

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 1:21-28

Background

Epiphany means several things: a gift is received; the gift must be shared. Jesus appears to be suggesting a rhythm, a balance to our lives. We go inward to be with God, to receive; we go out in the world to share what we have been given – still with God. We are called to balance the pouring out of our love with the resting in God. We are called to heal by just showing up, by laying on hands, by sharing what we have. This good news that was for the few people who heard it up close and personal is ours because they reached out and shared it. It will belong to those who have not yet heard, if we accept our call to share the story by how we live out our lives and as St. Francis said, “with words, if necessary.”

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Who is this man? He now has a little band of raw recruits – eager to serve yet largely clueless. Does Jesus send them off to school? No. He shows them. He models the behavior that will form disciples. He teaches with authority. He is right where they are – not way over their heads. He heals when he notices it is needed. Who he is speaks powerfully: as one with authority.

Theme: Who is this Jesus?

Before Class: You will need copies of the script below for the children, and you will also need strips of paper (a sheet of regular copy paper cut in strips about 2 inches high), and pencils.

Beginning:

As the children gather, ask them how their week was. Ask what they learned this week.

Once everyone is there, ask them to help you brainstorm the different ways in which we learn and write them up on a sheet of easel paper or white board. (We learn by following an example, watching someone else, reading or following instructions and rules, through our experiences, seeing something, reading, etc.) Keep this in mind as we enter into the story.

Opening Prayer: Help us, God, to figure out what you call us to do. Amen.

Option: Before you read the passage, you may choose to tell the group that in this passage there is a man with “an unclean spirit” and discuss what they think this means. You can tell them that at that time people had no concept of viruses or even germs, of mental illness, nor of many diseases now recognized, such as Hodgkin’s disease, cerebral palsy, etc. If a person was incapacitated, people assumed the person had an “unclean spirit.”

The Story: Mark 1: 21 – 28 You will need volunteers to read the parts: Narrator, the man possessed by an “unclean spirit”, Jesus, all the rest of the class. (see script below)

Reflection Questions:

Verses 21 – 22

- What is a synagogue and why did Jesus and his disciples go there? (The synagogue was the temple where Jewish people worshipped. Jesus and his disciples were Jews.)
- What kind of teaching did people expect from the “scribes”? Scribes are those who had spent huge amounts of time studying the scriptures to be sure they understood all the laws. (Do’s and Don’ts.)
- What do we think it means that Jesus “taught them as one having authority”? (He taught from God, and only God. He obviously understood a bigger picture and he was able to explain it in ways to help them “get it.”)

Verses 23 – 28

- How does Mark describe what was wrong with the man in verse 23? (The man had an “unclean spirit.”)
- What do we think might have been wrong with the man? (Accept whatever the children come up with. See the “option” note above about how you may want to explain/discuss this.)
- What did Jesus do? (He silenced him and sent the unclean spirit away.)

Discussion and Activity: Ask the children if this sounds familiar: You are starting on your homework and all of a sudden you think: “I can’t do this – it is just too hard.” Ask them what other kinds of ‘not good’ thoughts cause us to lose confidence in our abilities.

Give each child a strip of paper and invite them to write some of these messages that they receive (or that they tell themselves). Let them know that no one will read these messages. After a few minutes, invite them to fold them up and place them in a large bowl near the teacher.

Read verse 25 again. Ask the children to come up with their own words to describe what Jesus would want us to do about negative thoughts. What might we say? (Something like: “Jesus wants you outta here!”)

Take the strips of paper that they just placed into the bowl and begin ripping them up using the words that are in the scripture or the words that the children came up with reminding them that God is taking these thoughts away from them. Jesus takes these words and these feelings from us, wanting us to be whole.

Then, invite the children to take a different strip of paper and cover it with a statement or many statements of positive thoughts – in their own words – to take home with them. They can decorate the strip if they want. Make one for yourself.

Getting Closure: Ask the children ways they can remember that Jesus wants us to be well, both in our bodies and in our thoughts. Suggest that they take these strips of paper with positive thoughts and tuck them into a book or put them in their wallets.

Closing Prayer. Thank you, God, for helping us to stop putting ourselves down. Amen.

Mark 1:21-28

Narrator: They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out,

Person with an Unclean Spirit: ‘What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.’

Narrator: But Jesus rebuked him, saying,

Jesus: ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’

Narrator: And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another,

All: ‘What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.’

Narrator: At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

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