

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