

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 4
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Mark 2:23-3:6

Background: We are now in the long season known as Ordinary Time, which runs through Christ the King Sunday. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Proper: appropriate, fitting, and during Ordinary Time, the scripture appointed for each particular Sunday. The scriptures for this Season after Pentecost all come from the Gospel of Mark. In today's Gospel, we hear about the Pharisees challenging Jesus about the Sabbath.

Theme: Sabbath

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture for everyone. You will also need paper, crayons, pens, pencils, etc.

Beginning: As we begin a new season in the church and as summer begins, you may find that your class changes, therefore you will need to make sure to begin the class so people can get to know one another. As the children enter the room, invite them to your gathering place in the room. Ask them to share about their week, what they did or what they are looking forward to in the coming week. Once you think that everyone has arrived, invite each child to say their name and one thing that they really like about their family. Nametags would be helpful as well.

Introduction to the Season: Explain to the group that on this Sunday we begin the season of Ordinary Time or the Season after Pentecost. It is about six months long, making up the last half of the church’s lectionary year. Ordinary Time is a time in which the mission of the church is carried out in the day-to-day life of its members. Besides All Saints’ Day on November 1st, there are no high holidays (such as Easter) or disciplined fasts (such as Lent). And interestingly, in Ordinary Time we will probably encounter some out-of-the-ordinary events in our own lives and possibly even in our life together in this particular church community. The gift of this time – if we keep on looking for it – is finding the hidden blessings amid the ordinary occurrences. We could agree to share with each other, as we go along, things the world might consider unexceptional – a wildflower we noticed on a walk, an intriguing insight from a young child, even a place to purchase really fresh tomatoes.

The scriptures, for the Sundays from now until the end of November, are called Propers. Today is Proper 4. The Gospel for this year is mostly Mark – the most succinct of the Gospels. Mark was a "just the facts" Gospel.

Opening Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for the sabbath, a time when we rest and purposefully spend time with you and one another. Be with us as we pray and learn today. Amen.

The Scripture: Mark 2:23-3:6 Ask for two volunteers to read the passage, one person reading the first paragraph, the other reading the second paragraph.

Before you begin to read, ask the children:

- I wonder if someone can tell us what the Sabbath is? (If the children can't or if they don't have all the information, you may need to help them.)
- The word Sabbath means to cease or to stop. Sabbath is a day of religious observance and a time when we stop work. The Jewish custom is to keep Sabbath Friday evening to Saturday evening.

Share the story from Mark using these words or your own.

One sabbath day, Jesus and his disciples were walking through the grain fields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pull off heads of grain. The Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look, your disciples are breaking the Sabbath rules!" Jesus said to them, "Really? Haven't you heard the story about when David and his friends were hungry, and they entered the synagogue and ate the bread off the altar that is only meant for the priests? The sabbath was made for human beings, to serve us and give us a day of rest. We weren't made to serve the sabbath!"

Then, Jesus found a man with a hand that was crippled. The Pharisees were watching Jesus to see what he would do, hoping he would heal on the sabbath (which is forbidden.) Jesus said to the man, "Stand here so we can see you." Then he said to those around him, "What kind of actions should we be doing on the sabbath? Good or bad? Helping people or leaving them in pain?" No one said anything. Jesus said to the man, "Hold out your hand." And when the man stretched out his hand, it had been healed. The Pharisees were angry that he had done this on the sabbath and went away.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you liked best about this story.
- I wonder why the Pharisees were upset with Jesus for doing these things on the sabbath?
- I wonder if there are times when we rest from work to spend planned time with God?
- I wonder if we have ever stopped our rest or our work in order to help others?

Activity: Sabbath Planning

Sabbath is something you have to plan for so that you are ready for it. If you were going to take a whole day off to rest and be with God and your family, what would you do? What would you not do? (Invite the children to brainstorm what a sabbath day would look like for them. Create two columns for what would they do and what they wouldn't do?) Write their responses up on easel paper or on a white board.

After they are done brainstorming, invite the children to create a picture of what sabbath would look like for them.

Getting Closure: When you have about five minutes left, invite them to share briefly about their picture. Ask them, “Given our story today about Jesus breaking the sabbath, when might it be okay for us to break the sabbath?”

Closing Prayer: God of love, thank you for our time together to explore your Gospel message. Help us to always remember that there is a time to do each thing you have called us to do. Amen.

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