

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

Scripture: John 12:20-33

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 continues the preparation of his followers. The hour has almost arrived for "the Son of Man to be glorified." Whatever could he mean, his disciples wonder? So Jesus selects a concrete image, one they will all have experienced: a grain of wheat – apparently lifeless – yet falling into the earth and dying, bears much fruit. The paradox: those who love their life lose it. Whoever serves Jesus, must follow Jesus. And as Jesus accepts what is to come, the voice again is heard. The crowd thinks it is thunder, the disciples perhaps hear God assuring Jesus that God is being glorified by Jesus. And once again Jesus assures us that when he is lifted up from the earth he will draw all people to himself. The disciples shook their heads. We are still unpacking the power of this message.

Theme: Bearing much Fruit

Before: You will need copies of the scripture, paper, pens or pencils, and supplies for planting seeds such as egg crates cut up or plant containers, potting soil, seeds, and water.

Beginning: Tell the children that Jesus is, again, trying to help his disciples understand what Jesus now knows is going to happen. Tell them Jesus has just a little time left to finish training them. Tell them we are going to read today's passage together and then do a TV-type interview.

The Story (John 12:20-33): Ask the children to help you find the passage. Either invite children to read the passage, or you read it as they follow along.

Reflection Questions:

Suggest that the children take parts to act out a conversation between disciples who heard Jesus during this passage and disciples who were not there and are trying to figure out what happened. This is a very abstract passage, so carrying on a conversation may help children get a picture of what we believe about this passage.

To try to figure out what is going on, ask the children to choose who is going to be a disciple who heard and who is going to be one asking questions. (It doesn't matter if there is an unequal

number of disciples and questioners.) The "disciple" children can read the words of Jesus and you can help the others form questions.

Disciples: Verse 12: 23.

Others: What does Jesus mean: "glorified." (None of these people were sure what that might mean. They will after Easter.)

Disciples: Verse 24.

Others: We know what happens when you plant a seed in the ground. (Share experiences of a garden or a project at school with seeds.)

Disciples: Verse 25.

Others: Do we really have to "hate" our life, or could it mean that we choose to follow Jesus and not spend all our time thinking about ourselves?

Disciples: Verse 26

Others: What kinds of things are we doing as "servants" of Jesus? How are we following where Jesus wants us to go?

Disciples: Verse 27.

Others: Is Jesus really okay with what God is asking him to do?

Disciples Verses 28 and 29.

Others: Are you pretty sure it was NOT just thunder? (Help us remember other times we have heard that sound such as at Jesus' baptism and at the top of the mountain.)

Disciples Verse 32.

Others: How is Jesus going to be "lifted up?" (None of the disciples really understands - yet. That will happen on Easter. And, Jesus said he will draw "all people" to himself - what do we think that means?)

Planting Seeds: As an illustration of the "planting a seed in the ground," invite the children to plant seeds and then talk about the difference between a seed and the plant that it grows into.

Intercessory Prayer: If you have been working on types of prayer, today you could consider "intercessory prayer," which means praying for others. When we pray for others we are not doing something magic. We are doing something obedient. God uses our prayers in ways we cannot possibly understand. There is power in our choosing to pray for people. As a class you could look at one of the Forms of Prayers of the People in the Book of Common Prayer (pp. 383-392)

or they could consider people they know who are sick, in need, alone -- or in other kinds of need. They might choose to pray for those who lead us in our country and in our church. The children can choose.

Getting Closure: Turn to page 857 in the BCP and look at the question “What is intercession and petition?”

Closing Prayer: Say together the prayer the children have composed. Or pray: “Thank you, Jesus, for saying yes to God. Help us to say yes when God shows us work we can do. Amen.

John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say-- 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

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