

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Proper 24
Lesson Plans for Younger 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 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 torn into pieces
- Construction paper with large hearts cut into the middle of the page (fold the paper in half along the long edge.
- While the paper is folded, cut a half heart shape along the folded edge. When you open the paper it will be an open heart framed by construction paper.) *1 for each child
- Glue Sticks
- Sharpie Markers

Beginning: Welcome the children as they arrive for the day 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 a vase by accident, told a lie? 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 for us too. God loves us like a parent 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

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.

God spoke to the people through the prophet, Jeremiah. God loved the people very much but God was sad because the people weren't listening to God's plan for them. God wanted to make a new agreement with the people. God wanted the people to promise to love God and God would promise to love and protect the people. But God knew that the people have a hard time remembering God's promises when things are not going well. So God made a plan! God decided to write about God's love on the hearts of the people. God decided to write on their hearts that God loved them fully so that when they had a hard time remembering they only needed to look in their hearts.

- I wonder what it means for God to write on your heart.
- I wonder how it feels to have God's word "written on your heart."
- I wonder how the people felt when Jeremiah told them that God wanted to make a promise to them.
- I wonder how God feels about the people.
- I wonder how you know that your parents love you.
- I wonder how you know that God loves you.

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. What are some things God might want us to remember all the time? (God Loves You, Hope, Love, Grace, Mercy, etc...) Good! Let's keep all of those things in mind.

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 select a construction paper heart frame.

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. Using a sharpie marker, help them write that word or phrase 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, thank you for writing your word on our hearts so we will never forget your love. Amen.

*Published by the Formation Office of The Episcopal Church, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.
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