

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Palm Sunday
Lesson Plans for Younger 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: Today's Scripture will be too long for young children. The focus of this lesson is Mark 14: 3-9 and 12-16. If time permits, include Mark 14:17-25. The rest of the passage can be briefly summarized. A few props for your story would help the children. Bring a jar of something that smells sweet (bath oil, oil of clove – available from a pharmacy or natural foods store). Also bring a small sandwich roll, some glasses, and a small bottle of grape juice. If you want to teach the children the musical setting for the Sanctus, You will need a Hymnal. In the front of the Hymnal are several variations (S113 - S131), so you can use the one that is most familiar.

If your class meets while the worship service is going on, this Sunday the service may go longer. If it does not go longer, you may wish to use only the last two portions of the story here, omitting Mark 14: 3-9. You will need a copy of the Sanctus for each child.

If you have been including the Church School Missionary Offering Box in your sessions, a note to go home to parents reminding them that the boxes need to come back next Sunday – Easter – would be helpful.

Beginning: Tell the children that today we finish the part of the story of Jesus that will take us to Easter -- next Sunday. If you planted seeds in a pot that stays in the classroom, now would be a good time to see what has happened. If the children took the pots home with them, ask them what has happened in the pots. If you have been preparing a cross, let the children finish their work on it today and find a place to display it where the children can see it.

Praying: Thank you, God, for Jesus who did what you asked him to do. Help us to do what we need to do to follow Jesus. Amen.

The Story: (Mark 14: 3-9) Jesus had been invited to have supper at a friend's house. While Jesus was sitting at the dinner table, a woman came up from behind him, opened a jar with some sweet-smelling oil. Maybe it smelled like this (and share what you have brought). It was very expensive perfume. The people thought what she did was very strange: she gently poured it all over Jesus' head. But Jesus said she was doing a good thing and years later people would still know she had done this. Now, we know it too.

(Mark 14: 12-16) It was time to have a special party for Passover. Passover was the time people celebrated their freedom. Years ago they had been slaves and now they were free so each year they had a special party to help them remember that now they were free. Where shall we have this party? Jesus friends asked him. Here is what Jesus said: Go into town. Look for a man carrying a jar of water. He will take you to the house we will use for the party. It was very easy to find this man. In Jesus time, men almost never carried jars of water -- that was considered women's work. There was only one man who was carrying a jar of water.

(Mark 14:22-25) Jesus' friends came to the party with Jesus. We don't know for sure all they had to eat, but it was a very good meal. After supper, Jesus did something that the friends would never forget. Jesus took a loaf of bread -- maybe it looked like this one I brought in today. Jesus told them this would be the last time they would all have supper together, but he wanted them to remember this night and remember him. So, he broke off pieces of the bread and gave a piece to each of his friends, just like I am doing now. He said: "this is my body." He also told them that whenever they ate bread like this, Jesus would be there with them. Then he took a cup with wine in it. I will give each of you a cup -- with apple juice in it. He told them to drink from the cup and each time we do it, Jesus will be right there with us.

Activity: The passage to learn – or illustrate – today is longer, but the children will hear it anytime they are in church during Eucharist. You could tell them its name is Sanctus which means "Holy.'

Here are the words. You can make copies for each child:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Another Activity: One final sanding of the cross the children have been preparing for Easter.

Options: If the children have been putting coins in a Church School Missionary Offering Box, remind them to be sure and bring the boxes back next Sunday.

Getting Closure: Allow time at the end of your class to tell the children what we will be observing this week. For example, this week is called Holy Week because it is the week we remember what Jesus did. Do you know what sacrifice means? It means giving up something very important – to get something even more important. Jesus was killed. The leaders were sure he was saying things that were not true, and they thought they needed to kill him. So, on the day we call Good Friday, Jesus was killed. And all his friends were so very sad. They were so sad they forgot that he had told them that he would be "lifted up." We call that Resurrection. Remember what happened to the seeds we planted? They became green shoots, didn't they? Now, when people die, they go to be with Jesus. Next week we celebrate that good news and we call next Sunday "Easter."

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for giving your life and for showing us that you will "lift up" each of us. Amen.

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