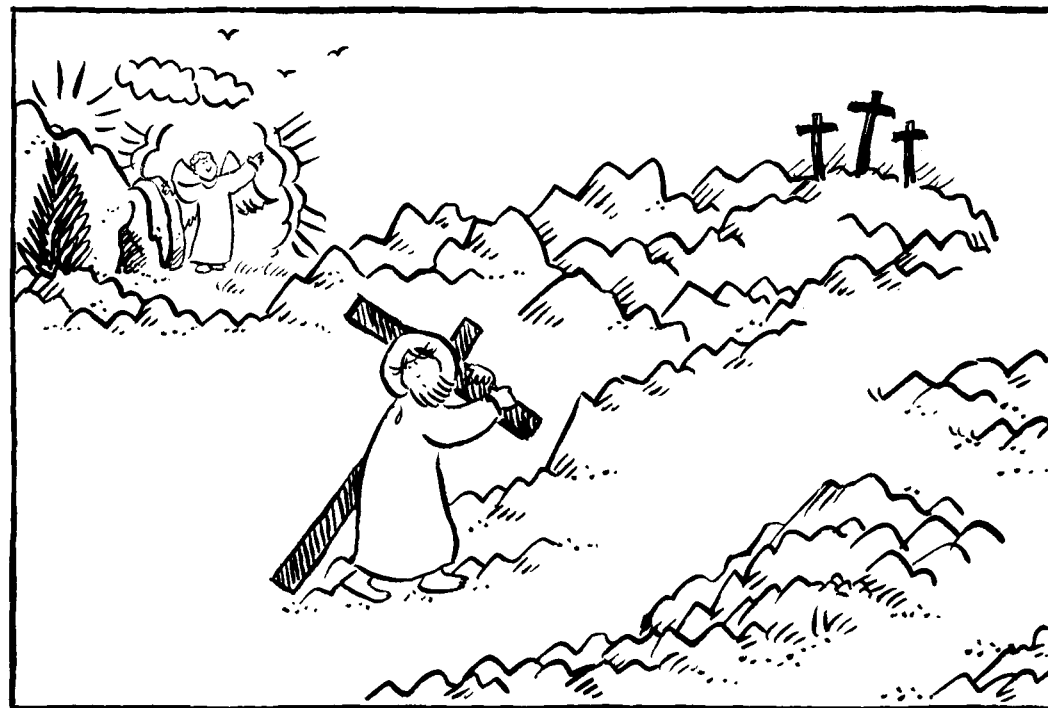


Jesus said, "Don't try to grab power and be first. My friends need to care for the small and weak."



God's people were waiting for a king to become their leader and scare away their enemies. That's what they wanted Jesus to do.

But Jesus said he had a more important job to do. He needed to show God's love. He needed to give us new life. Then we could learn to be like him. Then God's Kingdom could come, and Jesus could be King for ever and ever.



Draw yourself in the space behind Jesus. Then follow him, first to the cross and then to new life.

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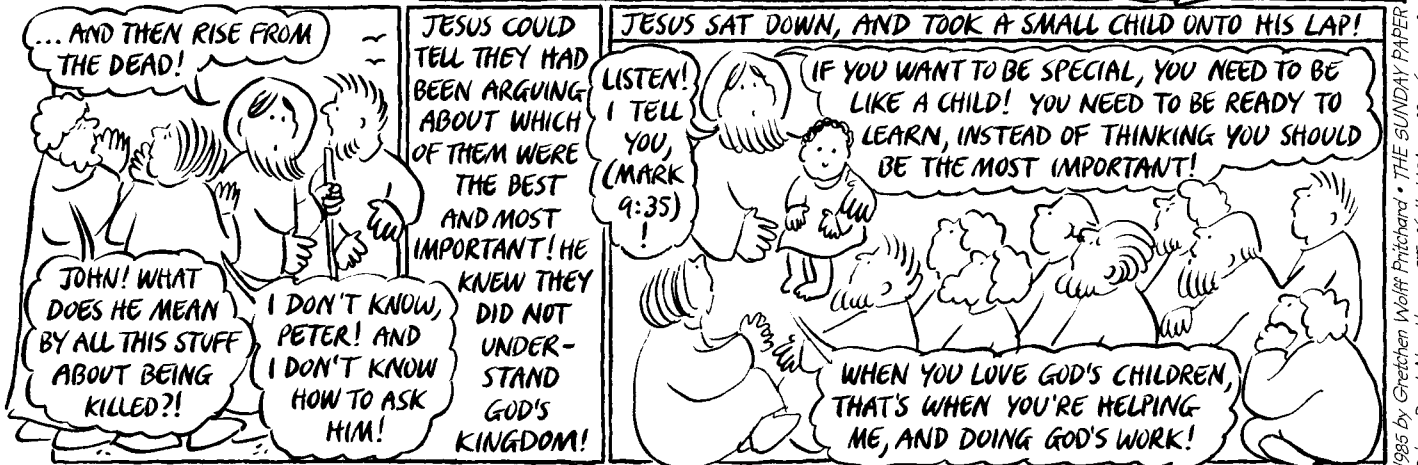
Year B
PROPER
20 TRACK
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The people of Israel in Jesus's time were waiting and hoping for God to send them the MESSIAH, the special leader who would set them free. Many people said that Jesus was the Messiah. Now they expected him to do something powerful and exciting that would throw out the Romans who ruled Israel, so that he could be the king and Israel would be an important nation again. Jesus told his friends that he was the Messiah. But he said he had come to do something different!

THE WAY OF THE MESSIAH

Mark 9:30-37

JESUS AND HIS FRIENDS WERE WALKING FROM TOWN TO TOWN IN GALILEE!



Jesus tried to explain to his friends that God does not work through force or fighting or trying to be first. God does his work through people who are fair and generous and loving, and are not scared of other people or trying to keep them out!

