

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 15
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Luke 12:49-56

Even on a sultry summer day, the wind of the Spirit hovers — almost imperceptibly. Our lives rarely accommodate a slower pace for the summer. Yet, we are invited to notice, again, the priorities that drive us. We are invited to stop, however briefly, the manic activity and consider options Jesus offers us.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Not everyone chooses the fire of change. God does not drag us kicking and screaming into the kingdom. God appears to be amazingly patient. The sting of divisions pains us; we yearn for peace. How are we to interpret the present time? What will we choose?

Theme: Risking the choice to change

Before: The message in today's Gospel is pretty heavy for young children, but the idea of how we make choices is accessible. To get into the story, have at hand a toy or two. You will also need several sheets of construction paper (each a different color), crayons, and glues.

Note also that if your school system is starting up this week you might have children new to your class. If so, be sure to take the time to incorporate them, getting to know their names, something about them, and making them feel welcome while helping the other children to welcome them.

Beginning: Let's figure out what a word that Jesus uses means. The word is choice. Any ideas what it means? (If they do not know, offer a sentence: I have a choice; I could read a book or watch TV.) So what would we say "choice" means (and it is OK if they use the word choose to define choice!) Then include the definition you have come up with as you pray and tell the story.

Praying: Thank you, God, for showing us how to (make good choices.) Amen.

The Story: Jesus was talking to the people. They just did not get it. Some times it is hard to be patient, when people don't understand what you are telling them. Jesus said, "I came to get you excited and you just don't get excited. You know how to understand the things that are around you. You understand that big black clouds in the sky probably mean it will rain and that the wind blowing from the south means it will be hot. BUT, you have trouble understanding what I am teaching you and making good choices."

Activity: We can make some choices about how we will treat each other. Give one of the children the toy you have brought in and say something like, "Here, (naming the child) you can play with this toy." Then ask the others, "How do you feel about this child having a toy and none of the rest of you having a toy? What could you do about it?" If no one comes up with it, ask, "Could you hit the child over the head and grab the toy away from him? That would be a choice.

Would it be an OK choice? What else could you do? What would be a good choice for the child who suddenly got a toy to play with?" (Share? Take turns?)

"Now, using our imaginations, let's pretend there is a plate of cookies on the table. What are some choices we could make? Race for the table and grab as many cookies as each of us can? Count the cookies to be sure there is one for each of us and then pass the plate. What if there are NOT enough cookies for each of us to have a whole cookie?"

Option: Spread out the construction paper on the table and tell the children to choose which one they want. What could we do if two children want the same piece of paper? (Cut it in half, see if one child would be satisfied with another color, give it to neither child. Other solutions?)

If the children write, show them the word you have come up with for choices and let them copy it on their papers. If they do not, you could write the word for them on pieces of paper they could glue onto their papers. Then invite them to illustrate the concept of choice, drawing whatever they want to draw.

Getting Closure: Invite each child to tell the rest of you about his/her drawing and affirm each creation.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for helping us make good choices. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 15
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 12:49-56

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A Notation for This Week's Gospel

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Theme: Risking the choice to change

Before Class: The Gospel for today is pretty heavy. The lesson focuses on choices and choices to change. But the heavy emphasis in the Gospel on divisions creates an opportunity you may, or may not, choose to take. That is a discussion on how we live peacefully in a multi-cultural society, balancing our call to "go and make disciples of all nations" with respecting religious choices made by others. Then, two options are offered from which you can make a choice. If your class is large enough (at least 6 children) you might want to create two groups with a different task for each. If the class is smaller, you probably would choose to work together as one group.

If school is beginning in your community, you might have a child new to this class and you will want to take the time to fully incorporate the child into the class.

Beginning: As the children are gathering, ask them, "If I said I have a choice, what would you say that means?"

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, that you help us make good choices. Amen.

The Story: Luke 12: 49 - 56 The entire passage is Jesus talking, but it might be good to divide it in half, with a voice for each half.

Invite someone to read the first half of the story: Luke 12:49-53

Questions.

- I wonder what is the "fire" Jesus is talking about in our passage? (People excited about the fact that God loves and forgives them, God is right here with us, God wants us to turn to God.)

- I wonder what the baptism with which Jesus knows he is to be baptized? (He knows he has to go to Jerusalem and he probably at least suspects that he will be killed but that with his death will come the Resurrection.)
- Jesus says he knows there will be divisions. I wonder what some of those divisions might be?
- What are some of the faiths represented in our community?
- Does anyone have a classmate with a faith different from ours?

Option: This is a discussion you may or may not choose to have with the children:

- I wonder how we honor the religions different from ours without abandoning our own?
- What situation might cause us to invite those with a different faith choice to come check out ours?

The Story (cont.): Luke 12:54-56 Invites someone else to read the second half of our passage.

Questions:

- I wonder, how did people figure out the weather in Jesus' time? (They couldn't just turn on the TV or check the weather website. Instead, they knew what clouds would result in rain and what the wind from the south would bring.)
- What were some of the signs Jesus tells the people they are missing? (Continuing on with the message that John the Baptist had proclaimed, Jesus has been telling people to choose to change their ways, tell God they are sorry, and start over. They are not getting it.)

Activity: Below are two scenarios you may use (you may have better ideas) to help the children through a process of making a choice. Use the three questions (What are the options? What will you choose? How did you arrive at that decision?) to decide how to present the scenario. Should the group present the scenario as a skit, discuss it more fully, draw it on paper, or use some other medium? Have a general discussion moving through the three decision-making questions.

(If you have a group over 6, you may want to divide the group into smaller groups and have them discuss and present the scenarios.)

Scenario 1: A child at school always waits until no teacher can see him and then he bullies another child. What are the options? What will you choose to do? How did you arrive at that decision?

Scenario 2: The doctor has told you that your health is at serious risk if you continue to consume a lot of sugar. But you love candy bars, soda, and cookies. What are the options? What will you choose? How did you arrive at that decision?

Getting Closure: Ask the children how they felt about the process. Ask them how they think they might be able to use it on their own, possibly offering a situation in which you used the process.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you help us when we have hard choices to make. Be with us as we go from this place and help us to make good choices so people can see your love in the world. Amen.

Luke 12:49-56

49 ‘I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! ⁵¹Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! ⁵²From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³they will be divided: father against son

and son against father,
mother against daughter
and daughter against mother,
mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law
and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.’

54 He also said to the crowds, ‘When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, “It is going to rain”; and so it happens. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, “There will be scorching heat”; and it happens. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?’

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 15
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Luke 12:49-56

Even on a sultry summer day, the wind of the Spirit hovers — almost imperceptibly. Our lives rarely accommodate a slower pace for the summer. Yet, we are invited to notice, again, the priorities that drive us. We are invited to stop, however briefly, the manic activity and consider options Jesus offers us.

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Theme: Risking the choice to change

Before Class: We live in a time when divisions within our church bring significant suffering to many. Be aware of which ones your class is in a position to discuss and which ones might best be left alone, for now. You will need copies of the Bible or copies of the scripture for today.

Beginning: We have a pretty hard passage today. Jesus presents us with some pretty significant choices, once again showing us that a Gospel message almost two thousand years old is disturbingly contemporary.

Opening Prayer: Dear Patient God, you offer us choices, you help us as we struggle with the choices, and you love us through all of it. Thank you. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 12: 49- 56. Invite one person to read the entire passage. Others may follow along in their Bibles.

Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you in this passage?
- I wonder, what is the "fire" Jesus brought?
- I wonder what would our world look like if each of us were "on fire" with Jesus' message? How would we manage disagreements and turf battles? How would we manage the resources of the earth?
- What is the "baptism" Jesus awaits? Didn't John already baptize him? (He knows he must go to Jerusalem. He probably suspects he will be killed — that in his death, death will also be conquered and the resurrected life will be available to all.)
- The divisions Jesus delineates: to what extent do they sound like a bad soap opera? To what extent do they describe the world we live in?
- Jesus was annoyed that the people could not interpret "the present time." I wonder what he meant? (Jesus was bringing a radical interpretation of what God was calling God's people to

do and so many were trying to cut and paste these teachings into the strict interpretation of the law — and, so, missing the point.)

Invite someone to read again Luke 12: 49-50, and then sit quietly with it for a moment or two. Then invite each person, silently, to picture a world where everyone believes God is right in our midst, that we can turn to God, be forgiven and move on, and we see the face of Christ in everyone we meet?

Getting Closure: Invite anyone who chooses to do so to share what they pictured. If you have time, invite them to share what they will take away from today.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that Jesus brought fire to the earth. Help us to find the courage to choose that fire in our lives each day. Amen.

Luke 12:49-56

49 ‘I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! ⁵¹Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! ⁵²From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³they will be divided: father against son
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