

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 21
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 9:38-50

Background: During this “Ordinary Time” our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

The Pharisee in each of us wants to "get it right." In the gospel passages for Propers 17-22 from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is concerned that we "get it." So Jesus takes the ordinary things of life, from washing hands to attending to a child, and meets us where we are and helps us to "get it," finding blessings in the ordinary.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

Jesus continues to teach, while gently holding a small child on his lap. "Whoever is not against us is for us." Then, do what you have to do to make sure you place no stumbling block before one of these little ones. If your foot causes you to stumble – cut it off! Hyperbole, perhaps, but the point is clear: pay attention. We are called to be salty people and at peace with one another.

Theme: Saltiness

Before: You will need copies of the reading for today, a small container of sea salt or kosher salt. Bring the crest project (see previous lessons), if you have been working on one and some liquid white glue.

Beginning: Show the children the salt you have brought. Ask them to brainstorm with you the uses of salt (on food, of course. What else? A salt lick for deer. Melting ice on roads in the winter.)

Opening Prayer: Thank you for the stories we have about Jesus. Help us to notice what Jesus wants us to know. Amen.

The Story: Mark 9:38-50. Tell the children that in this passage we have three teachings and a "p.s." so we will read the passage in sections.

First Section: Mark 9:38-41 Invite two people to read: John (verse 38) Jesus (verses 39-41) (A script that is broken into parts is at the end of the lesson)

Reflection Questions

- What is John concerned about? (People are doing good things, and are not part of Jesus' group.)

- I wonder if we can think of examples of people doing good things, in Jesus' name, but are not a part of our group? (People in other denominations of the Christian church, for example. People who take care of the sick, or the poor, who may not even be Christians.)

Second Section: Mark 9:42 Invite one person to read this verse.

Reflection Questions:

- What is a "stumbling block?" (Anything that keeps people away from Jesus. Rules that are impossible to keep, for example.)
- Who are the "little ones" Jesus is referring to? (His disciples, anyone who is trying to follow Jesus.)
- I wonder why Jesus calls them "little ones?" (Perhaps because he understands that many are trying to keep them from following Jesus. Perhaps because he knows we have so much to learn.)

Third Section: Mark 9:43-48 Invite one person to read these verses – Jesus talking.

Reflection Questions:

- Does anyone know the meaning of the word "hyperbole?" (Hy **per** bo le: An exaggeration to make a point. Example: everyone was there. Well, everyone in the world probably was not there!)
- I wonder what Jesus means in these verses? (It probably would be better to chop off a hand you simply could not control, but surely he is trying to get people's attention. Behavior matters.)
- I wonder if Jesus got people's attention?
- I wonder what they remembered?

The "P.S." - Mark 9:50 – Invite one reader for verses 49-50.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what Jesus means when he says that everyone will be "salted with fire?" (Everyone will have something really hard to go through in their lives.)
- Verse 50a: Good Question! But why do you think Jesus is asking this question? (If we have let who we are get away from us, what possible good are we?)
- Verse 50b: How do we have "salt in ourselves?" (We choose to be who we are and not try to be someone we are not.)
- Taking what Jesus has been quoted as saying in verse 50, can we restate it in words we would use now? (See what the children can come up with. If they get stumped, you could suggest phrases like: "Don't give up your salt." Or "Stay salted." "Keep the Peace." "Be at peace." Etc.)

Option:

If the children have been making a crest, give them the salt you brought to class and ask them to plan how they will use it on their crest. (Be sure to have liquid glue so they can glue some to their crest, if they want to do so.)

Getting Closure: Discuss the phrase your group came up with for salt and peace and find at least one way it will make life harder (for example: times we have to stand for something unpopular). Then think of times it will make life easier (for example: who I am is just fine with God – I don't have to try to be someone else.)

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for salt and for the salty part that is me. Amen.

Mark 9:38-50

Part 1:

John: 38 John said to him, ‘Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.’

Jesus: ³⁹But Jesus said, ‘Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰Whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

Part 2:

Jesus: 42 ‘If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. ⁴³If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell,* ⁴⁸where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

The P.S.

Jesus: ‘For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.’

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