

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Third Sunday after Epiphany
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Matthew 4:12-23

Because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Book of Common Prayer, page 378)

Accept the light we have received and shine it forth! It is not about shining the light in other's faces, blinding them, but holding the light in open hands.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And what does Jesus say? The kingdom of heaven has come near. What is this kingdom of heaven and how do we get ready to receive it?

Theme: A Light has Dawned

Before Class: You will need copies of the Bible for the group and at least one Bible in a different translation.

Beginning: Tell the group that we have had two accounts of Jesus' call to ministry. Today we will see aspects of his mission and of his Action Plan.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to bring us your breakthrough message. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 4:12-23 Invite the group to notice that today's passage has three sections and to be noticing when each part begins. Notice, also, that we had some of this story, last week, from a different point of view. Invite one person to read the passage and invite the group to listen for things that stick out for them. After a few moments of silence after the passage has been read, invite another person to read the passage in a different translation. After the second reading, invite reflection.

Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you in today's passage?
- I wonder if you noticed anything new or different in the two different translations of the passage?
- As we reflect on the Gospel, I wonder what is going on with Jesus in the first section, verses 12-16? (He has been affirmed in his ministry by hearing the words "This is my Son. . ." has discovered he will no longer have John's help, has gone back home to Capernaum, and turned to the prophesy of Isaiah to figure out his ministry.)
- Ask someone to read verse 16. What can we conjecture Jesus drew from this passage? (Jesus has been sent to be the "light" to this people who have sat in darkness.)

- What is the decision Jesus makes about the mission of his ministry in verse 17? (He needs to continue the message John began: “repent!” He also needs to help people see that God is not indifferent and far off, but right here in our midst.)
- I wonder what we might see about Jesus’ Action Plan? (Find people to work with him.)
- What might this pattern have for us in our various ministries? (Take time to find focus, looking to Scripture for assistance, staying on message and not getting diverted by distractions, and finding others to work with us.)
- I wonder how might Jesus be calling us into new ministry?
- I wonder how we can invite others into ministry?

Getting Closure: Invite the group to reflection (offering what they noticed only if they want to do so) on ways we can apply these methods to our own lives and ministries.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you have placed the kingdom of heaven right here in our midst. Help us to follow you and invite others we meet along the way to be a part of your call to us. Amen.

Matthew 4:12-23

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 'Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.' From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went through Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

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