

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C– Fourth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Older Children
RCL Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Joshua 5:9-12 (This passage makes the most sense in the context of Joshua chapter 4, where the people cross the Jordan River.)

Background: Lent is a reflective season – an opportunity to go deep within ourselves and focus on our relationship with God and with others. The forty days of Lent remind us of the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert following his baptism, pondering who he was and what he was to do. They also remind us of the forty years that the people of God wandered in the desert following the Exodus from Egypt, learning how to be the community of the people of God. The Hebrew Scripture lessons in year C focus on the covenants or promises that God made with the people of God. Like Jesus, we choose to enter this time of “desert,” in order to remember the promises of God, hear the stories of ways in which they were fulfilled (hint: They didn’t always look the way the people expected!), and the ways in which we are called to participate in those promises in our own time – to discover who we are in God and what we are to do.

A Notation for This Week’s Lesson: In this week’s lesson, we move forward in time again, to the time of Joshua, just after the people of God have ended their 40 years of post-Exodus wandering in the desert, and have crossed the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land. The lesson today takes place between this river crossing, which has many parallels to the crossing of the Red Sea in the Exodus story, and the battle of Jericho.

Theme: Remembering

Before Class: Determine which activity options you will be using and gather the materials needed. You will need the bowl of sand from last week, and a stone to place in the sand. (You can use a stone that you have found outdoors, obtain an artificial one from a craft store, or cut one out of construction paper).

Beginning: Gather the children in your usual manner, perhaps with an opening song or greeting. Ask what they notice in your worship space. See what they remember about the season of Lent. If necessary, remind them that Lent is the time of the church year when we get ready to celebrate the mystery of Easter. It is time for us to focus on things that bring us close to God, and to remember that we are part of God’s family. Have them mark the sign of the cross on their forehead to remember that they are “marked as Christ’s own forever.”

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of Lent, the time we pay special attention to the ways we can come closer to you. Help us to hear your promises, and to remember that we are part of your great family. Amen.

The Story: Help the children find the book of Joshua in their Bibles. Note that you have moved on from the book of Exodus, and are actually at the very end of the whole Exodus story, the time

the people are moving from the desert into the promised land. Moses had died, and Joshua was the new leader of the people of God.

Show the children the stone. Ask them to listen to see how it comes into today's story.

Ask what the children remember the Exodus and the time the people of God were in the desert. They might remember the crossing of the Red Sea (which has parallels in today's story!), manna, the Ten Commandments, and that the people wandered in the desert for 40 years. (If anyone remembers the story about the 12 spies that went into Canaan, it is fun to note that Joshua was one of those spies! See Numbers chapter 13 for that story if you're interested).

While the lectionary passage for today begins in Joshua 5, backing up a little bit to Joshua 4 is helpful for understanding. Have the class read together Joshua 4:19-5:1, and 5:9-12.

Reflection Questions: (Use the ones that interest you and your community of children)

- I wonder how the people felt when they needed to go across the Jordan River?
- I wonder how they felt when the waters were held back, and they were able to cross on dry land?
- I wonder how the people feel about finally entering the land that God had given them?
- I wonder how the stones helped them remember?
- I wonder if you have ever seen a stone, or piles of stones that people use to mark something? I wonder what kinds of things we mark with stones?

Activity Options:

1. **Mobile or Story bag:** Each story in the coming weeks lends itself to a symbol, which can be created to hang on a mobile or to fill a story bag that the children can take home at the end of Lent to remember the promises of God. (The symbols will be a star, a red leaf, stones, a portion of a map or a road, and a cross.) *The symbol for this week is a stone or stones.*
 - a. **For the Mobile:** You will need the embroidery hoop hanger that you created the first week of Lent. You will need to be prepared for children who were not here that week, either by helping them create the hanger (directions in week 1), or by having a few hangers prepared for them. For this week's stone, you might take the children outside to choose a small stone, or have a basket of small stones from which they could choose. Alternatively, you could have them create a lightweight "stone" from paper clay, such as Model Magic. Tie a length of yarn around the stone, and attach the other end of the yarn to the embroidery hoop so that it hangs down.
 - b. **For the Story bag:** You will need a small cloth bag for each child. (These would be easy to make, or can be found inexpensively at craft stores. Burlap or muslin would be good choices to reflect the colors of the desert.) Prepare the stone as above for the mobile, eliminating the yarn. Add the stone to the story bag.
2. **Building with stones:** In the story, the people of God built a stone memorial out of stones. The children can do the same to remember this story. Have a collection of small stones or rocks, and let the children build cairns or sculptures with them as you talk about the reflection questions. These could be temporary structures, or you could help the

children attach the stones together permanently using a glue gun. You might notice together with the children that in each of our stories thus far, the people of God have been given a way to remember the story and the promises of God anytime they encountered a particular item that they might see at any time (a star, sand, rocks, leaves).

3. **Journal:** An inexpensive journal can be created for each child to use during Lent. Composition books work well, or you might simply gather several pieces of notebook paper, and make construction paper covers by stapling them together down the sides. Journaling can be in words or pictures, and can be free-form, or follow a prompt. Possible prompts for this week: *Think of a personal story that you want to remember always. How might you mark that story through the use of something like stones? What places are important to you or your family? How have you marked those places?* Alternatively, the journal could also be a place for exploring possible Lenten disciplines, such as prayer, fasting, or charitable giving.
4. **Congregational Project:** If your congregation takes on a particular project for Lent, consider how to incorporate that into your class time.

Getting Closure: Gather in your story area as you prepare to end class. This can be a good time to share concerns and prayers. One way to pray together is to pass the stone from the sand bowl around the circle of children. As each child holds the stone they can name (out loud or silently) someone for whom they wish to pray. They then pass the stone to the next child. To close, you might choose to again remind each child that they are a child of God through the tracing of an invisible cross on their foreheads.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for your many promises, and for time for us to remember them through our faith stories. Thank you for leading your people from the desert into the Promised Land. Amen.

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