

Lesson Plans That Work
Year A –All Saints’ Day
Gospel Lesson for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

This section of Matthew, known as the Beatitudes, is a type of inaugural address for Jesus. These words are not a wish, or a dream, but a statement of what the Kingdom of Heaven is, and of how we should begin to treat one another now. The Beatitudes in Matthew are statements that tell us about the Kingdom of God that is coming and the Kingdom of God here on earth. In pronouncing these, Jesus is once again turning the norm on its head, and reminding us that the Kingdom of God is different. These declarations orient life toward the other, toward equality, toward discipleship and toward love. Those, who follow Jesus, are to be different.

So why do we read these on All Saints’ Day? The nature of the Kingdom of Heaven is that it is already-and-not-yet. They state the character of God and ask if this is the character of God, should it not also be the character of the people of God? The saints are people who understood this and lived into this character in a variety of ways. The saints give us an understanding of what it looks like to have God in our midst, and to live a life with the Beatitudes as a part of our being.

Theme: Blessed Saints

NOTE: Since today’s lesson is about Saints, you may want to read over some of the more popular and important saints for your parish. Is your parish named after a saint? Make sure to have the backstory on that saint. There are small bios of each saint below to help you with this, but there is lots of information on saints that can be found on the Internet as well as in books. Your parish priest may have a dictionary of saints if you do not have one in the classroom.

Supplies needed:

Option 1: *Saints’ Shields*

Copies of the shield templates, and art supplies for decorations.

Option 2: *Saints’ Prayer Chain*

Strips of different colored construction paper, markers, staplers, and tape.

Before: Make sure you have the copies of the things that you need. Have the strips of paper for prayer chains cut ahead of time. Lay out all the materials. To help the children prepare, you may want to hang pictures of saints around the room for them to learn about as they arrive.

Beginning: Welcome the children into the room, and have them sit, in your gathering area. Ask them whom they look up to in their lives. Who do they know that does a good job living how Jesus taught us? Which saints do they know?

Opening Prayer: *There are two prayers below from which to choose. The first is a simplified version of the Collect of the Day. The second is the Collect as it appears on page 245 of the Book of Common Prayer.*

Almighty God, you have brought us together in relationship with all who follow you: Help us to follow you the way the saints did so we can know your love and feel deep joy as they did. Amen.

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God in glory everlasting. Amen

The Story: Matthew 5:1-12

In the Bible, we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us. They eat and sleep, and go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories, we learn that God's plan is for each of us too.

Invite the children to each read one of the sentences of the passage today. It is broken up into twelve readers (see script below) and if you don't have that many, you can read the extras or have them continue around the circle until you reach the end.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what Jesus meant by all of these statements.
- I wonder what the people Jesus was talking to thought of these statements.
- I wonder what these statements might say to us.

Introduction:

All Saints' Day is a day to talk about saints we know because they are saints in the church, and saints who are in our own faith community. Today is a day to celebrate all those who have shown us the way of faith, the way of Christ, and the way toward God. Ask the children questions like:

- Who are saints that you know? (could be saints of the church or saints in their lives)
- Who are the saints in your faith community?
- Who are the saints in your family?
- What makes someone a saint?

Saints' Shields

Invite the children to make saints' shield of a saint that they know, a saint in their family or a saints' shield for themselves. Saints' Shields are usually simple with one or two things on them. "A Small Sampling of Saints" is included in the Downloads for this lesson and here you will find some examples of shields. You can show them these pictures, and help them discover how they would like to make their shield. There are also three different shield outlines that may be useful.

Creating a Saints' Prayer Chain

Invite the children to write prayers of thanksgiving to saints past and present. Have them share some of them or if you are going into church after your time together, see if there is a way to put the prayer chain either on the altar or in a place where it can be seen.

(Check with the priest ahead of time.) See if the children can bring it up at prayer time or at the offertory.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to clean up their space and gather in a circle. Invite them to share what they have created.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, we thank you for our time together today. Thank you for all we have learned from saints past and present. Help us to remember that we are part of the communion of saints, and are to help bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Amen.

Matthew 5:1-12

Reader 1: When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Reader 2: Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

Reader 3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Reader 4: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Reader 5: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

Reader 6: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Reader 7: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

Reader 8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

Reader 9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Reader 10: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Reader 11: "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."

Reader 12: Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

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