

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 6
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Mark 4:26-34

Background: We are now in the long season known as Ordinary Time, which runs through Christ the King Sunday. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Jesus has begun his ministry; fresh with the capacity to notice abundance wherever he looks. But how to describe the richness of the Kingdom of God so people can grasp it? Seeds. Maybe that is it – everyone has seen seeds.

Theme: Seeds Scattered on The Ground

Before Class: This lesson cries out for fresh dirt, water, and seeds! Some options: you and the children could cast wildflower seeds on a vacant lot; or plant seeds in a container small enough for you to take home and water (unless there is someone in your church who could tend to it midweek); or you and the children could plant some hardy seeds in paper cups. Note: the concept of Kingdom of God is a bit abstract for these children, but God’s World may connect.

If you are going to show the YouTube video of the story, have the equipment set up and tested.

Beginning: Ask the children if anyone has ever planted a seed or helped someone else plant seeds. Find out what they know (digging a hole, planting the seeds, covering them, watering them, etc.) Then tell them we have a story about seeds today.

Opening Prayer: Life-giving God, thank you for all that you plant and for how you help us grow. Be with us as we hear your story and your word that we may grow closer to you. Amen.

The Story: “Hmmm,” said Jesus. “God’s World is so wonderful, how can I tell people so they will understand? Hmmm. I know,” said Jesus. “Seeds! Everyone has seen seeds. It’s like this: there are seeds planted all over the place. We go to bed and sleep, we get up, and one day little green shoots stick up in the ground. No one knows how; it just happens. The shoots get bigger and bigger. One day they are ready to be picked. Then, if they are wheat seeds, we can make bread, cereal – even cookies. Sometimes the tiniest seed of all grows up to be the biggest tree. And that tree sticks out its big branches so birds can come sit on the branches – and make safe nests for their eggs.”

Here is a YouTube video of the Parable of the Mustard Seed you could use if you have the equipment. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKpxQjWV2RA>

Activity: Show the children what you have brought (seeds to plant outside – seeds to plant in a pot or in cups to go). If you cannot go outside for this activity, cover the workspace with newspapers or trash bags. Plant away!

If you have time, and if the children are taking the plants home, you can also give them popsicle sticks and help them write what seeds they have planted, so they and their parents can know what they are watching grow.

For additional ideas for seeds, look at this lesson from Abundant Life Garden Project from Episcopal Relief and Development. (Scroll down the page and click on Session Two: Seeds).

<http://www.er-d.org/Children#Abundant>

Grow like a Plant: Ask the children to show with their bodies what it is like to be a tiny round seed. What does it look like when a tiny green shoot sticks up through the ground? Then, show what the plant looks like when it gets bigger and sways in the breeze. What does it feel like when rain comes down on the leaves and the flowers? What would the seed look like if it grew into a great big tree with long branches stretching out? How would it look if birds came and sat on the branches – and made little nests that baby birds could sit in?

Activity: If time permits, give the children paper and crayons to draw either what you have planted together or the seed growing up.

Getting Closure: Describe what will happen from here, if you planted seeds. (How they will be cared for, etc.) Suggest the children be on the lookout for little green sprouts around their homes.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for our time together. Help us to grow in our love of you each day. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 6
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 4:26-34

Background: We are now in the long season known as Ordinary Time, which runs through Christ the King Sunday. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Jesus has begun his ministry; fresh with the capacity to notice abundance wherever he looks. But how to describe the richness of the Kingdom of God so people can grasp it? Seeds. Maybe that is it – everyone has seen seeds.

Theme: Seeds Scattered on The Ground

Before: You will need copies of the reading for each person. If you are showing the YouTube video for the story, have your equipment set up and tested.

Preparation for the Seed Game: You will need dice or a spinner from a board game. You will need a space where you and the children can mark off a “course” either outside, if possible, or inside. Almost anything can be “course markers” – sheets of paper with a rock to hold them down, lengths of crepe paper streamers, yarn – whatever you have on hand. If you are going outside, you will need a pitcher of water and cups.

Preparation for Planting: You will need to have soil, seed, water, and containers for the children to use as they plant their seeds. If your containers do not have bottoms, make sure you have plates to put under the planters. If you can, it might be good to do this activity outside so if there are dirt spills, it can be easily cleaned up. If not, cover the tables with plastic or paper to help in clean up.

Beginning: Jesus wants to help people understand what the world with God in it is really like. He uses words the people listening to him would understand: the Kingdom of God. What comes to our minds when we hear the word “Kingdom”? (Magic Kingdom of Disneyland? Stories of long ago?) If Jesus was telling us this story, what words might he use that are more familiar to us than “Kingdom”? (See what the children can come up with, perhaps helping by asking them about words such as “cosmic,” “peaceful,” “just,” etc.)

Opening Prayer: Life-giving God, thank you for all that you plant and for how you help us grow. Be with us as we hear your story and your word that we may grow closer to you. Amen.

The Scripture (Mark 4:26-34): Invite a child to read the scripture or you can go around the room, having each person read a sentence of the scripture.

Here is a YouTube video of the Parable of the Mustard Seed you could use if you have the equipment. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKpxQjWV2RA>

Reflection Questions:

- Why do we think Jesus talked about seeds? (Jesus knew that everyone listening would have seen seeds.)
- What specific kind of seed is Jesus talking about here? (Grain, like wheat.)
- What does a seed need to grow up and become wheat? (Good enough soil, water, and sun.)
- When wheat is harvested, what can it become? (Bread, cereal, pizza, donuts, etc.)
- How are we like seeds? (We need the right things in order to grow: food, sleep, parents, etc., so we grow up finding our place in the community.)
- How are we NOT like seeds? (We won't turn into bread!)
- If you were having feelings of not being very important or people made fun of you, how might verses 31 and 32 make you feel? (Small beginnings may lead to great things.)

Seed Game

Provide the elements to make it possible for the children to invent a “Seed Game.” Draw a line at one end of the space and mark it “Topsoil”. Tell them they can make up whatever rules they want, but the object has to be that everyone “sprouts” by crossing the “Topsoil” line. Perhaps the end of the game could be 50 and the children mark the space in units of 5 (5, 10, 15, etc.). The children can take turns rolling the dice (or spinning the spinner) and moving forward. One rule could be that if one person is falling behind, the person who is ahead would defer a turn to the one falling behind. Let the children see what they can do to make it possible for EACH of them to sprout before the game is over.

Planting Seeds

Show the children how seeds are planted and grown. Give them containers, soil (help them put the soil into the containers), make a hole and place the seeds into the hole, gently cover and water. If you have time, you may want to invite the children to decorate the planter and/or the plate. For additional ideas for seeds, look at this lesson from Abundant Life Garden Project from Episcopal Relief and Development. (Scroll down the page and click on Session Two: Seeds). <https://www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/christian-formation/christian-formation-for-children>

Getting Closure: Especially if you are outside, find a cool place to sit in a circle – maybe back in the classroom – for a water break. Help the children reflect on what they have done today and what they are thankful for as they grow like the seeds grow.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for our time together. Help us to grow in our love of you each day. Amen.

Mark 4:26-34

Jesus also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.

The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.

But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Jesus also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?

It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 6
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 4:26-34

Background: We are now in the long season known as Ordinary Time, which runs through Christ the King Sunday. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Jesus has begun his ministry; fresh with the capacity to notice abundance wherever he looks. But how to describe the richness of the Kingdom of God so people can grasp it? Seeds. Maybe that is it – everyone has seen seeds.

Theme: Seeds Scattered on The Ground

Before: You will need Bibles for the group. Bring a handful of seeds: birdseed, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, garden seed packets – whatever you have handy.

Beginning: Ask the group to think of a time they had a life-changing experience and how hard it was to communicate what had happened. Example: holding your child for the first time, climbing to the top of a mountain, event you went to, etc. Keep that in the back of your mind as we read Jesus’ attempt to describe the Kingdom of God to his hearers.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the kingdom you invite us to share with you. Amen.

The Scripture (Mark 4:26-34): Today’s scripture is mostly Jesus speaking, so we have divided it by sentence. Invite someone to begin by reading the first sentence, then have the next person read the next sentence and so on. If someone does not want to read, they can simply pass.

Reflection Questions:

- What stood out for you in the reading today?
- Mark refers to “the Kingdom of God” in his Gospel. Why do we think Mark chose the words? (The Hebrew Scriptures are full of references to the Kingdom of God and the Messiah who would bring the kingdom. And even if his hearers were not familiar with these passages, everyone in his time would know what a kingdom was.)
- The word “kingdom” may not resonate as well with us since the political implications may get in the way. How else might we describe this “kingdom”? (Perhaps we could focus on the attributes: being at one with God, perfect peace, unconditional love, etc.)
- As we discuss the Kingdom of God, what are some other attributes of this new way of life? (All invited, a place for all, growth, truth, real peace, etc.)

- If the Kingdom of God is “as if someone would scatter seed on the ground” what does this say about our tendencies to try to control things? (We cannot control the process, rules we might have thought would pertain, do not, etc.)
- How might we paraphrase the message of the mustard seed? (One option: things that start out small may turn into really big things. Note: This may have been a subtle aside to the Pharisees, because it would not have been kosher to plant a mustard seed in with other shrubs.)
- What surprised you about this reading and our discussion today?
- What challenged you?

Getting Closure: Tell the group they will not be called on to share, but they may do so if they choose. Give each person 2 or 3 seeds. Ask them to hold the seeds and reflect on 2 or 3 “seeds” God has planted in them. The seeds might be things like creativity, patience, resourcefulness, manual dexterity, courage, openness, etc. Ask them to notice what these seeds are and be grateful. After a few minutes ask if anyone noticed something they would like to share.

Closing Prayer: For the seeds you plant in us, God, we give you thanks. Amen.

Mark 4:26-34

Jesus also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.

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