

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 20
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Mark 9:30-37

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. 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.

The Pharisee in each of us wants to "get it right." In the gospel passages for Propers 17-22 from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is concerned that we "get it." So Jesus takes the ordinary things of life, from washing hands to attending to a child, and meets us where we are and helps us to "get it," finding blessings in the ordinary.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

As Jesus prepares his disciples for what is to come, they not only do not "get it," they begin to jockey for position. Jesus is succinct: whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all. He takes a small child gently in his arms and tells his disciples that as you welcome this child, you welcome not only me – but the one who sent me.

Theme: Welcome the Children

Before Class: You will need simple art supplies: white paper (perhaps cut in quarters, so the drawings will fit on the poster begun last week), crayons or felt markers, scissors, and a glue stick. If you have access to colored tissue paper, you could show the children how to tear little pieces and glue them to a drawing to make bright-colored clothes for the people they draw. This art activity will add to the “What We Know About Jesus” poster the group has been creating. Today we will add pictures showing people who welcome children. Cut simple stars – about an inch in diameter – from gold-colored paper, one star for each child. (Cut a spare or two in case you have a visitor.) Bring the stars and glue stick with you.

Beginning: Ask the children to put on their nametags. Tell the children you are going to set up two races. In the first one, someone will win, and in the second one, everyone will win.

Race One: Tell the children to line up on one side of the room. Explain that they must race by walking, heel to toe on each step. (Show the children how to do this.) Then indicate the goal line. “On your mark, get set, go!” You decide who won, and glue a gold star on that child's name tag. Especially if someone thinks your call was not correct, ask the children how they feel about one person winning and everyone else losing (probably not very good).

Race Two: Tell the child who won that the way this race is to be played is that the children all stand back where they began the last race, and one by one the winner will take the hand of a

child and walk with him or her to the goal line. As each pair arrives, the child who won glues a star on the other child's nametag. Keep going until everyone has a gold star.

Opening Praying: Thank you, Jesus, for loving each of us, just as we are. Thank you for not making us win a race to get to you. Amen.

The Story: Explain to the children that Jesus is trying to get his friends to understand what was going to happen. He wanted to tell them that he was going to be killed but that he was not going to stay dead, which is pretty hard to understand. His friends had to try to figure out what he was saying. "Die? Oh no!" "Not stay dead? How?" Their heads were sore from thinking about it so they started to argue with each other. "I'm the greatest!" said Peter. "No, I'm the greatest!" said John. Then all of them got into the argument. When Jesus asked them what they were arguing about, no one said anything; they felt very silly. But Jesus had heard them. "Ok," Jesus said, "If you want to be the greatest, then you must treat others as if they are greater than you, you must love and help others." And then he asked a young child to come sit on his lap. "This is how you get to be great: by welcoming a child."

Activity: Ask the children to think of people who are glad when they see them. Maybe their parents and grandparents? Ask them if there are people they know in church who greet them and listen to them. Make a list as the children name these people, so you can pray in thanksgiving at the end of class. Give the children paper and crayons and ask them to draw a person who welcomes them so we can add these pictures to our poster showing what we are learning about Jesus.

Getting Closure: Ask each child to name the person they drew. You could name someone who always welcomes you. Then ask the children to be on the lookout for someone they could welcome. It might be someone standing all alone after church. Ask them to be on the lookout for people Jesus would want us to welcome.

Closing Prayer. Thank you, Jesus, for welcoming children. Thank you for the people who welcome us: (name them). Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 20
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 9:30-37

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. 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.

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Theme: Welcome the Children

Before Class: You will need Bibles and something to write on, such as poster paper, newsprint, or white board.

Beginning: On a large piece of paper or on a chalkboard if your class has one, write these words: “Who is the greatest?” Then ask the children to take turns writing who they would list there. It could be a sports star, a rock star, a political figure, a coach, a teacher, whoever they want to add to a list of greats. Ask the children what it is that makes a person "great." Take their answers and write them in a column on the paper.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the people who give us the courage to keep on improving our skills. Thank you for those who set a good example for us to follow. Amen.

Option: Pass out copies of the Bible and the bookmarks the children made previously. Ask the children to find the index in the Bible. Invite them to find the book of Jeremiah. Then have them find Chapter 11, verses 18-20. Invite a child could read this passage. Be sure the children know that Jeremiah was a prophet and that they know what a prophet is.

A prophet is a person who speaks for God. In the Old Testament, a prophet is often a person chosen to speak for God and to guide the people of Israel (like Moses or the Major and Minor prophets).

The Story (Mark 9:30-37): Ask for two volunteers, one will read verses 30-32, the other 33-37.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you remember most about the story we just heard.
- I wonder why Jesus does not want anyone to know what he is teaching? (The disciples are not even "getting it," so others would not either. And it is not yet time for others to know this.)
- Can anyone remember what Jesus told the disciples in the passage we read last week? (See Mark 8:31.)
- Verse 32 describes what the disciples were feeling. How would we describe what was going on? (Perhaps the disciples could make no sense of what Jesus was saying. How could he die and rise again? Perhaps they were beginning to understand and felt safer in denial. Perhaps they did not want to ask Jesus because they were afraid they would understand.)
- I wonder what Jesus overhear the disciples arguing about? (In verses 33-34 they were trying to convince each other which one was the greatest.)
- How did the disciples answer to Jesus' question? (They said nothing; they were not proud of what they had been doing.)
- I wonder what we think it means when Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and a servant to all"? (The "greater" you are, the more you are called to serve and help those of lesser status or ability.)
- How did Jesus show the disciples what it took to be "the greatest"? (He took a little child, held the child in his arms. See verse 37.)
- I wonder what the reaction of the disciples might have been? (They were probably stunned and amazed. Children had no rights and little value in their culture. Welcoming children had not been a priority for them.)

Activity: Ask the children to look at the list they produced at the beginning of the class. Now, develop another list: "Who is the Greatest Nominated by Jesus?" Ask the children if they can think of people who would go on this list. Some of the people on the other list may go here also (a sports figure who donates time and funds to helping underprivileged children, for example). Invite the children to place names on this list, noticing that they may be people few have heard of: their grandparents, for example, or a soccer coach or a teacher.

Getting Closure: Ask the children to consider who Jesus might be calling them to welcome. Who stands alone after church? Who in our neighborhood is lonely? Who might be bullied at school? Who is always alone on the playground?

Closing Prayer: Thank you for making each of us 'the greatest' to you, Jesus. Help us to notice those you want us to welcome. Amen.

Mark 9:30-37

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; ³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.’ ³²But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

33 Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you arguing about on the way?’ ³⁴But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. ³⁵He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.’ ³⁶Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 20
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 9:30-37

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. 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.

The Pharisee in each of us wants to "get it right." In the gospel passages for Propers 17-22 from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is concerned that we "get it." So Jesus takes the ordinary things of life, from washing hands to attending to a child, and meets us where we are and helps us to "get it," finding blessings in the ordinary.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

As Jesus prepares his disciples for what is to come, they not only do not "get it," they begin to jockey for position. Jesus is succinct: whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all. He takes a small child gently in his arms and tells his disciples that as you welcome this child, you welcome not only me – but the one who sent me.

Theme: Welcome the Children

Before Class: You may wish to make a copy of this resolution passed by the General Convention of our church in 2000: “Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 73rd General Convention affirms that children are central to the mission of The Episcopal Church and asks each committee, commission, and program of The Episcopal Church to consider, as it plans for the future, how its ministry will positively impact the lives of children in our church and in the world, how it will be impacted by children, and how it will encourage children's full participation in the worship and mission of the church.”

Beginning: Show the class the resolution passed by General Convention in 2000. If few knew of this resolution, assure them that it has received little publicity in our church. To what extent does the group believe that our community has these priorities?

Since General Convention in 2000, the Episcopal Church has taken many measures to include, form, educate, and transform the lives of our children and our congregations.

This link has LOTS of information in it including the Children’s Charter for the Episcopal Church, Lifelong Charter for Christian Formation, and the Five Marks of Mission.

<http://buildingthecontinuum.wordpress.com/2012/03/31/ministry-with-children-in-the-episcopal-church/>

Usually in October, the Children’s Defense Fund holds the National Observance of the Children’s Sabbath, which is, “a way for faith communities to celebrate children as sacred gifts

of the Divine, and provides the opportunity for houses of worship to renew and live out their moral responsibility to care, protect and advocate for all children.” They have wonderful resources and ideas for honoring and celebrating children. You can find out more at:

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/programs/faithbased/faith-based-action-programs-pages/childrens-sabbaths/National-Observance-of-Children-s-Sabbaths.html>

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the children you entrust to our care: those in our own families, those in our church community, and those in our community here and around the world. Help us to welcome the children among us as you welcome us. Amen.

The Scripture (Mark 9:30-37): Invite two people to read, one will read verses 30-32, the other 33-37.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you today?
- Our scripture starts with Jesus telling them what is coming, namely, that Jesus will be betrayed, handed over, killed, and then will rise again. Why do you think the disciples are having such a difficult time understanding this? (It is something that they don't want to face, and it is something that they simply cannot foresee.)
- When Jesus asks them what they are arguing about, they do not answer. How does Jesus get their attention when he calls them together? (He brings a little child into the picture.)
- What was so astounding to the disciples about Jesus' choice of a child? (Children had no rights and little value in their culture.)
- To what extent would we say that children are valued in our community and in our culture? (Note: one way to measure whether children are valued is to consider to what extent adults attend to children. To "attend to" is to listen to, notice, and respond indicating that they are understood. It is believed that children grow in their ability to love and to serve in direct proportion to their perception of how well they are 'attended to' by significant adults in their lives.)
- To what extent would we say the ministry of our church "positively impacts the lives of children in the church and in the world"?
- To what extent would we say children impact the ministry of our church?
- To what extent would we say that we, in our church, "encourage children's full participation in the worship and mission of the church"?
- What might we choose to do to improve these situations?

Getting Closure: Consider committing to seeking out one child this week and engage the child in a conversation that truly attends to the child.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, we thank you for reminding us that we are to treat one another as you have welcomed children. Help us to engage in your mission, so we can welcome one another as one welcomes a child. Amen.

Mark 9:30-37

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; ³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.’ ³²But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

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