

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 7
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Luke 8:26-39

We remain Easter people, now with the wind of the Holy Spirit in our sails. Our task for the months ahead in this season of Ordinary Time, which extends to the end of November, is to look at what Jesus so tenaciously taught his disciples and see what is in these teachings for us as we carry out the work we have been given to do. Jesus promised his disciples a helper, an Advocate, who would stand with them making the work possible. This same helper, the Holy Spirit, hovers over us still eager to quench the fire of fear and replace it with the powerful energy of love.

A Notation for his week's Gospel

Demons. Not a likely topic for a meeting of psychiatric medical professionals. And the prescription — tossing demons onto the back of pigs and subsequently driving the pigs off a cliff — is equally unlikely. Yet who among us has not been taunted by a demon in some other disguise? ("I am not qualified, I can't do it, it is too hard." etc.) And, oh, the delicious relief when the wind blows the demons away.

Theme: Demons blown away

Before Class: You will need Bibles, small pieces of paper, pencils or pens, and envelopes that can be sealed.

Beginning: Tell the class that demons are our subject today. We are not qualified to serve as psychiatric counselors, and serious psychological problems deserve competent treatment. Invite the group to share demons we are capable of grappling with and helping each other as we free ourselves from their grip. Ask the group to take a few moments thinking about the demons that sneak up on us and rob us of our self-confidence and our conviction that we are children of God. Encourage them to make the distinction between things we can do nothing about (poor eyesight, for example) and those things that are mostly figments of our poor self-respect (they wouldn't want my help, etc.). Ask them to write on scraps of paper demons that show up. What they write will be for their eyes only and shared only if they choose to do so.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, thank you for wanting us to be free of the demons that bind us, free to serve you and to live our lives in love and in peace. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 8: 26 - 39 Invite someone to read the scripture passage.

Questions:

- Describe the situation of the "man" in this passage. (Verses 27, 29b)
- Describe what the demons request of Jesus (verse 31) and Jesus' solution (verse 32-33).
- I wonder what could Jesus be telling us to do with the demons that torment us?
- I wonder what we can do to rid ourselves of the things that bind us?

Getting Closure: Invite the group to sit in a circle. Give each person an envelope in which they can seal their piece of paper with the demon described. Invite each person to consider giving the demon back to Jesus. Allow a moment or two of silent prayer for people to do just that. Then invite them to tear up the envelope. Once they have torn up their envelope, invite them to imagine if the demon tries to show up again, remind the demon that you have already dealt with it and it needs to go away and leave you alone.

Closing Prayer: Dear Jesus, we thank you for wanting us to be free of demons that drag us down, and we trust you will take and drive away these demons we have offered to you. Amen.

Luke 8:26-39

Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me’— for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) Jesus then asked him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Legion’; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, ‘Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.’ So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

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

© 2013 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.