

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 1:40-45

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

The rhythm extends to include proclaiming the new while honoring the tradition. Good News does not eliminate the nurturing liturgies already in place. A leper comes to Jesus, humbly and almost apologetically. The leper is confident Jesus has the ability to heal him, and he is pretty sure he is not worthy of this healing. Jesus proceeds to dispatch the illness that has made this man not only ill, but outcast. Jesus does not measuring worthiness, but he does honor the tradition. "Go," he tells the man. Go to the priest, make the offering, and also, keep all this to yourself.” But of course, the man is unable to keep this good news to himself, and Jesus would henceforth be mobbed whenever he came to town.

Theme: I Do Choose

Before: You will need copies of the Bible and *The Book of Common Prayer* available.

Beginning: We have been considering the two-faceted theme of Epiphany: receiving so we can give; giving and in return receiving. We have seen calling forth and reaching out. Jesus’ action of healing and then contemplative rest. Today we see, in addition to all this, bringing the new without tossing out the tradition.

Creating the Setting: What might be a 21st century equivalent of leprosy? Note that in AD 30 people thought leprosy was highly contagious and totally incurable. Once you come to a decision as to what that disease might be, keep that in mind as we read the passage for today.

Opening Prayer: For all those in our community who, for whatever reason, have come to be seen as outcasts, soften our hearts and show us ways we can choose to help. Amen.

The Scripture: Mark 1:40-45 Invite volunteers to read the three parts: the leper, Jesus, and the narrator. When you have finished, invite the person who read the part of the leper to read it once more and the person who read the part of Jesus to read that once more.

Reflection Questions:

- What impressions, images, thoughts, and concerns came to you as you heard these words?
- Collectively, let's take the part of the leper. Getting inside his brain, what was the "No way!" part of his brain saying? What was the "Let's risk it" part arguing back? What do you think got him the courage to approach Jesus?
- With Jesus, notice the empathy. What level of risk did Jesus think he was taking to touch the man?
- Why do you think Jesus complied with the temple rules and ordered the man to go show himself to a priest?
- Jesus gave the man two commands. Did he respond to both? Neither? Just one? Why do you think he did what he did?

Getting Closure: What might have happened to our efforts at evangelism if instead of being told to go tell everyone, we were told to tell no one? Good news has a way of getting out. What Good News are we telling or showing the world?

Closing Prayer: Pp. 823-825 of *The Book of Common Prayer* have prayers that are appropriate. Engage the class in choosing one to close with, and ask them to read the prayer along with you.

Mark 1:40-45

Narrator: A leper came to Jesus begging him, and kneeling he said to him,

Leper: “If you choose, you can make me clean.”

Narrator: Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him,

Jesus: “I do choose. Be made clean!”

Narrator: Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him,

Jesus: “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Narrator: But the man who had been healed went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

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