

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Palm Sunday
Lesson Plans for Older Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Isaiah 50:4-9a

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

Isaiah 50:4-9 is identified as the third Servant Song. Here the prophet, who was taught by God, faithfully delivers God’s message of comfort to his fellow Israelites, despite their cruel treatment of him. This passage’s placement in the Palm Sunday lectionary signals the harsh torture that awaits Jesus in the course of Holy Week.

Theme: Prophets and Role Models

Before Class: Write down some possible vignettes for Bullying activity. Other things you might need this week are: some palms or a palm cross, real or make-believe microphone, a robe or cape for the prophet. You will want to have Bibles or copies of the Isaiah passage for each child.

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: Comment on any changes that have taken place on the waiting table. We are now at the end of Lent. Today is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. We have completed our Lenten journey and are now ready to walk with Jesus through the last days of his life on earth. This is a week that starts with triumph as Jesus enters Jerusalem with all his followers hailing him as King of the Jews. During the week there will be great torture, pain, and suffering as Jesus

is put on trial and then crucified on the cross. As Christians we know the story ends in triumph again when Jesus resurrects from the dead on Easter morning. Can you imagine that we are reading the very same words that Jesus read?

Opening Prayer: Open our ears O Lord that we may be guided by your word. Amen.

The Story: Jesus loved the writings of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus liked to read them from the scrolls in the Temple whenever he had the chance. A prophet is someone who speaks God's word to the people. Jesus loved Isaiah's words about hope and peace and all the wonderful things God was going to do for the people when they were ready to follow God's ways.

At the time when Isaiah was doing his work as a prophet the Israelites had been taken captive and were living in exile in Babylon. To be in exile meant that you weren't allowed to go back to your homeland. Isaiah gave them hope that they would return home one day.

At the time when Jesus was doing his work on earth, the people of Israel were living under Roman rule. The Romans made the Israelites suffer through heavy taxes that left them poor and through harsh treatment. They had very few rights. Jesus preached a message of hope, of God's never-ending love for them, and a better world to come. In today's Bible reading Isaiah is being treated very badly by his people in spite of the good news he wants to share with them. Isaiah's training from God teaches him not to give up or try to get even. The same thing happens to Jesus when he is put on trial and put to death. Jesus loved his enemies even to the end.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder if any of us have ever felt picked on like Isaiah and Jesus. How did you respond?
- Who has learned in school about non-violence and the work of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.? Who do you think influenced them?
- I wonder if Jesus a role model for Gandhi and Martin Luther King?
- I wonder if Isaiah a role model for Jesus?
- I wonder who are your role models?

Drama: Announcers

Prophets sometimes serve in the role of announcer. Announcers tell the audience what is coming next. They need to do it in a way that keeps the people interested enough to stay tuned. Sometimes the prophets speak of bad things that might happen if the people don't change their ways. Sometimes they bring a message of hope about the good things God wants to do for his people. Pretend that you are a prophet announcer at the time of Jesus. Like the announcers you see on television, announce Jesus' arrival today in Jerusalem. Take turns.

Isaiah: The Anti-Bullying Prophet, Who Knew? Ask these questions, and listen very carefully to the answers without making any judgments. Give everyone a chance to speak,

1. Have you ever been bullied?
2. Have you ever witnessed someone being bullied?
3. Have you ever acted as the bully?

Let's look at our Isaiah passage to see if we can find some advice or strategies for handling bullies. Possible examples might include: ignoring them [turning your back], facing them head on, finding strength in God to stand up for our beliefs, standing together.

List the responses on a board or large sheet of paper.

Describe a couple of situations the children have already mentioned or might face. Let the children act them out, trying out new responses. Share their feelings about this afterwards.

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. Thank them for their Lenten offerings. Remind them where the money is going. Wish them a blessed Holy Week and remind them of special events and services at the church.

Closing Prayer: "Dear God thank you for this time to learn about you and your prophet Isaiah. Help us to hear and be guided by your word so that we may always do the right thing. Amen."

Isaiah 50:4-9a

⁴ The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
⁵ The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backwards.
⁶ I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

⁷ The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
⁸ he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
⁹ It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
All of them will wear out like a garment;
the moth will eat them up.

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