

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Third Sunday After the Epiphany
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Luke 4:14-21

Epiphany: Shimmering glimpses of the abundance of the Kingdom of God. Perhaps we, too, noticed a star and followed it. Or maybe someone led us to the gift of faith. Now we take the Light — the Good News — out into the world. Will others see the light shimmering in us? Will they risk taking a journey into faith with us?

A notation for this week's Gospel

Jesus, energized by the retreat he has just completed and filled with the Holy Spirit, comes to the synagogue in his own hometown on the Sabbath. Taking the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah, he reads: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." When he finishes reading the passage, he rolls up the scroll and sits down. What did those in attendance hear? What do we hear?

Theme: Called to Trust

Before Class: You will need Bibles or printouts of the scripture found at the end of this lesson. Remember to bring the participants' plastic bags, extra plastic bags for newcomers, and additional cards.

Beginning: Ask the group to take a moment of silence and think about a time they had to go forward with not a lot of data and simply had to trust. Honoring some people's need for privacy and some to share, hear from those who want to describe a time they acted in faith, going forward on trust. Pass out the bags of cards, as well as an additional fresh card for each person, reminding them to record their 'epiphanies' as they occur to them today.

Opening Prayer: Loving God, for the leap of faith Jesus took to trust that you would give him the words he needed, we thank you. For times you have called us out in faith and been with us as we trusted, thank you. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 4: 14 - 21.

Before reading today's passage, invite the group to notice the passage just before it (Luke 4: 1 - 13, Jesus confronting his temptations. Tell the group we will have that passage the first Sunday in Lent. But for now, we see Jesus clear about what he is NOT called to do and trusting he will have the words he needs when he needs them.)

Once you have looked at the Temptation (if you choose to,) ask for a volunteer to read the part of the narrator and the part Jesus speaks.

Questions:

The group may want to know that the portion of Isaiah Jesus read from is Isaiah 61: 1-2.

What town is Jesus in as he reads this? (Nazareth - his hometown. Next week we will see how this turns out for him).

We don't know the answer to these questions, so we can speculate:

- I wonder if Jesus knew that this was the appointed passage for the day or do we think his statement in verse 21 was an epiphany for him?
- I wonder if the people listening made the connection that the Messiah Isaiah was proclaiming was sitting right there in their midst?
- I wonder what it was like to have Jesus teach you?

Since the good news proclaimed by Isaiah, and subsequently by Jesus, is still not the norm, in what ways could the "Spirit of the Lord" be upon us, inviting us to help make this happen?

Getting Closure: Ask the group if anyone has jotted down an epiphany they would like to share with the group. And if no one chooses to share, ask them if they are noticing that "epiphanies" in their lives are tending to appear as we focus on looking for them. Share anything you may have noticed. (Collect the plastic bags of cards.)

Closing Prayer: God, we thank you for going with us when and where you call us to go. Be with us as we venture into the world, helping us to speak your word and live knowing that the Spirit of the Lord is upon us. Amen.

Luke 4: 1 – 13 (Pre-Lesson Reflection on the Temptation of Jesus)

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.³ The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’⁴ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone.”’

5 Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.⁶ And the devil said to him, ‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’⁸ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’

9 Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,¹⁰ for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you”,

¹¹ and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’

¹² Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’¹³ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Luke 4:14-21

Narrator: ¹⁴ Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

Jesus: ¹⁸ ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’

Narrator: ²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them,

Jesus: ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

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