

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 25
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Luke 18:9-14

In the final 6 weeks of this Lectionary Year C, a firm and hopeful tone soars in Jesus' teachings in a rich symphony of themes. The background music of the Hebrew Scriptures holds the notes of the new covenant — a law written in our hearts rather than codified in legal structures — The Spirit poured out, a vision for the appointed time, God with us, a new heaven and a new earth, and a branch from the tree of David — the remnant gathered. We can believe that Jesus heard this cosmic music as he distilled his huge message to the disciples.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The promise echoing through the centuries, "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh," rings in Jesus' ears as he tells the disciples a story about the risk in assuming we "have it right."

Theme: Aligning our Hearts with our Behavior

Before: You will need paper and crayons.

Beginning: Ask the children to show you, using their bodies and their faces what someone who is really sorry for something bad he has done would look like.

Praying: Loving God, thank you for all you have given us and all you have done for us. Help us to remember to say thank you to show our love of you. Amen.

Story: Jesus had a story for his friends. There were two men in Jesus' story. The first man thought he was very important. This man went around with his nose stuck up in the air acting very proud of himself. When he prayed to God, he made sure everyone could hear him and he would pray like this: "I am glad I am not like other people who are not as wonderful as I am!" he would say. "I do all the stuff I am supposed to do and I give money to my church. I am a very perfect person."

The other man in Jesus' story knew he had done some bad stuff and he was really, really sorry. When this man prayed to God, he said, "I am so sorry. I really blew it. I am so very sorry, please forgive me." Jesus told his friends these stories to remind them that people who are able to say sorry and humble themselves in front of God are better than those who only praise themselves.

Activity: Movement activity. Tell the children we are going to pretend to be these two men. First we will be the one who was so sure of himself. What would that look like? Maybe we would have our noses stuck up in the air and our mouths turned down. When we walked around we would pay no attention to anyone else because we would be only thinking about ourselves.

Now, let's be the man who was so sorry about what he had done. What would that look like? With our heads down, we would walk very slowly. Maybe we would be saying, "I'm so sorry."

Now let's show how the sorry man would look after God tells him he is loved by God, the bad stuff he has done is all over, and he is forgiven. How would our faces look? How would our bodies act? Let's do a dance to show we are happy.

Activity: Invite the children to draw the person who is really sorry and is praying to God and knows that God hears and that God says all is OK. We will also need a drawing to put on our cross. There is a simple template below if you choose to use this for the coloring project or just for the one that you put on the cross.

Getting Closure: Gather the children in a circle. Tell the child next to you, "God forgives you. God loves you." Then ask that child to tell the person next to her what you just said, and you can say it along with the child. That child turns to the child next to him and joins in with you and the child. Keep going until each child has heard the message, and the last child has said it to you.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you forgive us when we tell you we are sorry. Thank you for your love and help. Amen.

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God forgives you.

God loves you.

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Theme: Aligning our Hearts with our Behavior

Before Class: If the children are keeping journals, the "Getting Closure" activity suggested in this lesson would be a good journal activity. If they are not, bring paper and pencils. You will need copies of the scripture for today, art supplies if you choose, and possibly some props like costumes for acting out the modern day retelling of the passage.

Beginning: Tell the children we have a story about a Pharisee and a tax collector. If they are not sure how to define these two types you could explain that Pharisees were religious rulers who tried very hard to obey all the many rules of their religion. Tax collectors figured out what people owed and often charged more than they needed to and kept the extra for themselves.

Opening Prayer: Loving God, thank you for all that you have given us. Help us to remember to be grateful to you and loving to others. Amen.

The Story: Luke 18:9-14 Invite children to read the parts of the passage today, the Narrator, Jesus, Pharisee, and Tax Collector.

Questions:

- Who are the Pharisees? (The people who were trying to keep all the rules and make sure everyone else kept all the rules.)
- Why do you think they were so sure they had obeyed all the rules? (When a person spends all their time making sure they are following the rules, they can usually follow the rules.)
- I wonder what could be wrong about just following rules? (You could miss what other people need.)
- What did tax collectors do? (They collected taxes from people to pay the government. Some of the tax collectors collected more than the people owed and kept the extra.)
- What was different about the tax collector's prayer? (He noticed he had done something wrong, felt sorry about it, and told God he was sorry.)

- I wonder how else could we say these words: justified, exalted, humbled? (Some possible paraphrases: justified: cleaned up our act; exalted: able to talk with God; humbled: noticing that God is in charge.)
- I wonder how else we could say verse 14 in words we might use with our friends? (Some hints: We are in a much better place when we put God first and not ourselves.)

Activity: Invite the children to brainstorm what being a Pharisee today might look like. What would it be like if they were a Pharisee? (Example: I got all my homework done, didn't waste any time playing with my little sister or helping Dad rake the leaves. I did what I am supposed to do.)

Then, invite them to brainstorm what being a Tax Collector today might look like? What would it be like if they were a Tax Collector? (Example: I blew it. My homework is not done. I did not help Dad rake the leaves. I took things that were not mine. I am a slob.)

After you have ideas for both a Pharisee and a Tax Collector, invite them to create a modern day telling of this story. They can act it out, paint it, or write about it as if it were a newspaper.

Getting Closure: Ask the group to picture a person who has had a triumph: won the 5k race, sank the winning shot in hockey, got the lead in the school play. Help this imaginary person compose a prayer that shows the person is grateful.

Now, compose a prayer for the person who blew it: didn't do the homework, left the dog outside all night, whatever. Compose this prayer.

Closing Prayer: “Thank you, God, that we can come to you when we have done something bad and know you will forgive us. Help us to remember to say thank you for all of our accomplishments, for your forgiveness, and for all you have given to us. Amen.”

Luke 18:9-14

Narrator: Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:

Jesus: ¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus,

Pharisee: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.”

Jesus: ¹³But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying,

Tax Collector: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

Jesus: ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.’

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 25
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Luke 18:9-14

In the final 6 weeks of this Lectionary Year C, a firm and hopeful tone soars in Jesus' teachings in a rich symphony of themes. The background music of the Hebrew Scriptures holds the notes of the new covenant — a law written in our hearts rather than codified in legal structures — The Spirit poured out, a vision for the appointed time, God with us, a new heaven and a new earth, and a branch from the tree of David — the remnant gathered. We can believe that Jesus heard this cosmic music as he distilled his huge message to the disciples.

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Theme: Aligning our Hearts with our Behavior

Beginning: Invite the group to think about a person whom they know that is humble. What words would you use to describe that person?

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, help us to humble before you and remember your love and forgiveness for each of us. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 18: 9-14 Invite someone to read the passage for today. After reading the passage, sit in a few moments of quiet before starting the discussion.

Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you in this passage today?
- What might have caused this overconfidence in the Pharisee? (They had high positions in their society; they knew what the rules were and how to follow them. They put 'getting it right' over noticing the needs of others.)
- What might have happened to the tax collector to make him so aware of what he had done wrong? (Perhaps he had heard Jesus speak; perhaps he noticed how hard it was for the people after he took their money.)
- The Pharisee, mired in his assuredness, repeats his rigid pattern. The tax collector, perhaps noticing the consequences of his cheating ways had opened his heart to Jesus' message. Most of us have a bit of both in us. How do we balance these two?
- I wonder what it looks like, sounds like, feels like to be humble?
- I wonder what this story might look like today?

Discussion Option: The line is sometimes not clear between noticing a job you have done well and becoming conceited. I wonder how we can be alert to this distinction in ourselves. The line between honest self-disclosure to God and maudlin staying stuck in the sin can be confusing. Discuss ways we can watch out for this in ourselves.

Getting Closure: Invite the group to reflect on these two statements: 1) I see the Pharisee in myself, and I wince. 2) I see the tax collector in myself, and I long to comfort that person.

Allow a moment or two for reflection. Then, together, discuss ways to heal both of these "persons" in ourselves.

Closing prayer: Collect For Vocation in Daily Work (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 261)

Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Luke 18:9-14

9 Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income."¹³But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.'

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