READY TO USE ALL-AGE SERVICE

# The servant king

MEETING AIM

To think about how we can follow Jesus’ example.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 13:1-20

BACKGROUND

This service is designed to be used with a congregation in a church building. However, with some adaptation, you should be able to use it on Zoom or other video-conferencing software.

Jesus has been in Jerusalem a few days and has been teaching some challenging things. Miraculous signs are floating about but the Jewish teachers still don’t believe that he’s the Messiah, the special saviour sent from God. The disciples gather with Jesus for the Passover meal – probably the most important feast that Jewish people shared together – but before the meal even begins, Jesus begins to turn everything upside down.

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## WELCOME – 5 mins

As people arrive at the service, welcome them warmly! You might want to serve refreshments at the start, as this will ease people who don’t come regularly into an environment they may feel unsure about.

## OPENING ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

**OPTION ONE: *The Generation Game***

**You will need:** equipment for a specialist task such as cake decorating or football freestyling

Before the session, ask someone in your congregation to demonstrate a special skill that they have. Line up some volunteers who are up for being taught that special skill.

Invite the participants to the front. Ask your specialist to teach the volunteers a simple skill and see how well people are able to follow the example.

**OPTION TWO:** Action songs

**You will need:** children’s action song; children to demonstrate the actions.

Explain that everyone is going to learn a new song. It’s a song with actions and you’re going to follow the actions of the children to learn it. Practise the song and actions. Then sing it as part of your community’s worship.

## BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** two volunteers to act out the story; a bowl of water; a towel; a chair

Give your volunteers the parts of Jesus and a disciple. Explain to the congregation that today’s Bible passage is being retold through mime. Use the following script – the two volunteers should act out what you read:

It was the Passover. Jesus and his disciples arrived for a meal together. As this is a time of economic uncertainly, we only have one disciple to keep costs down.

Jesus and the disciples sat down. *Emphasise the plural ‘s’.*

While everyone was settling down, Jesus thought about what was about to happen. He knew that he was going back to be with God. Being with God was a wonderful thing. *‘Jesus’ mimes thinking.*

In fact, being with God is the most amazing thing you can think of – even better than chocolate and Ed Sheeran. Y*ou could use another well-known personality that the congregation will relate to.*

Jesus was going to be with God because Jesus was the king.

He was going to get a crown. *Look pointedly at the mime artist until they mime!*

A robe…*Again, wait for the actor to mime.*

Cheering crowds…*And again.*

Jesus knew he would get a crown, but it wasn’t going to be a golden one, just yet. He knew that Judas was going to tell those who didn’t like Jesus where to find him alone, so they could capture him, and put him on trial for pretending to be a king.

But Jesus was no ordinary king, like no king before or after.

Jesus stood up. *Jesus stands.* He wanted to show his disciples how they should live. He got a bowl of water and placed it in front of his disciple. He took off one of his friend’s shoes, then the other. *Jesus does all this.*

In Israel, at the time of Jesus, the disciples would not have had shoes and socks, just sandals and their feet…well…

“Pooey, what a pong!” acted Jesus. *Wait for the overacting that is bound to happen, and the laughs.*

Actually, Jesus didn’t act like that at all – that’s the problem working with amateur mime artists.

Jesus was setting an example of how to treat others.

Jesus first washed one foot and then another.

He dried them with the towel.

Washing the feet of someone was often done by servants. Yet here was a king, washing the feet of his disciples. Jesus’ disciples were his pupils, his followers; they were pretty much his servants to command, and yet he washed their feet. In fact, Jesus even washed the feet of Judas, the one who was going to do a bad thing for their friendship.

Jesus did this to show his disciples how to be. It was a pattern for them to follow, an instruction and an example.

*Thank your actors and ask the congregation to give them a round of applause.*

Explain that Jesus set an example for us to follow. Jesus taught us to be servants, to serve others. And yet, he was also the Messiah, God’s chosen one and a king.

## SMALL GROUPS – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of the questions below; Bibles

Encourage people to discuss these questions in smaller groups. Give each group a copy of these questions:

* What is your favourite part of the story?
* What does washing someone’s feet symbolise?
* If this story took place today, what might Jesus have done for his disciples?
* What do you think this story tells us about Jesus?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

## REVIEW – 5 mins

**You will need:** roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on the questions from ‘Small groups’, using a microphone to hear people’s contributions if your meeting space is large.

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space or in different breakout rooms.

**OPTION ONE:** Prayer

Jesus taught his friends the prayer that we know called the Lord’s Prayer. Ask if someone can remember the words of the Lord’s Prayer and let them share.

Jesus also gives a pattern (or instruction) to follow to serve others. He did this by washing his disciples’ feet. Jesus was the servant king. Invite the group to pray the Lord’s Prayer, reminding them that they play a part in God’s will being done on earth.

**OPTION TWO:** Footprints

**You will need:** A4 paper; pens

Ask the group to draw a pair of feet. On the soles and the toes, write ideas that they can do to serve others. These are the sort of things that you wouldn’t expect those in charge to do. Would a top chef scrub the pots and pans? Would a chief executive drive his chauffeur?

**OPTION THREE:** Discussion

Ask a couple of people to lead a discussion about the story today and people’s response to it. You could review the questions from ‘Small groups’ as well as any questions that the people in the group may have.

## CLOSING – 5 mins

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

**DARREN HILL**

tells stories at *thecreativeminimalist.com*.