

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Season after Pentecost, Proper 9
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel and Reading

Today's lesson comes from a section in Matthew where John the Baptist and Jesus are talking about what Jesus' ministry is going to be. John the Baptist had a different picture of what Jesus' ministry would bring to the world. People are comparing what John had said and what Jesus was doing and wondering about their ministry. We hear Jesus' response in our passage today. Jesus recognizes John's ministry and at the same time, he tells people that his ministry is different. John's ministry was filled with austerity (no food and drink) as it is a period of waiting and repentance, and Jesus' ministry is filled with celebration (eating and drinking) as it is the time of fulfillment. The final verses lead us to see that Jesus' ministry is also full of compassion and mercy.

Theme: My Yoke is Easy

Before Class: You will need two different translations of today's reading.

Beginning: Invite everyone to gather and paraphrase for them the Notation for This Week's Gospel so they can understand what comes before this and that Jesus is really framing his ministry in light of John's preparation and witness, even though it is different than what John thought it would be.

Opening Prayer: Loving God, we ask you to be with us as we explore what your words mean for our lives. Guide us as we seek to understand how you are to live and move among us. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

You will be reading the lesson today twice and will need two different readers. Think about having two very different voices read this such as male or female, young or old. Before reading the lesson the first time, invite people to listen for a word or phrase that stood out for them.

Invite the first reader to read the lesson.

After a few moments of silence, invite the group to say what word or phrase stood out for them.

When you feel everyone has shared, invite the group to listen once more and to listen for what Jesus is saying to them. Invite the second reader to read the lesson.

After a few moments of silence, invite the group to say what they heard Jesus saying to them.

After everyone has shared, you can begin with the questions or go to the activity.

Questions:

- I wonder what this Gospel stirs in us?
- I wonder what questions this Gospel brings up for us?
- One of Jesus' famous sayings is at the end of this Gospel, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." What does this mean for you? If they do not understand what a yoke is, tell them that it is a piece of wood that you put over your shoulders and attach heavy things (like buckets of water) to either side. It helps distribute the weight and make things easier to carry long distances. A yoke is also used to tie two animals together. (see Older Children's Lesson for illustrations)
- If this is part of Jesus' ministry, how are we also living into this as Christ's hands and feet in the world?
- I wonder how we are taking on Jesus' yoke?

Activity: Compare and Contrast

From what we know about John the Baptist and Jesus, I wonder how we can compare and contrast them to one another? Take some time to look at their birth, life, and ministry. Where are their ministries the same, where are they not, and where do they intersect?

Getting Closure: Invite them to share what stood out for them in our discussion today.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, help us understand how you work differently in the world and to see you in the celebration, compassion, and mercy we encounter. Help us to hear and see your messengers in our midst. Guide our ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet that we may engage in your mission in the world. Amen.

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Jesus said to the crowd, "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

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