

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

Scripture: Matthew 6:24-24

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

Each decision we make, however trivial, is a choice. Our choices produce a pattern. We simply cannot serve two different bosses.

Theme: Do Not Worry about Tomorrow

Before: Tailoring to your own situation, think of small animals (such as birds, squirrels, etc.) your children would have seen in their surroundings. You will need paper and crayons.

Beginning: Ask the children if they have seen a [whatever small animal you chose] looking for something to eat. What do they eat? Has anyone ever seen any of these animals with a back pack? Why don't they need a back pack? (They find the food they need.)

Praying: Thank you, God, that animals can find the food they need. Thank you for what you give to us. Amen.

The Story: Jesus saw that some people had worried faces. What do we look like when we are worried? Show a face. (The teacher can make a "worried" face also.) People were worried. Maybe I won't have any supper. Maybe I won't have shoes to wear. Worry, Worry, Worry! So Jesus said to those people, "Why are you so worried? Look at the birds. Did you ever see a bird digging a garden, planting seeds, and worrying about whether the seeds would grow up into food for them? Of course not! And what about the flowers, do they ever say, 'I haven't a THING to wear!' No. Flowers have beautiful petals and bright green leaves. They just have to stand there to be pretty. So, don't you think God loves you as much as God loves the birds and the flowers? Do not worry about tomorrow, but be happy with today."

Activity: Finding what They Need

Ask each child to choose an animal they want to pretend to be. It can be any animal, bird, fish, etc. When each child has chosen an animal, let them take turns telling you what the animal needs for food. Then ask the children, in turn, to pretend to be the animal they have chosen and show how they find the food they need. The other children can offer suggestions as each child decides what their animal needs.

Activity: Who takes care of what WE need?

Ask the children to think of people who take care of them. Who cooks our meals? Who goes to work to make money to buy food? Who takes care of us when our parents have to be out of our house? Who comes to play at our house so we can have fun? (Obviously the children will have different answers. The teacher tailors the questions to what the teacher knows of the children: perhaps questions about day care providers would be appropriate – grandparents who either live with the children or are close enough to be in their lives, etc.)

Activity: Drawing Those Receiving Care

Perhaps the children will want to draw a picture of the animal getting what they need. Perhaps they will want to draw a picture of someone taking care of them.

Getting closure: When the children have finished their drawings, ask them to sit in a circle and invite them to share their work.

Closing Prayer: (Invite the children to name the people who take care of them and then incorporate their names into the prayer.)

Loving God, we thank you for caring for us, and for all of the people we have to take care of us, especially _____. Amen.

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

Scripture: Matthew 6:24-24

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)

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Theme: Do Not Worry about Tomorrow

Before: You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for the each child.

For the Option that requires cookies you will need enough cookies for each child to have one. It also needs "stuff." The "stuff" could be things already in the classroom (boxes of crayons, books, etc.). It would be more fun if you could bring stuff children would want to have: CD players, a cell phone, a board game, etc. The object will be to see how much a child can hold in his/her own arms.

Beginning: Ask the children what is the difference between "I need" and "I want." (Give them time to respond.)

Opening Prayer: Help us, God, to see a difference between what we need and what we want. Help us to be thankful for what you give us. Amen.

The Story: Matthew 6: 24 – 34 You can invite each child to read one sentence and just go around the room. Alternatively, you can ask one or two children to share in reading the passage.

Questions:

- What do we think is the difference between having a job to make the money we need and "serving wealth?" (Spending all our energy to make more and more money and get more and more "stuff".)
- Do we think God doesn't want anyone to have a lot of money?
- What worthwhile things could people do, if they had a LOT of money?
- I wonder what it means to "be worried?" (Afraid you won't have what you need.)
- What special commercial brands of clothing are "in" at your school? (Accept what they offer.)
- What is the problem that "in" clothes can create? (Those who cannot afford them can be at least uncomfortable and at worst, scorned.)

Option: Scrounging “stuff”

Show the children what you have been able to acquire and ask for a volunteer to see how much they can grab and hold in their own arms. The other children can assist the child to pile it on, but not to help carry it. When the child is sufficiently burdened down with stuff, ask one child to pass the plate of cookies so each child may have a cookie. Ask the children how the burdened child will be able to take a cookie. (Probably, he/she will have to dump some of the stuff.) Then, ask the burdened child to describe what she/he had to do to be able to receive the gift of the cookie.

Option: Pile it On Relay

Divide the group into two groups. Tell one of them that their task is to see how much of the “stuff” they can carry from one end of the room to the other without dropping anything. Tell the other group that their task is to cross from one side of the room to the other with God’s word (the Bible). Once they are both ready, set them to the race.

Once they are done with the race, ask the whole group what it was like to be in the group they were in? What did they notice? What did they feel? What would they do differently if they were to do it again?

Getting Closure: Ask the children to brainstorm about what positive changes could happen in the world if people really tried to honor what Jesus is telling us today.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you show us a better way. Help us not to be burdened by worry and objects, and guide us so we can see you and your gifts in our midst. Amen.

Matthew 6:24-34

24 ‘No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

25 ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 ‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

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

Scripture: Matthew 6:24-34

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)

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A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Each decision we make, however trivial, is a choice. Our choices produce a pattern. We simply cannot serve two different bosses.

Theme: Do Not Worry about Tomorrow

Before: You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for the group.

Beginning: Ask the group to be listen for choices we make that Jesus teaches about in this passage.

Opening Prayer: Gracious and Loving God, we thank you for all you have given us and all the things you bless us with each day. Help us not to worry over things in the future, but keep our minds on this day. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 6: 24 – 34 Invite one person to read the passage and ask the group to make note of things that stand out for them.

Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you in this passage.
- In verse 24, I wonder what Jesus is saying to us about “hating” or “loving” money. What if we thought about it in terms of priorities? (Unless God is our highest priority, something else will be.)
- What is the difference between “worrying about your life” and being good stewards of our lives? (Worry tends to paralyze us. Good stewards care for themselves, those in their care, and those in the community.)
- I wonder what Jesus means in verse 26? Jesus is not telling people to quit planting crops because the birds don't, what do we think he means? (Birds put in extraordinarily long days scrounging for food – but they do not take on unsuitable responsibilities.)
- An old cliché goes: “Bloom where you are planted.” Had Jesus heard this slogan, do you think he might have added it to verse 28? Why? Why not?
- Notice how many times in this short passage Jesus says, in one way or another: “do not worry.” I wonder what that might say to us today?

- Is it a source of comfort to realize that worry was also common 2000 years ago? Why? Why not?
- What would we say is the meaning of “righteousness” in verse 33? (Being in a right relationship with God rather than “worrying” about the mistakes we could make.)

Option: A look back at the Epiphany season

(Next week will be the last Sunday after Epiphany and will have a different focus that what we have been looking at since the beginning of this season.) Ask people to open Bibles and browse through Chapter 5 and that portion of 6 that we looked at for words that would help us define the Kingdom of God. (The Beatitudes, 5: 3-11, salt, light, the law expanded, trust, etc.)

What signs of hope do we see in our world that some of these aspects are a part of our lives? (Some examples could be the improved lot of women, the increasing value of children, the concept of hospitals, expectation that some taxes go to serve those who have the least, etc.)

What signs of work, still to be done, do we notice? (Our own priorities, the continuing difference between those who have and those who have not, our own church’s need for us to help it stay on focus, etc.)

Getting Closure: The Kingdom of God

Ask the group to sit in a circle, eyes closed as each person thinks of how they see The Kingdom of God. Invite those who wish, say: “I think the Kingdom of God is _____.”

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you have placed the Kingdom of God right here in our midst. Be with us as we go forth from this place that we might know you and see you more fully. Amen.

Matthew 6:24-34

24 ‘No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

25 ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

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