

Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Joshua 3:7-17

The Season After Pentecost is the longest season of the church year, spanning almost half the calendar year. The weeks after Pentecost are called 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 liturgical color of the season is green. It is often thought of as a season of growth both in our personal faith and in the life of the church. Common themes to focus on throughout the season are:

- Our relationship with God.
- Our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another through our prayers, the sacraments and life in the body of Christ.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- The Church and its work for God’s mission.

Notation for this Scripture

After Moses’ death, God commissioned Joshua, Moses’ assistant, to continue to lead the people of Israel. God makes promises to Joshua just as promises had been made to Moses about the land they were to possess and how God was to protect them on their journey. Keep in mind that those on the journey are now the children, grandchildren or maybe even great grandchildren of the Israelites that were freed. They have been journeying their whole lives, they have heard God’s promises, they have followed Moses’ lead and now Joshua is called upon to be the leader of God’s people and lead them into the promised land.

Today's story tells us about Joshua readying and taking the Israelites across the Jordan.

Note: I would encourage you to read a few verses further than the lectionary gives us today. If you include the next seven verses (Joshua 4:1-7) you will hear about the setting of the 12 stones to help the future generations remember their crossing over through the Jordan, into the promised land. I've included it as optional below.

Theme: Faith and Following God

Supplies Needed: It might be fun if you found an audio version online to play for the children. You may also want to find a picture to print off and show them pictures of the Ark of the Covenant.

Feet and Stones Paper, pencils, art supplies, markers, clean stones (if you do the optional part of the reading), paint for the stones. You may want to pre-cut the feet before the children arrive.

Creating the Ark of the Covenant One big box either painted in gold paint or covered in gold paper, tape, glue, scissors, copies of the wings and angels, markers, sticks or poles to hold the box, small gold paperclips, hot glue, art supplies for the children to create other things to go inside of the box such as small 10 Commandments, Aaron's rod

Beginning: Welcome the children into the room and have them sit in your gathering area. Ask how their week was. Ask if they have anything special that reminds them of God.

Opening Prayer: *Almighty God, you have given us so much, and continue to bless us each day. Open our ears that we may hear your word and understand more about your presence in our lives. Amen.*

The Story: Joshua 3:7-17 (4:1-7)

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God's plan is for each of us too.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what your favorite part of this story was?
- I wonder if this story sounds like another one that we heard about Moses?
- I wonder what it felt like to walk on the dry ground with the Jordan rising up in a single heap?
- I wonder what the Israelites were feeling as they crossed into the Promised Land?
- I wonder what special things remind you of God?

Feet and Stones

In our story today, we hear about all of the Israelites crossing the Jordan River on dry land. Do you remember how the water was pushed aside so they had dry land to walk upon? Allow the children time to respond.

The twelve tribes of Israel, (Asher, Benjamin, Dan, Gad, Issachar, Joseph, Judah, Levi, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, Zebulun) did as God had commanded Joshua. The 12 priests, one from each tribe, picked up the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments given to them by God (and maybe some other items) and carried it to the shores of the Jordan. As soon as their feet touched the waters, the waters rose up around them in a heap and created the dry land for them to walk upon.

(optional: Then, once they got over to the Promised Land, they once again did as LORD had told them and the 12 tribes chose a stone from the Jordan River and put it on the shore to create a memorial of their journey. These stones were stacked up to help the children who would come after them remember how they had come to the land and the faithfulness of God.)

Our feet, our bodies, are an important part of how we are faithful to God. The 12 Tribes of Israel journeyed a LONG distance and for many, many years, following the word of God that they heard through their servants Moses and Joshua.

FEET I wonder how our feet and our bodies help us to serve the LORD? Allow the children time to brainstorm, writing their ideas up on the board/paper.

Once they have thought about ways that they can serve the LORD, have them trace their feet and create footprints with words or pictures to help them remember. If you want to save some time, you can create a footprint template and make copies for each person to use.

STONES If you included the optional reading, you can include this activity as well. The Israelites marked the end of their journey by creating a memorial of stones. This memorial served as a reminder not only of their faithful journey following God.

Invite the children to brainstorm how the Israelites were faithful. Have them create stones with words of faith and journey written on them.

Creating The Ark

In our story today, we hear about the 12 priest of the 12 tribes of Israel carrying the Ark of the Covenant to the edge of the Jordan river. I wonder if you know what the Ark of the Covenant is? Allow the children time to respond.

The Ark of the Covenant is a chest that was built after God commanded Moses to do so. God gave Moses lengthy instructions on how to build the Ark of the Covenant, because it was to be carrying important things! The chest was built to carry the Ten Commandments as the Israelites journeyed to the Promised Land. Some say that it only contained the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. (1 Kings 8:9 and 2 Chronicles 5:10) Others say that it also contained Aaron's rod and a golden pot filled with manna. (Hebrews 9:4).

What did the Ark look like? (Exodus 25:10-22, 37:1-9) It was made of acacia wood, 2 ½ cubits long, 1 ½ cubit wide, and 1 ½ high with gold overlay inside and out. It had 4 rings, two on each side, attached to the feet of the box. The poles that went through the rings were also made of acacia wood and overlain with gold. The poles were used to carry the ark. It had a cover that was made of pure gold with two pure gold cherubim or angels sitting on it. There was one angel on each end of the cover, with the two angels facing one another, with their wings outstretched and touching each other. (a cubit, is about 18 inches long.) (There are many pictures of replicas of the Ark online if you wanted to show the children a picture.)

The Ark served as a reminder of God's presence with the people of Israel, carrying the Ten Commandments and reminders of God's presence in the angel, the Ark was always put in a special tabernacle when the Israelites made camp. The Ark was a physical reminder of all that God had done for them and given to them.

I wonder, if you had an Ark, what would you put in it to remind you of God's presence, of God's commandments, and of God's guidance? Allow the children time to respond.

The lesson can go two directions from here. 1. Have them work together to make a replica of the Ark of the Covenant. 2. Have them create the things that remind them of God that remind them of God to put into the Ark.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to clean up their space. Invite them to gather in the circle and share what they created.

Closing Prayer: *Gracious and loving God, thank you for guiding us each day and helping us see you in the things around us. Help us to remember your holy and life giving ways as we go out into the world. Amen.*

Joshua 3:7-17 (4:1-7)

The LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they may know that I will be with you as I was with Moses. You are the one who shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’” Joshua then said to the Israelites, “Draw near and hear the words of the LORD your God.” Joshua said, “By this you shall know that among you is the living God who without fail will drive out from before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites: the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is going to pass before you into the Jordan. So now select twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. When the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan flowing from above shall be cut off; they shall stand in a single heap.”

When the people set out from their tents to cross over the Jordan, the priests bearing the ark of the covenant were in front of the people. Now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest. So when those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the edge of the water, the waters flowing from above stood still, rising up in a single heap far off at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, while those flowing toward the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, were wholly cut off. Then the people crossed over opposite Jericho. While all Israel were crossing over on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan.

[(optional reading) When the entire nation had finished crossing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua: ‘Select twelve men from the people, one from each tribe, and command them, “Take twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet stood, carry them over with you, and lay them down in the place where you camp tonight.”’ Then Joshua summoned the twelve men from the Israelites, whom

he had appointed, one from each tribe. Joshua said to them, 'Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, one for each of the tribes of the Israelites, so that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, "What do those stones mean to you?" then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off in front of the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the Israelites a memorial for ever.']

Written by The Rev. Shannon Kelly

Creating an Ark of the Covenant

Supplies:

- Large Box
- Gold Paint (and you may want to pre-paint the box gold) OR Gold wrapping paper for them to wrap the box in
- Tape
- Glue
- Scissors
- Copies of the angels and wings or larger replicas for them all to color
- Markers
- Sticks for the poles (you could alternatively use popsicle sticks or similar)
- Small gold paperclips
- Hot glue (for the teacher not the children to use)

Paint the box gold or cover the box with gold paper.

Color the angel and the wings, on both sides

Glue the wings on each side of the angel and fold the bottom of the angel over just slightly so you can glue it onto the box.

