

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Fourth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

In the early Church the Easter Vigil was the only time that baptisms were performed. The forty days leading up to Easter was used as a time of reflection, self-examination, and instruction for the catechumens, or new converts, in preparation for the new life they would receive at baptism. Lent has always been a teaching season. All the lectionary readings during Lent point towards baptism, either its promises and covenants, or its signs and symbols. Lent is often referred to as a short course in baptism or a primer of our Christian faith.

Notation for This Week’s Scripture

Once David is anointed with oil by Samuel, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him and he is empowered to speak for God as Israel’s king. The Hebrew word for one who is anointed as king or spokes person for God is “messiah.” The Greek word for the same title is “Christos.” This story connects to the baptismal themes of Lent by reflecting the baptismal rite of anointing the newly baptized person with oil. “You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ’s own forever.” [*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 308.] The Christian is given the gift of enlightenment through the Holy Spirit.

Theme: God Looks at our Heart

Before Class: Ask the priest or a member of the Altar Guild for some Holy Oil. Choose suitable music for game. Write names for Jesse’s sons, including David, on cards or cut construction paper. You will also need a paper crown, Holy Oil, something to play music on and CD or MP3 Player, and a picture of a horn of oil from a children’s Bible.

Continuing the Journey of Lent

Lenten Waiting Table

A wonderful visual reminder to the children would be to create a “Waiting Table.” A purple cloth covering a table, a box or even a ledge would provide the display space. At the beginning of the season you could plant grass seed in a basket to produce a “living Easter basket.” Other ideas include fast growing seeds or bulbs, and caterpillars. The message we convey is that growth takes time and nurturing, and although we can’t always see it we can trust that it is taking place.

Lenten Roadmap: A visual tool to help the children mark time is recommended. Some possibilities include a large paper cross with forty spaces marked off, a “road map” with forty spaces leading to Easter, and made or purchased Lenten calendars.

Lenten Giving

A jar or other container to collect Lenten offerings is a visual reminder of sacrificial giving.

Beginning: Announce that it is the Fourth Sunday in Lent, the season that helps us to be ready for Easter. Show the children where you are at on the Lenten calendar or time telling aid from the week before. Collect contributions for your mission project. Show the children the Holy Oil. Today we are going to find out how God chooses people for special jobs.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, help us to see each other through your loving eyes. Amen.

The Story: Some good words to know before we start:

- a horn of oil [show a picture from a children's Bible, usually a hollowed ram's horn]
- a sacrifice [something of value offered to the Lord such as new crops or an animal]
- anoint [to bless with oil]
- shepherd [person who takes care of flocks of sheep]

Some of you were babies when you were baptized. This is one of the things that happened.

Demonstrate the baptism rite calling each child by name, for example, "Sally you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." The priest did this to you when you were baptized. Let's see how Samuel uses oil to make a king.

Samuel was a judge among the Israel tribes. That meant he traveled from town to town helping the people worship God and settling their fights and problems. The people wanted a king like the other countries around them. They thought it would make Israel seem more important. God made Saul the first king. Saul was disobedient and let God down. God told Samuel to anoint a new king that God will choose. God told Samuel to go to Bethlehem to meet Jesse and his sons to find the new king. Samuel tells Jesse and the town elders that he is there to offer a sacrifice to God. Samuel invites them all to join him.

Each of Jesse's sons passes in front of Samuel. Each time Samuel thinks this must be the one God wants him to anoint king. Jesse's sons are strong and handsome. After each son, God says to Samuel, "No, this is not the one. You look at their appearance. I look into their hearts." Seven of Jesse's sons passed in front of Samuel. Samuel asked Jesse "Is this it? Do you have any more sons?" Jesse answered "Just my youngest son David. He is a shepherd out in the fields." Samuel said to send for him. When David arrived, he stood in front of Samuel. Then God said to Samuel, "This is the one. Get up and anoint him." Samuel took the oil from his horn and poured it on David's head. He did this with David's father and brothers watching. As soon as he anointed him the Spirit of the Lord came upon David and was with David from that day on.

Reflection Questions

- I wonder what Samuel thought of God's choice? In our Bible stories when God wants to get something done, God doesn't always choose the oldest, or biggest, or most important or experienced person. In fact God often chooses the person you would least expect. Can you remember the part of the story that shows us that?
- Do you ever feel too young, or unimportant to do God's work? Remember being anointed with the Holy Oil? When you were baptized that oil not only marked you as Christ's own but tells you that from now on God's Holy Spirit is with you, just like David. The Holy Spirit will make you brave and smart to help do God's work in the world.

Circle Game: God Chooses You

Make a circle. Choose a child to be Samuel. Start the music. Have the children walk clockwise. "Samuel" walks around the circle counter clockwise. He taps someone on the shoulder and says, "John, God chooses you to be his own." John takes Samuel by the hand. The two walk around the circle, and John chooses the next child and repeats the saying. This continues until the inner circle has become the outer circle. It would be good to point out at the end that no one is outside the circle of God's love.

Drama: Samuel Anoints a King

Choose a child to be Samuel. The teacher, or a child who is a good reader, is Jesse. Jesse has a set of six to seven cards with names on them. Jesse selects a child and walks him in front of Samuel saying, "Samuel, I present my son" [Jesse picks a name. It can be Biblical or other.] The element of surprise comes from not knowing when Jesse will say "David." After each other name Samuel says, "No you are not the one. God does not choose by looks. God looks into the heart." When a child is called David, Samuel says, "You are God's chosen one." He crowns the child and makes believe he is pouring oil on his head. David says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." This can be repeated so that many children get to be David.

Life Application: "Not Too Young To Help"

Remind the children that David was the youngest of the sons, just a young boy. Because the children have been empowered by the Holy Spirit they are never too young to help God. This means taking care of God's world and God's people. Depending on time and interest, the children can pantomime, with the other children guessing something they can do to help God. You might also choose to have them draw or just talk about this.

Closing: Have the children stand and stretch their arms up to the ceiling and then bow to the teacher to say thank you, and then to one another, as a way of thanking one another for the time together. Remind them to bring in their Lenten offerings next week.

Closing Prayer: Dear God thank you for this time to learn about you .You see into our hearts and You make us holy and special to serve you. Amen.

Lent Lesson Plans for Young Children written by Trudy Ardizzone.

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