

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – First Sunday after Epiphany
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17

Because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Book of Common Prayer, page 378)

Accept the light we have received and shine it forth! It is not about shining the light in other's faces, blinding them, but holding the light in open hands.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Power. What power do we call upon to do the work we have been given to do? And where do we defer to a person with greater power? Jesus honors the sphere of John the Baptist's authority and then accepts the power now clearly his after baptism. He is the beloved.

Theme: Anointed with The Holy Spirit and With Power

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture today and if you choose to read the scripture as the script is written below, you will need enough copies for each person.

Beginning: Ask the group to think about what the word "power" conveys. What are some of its negative attributes? What are some of its positive attributes?

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the power you give us to do the work we have been given to do. Help us to listen for your voice and use the power you give us wisely. Amen.

The Scripture: Ask for volunteers to read the parts in today's passage: Narrator, John the Baptist, Jesus, and God.

Questions:

- I wonder why Jesus believed he should be baptized by John the Baptist? (Jesus chose to authenticate John's ministry by responding to John's call.)
- Describe John's hesitancy to baptize this man whom he had been proclaiming. (John must have felt inadequate or at least in awe that Jesus would come to him.)
- How could we paraphrase Jesus' response to John? (God had been calling God's people for baptism by John. Jesus being baptized by John fulfills this calling.)

Option: Invite the group to imagine themselves viewing the scene of Jesus' baptism.

I wonder what it would have looked like if you were a jaded reporter? What if you were a person who had been baptized by John and was eagerly awaiting this person John described? I wonder how we would have felt if we were in John's place in this story.

Let the group choose who they want to “pretend” to be. Then, ask them how they would describe what they saw and heard, bearing in mind that the author was clearly searching for words to describe such a powerful event. How do they think this event affirmed the ministry that Jesus was discovering as his?

Getting Closure: Tell the group that the season of Epiphany is bracketed by these words: “This is my Beloved.” We will hear them again on the Last Sunday after Epiphany, the Transfiguration of Jesus. I wonder what those words might mean for each of us as we approach this season?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you empower us to do the work you have given us to do. Help us hear your voice telling us that we are your beloved. Amen.

Matthew 3:13-17

Narrator: Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by John. John would have prevented him saying,

John: ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come from me?’

Narrator: But Jesus answered him,

Jesus: ‘Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.’

Narrator: Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said,

God: ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’

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