

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Season after Pentecost, Proper 15
Gospel Lesson for Younger Children

Scripture: Matthew 15:10-28

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

As we continue the journey with Jesus and the disciples, we first get a lesson about what is clean and unclean. Jesus' words are important for us all to remember – that our words come from our heart and what comes from our mouths speaks of who we are and our intentions. Following this parable, Jesus encounters a woman from Tyre and Sidon who had somehow heard of his teaching and healing. She comes to him, speaking words from her heart, showing Jesus that she truly believes even though she is not from Israel. He heals her because of her deep faith.

Theme: Words from our Heart

Before Class: Note: Because of the complicated nature of the lesson today, we will focus on the first part of the story with the younger children. You will need half-sheets of construction paper in various colors, markers, and crayons. You will need easel paper or a blackboard.

Beginning: Invite the children to gather together in a circle. Ask them how they feel when someone says something nice? Then ask how they feel when someone says something that is not nice, is mean, or is unkind?

Opening Prayer: Loving God, be with us as we explore what your words mean for us and for others. Help us to grow in our belief in you and not be afraid to tell others of your power and love. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 15:10-28

Our story begins today with Jesus calling the crowd to him and telling them to listen to what he is about to say, because it is important. He reminded them that they have many rules about what they can or cannot eat and many people get so worried about following those rules that they forget what is really important. He said, "What goes into the mouth (like food) is not what makes people ruined or bad, but it is what comes out of their mouth that can ruin them."

The disciples did not understand and were worried about who might have been upset by him saying this. Jesus told them not to worry about those who were upset. Peter asked for Jesus to tell them what the story meant so that they could better understand.

Jesus said, “Whatever we eat goes into the stomach and is digested and it cannot ruin us. But the things that come out of our mouths come from the heart. These words can ruin people if they are mean or evil. The evil and mean words can ruin them and those around them.

Reflection:

In this story, Jesus was reminding the people around them that words come from our heart, from our soul. These are the things that tell others about who we are and what is important to us. Our words can tell people of love and kindness and Jesus’ power or they can be mean and rude and hurtful.

Let’s make a list of all the words that come from our hearts that tell us about who Jesus is. (Write the words up on the easel paper or white board for those children that can read. Example: Love, joy, grace, prayer, peace, friend, teacher, thank you, I like you, let me help you, etc.)

Activity: Showing our Words

Give the children the half-sheets of construction paper you have cut out and invite them to write words or draw pictures that tell about what their heart would say to Jesus. What words would they use if they were talking with Jesus? What would it look like?

Activity: Loving Words

Invite the children to sit in a circle. Tell them that we are going to practice using our words of love and kindness to show the love and kindness in our hearts. Invite each child to say one thing in love and kindness about Jesus. If you have time, you can also have them say kind words to one another.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share what they came up with in the “Showing our Words” and take their papers home as a reminder of the power of using words to profess our faith and our love to one another.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, help us to not be afraid as we encounter you in the paths of our lives. Guide our ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet that we may engage in your mission in the world. Amen.

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