

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Third Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 2:13-22

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Events teach. Often the learning comes after the event. Jesus teaches with elements that have immediate impact as well as lingering meaning. And they usually land well outside the expected. So, with Passover looming, Jesus goes into the busy temple and proceeds to clean house. "Take these things out of here!" he demands of the money changers, the animal merchants – even those who sold doves. Then he announces: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." A temple that took 46 years to build? Could he mean the temple God has been building since the beginning of time? What "things" need to be removed from our own personal temples?

Theme: Cleaning the Temple

Before Class: Be sure you have fresh sandpaper if children are going to be sanding the cross. Make copies of the verse for the children to either learn or illustrate.

Beginning: If it is possible, take the children on a short field trip. Telling them to tip-toe and whisper if a service is going on in church as you travel, take the children to the entrance of your church. Ask them to look around and notice – without talking – what they can see. (Coat racks? A table with papers on it? A coffee pot?) Then tip-toe back to your classroom. Ask the children what they saw. If they missed something you saw, offer it.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for our church. Lots of people work to make it possible for us to come here, go to church, have Sunday School, get babies baptized, and people married. Thank you for the people who take care of our church. Amen.

The Story (John 2: 13-16): We saw the way our church looks. This story is about a church that Jesus went to visit. Instead of the things we saw (and remind them of what they have seen) he saw something that was really a mess. Instead of coat racks, there were people selling cows, and goats, and even birds! And other people were going up to tables and handing in their money and getting lots of change. What a mess! A noisy, mess, thought Jesus. All of this mess was getting in the way of worshipping God. So, Jesus decided to clean up the mess and he sent all those noisy people out of the church. "Take these things out of here! They do not belong in a church."

What Goes in a Church: Invite the children to draw the temple as a mess – before Jesus got there or what it looked like after Jesus cleaned it up. Or, they could draw a picture of what our church looked like when we tiptoed to look. You draw along with them and engage them in conversation about what they are drawing. You could ask them what kinds of things go on INSIDE our church (particularly if they are not usually there for a church service.)

Sanding the Cross: Some children may want to take a turn sanding the wood of the cross.

Prayer: If you are choosing to teach the children a new prayer or memorized verse each week, or if you are offering it to them as words to illustrate, here is a suggestion for today:

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

You could tell them that we say this a lot in church to get our attention: the leader says the first and the last lines, and the people say the one in the middle. You might also tell the children that Jesus told us that whenever two or three people are together to pray, that Jesus will be right there in the middle of them. These words help us remember that.

Getting Closure: Ask the children what they would like to do with the pictures they drew. Or get comments on the sanding of the cross. Do they want to hang up the pictures in the classroom, take them home, or tell someone in church what they saw?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for our church, for the people who take care of it for us, and for the people who come to this church. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Third Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 2:13-22

Background

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Theme: Cleaning the Temple

Before Class: You will need copies of the Bible or scripture for today, The Book of Common Prayer (BCP) for each person, paper, pens or pencils, and the journals, if you are using them.

Beginning: Ask the children to describe what your church looks like when we first walk in. Is there someone handing out bulletins for our service? Is there a place to hang coats? What else might we see? A coffee pot? People greeting us? Then ask them to picture this: they walk in, as usual, and instead of the things they have just described, there are a whole bunch of people buying and selling things. And some guys have set up a big table and are making change -- step right up, get your temple money here. What in the world would we think?

The Story (John 2: 13 – 20): Tell the children: This is what Jesus found when he went into the Temple, which was the Jewish church in Jerusalem.

You can invite one child to read the passage, or invite 4-8 readers and use the script found at the end of the lesson.

Reflection Questions:

- What did Jesus find in the Temple?
- What did he do about it?
- What does this passage tell us Jesus said?

- What did the disciples remember from their reading of Scripture? ("Zeal for your house will consume me," which could mean: "I love this place and it just kills me to see what is happening.")
- Then Jesus gave the people in charge of the temple a very strange answer. What did he say, and what do you think he meant? (Destroy this temple and in just three days I will raise it up. To figure out what he meant, what do we know was going to happen on Good Friday and then three days later on Easter?) They, of course, do not "get it."

Prayer: Last week one type of prayer was discussed: "noticing." This week would be a good time to discuss another type of prayer. It could be called the "Oops!" type of prayer. We use this type of prayer when we have blown it – and we know it – and we now are sorry. We need to be so sorry about it that we are also willing to say: "I am going to do my level best to see that THAT does not happen again!" These kinds of prayers are almost always just between one of us and God. We could take a little time to think about things we are truly sorry for – sorry enough to want to stop doing them – and tell God about them. This type of prayer is called "penitence." Look up what "penitence" means on p. 857 of The Book of Common Prayer. These prayers could go in a personal journal – they would not go in a class journal.

Getting Closure: Open the BCP to p. 447 and explain that there is a whole liturgy called The Reconciliation of a Penitent. This is a short service (there are two forms to choose from) for when a person wants to share their wrong-doings with someone else and have that person pray with them. Then turn to the bottom of p. 359 to find the Confession of Sin. This is a whole community confessing that it has fallen short in what they think, say, and do.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for always being willing to forgive us. Thank you for forgiving us for the things we have remembered today. Amen.

Reader 1: The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

Reader 2: Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of money changes and overturned their tables.

Reader 3: He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

Reader 4: His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Reader 5: The Jews then said to him: "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

Reader 6: Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Reader 7: The Jews then said: "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

Reader 8: After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Third Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 2:13-22

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

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Theme: Cleaning the Temple

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture or bibles for each person.

Beginning: In today's passage, we will meet Jesus in prophetic witness. He has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. The transformation from the old order is beginning to break through.

Creating the Setting: The Scripture appointed for today occurs near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus, acting on the authority he has from God, names what needs to be named: that which interferes with the life-giving spirit of God.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, open our hearts to hear the message that comes to us, now, in the passage we will work with today. Thank you for your trust in us to do this work. Amen.

The Scripture (John 2:13-22): invite someone to read the passage or invite one person to read Jesus and the another person to read the rest of the passage.

Questions:

- First of all, what were all those animals and money changers doing in the temple? (Animal sacrifice was a required part of the ritual. And the temple tax had to be paid in Jewish money, not Roman coins.)

- What do we do with Jesus' response? (This is not a temper tantrum, but a righteous response to leaders who had turned holy work into a profit-making business. He named what needed to be named and honored his own grief over what he was seeing.)
- What do we think "Zeal for your house will consume me." means? (Psalm 69.9 is the source of the quote -- a passage all would have been familiar with. It could also be freely translated as: "What you are doing with my house, my church, breaks my heart.") You may want to consider what things might break Jesus heart as he looks at our church, aware that we might be surprised.
- How does Jesus answer the question put to him by the Jewish leaders? (Notice his answer is, as usual, not an answer to their question but Jesus' insistence on keeping the focus where it is appropriate.
- We can imagine what the Jewish leaders meant by "temple." What do we think Jesus means by "temple?" (The place we meet God, our own bodies.)
- If we consider our own lives to be holy temples, what cattle, sheep, and money changers are cluttering up our temples? What things are we getting bogged down with in our lives in this particular community that is keeping us from doing the corporate work we have been given to do?

Getting Closure: If things that keep us from doing the work given us to do have been identified, ask where this dialogue should be shared. To whom should you talk to begin the dialogue.

Closing Prayer: Pray the Collect for Third Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer, p. 218.

John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of money changes and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then said to him: "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews then said: "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

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