

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

Scripture: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

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

Tax collectors, who are sinners, invited to the table? Shocking! So Jesus tells them a story: A son who blows an inheritance and a father who forgives before the son even has a chance to ask. What might we discover about the gospel of grace?

Theme: Amazing grace

Before Class: To make it easier for the children to act out this story, a few props would be helpful. A robe (which could be a pretty blanket, a bright coat, or whatever you have on hand) a costume jewelry ring (the fancier the better), a pair of slippers, and either a stack of Monopoly money or a large handful of coins. You will also need the container with the bags used in class from prior weeks, extra bags for newcomers, fresh paper, pencils and tape.

This is a long piece of Scripture, so make copies of the scripture lesson (found below) and highlight the parts: narrator, Pharisee, Jesus, younger son, father, slave, and elder son.

Beginning: Tell the children you are going to be asking for a skit after the reading of this Scripture, so they can be thinking about who should play each part.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, thank you for this story Jesus told us that gives us yet another picture of your amazing love. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 15: 1-3, 11b - 32. Ask for volunteers to read the different parts we will need: The narrator, the Pharisees, Jesus, the younger son, the father, a slave, and the elder son.

Questions:

Ask the children what they noticed about this story.
I wonder what seemed odd to you?
I wonder if there were any surprises?
Who, do you think was surprised in the story?

Ask for a volunteer to describe what happened to the younger son? What did he decide to do about it?

Ask for a volunteer to describe the father's response. (verses 20b and 22b)

Then ask for a volunteer to describe the older son's reaction. (verses 29-30).

Activity: Offer the props you have assembled and invite the children to produce a skit on this story. Tell them it is perfectly okay to set the entire skit in our town today. Enjoy the skit!

Getting Closure: Bring out the container so each child can retrieve his or her sack. Make paper and pencils available and ask the children what they noticed in this story about the father's forgiveness. Who do they think Jesus was describing with the father? Ask them to think about how God would react to dumb stuff we do. Allow time for the children to make whatever notes they want and then seal their bags and the container with the tape.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for this story that helps us see how eager you are to forgive us when we come to you. Amen.

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Narrator: Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying,

Pharisees and Scribes: ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’

Narrator: ³ So he told them this parable:

Jesus: ‘There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father,

Younger Son: “Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.”

Jesus: So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said,

Younger Son: “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’ ”

Jesus: ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him,

Younger Son: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

Narrator: ²²But the father said to his slaves,

Father: “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate.

Jesus: ‘Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied,

Slave: “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.”

Jesus: ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father,

Elder Son: “Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!”

Narrator: ³¹Then the father said to him,

Father: “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.” ’

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