

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Second Sunday of Easter
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 20:19-31

Background: Easter - the unearned gift of grace. The reflective season of “going in” that Lent provided (no matter what disciplines we undertook, nor even how well we attended to them) explodes on Easter. Of course, we cannot “figure it out.” How comforting, then, to have these scriptures, showing first how the disciples struggled to grasp what had happened and then stories of Jesus before the crucifixion, which are written in the light of the Resurrection.

As Easter people we know, as Paul said, that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God. We are people who expect life out of death. And so, in Eastertide we celebrate the wonder and prepare ourselves to take the awesome message out into the world on Pentecost.

A Notation for this Week’s Gospel

In fear, the disciples huddled behind locked doors – an obvious response to the crucifixion. (“Are we next?”) Suddenly, Jesus is right there, sensitively inviting the disciples to convince themselves that it is he – showing them the marks on his body. “Peace be with you,” Jesus says. The disciples are now to carry on the work Jesus had begun. Jesus breathes the power of the Holy Spirit upon them. As God sent Jesus, now the disciples are sent out. Their message is handed on to us, the torch of peace, so we can hand it on to those who come after us.

Theme: Peace Be with You

Before Class: You will need a Bible or copies of the scripture for each person and copies of the Book of Common Prayer. You will also need paper (construction paper, wallpaper scraps from a home decorating store, scrapbooking paper, card stock or any other creative type of paper you might have access to), scissors, markers, and if you’d like, strips of ribbon and a hole punch. You may need nametags for any newcomers to class.

Beginning: Greet each child by name. If you do not know all the children, make nametags the children can fill in themselves. Get caught up on what is going on in the children's lives – especially if you were not together last Sunday. Are any of them on sports teams? Are there school plays, dance recitals, or any similar activities going on?

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for letting us be together here today. Thank you for the events of Easter, which we have celebrated and which we will explore here today. Amen.

The Story: John 20:19-31 You could begin by asking the children to pretend that you have just arrived this morning from another planet having spent your entire journey learning English. Now you hear that there are all these words you did not learn and you need their help trying to figure them out. Who is “Jesus?” “What happened on what you call Palm Sunday? What happened on Good Friday? What is Easter?” (Keep on until they have filled in the story from Palm Sunday to

Easter, asking leading questions if they are missing pieces. Example: “I heard some say that ... Is that true?)

Once you are done with that, invite three readers to read the passage for today, Narrator, Jesus, and Thomas. (see below for script)

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder why the disciples were afraid? (Jesus has been killed, and they thought they might be next.)
- Why do you think Jesus' first words were: “Peace be with you?” (Perhaps because he could see that they were way too scared to understand anything until they felt more peaceful.)
- Does it seem odd that Jesus “breathed” on them? If so, why do you think he did this? (“Breath” and “Spirit” are the same word in Hebrew. They would have expected to receive the Spirit through breath.)
- How did Jesus help Thomas – who was not there the first time Jesus came – believe that it was really Jesus? (Jesus invited Thomas to touch him to see for sure that he was Jesus.)

Act it Out: Invite the children to act out this passage. You could tell them that since you still don't “get it” they should act it out for you. Let the children decide who will play each part. If you have more children than speaking parts, invite them to create things they think the disciples MIGHT have said.

Bookmarks: If time permits, the children could make bookmarks to use when finding Bible passages. Offer what materials you are providing and let the children decide what they want to put on their bookmarks. They can place their bookmarks in their copies of the Bible, take the bookmarks home, or you can collect them to use next time.

Getting Closure: After the “play,” invite the children's responses to the play and to the passage. How are we also invited by Jesus to be sent out? How can we greet one another in peace?

Closing Prayer: Pass out copies of the *Book of Common Prayer* and ask the children to turn to p. 383. Tell them that during the season of Easter, we will close each of our times together using one of the kinds of prayer suggested at the top of the page. Today we pray for the Universal Church, its members and its mission. The Universal Church is our church right here in our town and every church all over the world.

“Thank you, God, that over 2000 years since the time we read about today, there are churches in every country in the world. We pray for all of these churches and for our own church here that we can do the work you give us to do. Amen.”

John 20:19-31

Narrator: ¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said,

Jesus: “Peace be with you.”

Narrator: ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again,

Jesus: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

Narrator: ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,

Jesus: “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Narrator: ²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them,

Thomas: “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

Narrator: ²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said,

Jesus: “Peace be with you.”

Narrator: ²⁷Then he said to Thomas,

Jesus: “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.”

Thomas: “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

Narrator: ³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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