

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 29
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Luke 23:33-43

In the final 6 weeks of this Lectionary Year C, a firm and hopeful tone soars in Jesus' teachings in a rich symphony of themes. The background music of the Hebrew Scriptures holds the notes of the new covenant — a law written in our hearts rather than codified in legal structures — The Spirit poured out, a vision for the appointed time, God with us, a new heaven and a new earth, and a branch from the tree of David — the remnant gathered. We can believe that Jesus heard this cosmic music as he distilled his huge message to the disciples.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

This Sunday we celebrate Christ the King. We also close the third year of the three-year lectionary cycle. Today we hear a portion of the passion story in which Jesus is hanging on the cross in between two criminals. One is encouraging him to save himself. The other names that Jesus has done nothing wrong and asks that Jesus remember him. Jesus tells him, "Today you will be with me in paradise." Jesus' life on earth challenged those in power because it created a new way of life as Jesus talks about liberation from what we normally know as power. Jesus came to "to spread a revolution of love and grace, which entailed identifying and embodying a new kind of power and priority."¹

Theme: Christ the King of Love and Grace

Before Class: You will need supplies to create crowns such as construction paper, art materials, and tape. If you are going to have a celebration for Christ the King, bring celebratory snacks and party supplies.

If the children in your class attend a portion or all of your church's worship service, you might check to see if they could process in carrying the cross they have been decorating all Fall. If that is not an option, perhaps it could be displayed after class where the rest of the congregation can see it, and the children can show it to people, describing the various illustrations they have made.

Beginning: Tell the children that today we are celebrating Christ Jesus our King. Ask them what they think of when they think of a King. What do they think of when they think of Jesus?

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for all you that teach us and all that you have given us. Be with us today as we celebrate the love and grace you have given us. Amen.

The Story: At the end of Jesus' life, he was talking with two criminals. Both of them knew that they had done something wrong. One asked Jesus, "If you are the king, why don't you save yourself?" The other said, "Jesus, I know you are the king. Will you remember me when you go into your kingdom?" Jesus told them that they were forgiven the things they had done wrong and

¹ William Loader, "First Thoughts on Year C Gospel Passages from the Lectionary; Christ the King," <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/LkChristKg.htm> (accessed May 2013)

that they would come with him into paradise today.

Activity: Christ the King

Remind the children the words they used when they were describing a king and Jesus. Invite them to create crowns to celebrate Christ being our King.

If there are going to have a celebration, invite them to help set up the room and get ready for the celebration.

Activity: If the children can bring their cross into the worship service, plan with them what you are going to do. Or, if they are going to display it where all can see, take the cross to that place before your session ends.

Getting Closure: Invite them to share their crowns. If you have time, you can also invite them to share their favorite story about Jesus.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for all you have given to us, especially for the stories that tell us more about you, for your servants from whom we learn, and especially for your Son, Jesus. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 29
Lesson Plans for Older Children

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Theme: Christ the King of Love and Grace

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture for today or enough Bibles for everyone, paper, pencils, and art materials for the activity and response. If you plan on having a "Christ the King" celebration, you might want to bring celebration snacks.

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for all you that teach us and all that you have given us. Be with us today as we celebrate the love and grace you have given us. Amen.

Beginning: Invite the children to gather in a circle. Have each one of them name a word that they think of when they hear the word, "Jesus." When they have all shared, tell them that today we are talking about Christ Jesus our King and all we have learned over the last year.

The Story: Luke 23:33-43 To tell the story today, you will need a Narrator, Jesus, Leader, Soldier, Criminal 1, and Criminal 2.

Questions:

- I wonder what you liked about this story today?
- What did you find difficult?
- As Jesus hangs on the cross, he asks for God's forgiveness for those who had crucified him. I

² William Loader, "First Thoughts on Year C Gospel Passages from the Lectionary; Christ the King," <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/LkChristKg.htm> (accessed May 2013)

wonder what that tells us about Jesus' love for us, for all?

- I wonder what this tells us about the magnitude of forgiveness.
- As Jesus is being mocked, one criminal is encouraging Jesus to save himself. What would it have been like to be this man next to Jesus?
- What would it have been like to be the other criminal who understood what Jesus was about, and to simply ask Jesus to "remember him" today?
- I wonder what the man's response was when Jesus told him, "Today, you will be with me in paradise."
- I wonder what would our response be?

Activity: Tell the children that today we celebrate "Christ the King." Since it is the last day in the church year, it seems appropriate to remember who our year is all about. Ask the children what comes to mind, immediately, when they hear the word King. Tell them that king meant more when most Christians lived in countries ruled by kings or queens, so the idea of someone who was wiser than the one ruling them made the title fit Jesus. If king doesn't resonate, what other word, or words, might we choose? (Concepts like Main Man, Head Guy, and True Leader might get them started.)

What comes to mind when we hear the word Jesus? How might we celebrate, Jesus, our King?

Option: Invite the children to compose, with your assistance, a closing prayer for this year and for this day.

Some can write the prayer, others can do illustrations of the stories, and others can create a crown for the "king."

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share what they have done in their activity time. If a group wrote a prayer, use it in place of the prayer below.

Closing Prayer: Pray the prayer you and the children have composed or you can use the following. Loving God, we thank you for all you have given to us, especially for the stories that tell us more about you, for your servants from whom we learn, and especially for your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Luke 23:33-43

Narrator: When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said,

Jesus: ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’

Narrator: And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying,

Leader: ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!’

Narrator: The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying,

Soldier: ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’

Narrator: There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’

Narrator: One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying,

Criminal 1: ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’

Narrator: But the other rebuked him, saying,

Criminal 2: ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’

Narrator: Then he said,

Criminal 2: ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’

Jesus: ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 29
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Luke 23:33-43

In the final 6 weeks of this Lectionary Year C, a firm and hopeful tone soars in Jesus' teachings in a rich symphony of themes. The background music of the Hebrew Scriptures holds the notes of the new covenant — a law written in our hearts rather than codified in legal structures — The Spirit poured out, a vision for the appointed time, God with us, a new heaven and a new earth, and a branch from the tree of David — the remnant gathered. We can believe that Jesus heard this cosmic music as he distilled his huge message to the disciples.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

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Theme: Christ the King of Love and Grace

Before: You will need copies of the Bible or the scripture passage for the group.

Beginning: Tell the group that today is the last Sunday in the Church year. We complete the readings from Cycle C and next Sunday will begin Cycle A with the First Sunday in Advent. Today, we read a portion of the passion in which Christ is hanging on the cross between two criminals. Today, we don't focus on the crucifixion, but rather what that crucifixion meant for those around Jesus. How is Christ our King? What does that mean for us?

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for all you that teach us and all that you have given us. Be with us today as we celebrate the love and grace you have given us. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 23:33-43 Invite one person to read the entire passage. Invite the group to think about what it was like to be one of the criminals hanging there with Jesus.

Questions:

- I wonder what struck you about this story today?
- As Jesus hangs on the cross, he asks for God's forgiveness for those who had crucified him. I wonder what that tells us about Jesus' love for us, for all?

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- I wonder what this tells us about the magnitude of forgiveness.
- As Jesus is being mocked, one criminal is encouraging Jesus to save himself. What would it have been like to be this man next to Jesus?
- What would it have been like to be the other criminal who understood what Jesus was about, and to simply ask Jesus to “remember him” today?
- I wonder what the man’s response was when Jesus told him, “Today, you will be with me in paradise.”
- I wonder what would our response be?

Option: Invite the group to think about all the ways in which Jesus confronted the powers that were present when he was on earth. How was Jesus preaching about liberation?

William Loader, in his commentary on the Gospel says, “The songs of the birth narratives are full of it [talk about liberation]. Jesus marches into the synagogue to link his mission to Isaiah 61 in 4:16-20. He announces good news to the poor, hungry, those who wept. He asserts and expresses the value of those considered valueless. He gathers people and announces change. He is not beginning a school of meditation for personal enrichment (though that will have its place); nor is he promising a utopia at another time and another place. Rather he is announcing change and embodying it already in himself and in his community.”⁴

What does this gospel of liberation mean for us today? How is this “revolution of love and grace” for us? I wonder how we are claiming God’s love and grace? I wonder how we live differently knowing that Christ is King?

Getting Closure: Invite the group to name how they are claiming God’s love and grace. Where do we see God’s love and grace? Where do we see the gospel of liberation being lived out today? What part do we have in this gospel?

Closing Prayer: Loving God, thank you for all you have given us. Thank you for the love, grace, and forgiveness you bestow upon us. Amen.

⁴ *ibid.*

Luke 23:33-43

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’]] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!’ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’ There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’

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