

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 25
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 18:9-14

In the final 6 weeks of this Lectionary Year C, a firm and hopeful tone soars in Jesus' teachings in a rich symphony of themes. The background music of the Hebrew Scriptures holds the notes of the new covenant — a law written in our hearts rather than codified in legal structures — The Spirit poured out, a vision for the appointed time, God with us, a new heaven and a new earth, and a branch from the tree of David — the remnant gathered. We can believe that Jesus heard this cosmic music as he distilled his huge message to the disciples.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The promise echoing through the centuries, "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh," rings in Jesus' ears as he tells the disciples a story about the risk in assuming we "have it right."

Theme: Aligning our Hearts with our Behavior

Before Class: If the children are keeping journals, the "Getting Closure" activity suggested in this lesson would be a good journal activity. If they are not, bring paper and pencils. You will need copies of the scripture for today, art supplies if you choose, and possibly some props like costumes for acting out the modern day retelling of the passage.

Beginning: Tell the children we have a story about a Pharisee and a tax collector. If they are not sure how to define these two types you could explain that Pharisees were religious rulers who tried very hard to obey all the many rules of their religion. Tax collectors figured out what people owed and often charged more than they needed to and kept the extra for themselves.

Opening Prayer: Loving God, thank you for all that you have given us. Help us to remember to be grateful to you and loving to others. Amen.

The Story: Luke 18:9-14 Invite children to read the parts of the passage today, the Narrator, Jesus, Pharisee, and Tax Collector.

Questions:

- Who are the Pharisees? (The people who were trying to keep all the rules and make sure everyone else kept all the rules.)
- Why do you think they were so sure they had obeyed all the rules? (When a person spends all their time making sure they are following the rules, they can usually follow the rules.)
- I wonder what could be wrong about just following rules? (You could miss what other people need.)
- What did tax collectors do? (They collected taxes from people to pay the government. Some of the tax collectors collected more than the people owed and kept the extra.)
- What was different about the tax collector's prayer? (He noticed he had done something wrong, felt sorry about it, and told God he was sorry.)
- I wonder how else could we say these words: justified, exalted, humbled? (Some possible

paraphrases: justified: cleaned up our act; exalted: able to talk with God; humbled: noticing that God is in charge.)

- I wonder how else we could say verse 14 in words we might use with our friends? (Some hints: We are in a much better place when we put God first and not ourselves.)

Activity: Invite the children to brainstorm what being a Pharisee today might look like. What would it be like if they were a Pharisee? (Example: I got all my homework done, didn't waste any time playing with my little sister or helping Dad rake the leaves. I did what I am supposed to do.)

Then, invite them to brainstorm what being a Tax Collector today might look like? What would it be like if they were a Tax Collector? (Example: I blew it. My homework is not done. I did not help Dad rake the leaves. I took things that were not mine. I am a slob.)

After you have ideas for both a Pharisee and a Tax Collector, invite them to create a modern day telling of this story. They can act it out, paint it, or write about it as if it were a newspaper.

Getting Closure: Ask the group to picture a person who has had a triumph: won the 5k race, sank the winning shot in hockey, got the lead in the school play. Help this imaginary person compose a prayer that shows the person is grateful.

Now, compose a prayer for the person who blew it: didn't do the homework, left the dog outside all night, whatever. Compose this prayer.

Closing Prayer: “Thank you, God, that we can come to you when we have done something bad and know you will forgive us. Help us to remember to say thank you for all of our accomplishments, for your forgiveness, and for all you have given to us. Amen.”

Luke 18:9-14

Narrator: Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:

Jesus: ¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus,

Pharisee: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.”

Jesus: ¹³But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying,

Tax Collector: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

Jesus: ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.’

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