

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Palm Sunday
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 14:1-15 or Mark 15:1-39(40-47)

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

Abundance, not scarcity. The costliest of ointments poured out for Jesus. A man carrying a jar of water – work usually reserved for women – shows the way to the Passover meal. Pilate may have had generosity as one of his motives in offering the crowd Jesus' release, but they choose Barabbas; and so Jesus is crucified. The words pierce us across the centuries. A soldier who had stood guard exclaims: "Truly this man was God's Son." This conviction continues to penetrate our souls, creating a space to house the incredible news of Easter.

Theme: Walk with Jesus

Before Class: There is significantly more Scripture appointed for today than the children will be able to absorb. Ways to describe some of the highlights are offered here. You probably will not have sufficient time to use all the stories, so use what you have time to cover.

If you need permission from anyone in order to display children's art work in a place where the congregation can see it, secure that permission before your class meets, then be sure you have many sheets of white paper, markers, colored pencils, crayons, and masking tape to secure the work to a wall. If there are more stories than children, invite the children to illustrate more than one story.

Beginning: Tell the children that we are beginning Holy Week, the week we remember the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. More happened than we have time to look at today, so we will choose some of the highlights. And to help people in our church, we can illustrate different highlights and post them where people can see them.

The Story: Make sure each child has access to a Bible. Since the passages appointed are for today entirely too long for the children to read, indicate which portion you are telling them about so they can see some of the words in the Bible but mostly hear the events from you. Then, according to the amount of time you have, choose which of the following to tell the children and invite them to illustrate.

Mark 14. Wait for the children to find this place in their Bibles. Put a stack of paper in the center of the table, along with markers or whatever you have for the children to draw with. Tell the children to be listening for scenes they would like to illustrate.

Mark 14: 1 - 9. It was two days before Passover. Does anyone know what Passover is? (If not, it is the day Jewish people – to this day – celebrate getting out of Egypt where they were slaves.)

Jesus is at a dinner party and something happens that many people thought was very strange. While Jesus was eating dinner, a woman came into the room carrying a beautiful jar with very expensive perfume. She proceeded to pour the perfume all over Jesus' head. "Hey," the people said, "That perfume jar could have been sold and the money given to help poor people and she just wasted it!" No, Jesus assured them, it was not wasted. In verse 8 Jesus says: "She has anointed my body beforehand, for burial." Why do you think he said that? (He knows he is to die.) Anyone want to illustrate the woman gently pouring perfumed oil on Jesus' head?

Mark 14:12-16. Passover is coming. The disciples wondered where they would go to celebrate the feast. To help them find the right place, Jesus sent two of his disciples to find the place. This is how they would know they were in the right place: they would find a man carrying a jar of water.

Does anyone know why that one man would be easy to spot? (Carrying water was considered women's work, since few men would do that work, so this guy would be easy to find.) Who wants to illustrate this portion?

Mark 14:17-21. They are all at supper eating a very excellent meal. They must have been startled to hear Jesus say that one of the people sitting at that very table was going to betray him. They turned to each other and said: "Could I be the one? Whoa, I sure hope not!" But the one who would betray Jesus was sitting right there at the table. Who will illustrate this portion?

Mark 14:22-26. Jesus needed to leave his friends with something that would be with them all their lives and still be here for us today. So, Jesus took a small loaf of bread, broke off a piece for each person and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took the glass of wine and said: "This is my blood of the covenant with is poured out for many." And each person took a sip of the wine. Who will illustrate this portion?

Mark 14:32-42. Jesus and his friends go to a garden with the name Gethsemane. Jesus needs to pray to God and he wants his friends to pray with him. Here Jesus accepts that he is going to have to die. But his exhausted friends cannot keep awake. They keep falling asleep at their prayers. Who will illustrate this?

Mark 14:43-50. Judas shows up. Judas is the one who will betray Jesus. Judas has brought soldiers to have Jesus arrested. Judas comes up to Jesus and kisses him on the cheek. That was the sign he had given the soldiers so they would know whom to arrest. So they arrested Jesus. Who will illustrate this?

Mark 14:53-65. The chief priests need to be sure that what Jesus is saying is really wrong so they can kill him. They ask him many questions and finally convince themselves that what Jesus is saying is blasphemy. Blasphemy means telling lies about God. Who will illustrate this?

Mark 14: 66-72. Peter had been so sure he would stick with Jesus no matter what. Jesus had told Peter that Peter would snap -- that he would deny Jesus three times before the cock crowed. Sure enough, before Peter realized what was happening, in his terror, three separate times Peter said he did not know Jesus. Then the cock crowed. Peter was heartbroken. Who will illustrate this?

Mark 15: 1-15. The chief priests decide to hand Jesus over to Pilate. Pilate doesn't really want to kill Jesus, so he gets an idea. It was the custom to release one criminal at Passover. So Pilate asked the crowd: Shall I release this Jesus, or shall I release Barabbas? The crowd wanted Barabbas to be released! So that meant that Jesus would be handed over to be crucified. Who will illustrate this?

Mark 15: 16-32. Jesus is led away to be crucified. A man named Simon came along and carried the cross for Jesus for a while. At nine o'clock in the morning they nailed Jesus to the cross. Who will illustrate this?

Mark 15: 33-39. At noon, as Jesus hung on the cross the skies began to get very dark. By three in the afternoon, Jesus had died. The soldiers who had been standing guard said: "Truly this man was God's Son!" Who will illustrate this?

Mark 15: 42-47. A man named Joseph of Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus so he could bury him in a tomb. Joseph took a linen cloth to cover the body of Jesus and then carried him to the tomb. He gently laid Jesus body in the tomb and covered the opening with a huge rock. Who will illustrate this?

Everyone thought this was the end of the story. We now know it was not the end of the story. Next week we will celebrate what happened next.

Options: You may choose to post the drawings the children have produced in a place where the rest of your congregation will be able to see them, perhaps where people gather for coffee after church. Or you may choose to post them in your classroom.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to help you make a list of things we are thankful for. You could tell them that it is a funny thing about thank-you prayers: the more we say thank you, the more things we notice we have to be thankful for!

Closing Prayer: Say together the list of things you are thankful for. And add "Amen."

Mark 15:1-39, [40-47]

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way

he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

[There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.]

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