

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday After Christmas
Lesson Plan for Older Children

Scripture: John 1:1-18

Background: The Gospels appointed for these two Sundays after Christmas offer a fitting conclusion to Advent's mystery of "both/and" time. The first Sunday is from John's Gospel a mystery-laced view of the divinity of Jesus, "The Word became flesh and lived among us." The second Sunday is a very human story of the little boy Jesus. Just as Jesus was both human and divine, we also balance two worlds: the world in which we do our day to day tasks -- a world mostly unaware of its true potential -- and our life in Christ: "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16)

A Notation for this Week's Gospel

Here we have Salvation history in a nutshell. In the beginning was the "Word." Word as verb: moving, creating, redeeming. Word: creating since the beginning, now here as an infant. The prophets proclaimed this would happen, right through to the last of the prophets: John the Baptist. We have the law, thanks to Moses. Now we receive grace and truth through Jesus, the only Son. He is the Light; the Light that no darkness can extinguish dawns on. Now we are invited to decide who is this child for us?

Theme: The Word became Flesh

Before Class: The passage we have for today is beautiful, but extremely abstract, so you will need copies of the text for each person. Take time the week before to read the passage and discuss it with clergy if parts are eluding you. Here are some notes that might help:

John, the writer of the Gospel, is saying that Jesus has been since the very beginning with God, and all things come through God and through Jesus. Verses 6-8 describe John the Baptist who was sent to get people ready for the Light that was Jesus. Even though John the Baptist clearly understood who Jesus was, his own people to whom Jesus came, did not understand who he was. "The Word became flesh" is our way of saying that Jesus came among us as an infant taking on a body just like ours. Jesus came to pour out on us all the grace and truth available to him. We simply need to accept it. No one has seen God. But now the world has seen Jesus, so they have also seen God.

Beginning: Ask the children if they have ever been in the position of knowing something was true, being sure they had their facts, and the person they were talking to simply did not believe them. If they are having difficulty thinking of something, offer something from your own experience. You could also ask them if they can think of something they know is true, but they are not confident they know how it works. (For example, the Internet, for cell phones, or more natural phenomenon like lightning or the northern lights.)

Opening Prayer: Light-filled God, thank you for the words we have today to help us think about who this Jesus really is in every possible way. Amen.

The Scripture: John 1:1-18 Pass out copies of the scripture and pencils. Ask for volunteers to read sections of the passage. There are five paragraphs below, so you could ask for five readers.

Option: Tell the children to look at their copy of the Scripture and using a pencil -- and a code they choose to mark the parts they think they understand and another code for the parts they don't understand. (The code could be underlining, or drawing a circle or a square around the part.)

Reflection Questions:

- Parts of this Gospel are talking about John and parts are talking about Jesus. Let's find the parts that are talking about John the Baptist. (Verses 6-8 describe John, Verse 15 is a quote from John)
- Which parts talk about Jesus? What phrases are about Jesus?
- Ask them to notice words that might be different descriptions of Jesus. (Word, true light, Word became flesh, grace and truth, for example).
- Which parts did they understand?
- Which parts were not clear?

Translation: Invite the children to work together to translate this passage so friends of theirs could understand it. Offer to scribe their ideas, assuring them it is okay to use slang words, as long as they are sure their friends will understand.

Getting Closure: Read aloud what they have drafted. Ask for any modifications. Then offer to send their draft to them by e-mail (if this works for you and the class), make copies at the church before the end of class (if that is possible), or make copies later and send them to the children.

You could also read from another Bible such as "The Message" or "The Common English Bible" to get a different reading of the passage.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for the beautiful words in today's scripture and for the words we found today to make them easier to understand. Be with us as we continue to live into the Christmas Season, celebrating Jesus who always has been. Amen.

John 1:1-18

The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."')

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

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