

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Fifth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 11:1-45

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

He has been in the tomb for four days, Martha reminds Jesus. Yet Jesus stands before the tomb and cries in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" Then Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Where are we bound? What is keeping us from getting unbound?

Theme: Getting Free from What Keeps us Bound

Before Class: Is this a true story the children may ask? An answer is that Jesus healed a lot of people and at least three times he brought people back to life that were presumed dead. (Two other citations, if time permits, Luke 7:11-14, Luke 8:49-56.) The passage is, again, way too long for beginning readers to read in class. An option suggested is that Bibles be provided for each child to follow along as the teacher reads some parts, summarizes others, and invites the children to read some parts. Bring a few copies of the Book of Common Prayer.

Beginning: Tell the children that our story today is about Lazarus, who had died and who Jesus brought back to life. We do not know for sure why Jesus did this, but it may have been a way to help prepare his followers for the fact that Jesus himself would very soon die and would then show us the Resurrection.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, that you love us forever. Amen.

The Story: John 11:1-45 Tell the children that you will be summarizing some of the passage and they will be reading some parts of it. (See the script at the end of the lesson.)

Questions:

- What did Jesus find when he got to the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus? (Lazarus was in a tomb having been dead for 4 days.)
- When Jesus arrived, what did Martha say to Jesus? (Verse 21)
- What did Jesus answer her? (Verses 25b-26)
- How does Jesus' answer help Martha? (Verse 27: She is confident that Jesus is the Son of God, so she will trust him.)
- What does Mary say to Jesus when she gets to see him? (Verse 32, exactly the same thing Martha had said.)
- What does Jesus ask the people to do? (Verse 39)
- What does Martha warn Jesus? (Verse 39, last part)
- What does Jesus command Lazarus to do? (Verse 43)

- What happens next? (Verse 44a)
- What does Jesus command then? (Verse 44b)

Activity: Reporting the News Ask the children to identify the people to be interviewed, choose which one of them will be reporters, and then conduct the interviews. Make Bibles available for the children to check in with to help with forming the questions and deciding the answers. Watch the show when the children are ready to produce it.

Option: If the children want to talk about this passage and ask questions, make time for this to happen. Some concepts that might help: Perhaps Jesus brought Lazarus back from death to get his followers ready to accept that this is what Jesus would so very soon do as the crucifixion was very close. Perhaps it was to show that Jesus was not going to get bullied into being killed: he would let it happen. Perhaps Jesus is showing his followers that he is offering life now — not just resurrection. If time permits, show the children where the words in verse 25 appear in our funerals: (Book of Common Prayer, page 491)

Getting Closure: Ask the children to think about this: Maybe Jesus is asking us, right now, to notice the things that keep us all tied up and keep us from being who we really are. What are some of those kinds of things? (Worrying about whether we have the right clothes, trying to please a teacher rather than simply learning the subject, etc.)

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you want us to get ourselves untied and free to be who we are. Amen.

John 11:1-45 (Summary and Reading)

Tell the children that you will be summarizing some of the passage (*the italicized parts*) and they will be reading some parts of it. You will need three volunteers to help with verses 17-27 (Narrator, Martha, and Jesus) and a second set of readers to help with verses 38-45 (Narrator, Jesus, and Martha.)

Maybe you remember Mary and Martha? Martha was the one who was always busy, and Mary was the one who would take time to be quiet. Well, they had a brother, Lazarus. In those days women would not have been able to manage very well if there were not a man who could do the things that women were not allowed to do. Lazarus, their brother, got very sick. Jesus found out that Lazarus was very sick, but he finished up what he was doing and did not rush to their house. It would be dangerous to go to their house. The last time he was in that town people had tried to stone him. The disciples were worried about going back to this town, but Jesus wanted to help his friend.

Now, we are at verse 17. Let's have our first volunteer readers help us out.

Narrator: When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus,

Martha: 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.'

Narrator: ²³Jesus said to her,

Jesus: 'Your brother will rise again.'

Narrator: ²⁴Martha said to him,

Martha: 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.'

Narrator: ²⁵Jesus said to her,

Jesus: 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'

Narrator: ²⁷She said to him,

Martha: 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

Martha went back home and told Mary that Jesus had come and wanted to talk to Mary. When Mary got to Jesus, she burst into tears and said to Jesus: "If you had only been here, Lazarus

would not have died. I know you could have healed him.” Jesus felt so bad for Mary that he, too, was moved to tears.

Now, we need the three volunteers to read verses 38-45.

Narrator: Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said,

Jesus: ‘Take away the stone.’

Narrator: Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him,

Martha: ‘Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.’

Narrator: ⁴⁰Jesus said to her,

Jesus: ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’

Narrator: ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said,

Jesus: ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.’

Narrator: ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice,

Jesus: ‘Lazarus, come out!’

Narrator: ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them,

Jesus: ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’

Narrator: Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

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