

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Palm Sunday
Lesson Plans for Younger 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: For this week which is Palm Sunday you will also need some palms or a palm cross, magazine pictures showing people who are troubled, sad or in distress, and paper cups and string for “Prophet Lines.” Take time to prepare magazine pictures by cutting away any excess wording. Make holes in bottoms of paper cups.

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 joy as Jesus enters Jerusalem with all his followers hailing him as King of the Jews. During the week there will be great sadness, pain, and hurt as Jesus is put on trial and then crucified on the cross. As Christians we know the story ends in joy again when Jesus rises from the dead on Easter morning. Can you imagine that today we are going to read 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' lives hard. The Romans made them pay too many taxes. This left them poor. The Romans treated the Israelites badly. They had very few rights. Jesus preached a message of hope, of God's never-ending love for the Israelites, and of 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?

Isaiah knew how to listen to God so that he would know the right thing to do. Open up your ears to listen to Isaiah's words. Read passage [Isaiah 50:4-9a]

Those are some good but hard words. Let's listen again and I will say it with words we use today:

God gave me the tongue of a teacher so that I could know how to make people feel better with my words.

Every day God tells me to open my ears, to listen and to pay attention to what God wants me to do.

I am obedient. I do what God tells me to do. I listen to God.

When people hurt me or make fun of me, I just ignore them.

I feel strong and proud because God helps me.

Lets all stand up together for what is right.

Let the people who are against us come. We are not afraid because God is with us.

The people who do bad things will get tired and give up.

God will give strength to those who listen to him.

Game: Bible Telephone

Let's play a game to help us practice listening to God's word. Pick a phrase from the reading such as "The Lord God has opened my ear." Have the children in a line or a circle. Whisper the phrase in to the first child's ear. Have him/her repeat it to the next child, and so on, until all have heard. Have the last child say the phrase out loud. Congratulate them for good listening if they got it right. If not, try again. Play again starting in a different spot with another phrase. If there is time the children might enjoy making phones with paper cups and string. Call them Prophet Lines. Help the children knot the string inside the bottom of each cup. The children can work in pairs to cut the cups and string.

Activity: Words of Comfort

Display the magazine pictures you have prepared, one for each child. Repeat these words, "God gave me the tongue of a teacher so that I could know how to make people feel better with my words."

Why the tongue of a teacher? So we can teach others by our good example.

Have each child choose a picture. Each child has to say something to the person or people in the photo to comfort them or make them feel better. Model this for them if needed. Support their efforts with out criticizing them. Tell them how happy this makes God when they speak kindly to each other.

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.

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