

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

Scripture: Luke 4:21-30

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

Prophets don't do very well in their own hometown. It seems to be easier to hear hard sayings or even fresh insights from someone who comes from almost anywhere else. Perhaps it is because we remember when the prophet was a teen-ager, or because we helped raise this young person. Jesus is not spared this reality.

Theme: The path of the prophet

Before Class: You will need Bibles, the participant's plastic bags with "epiphanies" inside, additional plastic bags for newcomers, plus an additional card for each person.

Beginning: Ask the group if anyone has had the experience of being "the prophet without honor in his own country." Or, you could begin with sharing a situation from your own life (one where your words, actions, or ideas were ignored because you were "in your hometown") and then inviting the others to share comparable stories. Pass out the bags of cards and an additional fresh card for each person.

Opening Prayer: "Dear God, help us to hear your prophetic word in our lives and to choose to respond. Amen."

The Scripture: Luke 4:21-30 If you have people in the group who were not with you last Sunday, you might go back to verse 16 and read through to verse 30. Invite one person to read the scripture through one time, asking the participants to circle words or phrases that stand out for them.

Once you have read it, invite them to share what stood out for them and then move on to the questions.

Questions:

Notice the mood change and how quickly it happens: verse 20 — silence? potential recognition? What wonderful thing is going to happen next?

What is Jesus' message in Verse 21? (Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah.)

What is the initial reaction from the hearers? (Verse 22. Amazement that slides into disbelief when they remember they "knew him when.")

What is verse 23 all about? (Jesus tells them he knows they are expecting him to perform for them.)

What do you make of Verses 25-27? (Prophets of old were sent to non-Jews, to non-Israelites, poor, sick.)

I wonder why Jesus can't be a prophet in his own country? (For a clue, turn to Matthew 13: 58 where we have the same story with a more specific answer: Jesus seems to wait to find people who have faith before he works with them.)

What did his hometown people wanted to do with him? (Verse 29. They drive Jesus out of town.)

Describe Jesus leaving his hometown. (Verse 30.)

Option: Invite the group to reflect, silently, on two responses to this passage. First, what are we doing now, here in our lives, to drive Jesus out of town? Suggest they be careful not to project this onto others but to own it themselves. Then, what things are we doing, now, here in our lives, to collaborate with Jesus?

Getting Closure: Invite the group to share, if they are comfortable doing so, any epiphanies that came to them in the reflection time. Celebrate and look for ways to collaborate in those areas where people found their lives to be in sync with what Jesus calls us to do. (Collect the plastic bags.)

Closing Prayer: Inviting God, Thank you for the gift of faith and the opportunity to respond to you when you call. Guide us as we try to collaborate with you in your mission. Amen.

Luke 4:21-30

²¹Then Jesus began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ ²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’ ²³He said to them, ‘Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, “Doctor, cure yourself!” And you will say, “Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.”’ ²⁴And he said, ‘Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s home town. ²⁵But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’ ²⁸When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

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