

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY (YEAR A) Sunday 5 July 2026

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

CHILDREN'S GAMES

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

John and Jesus compared (Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30)

John the Baptist and Jesus presented highly contrasted images of God's messenger. John withdrew to the desert and lived as an ascetic. Jesus lived among people and drew large followings. He accepted the company of tax collectors and sinners. Both, however, were rejected by their generation. They accused John of being possessed and Jesus of being a drunkard. In this passage Jesus likens the generation to quarrelsome children satisfied with nothing.

The image to stimulate reflection on Matthew's picture of children in the market place is *children's games*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Matthew 11: 16-19; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said, 'To what will I compare this generation?
It is like children sitting in the market-places
and calling to one another,
"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn."
For John came neither eating nor drinking,
and they say, "He has a demon";
the Son of Man came eating and drinking,
and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard,
a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!"'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught your followers
to love life and to do good.
Teach us to love what is good,
that we may live our lives to your glory;
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

‘But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,

“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!” Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.’

Jesus Thanks His Father

At that time Jesus said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30)

Begin to explore Matthew's comparison between John the Baptist and Jesus by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- How do you see the contrast between John the Baptist and Jesus?
- Why were people criticising John the Baptist?
- Why were people criticising Jesus?
- How do you read the idea of God revealing hidden things to infants?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

This passage from Matthew holds material in common with Luke not reported by Mark. Did Matthew and Luke get this from a common source?

- Luke 7: 31-35
- Luke 10: 21-22

Explore passages in the Old Testament in which God's revelation has been to young people.

- 1 Samuel 3: 1-11
- Psalm 8: 1-2
- Isaiah 11: 6

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Matthew's comparison between John the Baptist and Jesus by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Matthew 11: 16-19 commentary
- Children's games in the ancient world
- Pieter Bruegel's classic picture 'Children's Games'

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Matthew's comparison between John the Baptist and Jesus is *children's games*. Draw on your experience of children's games. For example:

- Reflect on your experience of games you enjoyed playing as a child.
- Reflect on your experience of games you see children playing today.
- Reflect on your experience of learning from children.

What have you learned about children's games?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by the theme of Matthew's comparison between John the Baptist and Jesus or by the image of children's games.

- Make a display of children's games across different generations.
- Make a collage of children playing different games, 'Jesus observed children playing in the market place'.
- Make a poster of games played when you were a child.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Matthew's comparison between John the Baptist and Jesus or the image of children's games.



Liverpool Cathedral

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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