

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Fifth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger 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 winter wheat seeds (available from a seed store or a health-food store.) If you are making this a class project you will need one pot, some potting soil, a small handful of seeds and a pitcher with water. If the children are going to take the seeds home, you will need small peat pots a bit more potting soil and more seeds as well as aluminum foil to wrap the pots. Another option is to plant individual pots, and take all of them home with you to be sure they are sufficiently watered, and then bring them back the following week. Write notes to the parents so they can watch with the child the sprouting of the seeds – and be sure the seeds have sufficient water. You will also need a copy of the verse for each child.

Beginning: Tell the children that Jesus has a story that will help the people begin to understand what will happen on Good Friday and Easter. (It is not too early to begin to tell the story of Good Friday and Easter, especially if some of the children in your class are not there every Sunday.)

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for making seeds. Thank you for the things seeds grow into when they are planted. Amen.

The Story (John 12:20-33): (Have some wheat seeds in your hand as you tell the story) Jesus was talking to his friends and to some people who were trying to figure out just who Jesus was.

Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." No one could figure out what he meant. So he thought a minute and said this: "You have seen seeds, right?" (Show the children the seeds – give each child a seed or two to hold.) "When you look at this seed, it doesn't look like it has any life in it at all, does it? But if the seed dies – if it is planted in the earth – green shoots will come out in a few days."

Planting a Seed: Bring out the pots and the potting soil and let the children plant seeds. In a small pot about a teaspoon of seeds will be plenty; a larger pot might take a few more. Tell the children that we will sprinkle a little soil on top of the seeds. The seeds need to be buried pretty close to the surface. About 1/4 of an inch is best – deeper will take the seeds longer to sprout. What else do the seeds need? Water, of course. If the pots are going home make, sure the parents know to help the child remember to water the soil whenever it feels dry.

Art Activity: Give the children sheets of paper with these words:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Tell the children that we say this in church before we receive the bread and the wine. These few words explain what we believe about Jesus. Invite the children either to learn these words or to illustrate on a sheet of paper to take home.

Getting closure: If the children are going to take the pots home, remind them to water the planted seeds.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for this story about seeds and for what the seeds will become. Amen.

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