

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Younger Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-9a(9b-12)

The theme is about going from darkness into light, a common metaphor the prophets used to speak to God's people. It is about opposites: light vs. dark; insight vs. ignorance; listening to God vs. not listening; following God vs. waywardness. The easiest way to explain to children is compare and contrast. God's love is always there to direct us into the light of Christ by giving us guidelines on how to treat each other. This unit includes words of the prophets and the commandments.

A Notation for this Week's Scripture: Isaiah continues the theme of Justice. The prophet explains to the people that their relationship with each other reveals their true relationship with God. They cannot say that they have a good relationship with when they have no mercy for others. God does not require fasting. God requires justice and mercy.

Theme: The Light of Christ

Before: It is important to read the lesson before you come into the class. You will find the experience of knowing what the text says will help you to be present and focused.

You will need copies of the candle activity, plain sugar cookies to decorate (premade from the store, the kind you can cut and bake from a tube, or ones you make at home), frosting, sprinkles, and other decorations. Arrange ahead of time who you will give the cookies to and how to get them there.

Beginning: Today we have some activities to show us how light and dark are opposites; that God wants us to see the light and know the love God has for us. Open your time together with singing. Choose one to use each session of this unit. It could give structure to sing the same song before the story as a cue to the children it is circle time. Suggested songs:

- This Little Light of Mine
- He's Got The Whole World in His Hands
- The Hymnal 1982, #490 - I want to walk as child of the light
- Wonder Love and Praise, #787 – We are marching in the light of God

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, help me to keep my mind and heart open and listen to hear what you want me to learn this morning. Amen.

The Story:

People who lived before Jesus waited a long time for him to be born. While the people waited God began to get them ready to receive the gift of Jesus. God told particular people called prophets what was going to happen. Prophets listened to God in a special way. The prophets reminded the people of God's love and the great things God had promised to do.

God spoke to Isaiah and told him about what how we should act toward one another. "...share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them."

"If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday."

Questions:

- Last time we talked about kindness and mercy. This time God is more direct about how we are to act toward the poor and hungry. What do you think we can do? (Give children time to brainstorm, then help them to take action/follow up on one idea.)
- We have talked about light and darkness. When is the sunlight the brightest during the day? (Give children time to answer.) At noontime the sunlight is the strongest. God wants us to shine that bright by helping others.

Activities

We Bring Light When We...

Some people say that when we stand up for others, when we bring justice into the world, when we do the things that are in our scripture today (share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them,); we bring light into the world. Invite the children to create their own light by using the candle coloring sheet. Invite them to finish the sentence "I bring light into the world when I..." by either drawing or writing how they can bring light and justice into the world.

Cookie Kindness

To bring light into the world of other people who may be lonely or in need, decorate cookies for shut-ins or a feeding ministry in your church. Help the children make the connection between doing something nice for someone and how that can light up their life. Invite the children to frost and decorate sugar cookies. You may even want to let them add coloring to frosting and add sprinkles.

Note: Make sure the children wash their hands before beginning this activity.

Closure/Prayer Time: Dear God, I promise to shine your love for me and everyone today. Amen.

I bring light into the world when I...



This Week's Reading: Isaiah 58:1-9a(9b-12)

¹ Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. ² Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

³ “Why do we fast, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. ⁴ Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. ⁵ Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed to free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to and not to hide yourself from your own kin? ⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. ⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

(^{9b} If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. ¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. ¹² Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.)

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Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

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