

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 5
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Luke 7:11-17

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

Luke focuses on the powerful gentleness of Jesus. A young man is about to be buried. Jesus knows the devastation this man's death will bring to the man's widowed mother. A stunned crowd watches as Jesus gives the now obviously alive son back to his mother.

Theme: Unexpected healing

Before Class: You will need copies of the Bible or copies of the scripture passage. If you would like to have the group read from more than one translation, make sure and have either Bibles or copies of different translations on hand.

Beginning: If it seems appropriate offer something like this to the group: "Some of us may have had the experience of holding a deathly ill person in our arms and then knowing that blessed relief when he or she turned the corner and begin to get well. Let's remember that gratitude as we look at today's passage."

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for your great compassion and for the miracle of healing. Be with us as we explore your word and call to us. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 7: 11 – 17. Invite a volunteer to read. If you choose, you could have a few different translations and have different volunteers each read from a different translation.

Questions:

What stood out for you in today's reading? What caught you by surprise? (Allow time for response.)

The death of a child is always an indescribable tragedy, but what made this death even more devastating? (The man is young and is the widow's only son. She has no other source of support than this son.)

What is Jesus' response to this event in verse 13? How would we define "compassion?" (Not only being able to identify with the person's distress, but empowered to do something about it.)

What does Jesus do? (Verses 14-15)

Jesus heals many people in the gospels, but can anyone remember other times he raised a person who was dead? (Luke 8:49-56; John 11:1-44)

What was the response of the people who witnessed the healing of this man? (Verse 16)

Luke says that “fear” seized all of them. If we do not think they were suddenly afraid, what do we think this means? (“Awe” is a good paraphrase. Also the powerful conviction that God was with them.)

Option: Speculating on results of Jesus healing

Tell the group that we do not, of course, know why Jesus chose to heal this young man. The compassion of Jesus is obviously one reason. What might have been some of the other outcomes Jesus could have anticipated? (People who witnessed this healing were now grounded in their faith in Jesus; the testimony of the witnesses would bring others into believing; the inevitable confrontation with those who were invested in their own power structures was now in motion; the dawning belief that God cares for individual people; the accessibility of God to each of us, etc.)

Getting Closure: Discuss how we manage the apparent disconnect between believing that “with God all things are possible” and the times we have earnestly prayed for healing in a person and the person did not get well. What if healing sometimes means dying? What would our world be like if God DID intercede in every potential danger in the world? Where would God then stop? What would become of our freedom?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for showing us your compassion, healing, and love. As we go in to the world, may you continue to see your healing presence among us. Amen.

Luke 7: 11 – 17

11 Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹²As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother’s only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. ¹³When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ ¹⁴Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, ‘Young man, I say to you, rise!’ ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has risen among us!’ and ‘God has looked favorably on his people!’ ¹⁷This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

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