

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Pentecost Sunday
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: John 14:8-17 (25-27)

We remain Easter people, now with the wind of the Holy Spirit in our sails. Our task for the months ahead in this season of Ordinary Time, which extends to the end of November, is to look at what Jesus so tenaciously taught his disciples and see what is in these teachings for us as we carry out the work we have been given to do. Jesus promised his disciples a helper, an Advocate, who would stand with them making the work possible. This same helper, the Holy Spirit, hovers over us still eager to quench the fire of fear and replace it with the powerful energy of love.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

In today's Gospel passage we find Jesus gently preparing his disciples for the coming of the Advocate who will continue the teaching Jesus has begun and reminding them of all they had done together. In today's passage from Acts the disciples are waiting huddled in the upper room fearing that the authorities would come and get them before the Advocate showed up. What might they have been expecting? Sure enough, God remains true to form: God is a surprise. What they get is a wind that blows into the room, chases away the cobwebs of fuzzy thinking, and fills the disciples with fire. How is that same wind blowing in our lives as we look at the work we have been given to do?

Theme: The wind of the Holy Spirit blows with us

Before Class: You will need sufficient Bibles for each person to follow along or copies of the scripture passage. There is more material in this lesson than you may have time to cover so make some choices before you begin. You may choose to use the lesson as outlined or complete the Gospel portion before going to the Acts passage. (Please note: there is also an Intergenerational Lesson Plan for today.)

Beginning: Today, as we celebrate Pentecost, we will look at the before (the Gospel for today) the after (the Acts passage) resurrection stories. In some places Pentecost is called Whitsunday or the Birthday of the Church.

Opening Prayer: God, thank you for being the God of Surprise — ever blowing fresh wind into our lives so that we may see you anew. Amen.

The Scriptures: If time is limited, skip the first Optional section and go directly to the Gospel readings (John 14: 8-17, 25-27).

Optional Study: "After:" Pentecost: Acts 2:1-21.

Acts: 2: 1-4: Invite someone to read these first four verses.

Questions: Remind the group of the setting: The disciples are trying to carry on, they have cast lots for the replacement of Judas, but they are huddled in this closed room — in fear of their lives. Possibly they are feeling all the more guilty because Jesus had told them on so many occasions not to be afraid!

Something totally unexpected happens. Luke struggles for words. If we were to paraphrase what happened, what would we say? (Work with your group to come up with "non-churchy" words to paraphrase what happened.)

What caused crowds to gather? (Verse 4)

Acts 2: 5-13 Read this passage and then discuss.

Questions:

What astounding things did the crowds hear? (Verse 6)

Do you think the disciples suddenly learned all these new languages (possibly) or that the power of what they were saying communicated across language (possibly) or something else entirely (possibly.)

What did the skeptics say? (Verse 13)

Acts 2: 14-21 Read this passage and then discuss.

Notice the contrast between verse 1 and verse 14. (Huddled in the room in fear as opposed to standing together testifying to the people.)

The Scripture: John 14: 8-17: (Focus on the Gospel passage if time is limited.) Invite someone to read the passage. Explain that this passage comes near the end of Jesus' training of his disciples.

Questions:

What is the key concept in this passage — a concept Jesus has been teaching over and over and yet they still do not "get?" (oneness — not duality).

John writes using beautiful, but abstractly complex, words. If we were trying to get this concept across to a friend, how would we phrase this concept of God in Jesus and Jesus in God? (Grapple with the concept including the difficulties in getting it down in so many words.)

What "greater works" do you suppose Jesus had in mind that we could do — after he returned to the Father? (The concept of hospitals came from Christians, for example. How about works of art and music? What else can we think of?)

What might be involved "If you in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it?" (If this does not mean Jesus gives us any little thing our heart's desire, discuss what alignment might first be necessary.)

What is the sign that Jesus says indicates we do love him? (Verse 15)

Next Sunday is Trinity Sunday when we celebrate God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Look at verses 16-17 as a "Preview of Coming Attractions." Discuss the attributes of the Holy Spirit that Jesus describes in these two verses.

John 14: 25-27: Invite one person to read the passage while the rest follow along in their Bibles or simply listen with their eyes closed. Allow a minute or two for silent reflection. If time permits, ask another person to read the passage again. Ask the group what words or ideas appeared to them. Allow sufficient time for people to articulate their thoughts. If they need some assistance, here are a couple of questions:

What might the disciples have thought on hearing Jesus say "while I am still with you?" (Perhaps Jesus picked up on their anxiety with what he says next.)

What will be the mission of the "Advocate" Jesus says the Father will send? (teach and remind)

How does it make us feel to hear Jesus say to us — through this Scripture: do not let your hearts be troubled, do not let them be afraid?"

Getting Closure: A powerful wind blew through the lives of the disciples, a wind that stayed in them during awesomely difficult times. That wind, the Holy Spirit, is still here for us. The Holy Spirit, Advocate, and Counselor, will teach us all things. What helps us notice the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives? How can we encourage each other to "blow with the wind?"

Closing Prayer: *Collect for Pentecost*

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

John 14: 8-17

8 Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’⁹ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?’¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

15 ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments.¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever.¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

25 ‘I have said these things to you while I am still with you.²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Acts 2:1-21 (Optional Lesson)

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?’⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’¹³ But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning.¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.
¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.
¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

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