

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Older Children

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 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: If at all possible have a meeting — even if only by phone — with the clergy person in your congregation, so you will be working in sync with their vision for Lent. Also make a note of the visual changes, such as the use of the color purple and possibly simpler vestments. Lent is a predominantly adult season, yet the children probably will notice the more somber mood. Bear in mind that they will see very odd things on TV and may find the realization that Jesus dies to be confusing. It is important to be holding the ending of the Lenten stories up for the children, especially if you have children that are not in your class every single week.

Assemble brown lunch bags, one for each child (plus a spare in case another child joins you another Sunday being aware of any allergies the children may have), pieces of notebook paper cut in half, pencils, and masking tape or transparent tape. Be sure you have enough so there will be one for you also. Bring a box — or a larger paper bag to hold all the bags, seal that also, and bring it, **unopened**, to class next week. You will need Bibles (or copies of the scripture found below) and copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Beginning: Tell the children that this is the First Sunday in Lent. If they have any observations about the season, be sure they have the opportunity to tell you. If they come up with things like: it is the time we give up chocolate, honor that and say we will be looking at that and possibly even adding something. You could tell them that Lent comes from an old word for Spring, so we could think of Lent as Spring Training (like in baseball - a training that helps get us ready for the season ahead.)

Opening Prayer: Dear God, you are full of compassion and mercy. Help us to remember, experience, and know that you are there for us and we can trust you. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 4: 1-13. Ask for volunteers to read one each of the paragraphs as outlined below.

Tell the children that this situation happened following Jesus' baptism by John. Jesus went off by himself to think through what he understood God wanted him to do. After hearing this passage we will see if we can figure out how these temptations are also temptations we face.

Questions:

Remind the children that we are going to look at this passage to see what it might be saying to us about the kind of Spring Training we are being invited to begin.

I wonder what it was like to not eat for forty days?

Verses 3 and 4

I wonder if Jesus could turn stones into bread? What would be cool about loaves of bread all over the place? (Crowds would show up, for sure, people would get food.)

What would not be good about this? (Jesus was not sent to do magic tricks nor do people's work for them.)

I wonder why he chose not to do this? (He knew he needed to help people see what is the right thing to do — not just dazzle them.)

How do we go about making decisions between what we might "want" to do and what we "need" to do?

I wonder what some of our "wants" are? Which things do we really "need?"

Verses 5 through 8

The devil was pretty sure he had all the kingdoms of the world under his thumb and could put Jesus in charge of all of them. I wonder why Jesus said no to the devil? (Jesus knew that he had not come to boss people around and be a fancy king. And he also knew he was not about to surrender to the forces of evil.)

What forces of evil can get us into trouble? (Yes, drugs, alcohol, and things like that, what else?)

I wonder what we "worship?" What grabs our attention? Suggest to the children that they think, privately, about some things you will mention — not necessarily owning them publicly, but considering whether they might pertain. Some possibilities, and you may know of others from situations in your community: Having the latest CD. Wearing the

coolest clothes. Finding big chunks of time to surf the Internet. Getting the lead in the school play. Getting on the best team. Being the most popular kid in the class.

Ask them if they think any of this is **TOTALLY** bad? What is the difference between "wanting" any of these and "needing" them?

Verses 9 through 11

Jesus knew angels would rush in, if he called on them, so why do we think he decided not to do this? (Pretty flashy. Silly use of angels. Again, people would show up for all the wrong reasons.)

I wonder if any of us can think of a situation where someone is putting God to the test? (an example could be a someone driving way too fast and being sure he or she will not crash the car.)

Can we think, privately, of times we are "smug" — times when we are sure WE have the right answer and are not open to listening to anyone else?

Activity: Spring Training

Give each child a paper bag, paper and pencils. Tell them we are going to design our Spring Training kits — for our eyes only. At the end of this activity, today, each of us will put what we have been writing inside our bags, put our names on the outside, seal the bags, and place them in the larger container where they will remain sealed until we come to class next week. The purpose is to develop individual Spring Training disciplines. Discuss some options: finding a time during the week to read from the Bible, finding time during the week to pray for help with dumping something that is getting between you and God, giving up something that is getting in the way, or that will get you in better shape, etc. Then, allow time for each child to, privately, write something to put in the bags. When you are finished, give each child the tape dispenser so each can seal his or her bag to their satisfaction, and then place their sealed bag in the larger container. When all the bags are in the larger container, invite the children to seal that container. Tell them the container will ride around in the trunk of your car all week and return with you next week, unopened.

Getting Closure: If any of the children want to make a copy of what they will put in their sealed bag to take home with them; be sure to allow sufficient time for that.

Closing Prayer: Give the children copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* and direct them to some prayers probably not frequently heard and let them choose which one to read as your closing prayer. Some options: Lent prayer on page 111, the antiphon in Compline on page 135, or the Collect at the bottom of page 139.

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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