

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

**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.<sup>15</sup>No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In 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. <sup>18</sup>For 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. <sup>19</sup>Therefore, 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.<sup>20</sup>For 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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