

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Matthew 5:13-20

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

Called to be salt! Who we choose to be, seasons our community; and what we focus upon, casts light. The call: don't just do something, Be!

Theme: Let your Light Shine

Before: A salty snack is called for. If you can get a box of unsalted saltine crackers AND a box of salted, that would be great. Otherwise pretzels or something similar.

You will also need a box of salt, a roll of plastic wrap (or some plastic bags cut into 4 or 5 inch squares), and transparent tape. If you choose the option, you will need colored construction paper, crayons, white glue, wipes or wet paper towels for clean up.

Beginning: The song "This Little Light of Mine" can have this verse added as the children sing:

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
Shine like Jesus shows me how (holding the candle up in the air)
I'm gonna let it shine.

Praying: Show us, God, what you want us to do to help Jesus. Amen.

The Story: Lots of people were sitting on the side of the hill listening to Jesus. So Jesus looked right at them and said: You are the salt of the earth: the earth is a better place because you are here. You are the light of the world. You help people see that God loves all of us. Keep on doing the things you know are good. I will keep on helping you do the hard things.

Activity: Show the children the snack you have brought them. (If you were able to get the saltines, invite them to taste the ones without salt first. Then give them the salted. Ask them what the difference is.)

Ask the children what foods they like to sprinkle a little salt upon. If someone in your family likes to put salt on something odd, share that with the children (example: salt on watermelon). Ask them why they like to put salt on some foods.

Option: Creating with salt

Give the children sheets of construction paper and crayons. Give them access to the white glue and small piles of salt. Invite them to create a picture. The salt can be sand on a beach, or simply texture for the pictures. You will need to make provision for clean up before the next activity. If they cannot go wash up with warm water and soap, provide either wipes or wet paper towels.

Getting Closure: Sing the song “This Little Light of Mine” one more time.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, that we, too, are salt of the earth for you. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 5:13-20

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Theme: Let your light shine

Note: An ongoing Epiphany project is offered, if you have long enough class time or if it seems to work for you and the children you teach. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 1-12) is the reading for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany and one session is less than adequate to unpack all that is offered. If you choose to do this Option, each week you will take one or two of the "Blessed are" statements and consider what they say to the children. Each week, either print in large letters or print-out from your computer using at least 60 point type one of the Beatitudes. "Merciful" is the Beatitude suggested for this week.

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture for each child. A salty snack (pretzels would be best) would be good if you can bring it.

You will need blank index cards. On one side of each card cite an abbreviated version of one of the Ten Commandments. You and the children can come up with the abbreviations if you have the time. If time is short, here is a suggested list you can put on the cards. 1. No other gods; 2. No idols; 3. No swearing; 4. No work on the Sabbath; 5. Honor your parents; 6. No murder; 7. No adultery; 8. No stealing; 9. No telling lies; 10. No desiring.

Beginning: Ask the children to consider this situation: you are members of a team – might be basketball, soccer, swimming, whatever. Now you have a new coach. What things will not change – what things will? (Obviously, the rules of the game will not change, but the coach will probably have some new twists.)

Opening Prayer: Help us, God, to hear what you invite us to be. Amen.

The Scripture. Matthew 5: 13-20 The entire passage is the voice of Jesus, so you might choose to have different volunteers read in this fashion: First volunteer: verse 13; Next: verse 14-16; next: verses 17 – 18; last volunteer: verses 19 – 20.

Questions

- Salt may seem kind of ordinary to us; what is it about salt that might have been more important to the people hearing Jesus? (They did not have the wonderful array of bottled sauces we find in our cupboards. Salt was a seasoning even the poorest people would have had.)
- I wonder how being a person who tries hard to live a Christian life can be “salt” in our community? (The community would be better because these people were a part of the community. These people might cause other people to choose to live better lives.)
- I wonder how we can be “light of the world?” (Being the kind of people others look up to.)
- Who do the children know by the way they live their life is a “light” to others?
- What is Jesus saying about the rules in the Bible that these people would all know? (The rules still stand.)
- What are some of these rules that everyone would have known? (Look up Deuteronomy 5: 6-21 or Exodus 20: 1-17)
- Jesus talks about “the kingdom of Heaven.” What do we think he means? (He is trying to help people see that heaven is, yes, where we will be after this life, but that it is also here, right now and God is with us now.)

Option: Ask the children to respond to this definition: The Kingdom of Heaven is a fitness plan with positive things to do and negative things to avoid. What would be some of the things Jesus has been showing us that are good to add to our fitness plan (forgiving, sharing, etc.)

Activity: A New Deck of Cards

Invite the children to look up the Ten Commandments in the Bible (either Deuteronomy 5: 6-21 or Exodus 20: 1-17.) Then show them the “deck of Cards” you have brought. Invite them to help you come up with abbreviated statements describing each commandment, showing them what you have produced, if they get stuck. Then ask the children to brainstorm things Jesus is teaching that could go on the other side of the cards – as being additions to the law. For example: “Be salt!” could go on the other side of 1. No other gods. (Whatever seems good to them, there are no wrong answers.) What about: “Be light?” Tell the children we can add statements to these cards the next weeks of Epiphany.

Getting Closure: A salty snack Together “toast” salty qualities we have noticed in others. Then, “toast” salty qualities we have discovered in ourselves.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for the salty people, the light-filled people, and the merciful people you place on our path. Amen.

Matthew 5:13-20

Salt and Light

13 ‘You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

14 ‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

The Law and the Prophets

17 ‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

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

Scripture: Matthew 5:13-20

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A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Called to be salt! Who we choose to be seasons our community; and what we focus upon casts light. The call: don't just do something, Be!

Theme: Let your Light Shine

Before Class: Have various translations of the Bible on hand. Suggested: The Message, the Common English Bible, and New Revised Standard Version. You can find all of these online and simply make copies for your group.

Beginning: Ask the group to take a minute to think about at least one person who has been a light to them in their lives.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for all those who are light in our lives. Show us how to shine our light, too. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 5: 13-20 Invite readers to read the passage once through in each of the translations that you brought.

Questions:

- What might be some “God-flavors of this earth” that we are called to season with salt? (Some possibilities: hope, love, joy, courage, etc.)
- What do we think are some of the “God-colors” our light could bring out? (Showing by our actions that all people are God's people, etc.)
- What is the “law and the prophets” Jesus refers to in verse 17? (The Ten Commandments and the promises the prophets had made through the years.)
- I wonder what “righteousness” as Jesus uses it in verse 20 means? (Being in a right relationship with God, including noticing when we blow it, making the necessary changes and then accepting forgiveness.)

Option: Jesus refers to the “kingdom of heaven” three times in this passage. (Matthew mentions it 36 times in the entire Gospel). What do we understand Jesus to mean? Discuss aspects of the kingdom of heaven – as a description of what eternity with God will be like if we choose to be a part of it, as well as a description of what life can be now if we choose to be a part of the

kingdom of heaven. Note: Jesus also chose this phrase to define his mission to call for internal change and his refusal to be the political force people had expected.

Getting Closure: Invite the group to reflect on signs of salt and light they have noticed in each other. (An example might be: I have noticed that you (name the person) are open to seeing things in a new way. I see the way you (name the person) reach out to the youngest children in our community, etc.)

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for the opportunities you show us to be salt and light for you. Guide us as we are called to live into a call to serve you. Amen.

Matthew 5:13-20

Salt and Light

13 ‘You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

14 ‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

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