

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year C– Fifth Sunday in Lent**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**  
**RCL Old Testament Readings – Track One**

**Scripture: Isaiah 43:16-21**

**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:** We have moved from the story-telling kind of narratives in our Hebrew Scripture lesson, to the more poetic voice of Isaiah. (You might want to remind the children that the Bible is made up of all kinds of writing, such as stories, letters, laws, and songs.) We don’t listen to this kind of writing the same way that we listen to a narrative story. Today’s reading is a kind of poetry through which we still hear the voice of God. This passage from Isaiah references the stories we have heard in the past few weeks, but calls us to move past simple remembrance into participation into God’s new and ongoing action in the world.

**Theme: God is Doing a New Thing!**

**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 “road” to place in the sand. (You could cut a simple road out of black construction paper with white or yellow lines down the middle, or even cut apart a piece of a road map to use as a “road.”)

**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:** Help the children find Isaiah 43 in their Bibles. Isaiah is in the middle section of the Bible, just after the poetic books of Psalms, Proverbs, and the Song of Solomon. (Feel free to use the Table of Contents that is at the beginning of every Bible to find Isaiah. There is nothing wrong with using this tool!)

Just looking at the printed text, you can see that this is a different type of writing than what you were seeing in Genesis, Exodus, and Joshua. This writing is more like poetry and less like storytelling. Isaiah was one of the prophets of Israel. Prophecy in the Bible is not like telling the future. In Isaiah, it is more like a word painting in which we hear the voice of God. God spoke through the prophets to the people in their original time, and God speaks to us today also. The original hearers of Isaiah were long-removed from the time of the Exodus and the time of the crossing into the Promised Land, but like us, they knew those stories very well. Those stories were stories that told them who they were as the people of God. Our Isaiah passage references the story of the Exodus, but then sends the hearers in a new direction.

I am putting this road in our bowl of desert to help us remember this story. Listen and see if you can figure out why we are using this road to help us tell this story.

Isaiah 43:16-21 (International Children's Version):

This is what the Lord says.

He is the one who made a road through the sea.  
Even through rough waters he made a path for his people.  
He is the one who defeated the chariots and horses.  
He defeated the mighty armies.  
They fell together, and they will never rise again.  
They were destroyed as a flame is put out.

The Lord says,

Forget about what happened before.  
Do not think about the past.  
Look at the new thing I am going to do.  
It is already happening. Don't you see it?  
I will make a road in the desert.  
I will make rivers in the dry land.

Even the wild animals will be thankful to me.  
The wild dogs and owls will honor me.  
They will honor me when I put water in the desert.  
They will honor me when I make rivers in the dry land.  
I will do this to give water to my people, the ones I chose.  
These are the people I made.  
And they will sing songs to praise me.

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

- I wonder how the people feel when they remember the stories where God led the people through the waters?

- I wonder why the author of Isaiah reminds the people of their stories, and then has God tell them to “forget what has happened before”?
- I wonder what the new thing God is going to do could be?
- I wonder if you see God doing new things?
- I wonder why we might want a road in the desert?
- I wonder what songs we like to sing to praise God?
- I wonder if your family sings songs or tells stories when you travel? What “road trip” songs do you enjoy?

### 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 road.*
  - 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. For this week’s road, you could work with the children to create a road out of construction paper, or you could cut out portions of a road map. Punch a hole in one end of the road, and tie a length of yarn through the hole. Attach the other end of 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 road as above for the mobile, eliminating the yarn. Add the road to the story bag.
2. **Singing!** This reading ends with the words “these are the people I made. And they will sing songs to me.” Have a time of singing your favorite songs to praise God.
3. **Journal:** An inexpensive journal can be created for each child to use during Lent. Composition books work well, or you might simply gather several pieces of notebook paper, and make construction paper covers by stapling them together down the sides. Journaling can be in words or pictures, and can be free-form, or follow a prompt. Possible prompts for this week: *I wonder what songs or stories you would choose to sing or tell on a road trip? I wonder if you have ever been on a trip or hike where the road or trail disappeared or ended? What did you do?* Alternatively, the journal could also be a place for exploring possible Lenten disciplines, such as prayer, fasting, or charitable giving.
4. **Congregational Project:** If your congregation takes on a particular project for Lent, consider how to incorporate that into your class time.

**Getting Closure:** Gather in your story area as you prepare to end class. This can be a good time to share concerns and prayers. No matter which activity option you chose, you might want to sing your prayers, using a song familiar to the class. 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 your promise to do a new thing. Help us to have eyes to look for where you are at work in our daily lives. Amen.

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