

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

**Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14**

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**

Living in Babylon during the time of the Exile, Ezekiel’s visions and prophecies gave his fellow Israelites encouragement and support. He put the events of destruction and capture in a theological context, assured the people that God was still with them, and provided hope for return and restoration. The Book of Ezekiel is noted for its thorough chronological notations, vivid imagery, and beautiful prose and poetry. The Lectionary reading of Ezekiel connects to the Baptismal Rite’s forgiveness of sins and new life through baptism. “Heavenly Father we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and raised them to the new life of grace.” [*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 308]

**Theme: Prophets Bring Hope**

**Before Class:** Print out copies of Reader’s Theater (attached). Find photos of devastation and reconstruction. For this week, depending on which activities you choose, you may also need: Legos, building blocks, paper cups, coins or anything that can be stacked. Pipe cleaners to make skeletons.

**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 Fifth 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. Hold up a picture of destruction and then show a picture of restoration or rebuilding [ex. photo of the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and then one that shows rebuilding, or a city dump and then its transformation into a community garden.] Explain, “Today we are going to learn how God can fix broken places and people who hurt and make them feel whole and new again.”

**Opening Prayer:** Dear God, Breathe your Spirit into us so that we may have a new life with you. Amen.

**The Story:** God uses very special men and women to get His message to the people. We call these people prophets. Sometimes God speaks to them through words. Other times God sends the prophet visions or pictures in their imaginations. Ezekiel was one of God’s prophets. He had a wonderful imagination so God sent him many unusual pictures to show the story of what God was going to do next.

Ezekiel lived as an exile with the other people of Israel in a country called Babylon. The Israelites’ own country had been captured by a foreign army, and their homes and their temple were all knocked down. Being an exile meant that they had to live in this foreign place and they could not go home again. The people were sad and worried. They wondered if God knew where they were. They wondered if God could hear their prayers so far away from home. They wondered if their prayers counted if they didn’t say them in the temple. Ezekiel was also their priest. He tried to tell the people that God was with them wherever they were. They had been away for a long time. They were losing hope of ever going home again, of ever being a nation again. God sent Ezekiel a vision of a valley full of dry bones. God asked Ezekiel if the bones could live again. Ezekiel answered that only God knew that. God told Ezekiel to order the bones to get up. Ezekiel did as he was told. The bones started to come together, but there was no life in them. Then God asked Ezekiel to tell the winds to put the breath of life back into the bones. Ezekiel did as he was told and the bones stood up and came to life. God made Ezekiel understand, that just like this vision, God would put the nation of Israel back to life again. Ezekiel shared this message of hope with the people. Soon they were able to go home again.

**Reflection Questions:**

- Who can help you understand God’s words?
- Did you ever break something or mess something up? Who helped you fix it or clean it up? Did you ever feel sad or scared, and you didn’t know what to do about it?
- Do you think God would help you if you asked?

**Game: Knock ‘Em Down**

Hand out building blocks, Legos, paper cups, coins, or anything that can be stacked. Ask the children to build something. Select a child not likely to cry. Knock down his building. Say, “Oh, my bad behavior has destroyed your creation. Can it be fixed? Can it be put back together? Can it be restored? Can it be made new? I think I will need God’s help to fix this. God fill me with Your Holy Spirit so that I can make this whole again.” Then blow on it and rebuild it. Have the

children take turns. One child builds something. Another child knocks it down, prays for help, blows on the mess, and rebuilds it.

**Art: Where Is God?**

Draw a picture of where you think God is. Now put yourself into the picture. Post the pictures on a display board that says “God is Wherever We Are.”

**Art Activity: Dancing Skeletons**

Make skeletons out of pipe cleaners. Play “Them Bones,” or sing and make the skeletons dance. Children can dance with the skeletons.

**Puzzles**

Puzzles are good metaphors for taking some thing apart and putting it back together again [restoring it]. Use puzzles in the room, or make ones from poster board for the children from the sample. Say, “What was once all apart can become whole again with God’s help.” Instruct the children to say this when they have finished.

**Closing:** Have the children stand and stretch their arms up to the ceiling and then bow to the teacher to say thank you, 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 and your prophet Ezekiel. Help us always to welcome your Spirit inside us. Amen.”

*Lent Lesson Plans for Young Children written by Trudy Ardizzone.*

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