

Lesson Plans That Work
Year A – Season after Pentecost, Proper 19
Gospel Lesson for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 18:21-35

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus’ ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word “ordinal” which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

This week’s lesson follows on the heels of Jesus teaching on how we are all to humble ourselves as children in order to enter the Kingdom of God, on how we are to look for the lost sheep if there is one lost and how we are to solve conflicts in our communities. This section of Matthew deals with how Jesus calls us to live together in community in this new way which leads to a good number of questions about what this means.

Peter asks Jesus how many times we are to forgive someone who has sinned against us or has done us wrong. Jesus responds with the parable known as the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. Throughout the ages as people have interpreted Jesus’ answer of 77 times to mean never. We are never to stop forgiving and the parable leads us to see that as well. The servant who comes before the king owes him an outrageous amount. The king’s first reaction is to sell him and his family. Out of fear, the servant begs for mercy, and he is forgiven his debt. However, when the servant requires another person to repay him a rather small amount of money and does not forgive that person of his debt, the king shows no mercy. When the king sees that the servant is unwilling to forgive this small debt, he lets the servant know that he has had enough and hands him over to be tortured until he can pay his debt.

We are to show mercy and forgiveness to others just as God shows us mercy. The king’s willingness to forgive the debt completely at first is an example of how much God is willing to forgive us. It is only when we see the burden of our own debts that we can see the magnitude of God’s mercy in our lives.

Theme: Forgiveness

Before: You will need a few different translations of the Bible, Red Thread or Yarn and Beads, Costumes for the “Modern Day” scenarios on the scripture for the day, something heavy for each child to carry as soon as they arrive (bag of bird seed, bag of play dough or clay, large rock, etc.)

Prepare:

- **Modern Day Scenarios:** make sure you have costumes and props for them to use.

- **Weighed Down and Forgiven:** make sure you have something heavy to give each child as they walk in. They don't all have to be the same thing, but you want to make sure that it is heavy enough that they will be burdened by carrying it around. Make sure you also have the bracelet making materials out for them.
- **Bracelets:** set out the supplies ahead of time. Putting thread and beads in individual bowls for each person may cut down on some of the mess and chaos.

Beginning: As the children arrive, welcome them to the room and invite them to your gathering area.

Note: If you are doing the “Weighed Down” activity, please give them their item to carry around with them as soon as they arrive. You don't need to explain why, but just tell them they must carry it or have it with them at all times and they can't put it on the floor.

As you are waiting for children to arrive, ask them about their week.

Opening Prayer: Merciful and loving God, as we prepare to hear your word today, we thank you for your continued loving presence and your generous forgiveness. May your words and message touch our hearts, minds and soul that we may live as you have taught us to live. Amen.

The Story: Matthew 18:21-35

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God's plan is for each of us too.

Read Matthew 18:21 from a Bible or Children's Bible.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder who you think the King might be in this story?
- I wonder how the servant felt when he was forgiven his debt?
- I wonder how the servant felt when he was caught not forgiving another persons debt?
- I wonder what you think this might mean for God's forgiveness for us?

Option 1: Act out the story in a modern day scene

For this, you will need a few different versions of the scripture for today. If you have more than eight children, split them into groups or if you have fewer than eight, you can have everyone do this together.

Give the children or read to them a couple different versions of the story and then ask them to brainstorm what this parable might be if it were a modern day situation. What would this parable be if it was something that happened at school or with their friends? Once they have had time to brainstorm the ideas, have them create a skit from the scenarios that they came up with and then present them to you and the other teachers and/or to the other groups.

Having costumes or props might help them be a bit more creative with this and get into the spirit of making it modern day.

Option 2: Weighed Down and Forgiven

When each child arrives, give them something heavy to carry such as a good-sized rock, a bag of birdseed, bag of play dough or clay, etc. (the heavier it can be, while still keeping the children safe, the better). Ask them to carry it with them to the gathering area. Tell them that they can't put it down until later in the lesson.

After everyone has arrived and you have reflected on the lesson for today, have them play a game or sing an active song together (while still holding their item).

Game/Song ideas:

- Simon Says
- Red Light, Green Light
- Father Abraham
- Hokie Pokie

After you have done the activity together, gather the children back together and ask them questions like:

- I wonder what it was like to do that activity while holding onto your item?
- Would it have been easier to put it down and then do our activity?
- Can anyone guess what the items I gave you are supposed to be?

The items I gave you are supposed to symbolize grudges that we carry around. Do you know what a grudge is? When someone has done something wrong to us or when they have hurt us in some way and we get angry and carry those feelings around with us, they begin to weight us down. They begin to make us slower and more frustrated and _____ (fill in the blank from their responses after playing the game or singing the song.). When we forgive someone or when someone forgives us, the weight of carrying that around is lifted and we can be free to love that person again.

When we forgive someone, there is a weight lifted from us and from the person we forgave. That is one of the reasons that Jesus wanted us to forgive, so we can more easily love one another. Love and forgiveness go hand in hand.

To help us remember this, we are going to make bracelets that will help us to remember to forgive one another when we need to and to always love one another. The red is the color of love. The beads are to help us to not only forgive someone once or twice, but to forgive and love them always.

Give each child red thread and beads to create bracelets.

****See sheet below for possible ideas for creating Forgiveness Bracelets.**

Closure: Gather the children back together and invite them to share what they created or to present their Modern Day scenario of the story. If you have time you can invite them to share what they learned about forgiveness or stories they have heard about forgiveness.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, We thank you for our time together today. Help us to remember to forgive and to love others as you love us. Be with us as we go into the world to do your work. Amen.

Matthew 18:21-35

Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Written by The Rev. Shannon Kelly

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Forgiveness Bracelets

You can use red embroidery thread or red yarn for this activity.

Possible colors for the beads:

- Green is known to be a color associated with forgiveness because it symbolizes growth and new life.
- Blue is also associated with forgiveness because it symbolizes water, baptism and new life.

Encourage the children to make a pattern with their beads and think ahead about what they want to create with the materials that you give them.

Knot Bracelets

- Put three pieces of thread together and knot it at one end.
- Tie a few more knots on the end and then separate the three threads.
- Put a bead on the middle thread and then gather them back together and tie another knot so the bead now has one thread going through it, and one on either side.
- Keep this pattern up and vary the pattern by adding braiding, etc. until the bracelet is long enough.

Braided Bracelets

- Take three pieces of thread.
- Tie them at one end.
- Begin braiding the bracelet until it is long enough to fit on your arm but do not tie it off.
- Add bead to the bracelet and then tie off the end so the beads stay on.

These are just a few simple ideas. You can go online and discover lots of wonderful patterns and ways to create bracelets.