

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Fifth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 12:1-8

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy: Come, let us adore him. (Antiphon for Lent, Book of Common Prayer, page 81.) And what if, during this season of Lent, we sought a deeper understanding of this amazing gospel of grace? Will that image of grace energize us to do the spiritual housekeeping we need to be ready for the "new thing" God is doing in Easter?

A notation for this week's Gospel

The imported perfume was worth a year's wages, and it was poured out on the feet of Jesus. Was it an obscene waste of valuable resources that could have been used to feed the poor? Or an orthodox preparation of a body for burial? How do we become responsible stewards knowing when to store up and when to pour out?

Theme: The fragrance of generosity

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture lesson for today. If you have a piggy bank, or a jar in which you save coins (and you are comfortable with the idea), bring it to class with you. If not, use another container with a handful of coins to provide a visual for this session. You will also need something to cast lots — enough drinking straws, toothpicks, even wood matches so you have one for each child. If you have a pair of dice, bring them or the spinner from a game. Also bring the container with the bags.

Beginning: Show the children the container of coins you have brought with you. Tell them to pretend that it contains your entire year's allowance. Tell them to keep this amount in mind (without sharing it with the rest of us) as we read the Scripture and discuss it today.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, help us to learn how to make good decisions. Amen.

The Scripture: John 12: 1-8. You will need a person to read the part of the narrator, Judas, and Jesus.

Questions:

What did Mary decide to do? (Wash Jesus' feet, a job usually done by slaves and she used very costly perfume.)

If we said, "Judas made a good point, but for the wrong reasons," how would you describe what he really wanted to do with the money? (Verse 6)

What does Jesus say to Judas? (Verses 7 -8)

Activity: To help the children notice how we make decisions, ask them to pretend we are going to spend the money in the box. Tell them to come up with two options: one that will clearly benefit the poor and one that might seem a bit extravagant, but would benefit our church. Once they have decided on two options, ask them to describe ways we could make the decision. (Example: the teacher could say: "We are going to do this, because I said so!")

Invite the children to consider other options:

- Vote - so the majority wins, the minority loses.
- Draw straws (one straw shorter than the rest so the child that draws that straw wins.
- Roll dice, having decided in advance what the "winning" number will be. (Or spin the spinner.)

Can they think of any other way we could reach a decision? Describe the process of "consensus" which means that both sides will feel they have been heard, participated in the decision, and own the decision. It might mean that neither option is chosen, but something else instead. See if you and the children can reach "consensus" on your options.

Getting Closure: Bring out the container with the bags. Tell the children that this is the last Sunday we will use them. Offer pieces of paper and pencils, so they can add anything from today's session. Then provide tape for them to seal their bags — and take them home with them.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for trusting us to make decisions. Guide us as we do your work in the world. Amen.

John 12:1-8

Narrator: Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said,

Judas Iscariot: ⁵'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?'

Narrator: ⁶(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷Jesus said,

Jesus: 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'

*Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.
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