

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday in Lent
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Luke 4:1-13

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy: Come, let us adore him. (Antiphon for Lent, Book of Common Prayer, page 81.) And what if, during this season of Lent, we sought a deeper understanding of this amazing gospel of grace? Will that image of grace energize us to do the spiritual housekeeping we need to be ready for the "new thing" God is doing in Easter?

A notation for this week's Gospel

Jesus, energized and equipped, goes to the wilderness where he faced-down three temptations and confrontations that challenge us to this day. The first: how do we make the distinction between what we "want" and what we "need;" "bread" really feeds us? Second: whom do we serve and what do we worship? Third: where are we smug, sure we are right, and putting God to the test? Jesus found his way through; Lent invites us to find our way through too.

Theme: Confronting the Temptations

Before Class: Get a listing of the additional services and programs your church may be offering during Lent. Is there a special focus, theme, or outreach? Make sure you have Bibles for everyone or copies of the scripture found below.

Beginning: Tell the group that the setting for today's Gospel occurs directly after Jesus was baptized. It might be helpful to think of it as his private retreat where he sorts out what he is called to do and, equally important, what he is not called to do. As we begin this season of Lent, we too may be called to hold our own private retreat.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, in this season of Lent, help me to remember, experience, and know that 'you are my refuge, my God in whom I trust.' Amen. (*Quoted text comes from Psalm 91:2*)

The Scripture: Invite four people to read one of the paragraphs as outlined below so as to get different voices reading scripture. Invite the group to mark down the words or phrases that stood out for them.

Questions.

Suggest the group take a few moments to look at the first temptation (verses 3 and 4) privately, asking themselves: where is Jesus making a decision between what he might want and what he might need?

Invite them to discuss what they came up with and ask them to think of how we decide between what we might want and what we really need.

Invite the group to then wonder how changing piles of stones into loaves of bread would have improved Jesus' image with the people?

I wonder why he dismissed that option?

Second temptation (verses 5-8) Invite the group to re-read these verses silently and privately reflect on those things that beckon us to serve again feeding on our wants.

After a few moments of silence, invite them to discuss what they came up with and ask the group what Jesus could have gained by being the Supreme Ruler of all the kingdoms of the world.

I wonder why he refused that plan?

Third temptation (verses 9-11) Invite the group to re-read these verses silently and privately reflect on the flashy options we could choose — our wants whispering in our ears.

After a few moments of silence, invite them to discuss what they came up with and ask the group what this crowd-producing feat would have done to get Jesus visibility and why he decided not to misuse angels in this way?

Option: Invite the group to share creative ideas for making this Lent a time we get a better grip on what we really need and have better strategies for measuring our wants. Discuss options for Lenten disciplines. A long retreat would probably be extremely refreshing yet outside the realm of possibility for most of us. What other options occur? (Choosing to use the time we walk the dog to intentionally pray. Committing to use time bogged down in traffic snarls to pray. Turning off the TV one night a week to read the Bible, etc. Make sure you have any brochures, fliers, or information about Lenten Programs that are being offered at your church or churches nearby so everyone is aware of the options they may have.) Invite people to choose a discipline that will be feasible for them amid all their other demanding responsibilities.

Getting Closure: Sit quietly in a circle for a moment. Then invite persons to pray, silently, for the person seated to their right.

Closing Prayer: The Lord is full of compassion and mercy: O come, let us adore him. Amen.” (Antiphon for Lent, *Book of Common Prayer*, page 81)

Luke 4:1-13

After his baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 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.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 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, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

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, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

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