

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Season after Pentecost, Proper 15
Gospel Lesson for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 15:(10-20) 21-28

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

As we continue the journey with Jesus and the disciples, we first get a lesson about what is clean and unclean. Jesus' words are important for us all to remember – that our words come from our heart and what comes from our mouths speaks of who we are and our intentions. Following this parable, Jesus encounters a woman from Tyre and Sidon who had somehow heard of his teaching and healing. She comes to him, speaking words from her heart, showing Jesus that she truly believes even though she is not from Israel. He heals her because of her deep faith.

Theme: Words from our Heart

Before Class: You will need the scripture for today. You will need half-sheets of construction paper in various colors, markers, and pencils.

Beginning: Invite the children to gather together in a circle. Ask them what it is like when someone says something nice – how do they feel? Then ask how they feel when someone says something that is not nice, is mean, or is unkind?

Opening Prayer: Loving God, we ask you to be with us as we explore what your words mean for our lives and what our words mean for others. Help us to grow in our belief and not be afraid to speak of your power and love. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 15:(10-20) 21-28

Invite two children to read the lesson. The first will read verses 10-20, the second will read vs. 21-28.

Alternatively, you can have many readers and follow the script found at the end of the lesson.

Reflection Questions:

There are two stories...first let us look at the story Jesus tells us.

- The Old Testament had MANY cleanliness rules, the rules about what one should eat and not eat, I wonder what the crowd's reaction was when Jesus said that it mattered not what they ate?
- I wonder if it made them confused or angry?

- Now that Jesus caught their attention, he now tells them what does matter – and that is our words. I wonder what he means by this? (possibly those who were say bad things and treat people horribly, but make sure they abide by all the rules in the Bible?)
- Do words matter for us today?
- How does what we say tell people about who we are?

The second part of the Gospel is the story about the Canaanite woman from Tyre and Sidon who comes to him begging Jesus to heal her daughter.

- At first, Jesus tries to ignore her because she is not from Israel. His response is confusing because he does not speak to her, nor does he send her away. What might this be about? (Might he be using this moment as a teaching tool? As a way to hear the words from her heart – the same words he was just telling others about in his teaching? Might he want to know what she has to say?)
- The woman kneels before Jesus, just as people knelt before kings and royalty, showing that she recognizes his power and that she needs his help. He tries to turn her away. Why do you think he tried to turn her away? (He wanted to focus on his mission to the people Israel.)
- When she persists and shows her deep faith. She tells him that even if she only has a crumb, the smallest amount of possible, that her daughter will be healed. What does this say about her belief in Jesus' power? (even the smallest amount could take on a demon, her faith in his power was strong.)
- Jesus praises her faith and heals her daughter. This woman was brave for standing up to Jesus and showing him her faith. I wonder how we can show our faith in the same way today.
- I wonder how the words that come from our hearts are showing our faith in Jesus.

Activity: Showing our Words

Invite the children to brainstorm what they might say to Jesus to show them what was in their hearts. If our hearts reveal who we are and our words come from our hearts, what do they have to say to Jesus? Give them time to respond and brainstorm.

Give the children the half-sheets of construction paper you have cut out and invite them to write words or draw pictures that tell about what their heart would say to Jesus. What words would they use if they were kneeling before Jesus?

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share what they came up with and take their papers home as a reminder of the power of using words to profess our faith and our love to one another.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, help us to not be afraid as we encounter you in the paths of our lives. Guide our ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet that we may engage in your mission in the world. Amen.

Script for Matthew 15:(10-20) 21-28

Narrator: Then Jesus called the crowd to him and said to them,

Jesus: “Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.”

Narrator: Then the disciples approached and said to him,

Disciples: “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?”

Jesus: “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.”

Narrator: But Peter said to him,

Peter: “Explain this parable to us.”

Jesus: “Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.”

Narrator: Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting,

Woman: “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.”

Narrator: But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying,

Disciples: “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.”

Jesus: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Narrator: But she came and knelt before him, saying,

Woman: “Lord, help me.”

Jesus: “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.”

Woman: “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

Jesus: “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

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