

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

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 Class: You will need paper and crayons or markers for each child. If your children are not writers yet, you may want to make enough copies of the “please” and “thank you” pages below so that each child gets one of each.

Beginning: Today's story is about Jesus healing a leper. The word "leper" will get you way off track with children who know nothing of leprosy and much about an elegant wild animal. We suggest you use only the word leprosy - and describe it.

Praying: Thank you, God, for this time we have together today. Please help us learn about your love and remember to be thankful for what you give us. Amen.

The Story: Mark 1:40-45 Today we have a story about Jesus teaching us to say, "Please," and then not to forget to say, "Thank you." In this story, a man who has a yucky disease comes to Jesus. The man has leprosy, a disease that makes your skin get all gross and nobody wants to be anywhere near you.

The man is pretty sure Jesus can heal him, but he is not sure Jesus will want to heal him. He gathers up his courage anyway and says, "I'm sure you can heal me, and I sure want you to. Would you please heal me?"

Jesus heals the man. The man is so happy he's about to race off and tell all his friends. "Hold it," Jesus says. "You need to do something first. Go to the priest. Tell the priest you are glad and that since you are glad you want to give something back. And one more thing: don't tell anyone about this!"

Well, he said please. And he said thanks. But he forgot all about the secret and went and told everyone he knew.

Please and Thank You: Give each child a piece of paper. If they can write, show them the two words to put at the top of the paper: "Please" on the left side and "Thank You" on the right side. Then ask them to draw pictures of things they would like to ask God to do for them. (Is someone they know sick, for example?) Then draw pictures of things they want to thank God for. (Their house, pets, parents, or whatever they come up with.)

Act it Out: If time permits, you may want to let the children act out the story, taking turns being Jesus and the man with leprosy.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share their please and thank you pages with each other.

Closing Prayer: Ask the children to help you notice things we want to say please about and things we want to say thank you about and then pray with them about these things.

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Please

Thank You

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Lesson Plans for Older Children

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Background

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Theme: I Do Choose

Before Class: You will need copies of the script found at the end of this lesson and copies of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

One of the suggested activities in this lesson plan is an outreach project. Be sure to find support for this before presenting it to the children. If there is an outreach committee in your church, perhaps they could help you find a project that would welcome the children's participation.

Beginning: Does anyone know anything about the leprosy? If not, explain to the children that it was a common disease in the time of the Bible, and since ways to treat it had not yet been found, it was feared that it might be contagious, so people with the disease were kept apart from others. Today's story is about a man who had this disease and who came to Jesus for help.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for listening to us, helping us, and loving us. We will listen to hear what you have for us in our story for today. Amen.

The Story: Mark 1:40-45 Invite children to read the different parts: the leper, Jesus, and the narrator.

Reflection Questions:

- What might have been going through the mind of the leper when he could see that Jesus would cross his path?
- What do you suppose gave him the courage to speak to Jesus?
- Get inside the leper's head and think of some of the things he might have considered saying to Jesus, before he came up with what he did say.
- What do you think the leper expected Jesus to say to his request?
- Why does the Bible say Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the leper?
- What risk was Jesus taking in doing this?
- Notice the words Jesus uses.
- What two things did Jesus tell the leper to do?
- Did the leper do them?
- Why do you think the leper did not keep his healing a secret? (Could he? His disease was so obvious before and now it was gone!)

Act it Out: Invite the children to act out the story, give each child a chance to play the role they want. The children that are not one of the main parts can play the crowd around Jesus and imagine what their reaction may have been.

Helping Others: We do not have the skills or the resources to go out and cure leprosy, but is there anything else that our community needs that we could help with? Is there anything here at our church such as a soup kitchen we could help with, food for the hungry we could sort and package, toiletries we could collect for a homeless center, or toys we could gather for a shelter? Perhaps we could get information about Episcopal Relief and Development on their website (<http://www.episcopalrelief.org>) to help needy children.

Brainstorm with the children and come up with some ideas. It might be good to have a simple outreach project for them to do in class that day as well as think of an ongoing project you can all do together.

Getting Closure: Think about a time when you were given a gift that you were excited about. How did that gift change your life? How did you use it? Did you have to tell someone about it or show it off? Who gave you the gift? Does that person know how much you like it? Is it possible to say thank you to that person again? What would you say?

Closing Prayer: Invite the children to select a prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer*, perhaps prayer 36 on p. 826. Or, they may find another prayer they want to use. Pray together.

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

Scripture: Mark 1:40-45

Background

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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

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