

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Proper 24
Lesson Plans for Older Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:27-34

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. 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

Our passage from Jeremiah this week continues the narrative of the past two weeks. First we heard of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the subsequent exile of the people of Judah. Last week, Jeremiah spoke to the people of Judah living in Babylon and conveyed God’s desire for the people to build houses and families in the foreign land. This week, Jeremiah continues his prophesy. This time declaring the coming of a new covenant with God. This new covenant does not nullify the first; rather, because the people broke their covenant, God is showing Mercy by promising to forget their sin and continue moving forward with the people of God.

Theme: God’s Mercy is Everlasting

Before Class:

Make sure there are enough bibles for each child to have one during the lesson.

Materials for the Activity:

- Wax Paper cut into rectangles the same size (or slightly smaller than) the size of your construction paper
- Multi-colored Tissue Paper
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue Sticks
- Sharpie Markers
- Music Player and soft music

Beginning: Welcome the children as they arrive and ask them how they are doing. Once the class is all present and seated ask them if there is anything they’ve ever done that they wish their parents would forget about. Have they hurt a sibling on purpose, lost a new toy soon after receiving the gift, broken something by accident? It seems like our parents have the uncanny ability to remember every single thing we’ve ever done wrong when it’s time to get in trouble! When we pray the Lord’s Prayer we call God our Father – this is because God is like a parent or

loved one. God loves us and worries about us... and even gets a little frustrated when we don't listen to God. Today's story will teach us about a time when God promised to forget about something God's children did wrong so that they could all move forward, together.

Opening Prayer: God of Love, sometimes we struggle to do the right thing. Thank you for forgiving us and loving us just as we are. Amen.

The Story: Jeremiah 31:27-34

Pass out the bibles and help all of the children to find Jeremiah.

Remind the children of the themes of the last 2 weeks lessons. (The destruction of Jerusalem, exile of the people to Babylon, and God's instructions to the people to settle in Babylon and pray for the city.) Once the children are refreshed, let them know that this passage from Jeremiah is a continuation of God's message to the people of Judah exiled in Babylon.

Ask for 3 volunteers willing to read. The first volunteer will read verses 27-28. After reading those 2 verses, ask the group: **what does it sound like God is saying here?** Break down the two verses – God is promising to remain with the people in the good times that are coming just as God was there while the people disobeyed and the destruction came.

Ask the second volunteer to read verses 29-30. **What does this mean?** In verse 29 we hear of the idea that the things the parents do wrong dooms the children to a poor fate, but in verse 30 God says that our fate is our own.

Have the third volunteer read verses 31-34. God is making a new covenant – **what was the old covenant?** Do the children remember? (God promised the people who were led out of Egypt by Moses that God would bring them to their own land in freedom. The people believe that to be Jerusalem, from which they are currently exiled.

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to write something “on their hearts?”
- What is God writing on their hearts?
- Is there anything written on your heart?
- I wonder how it feels to have God's word “written on your heart.”
- I wonder how the people responded to Jeremiah telling the people of God's new covenant.
- I wonder how God feels about the people.

Activity: Today we will make stained glass hearts for God. Before we make our hearts, we need to take some time to ask God what word God wants to write on our hearts. Turn on the instrumental music and give the children a couple minutes of quiet prayer time to ask God what word God wants written on their hearts. At the end of the time turn off the music and continue.

Each child should take a piece of wax paper and a variety of colored scraps of tissue paper. The children can tear the tissue paper into a variety of small shapes. Using a glue stick, the children

will stick their tissue paper onto the wax paper. So that there is no plain space left and it is entirely filled with color.

After the wax paper is covered, invite the children to select a piece of construction paper. Ask them to fold the paper in half along the long edge. While the paper is folded they should cut a half heart shape along the folded edge so that when they open the paper it will be an open heart framed by construction paper.

Next, turn the wax paper over so that the tissue paper side is on the table and the wax side is facing up. Put glue on one side of the construction paper and stick it to the wax paper so that the empty heart is now filled with the color from the tissue paper.

Finally, ask the children to recall the word they discerned that God wants to write on their hearts. Give each child a sharpie marker and invite them to write that word on the wax paper. (Water soluble markers will not work on wax paper, they must be permanent markers.)

Getting Closure: If there are windows in your classroom (not the safe church windows, but additional windows) you can use these stained-glass hearts to decorate the classroom while the children share their hearts with the class. If not, invite the children to share their hearts and then invite them to take the hearts home and hang them in their bedroom windows as a reminder of God's word for them.

Closing Prayer: Holy God, you loved the people of Judah so much that you forgot their sin and shared your love. Help us to love people so much that we forget their wrongs and remember their beauty. Amen.

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