

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

Scripture: Matthew 17:1-9

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

Mountaintop experiences! Moses received the Law — to obey. Jesus is revealed as the person — to follow.

Theme: The Disciples See the Brightness of Jesus

Before: You will need copies of the Bible or copies of the scripture for each person, paper for notes, and pens or pencils.

Beginning: Remind the group that this is the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany. Wednesday is Ash Wednesday followed by 40 days of Lent. The Season of Epiphany has been a time to hold out our light inviting and drawing others in. Today, the Transfiguration gives us a glimpse of what is to come.

Opening Prayer: Grant us, God, that as we behold by faith the light of Jesus' countenance, we may be changed into his likeness from glory to glory. Amen. (*Adapted from The Book of Common Prayer, Collect for the Last Sunday after the Epiphany, page 217*)

Option: As a means of attempting to identify with the difficulty the disciples must have had describing what they witnessed on the mountain, invite each person to identify a life-changing event in their lives that they would have great difficulty conveying in words. (Perhaps seeing your newborn for the first time, standing with a person who is dying, watching an incredibly beautiful sunset.)

Invite them to identify an experience of watching a person's face change in a life-changing situation? (A child who has finally discovered how to read, a person who has just finished an incredibly difficult race, etc.)

Beginning: Invite the group to be noticing, as the passage is read, how Jesus intended this trip up the mountain to (1) change the disciples into his likeness, and (2) call us to be so changed. Offer paper and pencils or pens for those who prefer to make notes while the scripture is being read.

The Scripture: Matthew 17:1-9

Invite one reader to read the entire passage and then maintain a moment or two of silence. Then ask for another volunteer to read the entire passage again (possibly in a different translation) followed by another moment of silence.

Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you in this passage?
- What is the significance of Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus? (To the disciples it would have signified that Jesus truly is the Messiah for it was expected that Elijah would return just before the Messiah arrived. Moses was the key authority figure for the Hebrew people, so his presence would further authenticate Jesus' mission.)
- Why might Peter have come up with his idea in verse 4? (Events significant to Hebrews were often marked by creating "booths" tent-like structures. In our own time, how do people tend to mark the location of a tragedy? (With teddy bears, flowers, and candles.)
- What is the response of the disciples to hearing "the voice?" (Stark terror and awe as they fall on the ground.)
- How does Jesus minister to them? (He "touches" them and then reassures them.)
- Why do we suppose Jesus told the disciples to say nothing of what they had seen until "the Son of Man has been raised from the dead?" (Clearly people would either be unable to believe what the disciples could say or they would mob Jesus for all the wrong reasons.)
- I wonder what the disciples understood of what Jesus said? (Even if they suspected Jesus was on a collision course with death, they probably still thought it could be avoided. The answer must have been unsettling for them.)
- What evidence do we have that the disciples understood that they were being "changed into his likeness?" (Perhaps their continuing to follow Jesus as they became more aware of the risk.)
- What evidence do we have that we, too, are being "changed into his likeness?" (Encourage the group to "notice" the manifestations of Jesus that they see in each other.)

Getting Closure: Invite the group to maintain a moment or two of silence to reflect on what it means to each one that they are being "changed into his likeness, from glory to glory." Invite them to respond if they wish.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for seeing Jesus in each of us. Help us to see Jesus in each other and to live into the call Jesus has given to us. Amen.

Matthew 17:1-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ ⁵While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!’ ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Get up and do not be afraid.’ ⁸And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, ‘Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.’

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