

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C– Third Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger Children
RCL Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-15

Background: Lent is a reflective season – an opportunity to go deep within ourselves and focus on our relationship with God and with others. The forty days of Lent remind us of the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert following his baptism, pondering who he was and what he was to do. They also remind us of the forty years that the people of God wandered in the desert following the Exodus from Egypt, learning how to be the community of the people of God. The Hebrew Scripture lessons in year C focus on the covenants or promises that God made with the people of God. Like Jesus, we choose to enter this time of “desert,” in order to remember the promises of God, hear the stories of ways in which they were fulfilled (hint: They didn’t always look the way the people expected!), and the ways in which we are called to participate in those promises in our own time – to discover who we are in God and what we are to do.

A Notation for This Week’s Lesson: In this week’s lesson, we move forward in time from the story of Abraham, to the time that the people of God are slaves in Egypt. We hear how God calls Moses to lead the people to freedom, and promises to be with Moses as he does this. Through Moses’ action, God will fulfill the promise made to Abraham that his descendants will live in the land that God had given him.

Theme: God Promises to be with Moses

Before Class: Determine which activity options you will be using and gather the materials needed. You will need the bowl of sand from last week, and a red leaf to place in the sand. (You can use a red leaf that you have found outdoors, obtain an artificial one from a craft store, or cut one out of red construction paper).

Beginning: Gather the children in your usual manner, perhaps with an opening song or greeting. Ask what they notice in your worship space. See what they remember about the season of Lent. If necessary, remind them that Lent is the time of the church year when we get ready to celebrate the mystery of Easter. It is time for us to focus on things that bring us close to God, and to remember that we are part of God’s family. Have them mark the sign of the cross on their forehead to remember that they are “marked as Christ’s own forever.”

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of Lent, the time we pay special attention to the ways we can come closer to you. Help us to hear your promises, and to remember that we are part of your great family. Amen.

The Story: During the season of Lent, we are hearing stories about times that God made promises to the people of God, even some times that the promises that seem impossible. Today’s story is about one of those promises. I am putting this red leaf in our bowl of desert to help us remember this story. You can see this type of leaf often in people’s yards in the fall, and we call

it the plants that have these red leaves “burning bushes.” Listen and see if you can figure out why we are using this leaf from a “burning bush” to help us tell this story.

Last week we heard the story of Abraham and Sarah, who wanted a child so that their children and grandchildren would always live on the land that God had given them. Even though Sarah was too old to have a baby, God gave them a son named Isaac.

Isaac married Rebekah, and they had children. And their children had children. And they lived on the land that God had given Abraham and Sarah. But then something hard happened. The rains did not come, so they were not able to grow food to eat. And the grandchildren of Abraham and Sarah took their children to go and live in a land where there was food, the land of Egypt.

There was food in Egypt, but the people became slaves. This meant that they had to do everything that their Egyptian leaders said. They worked for the Egyptians. They could not leave, even when the rains came again in their own land. They stayed in Egypt for a long time. Children grew up, became adults, and then their children grew up. The people were angry about being slaves, and they cried to God for help.

One of the children of the people of God was named Moses. When he was a baby, he was adopted by the Pharaoh (king)’s daughter, so he was not a slave, and when he grew up, he moved into the country around Egypt, where he took care of his father-in-law’s sheep. One day, when he was taking care of the sheep, he saw something strange. He saw a bush that was on fire, but the bush did not burn up! God spoke to Moses through the fire in the bush.

God told Moses to take off his sandals, because the ground was holy. Then God said, “I have heard my people when they cry to me because the Egyptians have hurt them. I care that they are hurt. I will save them from the Egyptians, and lead them to their own land. I will save them by sending you to the king of Egypt.”

Moses said, “I am not a great man! Why are you sending me?”

And God answered, “I will be with you. I will help you lead the people out of slavery. You will lead them to the mountain that we are standing on, and they will worship me here.”

Moses said, “Why will the people follow me? What if they ask me who you are? What is your name?”

God said, “You will tell the people that I am the God of Abraham and Isaac. You will tell them that I am sending you to them. My name is I AM, and that is how the people will know me.”

Reflection Questions: (Use the ones that interest you and your community of children)

- I wonder how Moses felt when he saw the bush was on fire?
- I wonder how Moses felt when he heard God talking to him?
- I wonder how God heard the cries of the people who were slaves?
- I wonder why Moses was afraid to go back to Egypt?

- I wonder what happened next?
- I wonder what God sounds like to you?
- I wonder why we call these red plants “burning bushes?” I wonder how they help us remember this story?

Activity Options:

1. **Mobile or Story bag:** Each story in the coming weeks lends itself to a symbol, which can be created to hang on a mobile or to fill a story bag that the children can take home at the end of Lent to remember the promises of God. (The symbols will be a star, a red leaf, stones, a portion of a map or a road, and a cross.) *The symbol for this week is a red leaf.*
 - a. **For the Mobile:** You will need the embroidery hoop hanger that you created the first week of Lent. You will need to be prepared for children who were not here that week, either by helping them create the hanger (directions in week 1), or by having a few hangers prepared for them. Draw a large leaf for each child on a piece of construction paper or cardstock. Have the child cut out the leaf (or pre-cut it for younger children). Punch a hole in the top of the leaf with a hole punch, and string yarn through the hole. Have the child decorate the leaf while you talk about the reflection questions for the story. You could use red paint, or glue red/orange tissue paper on the base leaf or simply decorate the leaf with crayons or markers. Tie the yarn to the embroidery hoop so that it hangs down.
 - b. **For the Story bag:** You will need a small cloth bag for each child. (These would be easy to make, or can be found inexpensively at craft stores. Burlap or muslin would be good choices to reflect the colors of the desert.) Prepare the leaf as above for the mobile, eliminating the hole punch and yarn. Have the child cut out and decorate the leaf while you talk together about the reflection questions. Add the leaf to the story bag.
2. **Burning Bush Game:** (Red light/Green light variant): To play this game, have one child (or yourself) be the Burning Bush. Give them a large red leaf to hold. Line the other children at the other end of your room or game area. Have the “Burning Bush” stand with their back to the children. When they turn around (facing the group) and hold up the leaf, the other children can move. When the Burning Bush turns their back to the group, everyone must freeze. On the first move of the game, the children must take off their shoes before they can begin to move toward the Burning Bush (it is holy ground!!). The first child to reach the Burning Bush becomes the next Burning Bush, and the game begins again.

Getting Closure: Gather in your story area as you prepare to end class. This can be a good time to share concerns and prayers. One way to pray together is to pass the red leaf from the sand bowl around the circle of children. As each child holds the leaf, they can name (out loud or silently) someone for whom they wish to pray. They then pass the leaf to the next child. To close, you might choose to again remind each child that they are a child of God through the tracing of an invisible cross on their foreheads.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for your many promises, and for time for us to remember them through our faith stories. Thank you for sending Moses to lead the people from slavery to freedom, showing that you heard their cries, and remembered your promise to them. Amen.

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