

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Proper 22
Lesson Plans for Younger Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Lamentations 1:1-6

Background

How is it possible that we are still in the same season of the church year? The Season after Pentecost stretches long through the changes of seasons in our world. Spring made way for summer and now autumn is upon us. Yet, still we walk forward in our churches as the steadfast love of God is proclaimed in the “long green, growing season.” It is impossible, however, not to notice that the long green season is now beginning to compete with the pace of life outside. Each year we lament as stores begin advertising decorations and treats for the upcoming secular holidays even earlier than the year before. Although October has just begun, Halloween and Thanksgiving decorations are all around us. The struggle to remain present in the current day is a challenge that increases with each leaf that falls from the trees outside our windows. And so we use the stability of the church calendar to root ourselves in this day that the Lord has made.

A Notation for This Week’s Scripture

This week our Old Testament passage takes us back in time to a period of tremendous grief and devastation. Lamentations was written following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE as a series of five poems. Lamentations is a sort of survivors’ therapy – the author is working out the horror, sadness, and grief experienced through the trauma of the destruction in beautiful and illustrative **acrostic poetry**. Our portion of the passage today is the very beginning of the poem. The author writes in the third person and uses the image of a woman to portray the city of Jerusalem. The challenge of this scripture when using it in the classroom is to allow the poem to speak honestly to the children without losing the hope we know as Christians.

Theme: Hope in Hopeless Times

Before Class: Today you will make handprint gardens with the class. You will need:

- Green temper paint
- Soft, wide paint brush or sponge
- Wet Wipes (for hands)
- Smocks
- Paper Towels
- Light colored construction paper
- Brown construction paper cut into 3”X3” flower pots
- Small pieces of tissue paper
- Glue
- Markers

Beginning: Welcome the students to class and ask them each how their week has gone. Allow the children to settle in and find a place around the table before beginning. Tell them that this week they are going to learn about a time when God’s people suffered and the class’ job will be to find the Good News even though they are sad.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, we know that you love us always. Help us to find your love even when times are hard. Amen.

The Story: Lamentations 1:1-6

There once was a beautiful old city named Jerusalem. The beautiful old city was the city of God and the people of God lived within her walls. The beautiful old city loved the celebrations and joy of the people who lived there. One day, many, many years ago, a mean army came to the beautiful old city and tore down her beautiful buildings and made a mess of her happy streets. Oh, how sad this made the beautiful old city! Before the mean army left to return to their mean city they took the people of God who live in the beautiful old city and made the people come to live in the mean city. Now the beautiful old city was empty and alone. She missed her people and their parties. She missed the joy of the travelers on her streets. The beautiful old city missed her old life and worried that she would never be joyful again. The beautiful old city did not know that God had a plan for her, even in such a difficult time.

Questions for Reflection:

- I wonder what the beautiful old city looked like.
- I wonder why the mean army came to the beautiful city.
- I wonder how the people of God felt.
- I wonder what God will do for the beautiful old city.

Activity: What would you say to help the beautiful old city feel better and to share the love of God with her? – How could we show the people of God that the beautiful old city is still there and waiting for their return?

I wonder if you have ever given flowers to someone.

Sometimes we give flowers to people to help them feel better. Flowers are pretty and can remind us of the beauty of God's love.

Today we are going to turn Jerusalem's tears into something beautiful. In our story from today we heard about the beautiful old city and how sad the city is that the people of God have been taken away. The beautiful old city has been torn down and she does not feel beautiful anymore. She does not feel like God is with her in her pain. So today, we are going to plant a garden in the beautiful old city!

1. Help each child roll up his/her sleeves and put on a smock. Next, each child can choose one sheet of light colored construction paper.
2. After each child has a piece of paper, you will go around and help all of the children make a green handprint in the center of their paper.
3. While the paint is drying, offer the children wet wipes to clean their hands.
4. Next, each child will put glue on the back of their brown construction paper "flower pots" and glue it to the bottom of the paper so that it just barely covers the heel of their handprint.
5. Set the papers aside as they finish drying.
6. While the paint dries, the children can choose 5 small tissue paper squares. These will be the buds of their flowers. They will crumple the paper and then glue on piece to the top on each finger on the handprint.

Getting Closure: After each handprint garden is complete, ask the children what they want to share with people who are hurting like the old city was hurting. What do they think God wants to

share with people who are hurting? (Examples love, hugs, happiness, beauty, etc...) After the children decide what they individually want to share, go around with the marker and write for them (or help them to write if they can) "I want to share _____ with hurting people."

Closing Prayer: God of Hope, thank you for the gift of beauty and for the chance to share your beauty with other people. Amen.

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