

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Third Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 13:1-9

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy: Come, let us adore him. (Antiphon for Lent, Book of Common Prayer, page 81.) And what if, during this season of Lent, we sought a deeper understanding of this amazing gospel of grace? Will that image of grace energize us to do the spiritual housekeeping we need to be ready for the "new thing" God is doing in Easter?

A notation for this week's Gospel

To repent means to turn or return after seeing what you have done or not done is wrong. It is a change of mind – turning away from the evil ways, toward the good ways. The first part of today's Gospel may seem like another version of the age-old question: why are some people killed in bizarre accidents — and others amazingly spared?

However, today's lesson is not about good guys or bad guys, but rather about turning your life around so you are ready to meet God. It is about feeding our souls with the good, nurturing ourselves so we will produce good things, and turning over the soil of our lives so we can begin again and again.

Theme: Called to repentance

Before Class: Bring in the container of bags from last week, additional pieces of paper and pencils, an adequate supply of tape, and extra bags for newcomers. You will also need Bibles. Be alert for a news story the children will have heard about where a tragedy involves some and amazingly spares others. Perhaps it was a fire that some escaped, or an accident some walked away from. Then, if you happen to have a really large backpack – the kind hikers carry that can hold many pounds – bring it. If you do not have one, then fashion a backpack out of two black trash bags (one inside the other). Bring heavy stuff to put in the backpack, such as books, bricks, a 5 pound bag of flour. (Don't purchase anything, just scrounge in your house or on the church premises.) The object will be for the children to see how it feels to be carrying an increasingly heavy load and how much better it feels to put it all down. This feeling will be related to the Lenten theme, "giving it up."

Beginning: Ask the children if they have anything to share about their Spring Training (See Lent 1, Year C Lesson Plan). Then ask them to give you a definition of the word repent. Accept what they come up with and tell them we will look into it a bit more today.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, that you always forgive us and are ready to hear us when we say we are sorry. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 13: 1-9 Tell the children that we really have two stories today. Invite them to read the parts of the narrator, Jesus, the man, and the gardener. (see the scripture below)

Questions:

The people are asking whether those who died were more guilty than those who were spared. What does Jesus say to this question? (Verse 5)

If you have been able to think of a comparable local story, bring it to the children's attention and ask them the same question about this event.

What does Jesus say that everyone needs to do about this situation? (Repent, stop doing what they know is wrong, tell God they are sorry, and do things differently afterward.)

Activity: Tell the children you have a Repentance Simulation they can demonstrate. Repentance in the religious language means to “turn around” or to “turn away from.” When we turn our lives around or turn away from things, we need to let go of stuff we are hauling around.

Show them the stuff you have brought and the backpack or trash bags. Ask for a volunteer to be the hauler and ask the rest of the children to load up the backpack after the volunteer has put it on. (If you are using trash bags, show the child how to cross arms and hang onto the edges of the trash bags on the child's back.) Add stuff, a bit at a time until the child clearly has all he or she can carry. Suggest they take a couple of steps and then let the load slide to the floor. Ask them to describe how it felt to have all that stuff on their back? How did it feel when you got free of it? What things weigh us down, keeping us from being who God wants us to be? What might we give up?

More Questions:

What did the owner think needed to happen to the fruitless tree? (Chop it down. It was using up good soil!)

What did the gardener think needed to happen? (Some care, loosening up of the soil that was packed down, adding a bit of fertilizer...helping the tree turn around and bear the fruit he knew it could with some care and tending)

If we thought of our Spring Training as needing soil dug up a bit and fertilizer added, what would the digging be and what might the fertilizer be? (See if the children can come up with parallels for loosening up and for added help.)

Getting Closure: Bring out the container with the bags and let the children open the large container and find their bags. Allow a bit of time for the children to look at what is in their bags and notice what they might want to add. Offer paper and pencils. When they are through, provide tape so they can, again, secure their bags and place them in the larger container which they will also tape shut and return to your care for the week.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you are full of compassion and mercy. Help us to turn toward you and away from the things that are weighing us down, or the things that are holding us back from doing what you call us to do. Amen.

Luke 13:1-9

Narrator: At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²Jesus asked them,

Jesus: ‘Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.’

Narrator: Then he told this parable:

Jesus: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener,

Man: “See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?”

Narrator: ⁸He replied,

Gardener: “Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”’

Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

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