

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Season after Pentecost, Proper 17
Gospel Lesson for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 16:21-28

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

"From that time on..." this phrase signifies a shift in the Gospel of Matthew. After last week's lesson where Peter professes that Jesus is the Messiah, we turn this week to Jesus getting down to business telling them what that means. Being the Messiah doesn't mean that he is above anyone, but rather that he is one who is living out what he has been professing in his teachings, miracles, and parables. Peter does not want to believe that this is possible and wants to save him from this. Jesus reprimands him, saying that even though he had professed him as Messiah, he clearly doesn't understand what that will mean.

Theme: Stumbling Blocks

Before Class: Set up your altar area with a green cloth, cross, and candle. You will need copies of the script below for today's reading. If you are going to do the Stumbling Block activity, you will need copies for each child and pens or markers. If you are doing the Leaving Behind activity, you will need a box, paper, pens or markers.

Beginning: Invite the group to gather together. Invite them to think about what it would have been like to be Peter, the disciple who "got it" in last week's Gospel and professed Jesus as the Messiah? What would come after that?

Opening Prayer: Loving God, we ask you to be with us as we explore who you call us to be as your disciples. Help us to grow in our belief and understand what being your disciple truly means each day. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 16:21-28

You will need three readers today for each of the parts in the script below.

Reflection Questions:

- "From that time on..." is how the reading begins today. This marks a shift from Jesus' teaching ministry, to him telling the disciples over and over again what is to come. If you were hearing all of the things that Jesus is telling the disciples would happen, what do you think your reaction would be?

- After getting it so right last week, I wonder why Peter gets it so wrong this week? (While Peter understands that Jesus is the Messiah, he still does not understand fully what that means. He probably is also shocked to hear what his mentor and teacher is telling him.)
- Now, instead of being a rock, Peter is a stumbling block. What do you think Jesus meant by this? (Peter is worried about things of this world and not the things of heaven. If he keeps this up, he will not be following the way Jesus had taught him.)
- I wonder what might be stumbling blocks for us? I wonder what gets in the way of us following Jesus?
- Jesus tells us that if we want to follow him, we must lose our lives in order to save them. I wonder what this might mean? (In order for us to really follow Jesus, we have to stop worrying about earthly things and instead focus on following God and what God is calling us to do.)
- What might you have to leave behind in order to more fully follow Jesus?

Activity: Stumbling Block

Pass out the sheets of paper with the block printed on them. Invite the group to write down those things that they stumble over, those things that might get in the way of their walk with God. Once they have had some time to do this, call them back together.

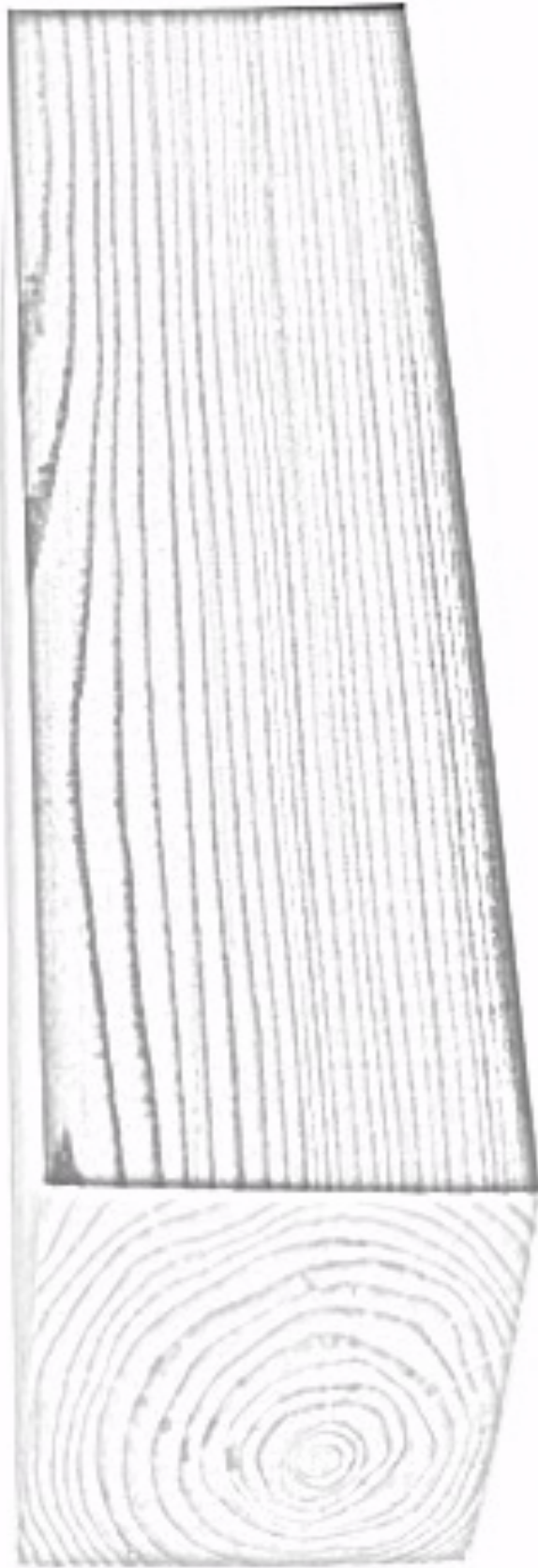
Activity: Leaving Behind

Brainstorm with the children what things they might have to leave behind in order to follow Jesus more fully. (worries about money, about having the right clothes, fitting in, etc.) Discuss with them – is this easy or hard to leave things behind to focus more on God? (it is hard, the disciples had a hard time and so did Jesus followers) The good news is that God gives us all the chances we need and we can keep trying.

Invite them to take a sheet of paper and list all of the things they want to leave behind in order to follow God more closely. Once they are done, invite them to leave them in the box that is on one side of the room and walk to the altar area to symbolize their movement away from those things and toward God.

Getting Closure: Invite the group to share one thing that they wrote on their stumbling block or what they chose to leave behind (if they choose to share.) Then, invite them to tear up the papers, reminding them that these are only stumbling blocks because we make them into stumbling blocks. Invite them into prayer.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, help us not to stumble over earthly things that can get in our way and when we do stumble, help us to get back up and continue our journey with you just as Peter did. Guide our ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet that we may engage in your mission in the world. Amen.



Matthew 16:21-28

Narrator: From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying,

Peter: “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.”

Narrator: But he turned and said to Peter,

Jesus: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Narrator: Then Jesus told his disciples,

Jesus: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

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