

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C– Palm Sunday
Lesson Plans for Younger Children
RCL Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Isaiah 50:4-9

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: It is Palm Sunday! Isaiah 50:4-9 is read in all three lectionary years, regardless of which Gospel account is given. This reflects the long understanding of the Christian church that Jesus is the suffering servant described in Isaiah.

Theme: The Suffering Servant

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 simple cross to place in the sand.

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: It is Palm Sunday! We are almost through our season of Lent, almost ready for the mystery of Easter! During this week, which we call Holy Week, we remember that Jesus was God’s servant. The Hebrew Scripture reading from Isaiah 50:4-9 describes God’s servant. Our Old Testament lesson today is not very much like a story. Remember the Bible has all kinds of writing in it – stories, and poems, and songs, and letters. Today’s lesson is a description of a special servant, the servant of God.

Ask your class if they know what a servant is. Listen to their answers. (They have likely heard the word servant used in fairy tales, such as Cinderella, or other stories.)

Here are some of the words that are used in Isaiah to describe what God's servant does.

God's servant:

- Teaches
- Makes the weak strong
- Wakes up!
- Listens
- Learns
- Follows God
- Is not ashamed
- Is determined
- Does not do wrong
- Sometimes gets hurt by others.

Christian people have long thought that the servant that Isaiah is describing is Jesus. During this week, as we get ready for Easter next Sunday, we remember these words about God's servant. We remember how Jesus did all these things, and still there were people who wanted to hurt him.

But God helped Jesus, and stayed with Jesus even throughout this week. Even though Jesus died because of the people who hurt him, God stayed with Jesus and made him alive again. That's what we celebrate on Easter.

We are putting a cross in our desert sand today to remind us that Jesus was God's servant.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what it is like to be a servant?
- I wonder how God's servant is both a teacher and a learner?
- I wonder how God's servant makes the weak strong?
- I wonder what it is like to be hurt by others, even if you have done nothing wrong?
- I wonder what you wonder?

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 cross.*
 - 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 cross, you could work with the children to create a cross out of construction paper, or you can purchase simple wooden crosses from a craft store. Punch a hole in one end of the road, and tie a length of yarn through the hole. 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 cross as above for the mobile, eliminating the yarn. Add the cross to the story bag.
- 2. Be a servant:** This is a good week for a simple service project, such as creating bags to hand out to hungry or homeless people. Have students fill a quart size Ziploc bag with a water bottle, small package of Kleenex, chapstick, a granola bar and an Easter token such as stickers, bite sized candy or an Easter egg.
- 3. Palm Sunday Parade:** Using real or construction paper palms, create a parade that follows the Palm Sunday gospel story. Shout “Hosanna! Blessed is the King that comes in the name of the Lord!” Then try substituting the word “servant” for “king” – “Blessed is the servant that comes in the name of the Lord!” Continue as long as the children are interested.

Getting Closure: Gather in your story area as you prepare to end class. This can be a good time to share concerns and prayers. 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, that the season of Lent is coming to a close. Help us to prepare this week for the good news of Easter. Amen.

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