

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Season after Pentecost, Proper 9
Lesson Plans for Older Children

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 Bibles or copies of the scripture for each child. You will need strips of cloth and markers. You will need two small/medium buckets filled halfway with water, rope, and a piece of wood or something else that can serve as a yoke to tie the buckets to for the children to carry. Since water may be spilled, you may want to do this outside. Alternatively, you could fill the buckets with something else that is heavy (rocks, bricks, etc.) but make sure it is not too heavy so they can lift them without getting injured.

Beginning: Gather the children ask them if they have ever carried anything really heavy. What did that feel like?

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 your ministry among us and how you can ease our burdens. Amen.

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

Invite someone to read the lesson for today. If you have time, you can read it from two different translations and note how they are different.

Questions:

- I wonder what you heard in today's lesson?
- I wonder if you know what Jesus meant when he said, "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."
- Do you know what a yoke is? (see picture)

Activity: Being Yoked

Ask the children if they have ever carried anything that is really heavy using just their hands. What happens to your hands when you are carrying something heavy? They get tired, cramped, sweaty, and blistered. Invite them to try to pick up the bucket filled with water (without the yoke) and carry it across the room. Ask them if they think they could carry it a long distance.



Then, attach the buckets of water to the yoke/board. Invite one of the children to try to carry that across the room. Was that easier or harder than just carrying the bucket alone?

A yoke is something that helps lighten our load and that helps us carry heavy things. In our reading today, Jesus said that "his yoke was easy and his burden was light."

- I wonder what that means.
- I wonder what it means that Jesus helps us carry our heavy burdens?
- How might Jesus help us do that?
- What burdens does Christ help us carry?

The stoles that a priest wears has the symbol of being yoked, reminding us of the burdens that Christ helps us carry. Give each child a strip of cloth to symbolize their yoke. Invite them to write or draw what things Jesus helps them carry.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share what they created.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, thank you for helping us carry our burdens and for showing us celebration, compassion, and mercy. 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."

Written by The Rev. Shannon Kelly

Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

© 2014 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.