

But this also is the day...with all that implies. “This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it”. Rejoice? Are you crazy? How can we face all this difficult news and probably personal hardship in our own lives with anything but tightly clenched jaws and even tighter fists? Rejoice? I don’t think so! Be glad? No way! Because hard times do make us want to batten down the hatches. As we see this parade of woe, we are inclined to close our doors, our hearts and our purses, jam that wallet tighter into an inside pocket of our soul and hang onto what we’ve got. We don’t want to become the poor wretch on TV who made a bad choice.

We hear the words of our own time of troubles dramatically expressed in this excerpt from Psalms: “All nations surrounded me; in the name of the Lord I cut them off! They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the Lord I cut them off! They surrounded me like bees; they blazed like fire of thorns; in the name of the Lord, I pushed them off! I was pushed hard so that I was falling...”

This is a very bleak picture...what a grim piece of scripture...this must be one of those Psalms or songs of lamentation...all sorrow and gnashing of teeth.

No, this is song of joy...in fact, this is the very source of the familiar words: “This is the day that the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it”. Psalm 118. The Psalm blasts us through all the scenes of trouble and destruction, armed not with a great investment manager, or a terrific credit card deal or an armour-clad job offer, but with the simple reminder: “What can mortals do to me? The Lord is on my side to help me.”

As Christians, our marching orders from this Psalm are simple: “It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” You can bet the folks who gave money to Bernie Madoff or Conrad Black wish they’d listened!

Beyond that simple advice, what is this Psalm saying to us? If you haven’t read it recently, take a few minutes...because “herein lies wisdom”.

But the Coles Notes’ version applies to our situation right here, right now: A little less judgment, a little more joy. When trouble knocks, don’t hide and cringe. Answer with a smile and your hand extended. In tough times, we must go on rejoicing about the love we have been given and the care the Lord has offered. Our answer to our neighbour around the block or around the world must always be an open hand, not a closed fist. Give and go on giving. If your financial resources are short, give your time. If you still have a dime in your pocket, give away a nickel to the person who doesn’t. Do it willingly, with smiles and an open heart and mind. In fact “rejoice and be glad in it”. And to God be the Glory.

HYMN: *This is the Day*
 This is the Day

(Voices United-#412)
(More Voices-#122)

Observer Children's Time

Leaders: *Please review this Children's Time to make yourselves aware of the concept of the Moonjar. You may decide to just read this out to the children, and encourage them to make their own jars at home. Or you might want to have a craft session one Sunday, and supply the markers, stickers, magazines, glue etc., for the children to create their own Moonjars. Whatever you decide, we ask that you create your own Moonjars to have on display as you explain the concept to the children. (Please feel free to adjust the text below accordingly).*

This Sunday we are talking about how to be generous when we don't have a lot left over. This is not just something that grown-ups have to think about; children can do their part too. I have been thinking about it a lot and I have come up with an idea for a project I want to share. Let me tell you about my Moon Jars (show finished jars...)

Before we begin let me explain the name:

The first part is the word Moon. Have you ever heard someone say, "Shoot for the moon?" It means to go after dreams and goals.

The second part of the name is jar. We see different sizes and types of jars, all around us, in our homes, and classrooms. Jars are meant to hold things. The idea for these special jars comes from an ancient custom where wishes or dreams are written down and placed inside for future celebration!

So moon + jar = MOONJAR!

Here is the fun part:

When you get home, gather three containers like I have here. They could be old coffee cans, or jam jars, whatever you can find. You will want to make sure that each has a lid. Once you have your three jars, it's time to have some fun. Gather together stickers, paint, crayons and markers, and use these items to decorate each of your jars. You can make them as fun and colorful as you like.

The next step is to label each of the jars with one of the following words: "Spend", "Share", and "Save"

Now I will explain what to do with each of the jars:

The **spend** jar is for you to use now. Maybe there's a small item you'd like to buy. Possibly a book or a new set of trading cards, whatever you decide. You can use your money from your *spend* jar for these types of things – things that don't cost too much money. This is fun, as it won't take you too long to save, and once you have spent your money, you can begin to save again for a new item. Can you tell me some things you would like to save for that don't cost too much money?

The “**share**” jar is where you put money that you are going to share with others. Every time you are given money, or receive your allowance, you can put some of that money into your *share* jar. This is special money because you are going to take what you have and share it with others. You can do this in many different ways: You can put this money into the collection plate at church on Sunday, or you can give it to a charity to help others. A wonderful way to share is to sponsor a child from another country. Every dollar can really make a difference in those lives. We always feel good when we help others and share with them. Can you think of other ways to use the money from your *share* jar?

The third jar is the “**save**” jar. The money in this jar is for the future. You can use this for something really special, such as a new bike or skateboard, something that can be quite expensive. A great idea is to cut out a picture of the item you are saving for and glue it to the front of your jar. This makes it so exciting, because every time you put money into your *save* jar, you are a little bit closer to buying what’s on the front. You don’t have to spend the money in this jar, after all it is called a *save* jar. When your *save* jar gets full, you can gather this money together and take it to the bank and make a deposit into your account. This way your *save* jar money really is for the future. Can you think of some special things that you would like to use your *save* jar for?

Talk with a grown-up about how much money you put in each jar. The key is to make a deposit into **each** of the jars every time you receive some money.

As you can see, the Moonjar helps us save for our dreams, big or small, and at the same time lets us do our part in helping others by sharing our gifts with them, which is what God asks us to do.