

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Season after Pentecost, Proper 17
Gospel Lesson for Younger Children

Scripture: Matthew 16:21-28

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel and Reading

"From that time on..." this phrase signifies a shift in the Gospel of Matthew. After last week's lesson where Peter professes that Jesus is the Messiah, we turn this week to Jesus getting down to business telling them what that means. Being the Messiah doesn't mean that he is above anyone, but rather that he is one who is living out what he has been professing in his teachings, miracles, and parables. Peter does not want to believe that this is possible and wants to save him from this. Jesus reprimands him, saying that even though he had professed him as Messiah, he clearly doesn't understand what that will mean.

Theme: Stumbling Blocks

Before Class: Set up your altar area with a green cloth, cross, and candle.

Beginning: Invite the group to gather together. Invite them to think about what it would have been like to be Peter, the disciple who "got it" in last week's Gospel and professed Jesus as the Messiah? What would come after that?

Opening Prayer: Loving God, we ask you to be with us as we explore who you call us to be as your disciples. Help us to grow in our belief and understand what being your disciple truly means each day. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 16:21-28

Now that the disciples understood that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus told them what was going to happen. He let them know that he would suffer, be killed, and raise up again on the third day. Peter could not believe what he was saying and told Jesus that they could not let this happen. But Jesus told Peter, "Get out of my way, you are a stumbling block and do not understand."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "Anyone who wants to follow me must let me lead them. You must leave behind what you usually do and follow what I tell you. Do not run from what is ahead of me, rather embrace it. Follow me and I will show you the way. You have to leave your way behind and follow my way in order to truly be a disciple. I promise, there will be great reward at the end."

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what your favorite part of the story is?
- I wonder what questions you may have about the story?
- Jesus was teaching his disciples what it meant to follow him. I wonder how we follow Jesus today?

Activity: Jesus Says

Invite the children to play the game “Jesus Says” which is like Simon says.

Choose one person to be the leader. The leader then tells the children what they must do. The children can only do what the leader asks when he or she uses the phrase “Jesus says” before giving the instruction. For example: Jesus says high-five your neighbor. When someone follows an instruction when the leader didn’t use the words “Jesus says” then that person is out. For example: Give your neighbor a high-five. Repeat until one person is left and they become the leader.

Activity: Follow the Leader

Invite the children to play follow the leader. The leader is Jesus and the rest are following as disciples. The leader can take any safe path they choose that leads to the altar and Jesus. Let each of them take a turn being the leader.

Activity: Following Jesus

Invite the children to draw a picture of what it means to them to follow Jesus.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to gather in a circle. Ask them if they have anything they would like special prayers for and make note of what they say. Then invite them into prayer and insert what they offered.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, help us to follow you more closely. We pray especially for (insert prayers here.) Guide our ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet that we may engage in your mission in the world. Amen.

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