

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 1:4-11

Background

Epiphany means several things: a gift is received; the gift must be shared. Jesus appears to be suggesting a rhythm, a balance to our lives. We go inward to be with God, to receive; we go out in the world to share what we have been given – still with God. We are called to balance the pouring out of our love with the resting in God. We are called to heal by just showing up, by laying on hands, by sharing what we have. This good news that was for the few people who heard it up close and personal is ours because they reached out and shared it. It will belong to those who have not yet heard, if we accept our call to share the story by how we live out our lives and as St. Francis said, “with words, if necessary.”

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The baby Jesus is now a man; a man beginning his ministry. Perhaps he is still trying to sort out in his mind what he is being called to do. He looks for validation and turns to his cousin, John. John, meanwhile, has been faithfully calling people to prepare, turn around, start over. He is pretty sure he will recognize Jesus, but he has not yet met him. When Jesus shows up, John goes into the water with him to baptize him, and both of them hear a voice from heaven. Jesus now knows he will be able to figure out what it is that he is being called to do.

Theme: Receiving the Gift and Offering the Gift

Before Class: You will need copies of the script (found below) for each child. You will also need a 3 x 5 card for each child and bright markers, newsprint or a large piece of paper. You will also want to have copies of the Book of Common Prayer available.

Beginning: Describe the way you are going to read the Scripture today: different people reading different parts. Then, ask for volunteers to read each part. (The voice of God could well be said by all the children – and you – together, to give it more power.)

Opening Prayer: *Thank you for the stories we will have in this season of Epiphany. And thank you for each of us here today. Amen.*

The Story: Mark 1:4-11 Our theme for today is “Receiving the Gift and Offering the Gift.” Be looking for signs of this theme in our story from the Bible. Today’s reading is Mark 1:4-11, but we will focus on only the verses 9 - 11. Read the passage, with each part read by a different child. When you get to the voice of God, read it together.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what it was like for John to baptize Jesus, his cousin?
- I wonder what it was like for Jesus to be baptized.
- I wonder why we do baptisms in our church and why it is usually babies who get baptized?
- Has anyone here been to a baptism at our church and remember anything that happened?
- Who usually does the baptisms?
- Where do the baptisms take place?
- What is a godmother or godfather?
- I wonder what baptisms tell us about being people of God?

I am Sealed by the Holy Spirit: Pass out copies of the Book of Common Prayer. Ask the class to turn to page 300, then to page 304 and 305, and look at some of the promises. Then turn to page 308. Give each child a 3 x 5 card and ask them to pick a colored marker and copy the sentence in the middle of the page, writing “I am” instead of “N., you are,” so that it reads,

"I am sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever." Invite the children to take the card and find a place at home to put it. (A bookmark? By their bed? Whatever they choose.)

Gifts: The theme for the season of Epiphany is "Receiving the Gift and Offering the Gift." What do we think this means? (Perhaps the children are familiar with the concept: "Pay it Forward", which was a book and then a movie they might have seen.) Some may have seen the bumper sticker that invites people to practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of generosity.

Let's see if we can figure out things we could do to make something better or someone happier – and do it secretly. Could we do these things in ways so no one will know? See what the children come up with. (Example: get a big trash bag and pick up junk at the park and toss the bag in the trash. Unload the dishwasher when no one is looking – and it is not your turn!) We can use this piece of newsprint and list ideas, then fold the paper up so no one can see it when we are not together.

Getting Closure: Ask the children to take a minute and think of one word that has caught their attention in this time together. Invite them to share.

Closing prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon us your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised us to the new life of grace. Sustain us, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give us an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen. (adapted from the Book of Common prayer, page 308)

Mark 1:4-11

Narrator: ⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going

out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.⁷ He proclaimed,

John: 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

Narrator: In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.¹¹ And a voice came from heaven,

God: 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'