

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger 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: who 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. You might choose to fashion a very simple altar with the children: a small table, a piece of purple cloth, a candle in a jar, a Bible, a cross, and a small basket that can receive drawings the children make. You will also need paper and crayons.

Beginning: If the children have been in church before coming to class, ask them if they noticed anything different. Explain that our church is getting quiet and creating space for people to think about the things Jesus had to do before he was killed and before he rose from the dead to be with God. Be open to any questions and aware of silences that indicate questions too unclear to form. If you have brought materials to fashion an altar, invite the children to arrange the items in a way that looks right to them.

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

The Story: Remember a few weeks ago we talked about Jesus getting baptized? Remember he went into the water, and John the Baptist baptized him, and he heard that God was very pleased with him. Well, this story happened right after that. Jesus knew he had work to do, so he went off by himself to do some serious praying and thinking. He knew there were lots of things he could do. He needed to decide which things he should do.

As he was praying and thinking the devil came to him and said, “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.’” Jesus was pretty sure God did not want him to do magic tricks.

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, “I will give this all to you.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” Jesus knew he could be a fancy king and rule all the countries of the world. No, he decided. It was God he wanted to serve.

Finally, the devil took him to Jerusalem, and put him on the tallest place outside of the temple, and told him, “If you are the Son of God, jump off and call upon the angels to save you.” Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Jesus was sure that was not what he was supposed to do. Now that he had decided not to do those things, he could go do the work God had given him to do.

Activity: Can anyone tell me what a temptation is? (Temptations are those things that sound like they would be exciting, but we know are not good for us.) Let's see if we can think of some things we know we are not supposed to do, but we think about how it might be fun to do them anyway? (If they do not think of anything, you could suggest: those cookies that Mother said you could not have until after supper? How about the TV show Dad says you are not to watch, but the baby sitter may not know the rules?)

I wonder what might help us decide not to do a "temptation?" (Allow the children time to respond and then ask...) I wonder if we could come up with a prayer to ask Jesus to help us so we do not get into trouble? Invite the children's help in composing such a prayer and then scribe what they develop. If you and the children are satisfied with what you have created, offer to make copies for them to take home, or leave it on your altar.

Option: Invite the children to think about Jesus choosing what he knows he is supposed to do for God and draw pictures of Jesus that can be placed in the basket on the altar.

Getting Closure: Gather the children around the altar. Light the candle, if you have chosen to bring one. Invite the children to be silent. Breathe in and breathe out. After some silence invite them to pray for anyone who needs prayers. Feel free to add your own intercessory prayers.

Closing Prayer: Close with the prayer you and the children have created and blow out the candle.

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