

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: John 20:1-18**

“I have seen the Lord!” exclaimed Mary Magdalene. At first she does not recognize who is standing beside her. When she realizes it is the risen Jesus she wants to grasp him. He holds her off and tells her to go and share what has happened: He has walked through death and has created a path for us to follow, now and on through our own death.

In these 50 days of Easter, celebrating what Jesus has done for us, we are invited to recognize Jesus standing beside us, as he did with Mary. What is he calling us to do? Perhaps we can train our eyes to look in the direction that this Jesus, standing beside us is looking. What might he be looking at? Do we dare follow where he is leading? Can we notice and honor the various ways Jesus “appears” to people?

**A Notation for This Week’s Gospel**

First Mary Magdalene, then Peter and another disciple, peer into the tomb. The body is gone but not stolen. Remaining in the tomb were the cloths, just as the women had placed them around their Lord’s broken body. Jesus is now transformed into his resurrected body. What transformation is Jesus calling us to in our time and place?

**Theme: Come and See**

**Before:** Your time with the children may be longer than usual. An introduction activity is provided in the event there are children who do not know each other. Options for going outside are offered, if your setting and the weather permit.

*Creating a special worship space:* Use a small table (or a cardboard box), a white cloth (a length of inexpensive white cloth about a yard-and-one-half long or an old sheet cut to fit). A clear glass container such as a mason jar, half-filled with baking soda (which can act as a fire-extinguisher if needed), and a small votive-type candle inserted in the container create the setting. The fireplace matches sold in some stores make lighting the candle easier. Use your own imagination about what else can go on the altar. (A small bouquet of flowers pretty rocks, seashells, pine cones, or whatever is native to your area).

During the Easter Season, the children will create decorations to be pinned onto the cloth, creating a circle of their own creativity around the worship space. You will need sheets of 8 ½ x 11” paper cut in quarters, crayons, and straight pins to pin the drawings on the cloth. A walk is an option is offered for both this group and Older Children, so you might want to consider coordinating it with the teacher of the other group.

*Story Telling Option:* To tell the story in a more visual way, bring lengths of white cloth about 4 or 5 inches wide. You could use an old sheet you tear into lengths or long white scarves.

**Beginning: (If there are children visiting)** Stand in a circle, tell the children your name, and ask each child to say his or her name, one after another. Then, you name each child (even if you have to ask the child for his or her name) with a statement on this order: Good morning, Ashley, it is good that you can be here, Hello, Brendan, good to have you here with us, etc.) Then notice something that a new child could answer, such as: Is anyone here wearing black shoes? Does anyone have on a red shirt? How many boys are here today? How many girls? Keep going until each child has had a chance to speak.

Ask the children to each find a chair or a place on the rug and make a circle. Sit in the circle with the children. Ask the children what we call this day. What are we celebrating this day? (You will get Easter Bunny, candy, and toys, probably.) You can tell the children that today is Easter Day. You can add that all this celebration happens because Jesus who died on a cross, did not stay dead. You can also tell them that Easter is a Season, so we will be celebrating Easter for six more weeks.

Tell the children that we are going to create a special worship space to celebrate Easter. Show them what you have brought and invite their help in setting up the table or box, covering it with the cloth, placing the candle on the space and adding whatever else you have brought. When it is set to everyone's satisfaction, stand in a circle around the worship space and pray the opening prayer.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, for sending us Jesus who teaches us important things. Thank you for the Easter Season we begin today and for all the children who are with us today. Amen.

**The Story:** Invite the children to listen to the story of Easter morning. Jesus' friends were very sad. Jesus had died and they missed him. When he died, the women in their group carefully prepared the body of their Jesus, so it would be ready to be buried. (If you have the cloth, pretend to be gently wrapping it around Jesus.) They gently washed his body and then wrapped his entire body in soft white cloths. The men helped them place Jesus in a tomb. (A tomb was a cave, a cool, empty space in a hill.) They rolled a great big stone in front of the cave so the body would be safe. Then they all went home and were sad. Very sad. They missed their friend. The next morning, the women went back to the tomb. The stone that was protecting the tomb had been rolled away. "How could that happen?" they asked. Then, they peered into the tomb. They looked and looked. The body of Jesus was not there! They raced to find other friends, and they rushed back and peered into the tomb again. Jesus was not there, but the cloths were all there, just as the women had placed them on the body of Jesus. Now Mary was very, very sad. She was standing by the tomb, crying and crying when someone said to her, "Why are you crying?" She started complaining to this person, telling him that Jesus was gone when suddenly she realized: it was Jesus she was talking to! Jesus was standing there in front of her. "Wow!" she called out. "I have seen the Lord!" And she raced to tell all her other friends.

**Questions:**

- I wonder what it would have been like to be Mary?
- I wonder what you would do if this happened to you?

**Activity:** Tell the children that they can take turns being the women who get Jesus' body ready for burial, the men who help the women, and the men who come with the women the next day.

And they can take turns playing the part of Jesus. Let the children decide what will be the tomb (a table turned on its side, for example). Enact the discovery of the risen Christ as many times as the children want, making sure that each child gets to play whichever parts the child wants to play.

**Activity:** Tell the children that we are going to be adding to our worship space during the Season of Easter by making our own decorations to pin on the cloth. Give them the squares of paper and crayons to draw what they want about the story. Tell them they may make two drawings if they want: one to pin on our worship space cloth and another to take home with them.

**Option:** If your situation and the weather permit, take a walk with the children. If you go outside, look for signs of spring, even if it is just the suspicion of buds on bare trees or a tiny blade of green in the snow. If you cannot go outside, consider a tip-toe walk to peek into the sanctuary where people are worshipping. When you return, talk about what you saw.

**Getting Closure:** Invite the children back to the circle to tell the group about the picture they have made to pin on the cloth. As each child finishes telling the story of his or her drawing, help the child pin the drawing to the cloth.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, for the Easter Season and for Jesus who loves us. Amen.

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