

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Second Sunday of Easter
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 20:19-31

“I have seen the Lord!” exclaimed Mary Magdalene. At first she does not recognize who is standing beside her. When she realizes it is the risen Jesus she wants to grasp him. He holds her off and tells her to go and share what has happened: He has walked through death and has created a path for us to follow, now and on through our own death.

In these 50 days of Easter, celebrating what Jesus has done for us, we are invited to recognize Jesus standing beside us, as he did with Mary. What is he calling us to do? Perhaps we can train our eyes to look in the direction that this Jesus, standing beside us is looking. What might he be looking at? Do we dare follow where he is leading? Can we notice and honor the various ways Jesus “appears” to people?

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

“Are we next?” In fear the disciples huddled behind closed doors. As they pray, Jesus is right there with them, empowering and commissioning them. Jesus honors Thomas’ need for authentication. At the same time, Jesus reaches out to us across the millennia: “Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe.”

Theme: Believing in Order to See

Before Class: If you met with this group last week, you may want to skip the first beginning activity. The first option honors the fact that the children you are working with are mostly thinking very concretely and want to know, “Is it true?” You will need either Bibles or copies of today’s passage.

Beginning: (recap of Holy Week and Easter) Did anyone here attend any of the services we had at our church for Holy Week? If so, what can you tell us about them? What parts were hard to understand? If you were trying to describe them to a classmate who is not a member of this church, how would you describe the services? What were we getting ready to celebrate on Easter?

Beginning: Tell the children that there are many things you know are true, but you cannot explain how they work. (Offer something that is true for you. For example, how WiFi works, how voices come through your telephone, how oxygen makes its way through our bodies, etc.) Ask the children to offer some things they know are true, but cannot explain.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of life and for life that goes on forever. Amen.

The Story: John 20: 19-31 Invite four people to read the following sections: vs. 19-23, vs. 24-25, vs. 26-29, and vs. 30-31.

Questions:

- I wonder why the disciples were huddling behind locked doors, “in fear of the Jews?” (The disciples were also Jewish but the “Jews” they feared were those few leaders who had agreed to the crucifixion of Jesus.)
- I wonder why Jesus greeted the disciples by saying “Peace be with you?” (Perhaps since that was the way he had always greeted them, they would know he was Jesus.)
- What did Jesus do to let the disciples see for themselves that he was really Jesus? (verse 20)
- Why would they have NOT recognized Jesus? (Evidently he looked different. In last week’s lesson, Mary Magdalene did not recognize him at first, in stories to come we will see others who did not recognize him right away.)
- Why was breathing on the disciples so important? (In their language the same word is used for breath and for spirit and even for wind. Look at Genesis 1:2)
- What does Jesus say that receiving the Holy Spirit prepares the disciples to do? (verse 23)

Option: Ask the children if anyone knows why we stop our service in the middle and walk around shaking hands. The explanation: The service has just offered people the opportunity bid one another the Peace. It is a time to ask God for forgiveness and at the same time to forgive people who have hurt us. The person we want to forgive, or ask for forgiveness, may not even be in the room, so we stand in for each other, shake each other’s hands, and say, “Peace be with you.” Suggest we sit in silence for a minute, remember something we need to ask God to forgive, and then stand and shake hands with each member of our group, saying, “Peace be with you.”

More Questions:

- Looking at the last part of our story, how does Jesus help Thomas to believe? (Verse 27)
- What does Jesus say about us who were not there? (Verse 29b)
- What else does Jesus tell us in verse 31 that he understands about how we believe? (We come to believe, which means we have our whole lives to continue growing in our belief.)

Activity: Divide the class in half in some arbitrary fashion. If the group is too small to divide, you participate in one of the halves. Tell one of the groups they are the disciples. The other group is reporters trying to understand what is happening. Give both groups a little time to plan either how they will respond to the reporters, or what questions they will ask as the reporters. Then let them begin the interviews. If time permits, have the groups switch roles so the ones that had been disciples are now reporters and visa versa.

Getting Closure: Ask the children who played disciples to tell how it felt to be interviewed. Then ask the reporters how it felt to ask the questions.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you love us and know we need time to grow into our faith. Amen.

John 20:19-31

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.²¹ Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.²⁵ So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’

26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’²⁸ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’²⁹ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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