

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Third Sunday after the Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Older Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Jonah 3:1-5

Background

The Sundays after Epiphany contain stories that show forth the divinity of Jesus and the great power of God. We hear miracles, teachings, and events that make manifest God's saving action in the world. We begin at the beginning: Genesis and the creation of the world. Then we hear stories of the prophets God called to tell the world of God's goodness and mercy and often of the people's need for repentance. We hear stories of healing, of promise, and of hope. We come to know that we are part of a long history of God's love and redemption. We consider how we might share this good news with others.

A Notation for This Week

Whether you tell the entire story of Jonah (whale and all) or just the verses assigned for today, the message of repentance and forgiveness are clear. God has sent his prophet, Jonah, to preach a message of warning to the people of Ninevah. Surprisingly, they listen to his message and repent. God changes his mind and chooses to spare the people from destruction. If only we were as quick to repent!

Theme: Jonah Brings the Word of God

Before Class: Choose and learn music. Gather different bible story books and picture books that include the story of Jonah. Gather brown fabric scraps (or dish towels) to use as sackcloth.

Sing: Gather the children and sing "Peace Before Us" - Wonder, Love and Praise or My Heart Sings Out

Opening Prayer: Forgiving God, we know that we all have made mistakes. Help us to say we are sorry, and assure us of your forgiveness. Amen.

The Story: Scripture Jonah 3:1-5

Although the verses assigned for this week tell enough of the story, children may remember that Jonah was in the belly of a whale for a bit. Consider telling the whole story (there are plenty of children's bible storybooks that include this story). The NRSV works well for this age.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder how Jonah felt when he was called to go to Ninevah?
- I wonder if he was surprised that the people repented?
- I wonder how he felt when God forgave them?
- I wonder what a messenger would tell us if God sent them here?
- I wonder what repentance looks like today? Instead of sackcloth, what do we do to show we are sorry?

Art response:

Make “U-Turns Allowed” signs - talk about times when they knew they were going the wrong way or doing the wrong thing and they were able to turn themselves around and do something different. Say that we are called to admit when we are wrong and change our ways. God is a God of forgiveness and mercy. Often, we need a reminder. So, these “U-Turn” signs can serve as our reminders.

Modern Messengers:

Use paper that can be rolled into scrolls to have the children write messages to the church today. How do they see the church doing God’s work in the world? What other needs does the world have that the church should respond to? Have them deliver these messages - perhaps to chosen people at coffee hour or committee chairs or clergy. Scrolls can be illustrated.

Prayer Chairs - set the fabric scraps or dish towels on chairs in a circle. Encourage children to put the “sack cloth” on and sit in a chair and silently consider ways they have made mistakes. Tell them to say a silent prayer to God, saying they are sorry and asking for forgiveness. Set out some heart stickers for them to take afterwards to remind them of God’s love and mercy. This can either be an option for children to do as they feel moved, or you could play music and encourage everyone to try it at the same time.

Music: Consider playing “Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel” from LEVAS II or “Ubi Caritas” from Wonder, Love and Praise while they are working.

Sing: Ubi Caritas from Wonder, Love and Praise

Closing Prayer: Pray the Lord’s Prayer together.

*Published by the Formation Office of The Episcopal Church, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.
© 2017 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.*