

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C– Fourth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Younger 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: During the season of Lent, we are hearing stories about times that God made promises to the people of God, even some times that the promises that seem impossible. Today’s story is about one of those promises. I am putting this stone in our bowl of desert to help us

remember this story. Listen and see if you can figure out why we are using this stone to help us tell this story.

Last week we heard the story of Moses and the burning bush. Moses came across a bush that was on fire, but was not burned up! God spoke to Moses through the bush, and told him to go to the land of Egypt, where the people of God were slaves, and to tell the king of Egypt, the Pharaoh, to let God's people go.

Pharaoh did eventually let God's people go, and Moses led the people to freedom! But they didn't know which way to go, and they wandered in the desert for 40 years. They were not ready to enter the land that God had promised to give them, as the great-great-great-grandchildren of Abraham. At the end of that time, Moses died, and a man named Joshua became the leader of the people of God.

To enter the land God had promised to give them, the people needed to cross the Jordan River. The people did not know how they would get across the water! God told Joshua that God would part the water so that the people crossed the river on dry land, just as they had crossed the Red Sea when escaping Pharaoh. When they were all across the river, Joshua told the people to take 12 stones from the water and use them to mark the place that they had crossed the river. Whenever they saw these stones, they would remember that God had held back the river so they could enter the promised land. They named that place "Gilgal," which means "circle," likely referring to the circle of stones.

After they had done this, they celebrated the Passover feast together. During the Passover feast, they remembered that they had been slaves in Egypt, and that God had set them free. And God came close to the people, and told them, "You were slaves in Egypt, and you were ashamed. Now you are free people, in the land that I have given you, and you should not be ashamed anymore."

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.

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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