

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Fourth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 3:14-21

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Jesus patiently prepares his followers for what is to come. Jesus is to be "lifted up" so that he may then lift up all of us. The light has come into the world – a light some will seek at all costs. For others, the darkness is preferable to the penetrating brightness of the light. God reaches out to all of us, sending the Son into the world so that all might be saved through him. We do not know what the disciples made of this revelation. Our concern is what we make of it and what re-alignment we may be called to make.

Theme: Come to the Light

Before Class: Be aware that some children may not be with you every Sunday through Lent and may also be watching television programs that present the events of Holy Week. As you talk with children, give them opportunities to ask questions.

Beginning: Tell the children that Jesus knows that soon he will have to do something very hard and now he wants to teach his friends. He spends much of his time teaching.

Praying: Thank you for sending Jesus to show us what you want us to know. Amen.

The Story: Jesus is trying to help the people understand that God loves us – all of us. And God wants us to be sure we know we are loved by God. That is why God sent me, says Jesus. Now that you hear me telling you that God loves you -- you will know it is true. We will also know that God is not just sitting there waiting for us to get in trouble. God wants to help us stay out of trouble. Listen to what Jesus said: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." God loves us so much that he gave us Jesus. Jesus is the light of the world for us to follow.

For God So Loved: You may choose to give each child a piece of paper with these words on it:

For God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son.

The children may illustrate the words and take the sheet of paper home with them. If you want them to memorize the words, you could ask the children to repeat the phrase with you a few times, then sit in a circle and whisper it around the circle.

Come to the Light: Invite the children to create pictures or an piece of art that reflects where they see “the light” or God in the world today.

Cross: Some children may want to continue sanding the cross.

Outreach: If you are doing an outreach project, revisit the activities for it.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share what they created. You could say: “Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord.” What comes next? (“Thanks be to God.”) Or if I say “The Lord be with you,” what comes next? (“And also with you. Let us pray.”)

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for helping us learn how to love and serve you. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Fourth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 3:14-21

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Jesus patiently prepares his followers for what is to come. Jesus is to be "lifted up" so that he may then lift up all of us. The light has come into the world – a light some will seek at all costs. For others, the darkness is preferable to the penetrating brightness of the light. God reaches out to all of us, sending the Son into the world so that all might be saved through him. We do not know what the disciples made of this revelation. Our concern is what we make of it and what re-alignment we may be called to make.

Theme: Come to the Light

Before Class: You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for you and the children, paper (or the journals), and pencils or pens.

Beginning: Ask the children the name of the season we are in (Lent). Ask them what Good Friday is about. What is Easter about?

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for loving us so much. Thank you for being so patient with us. And thank you for Jesus. Help us to follow him. Amen.

The Story (John 3:14-21): Ask the children to find the passage in the Bible or hand out the copies of the scripture. Tell them they can follow along as you read the passage, but to read verse 16 together.

Reflection Questions:

- Jesus knows that Good Friday and Easter are soon to come. It's important for children to see the two events as being connected. If they are not sure what to say, remind them that on Good Friday Jesus dies on the cross and everyone thinks the story is over, but on Easter, they see that Jesus is resurrected and will show us the way to be with Jesus even after we die.
- What is Jesus telling the people when he says, "the Son of Man must be lifted up?" (That he will be resurrected and bring all of us with him – in time.)

- Jesus talks about darkness. Who likes to be in the dark? (People who are doing stuff they should not be doing.)
- What happens in the light? (Everyone can see what is happening.)
- What happens when we do "what is true" – when we choose to follow Jesus? (The light of Jesus shines on us and helps us to do what we are supposed to do.)
- I wonder where you see light or Jesus' love in the world today?

Prayers: If you are working on prayers this Lent, a type of prayer for today could be "Obedience."

Obedience means doing what we are supposed to do, doing the very best we can. It is not about getting an "A" but about faithfully doing the homework. It may not mean getting the soccer goal, but it is about showing up for practice and for the game. Ask the children to share how they might be obedient in their lives.

Another way of looking at obedience is to look at the prayer of oblation (BCP p. 857). "Oblation is an offering of ourselves, our lives and labors, in union with Christ, for the purposes of God."

Invite the children to write prayers about obedience and oblation. You can do this as a whole group, working in pairs, or individually.

Come to the Light: Invite the children to create pictures, poems, or an piece of art that reflects where they see "the light" or God in the world today.

Project: If you are working on a Lenten project in conjunction with the rest of the parish, talk about what is happening.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to either share the "light" creation they made or to share the prayers they wrote.

Closing Prayer: Close with the prayers the children composed. Or pray: "Thank you, God, that you so loved the world that you gave us your only Son. Amen."

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Fourth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 3:14-21

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Jesus patiently prepares his followers for what is to come. Jesus is to be "lifted up" so that he may then lift up all of us. The light has come into the world – a light some will seek at all costs. For others, the darkness is preferable to the penetrating brightness of the light. God reaches out to all of us, sending the Son into the world so that all might be saved through him. We do not know what the disciples made of this revelation. Our concern is what we make of it and what re-alignment we may be called to make.

Theme: Come to the Light

Before Class: You will need Bibles for each person. You might check with your church office if you are not aware of special prayer requests in your church. You will need paper and art supplies if you are doing the optional activity.

Beginning: Ask the group if there are special needs anyone wants to bring to this group for prayer. You may wish to include prayers you know have been requested.

Remind the class that this is the Fourth Sunday of Lent, and we are more than halfway through Lent. In some churches, this Sunday is taken a bit more lightly.

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, we come before you today, open to hear your word and explore what it says to us today. We offer special prayers for (Pray for those needs requested and thank God for inviting us into prayers of intercession.) Amen.

The Scripture (John 3:14-21): To make it easier to follow, you could break the Scripture into these units, taking turns reading the verses: verses 14-15; verse 16; verses 17-18; verses 19-21. If time permits, take a minute or two to reflect and then read the passage again, from the beginning – perhaps this time with just one voice.

Reflection Questions:

- Jesus knows that time is at a premium and he has so much he wants to teach. Has anyone here had the experience of knowing that the person you want to talk with may well be leaving before you can say all you want to say? What is it like to be in such a situation?
- Many of us have heard John 3:16 in a variety of contexts or seen the verse all by itself. Where have you seen or heard it? "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."
- I wonder what you think John 3:16 means?
- Jesus speaks of light and darkness right after John 3:16. How do you think these two fit together?
- Remembering the hints of a new order that we saw in last week's lesson, what signs of darkness giving way to light can we find? (From condemnation to saved through Jesus; people with the clear choice: darkness or light – those whose deeds are evil and those who do what is true.)
- "...light has come into the world..." Where do you see light today?

Optional Activity: Invite the participants to take a piece of paper and draw, write, or illustrate in some way where they see light or Jesus in the world around them today.

Getting Closure: Invite the participants to share what they did during the Activity time. If you don't have time to do the activity, invite them to talk about those things that bring them light or show them the love of God.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for your unconditional love pouring out on us and on those we love. Amen.

John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

"And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

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