

Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Mark 1:21-28

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

Who is this man? He now has a little band of raw recruits – eager to serve yet largely clueless. Does Jesus send them off to school? No. He shows them. He models the behavior that will form disciples. He teaches with authority. He is right where they are – not way over their heads. He heals when he notices it is needed. Who he is speaks powerfully: as one with authority.

Theme: Who is this Jesus?

Before: You may need paper and crayons. Consider whether you and the children could take a walk within the building – to simulate Jesus and his disciples walking to the synagogue. If that is not realistic, the session can be done in your own space. The activity honors the fact that children learn by noticing and imitating so a pantomime of the story is suggested as the activity. If possible, create a simple “scroll” using two dowels (could even be

paper towel cardboard cores) and a few sheets of paper taped together and onto whatever you are using as dowels.

Beginning: Tell the children we have a story about Jesus showing his disciples what he wanted them to do. The first thing they did was go to church; and the first thing Jesus did was give a sermon. What would we say a sermon is? (If they are not clear, tell them that a priest, deacon, or lay preacher reads the Bible, thinks about it, prays about it, and then tells us what these words mean.)

Opening Prayer: *Thank you, God, for wanting us to be your helpers. Amen.*

The Story: Jesus had some friends to help him. They wanted to know what they should do to help. So, the first thing Jesus did was walk with his friends, walk all the way to their church. (It was called a synagogue.) Jesus got up and read the stories from the Bible. They did not have a book, like we do; the words were written on a scroll. (Show what you have brought.) Jesus explained what all the hard words meant. And his disciples said: "I get it!" There was a man at church who needed help. His body was not working well, so Jesus simply put his hand on the man's shoulder and healed him. "Wow!" said all the people. "This man is special." And they told all their friends.

Activity: A Story Without Words

Ask the children to think out loud with you, at first, so they can "tell" this story with actions – not words. Some questions to get them started:

- Did Jesus drive his friends to church in his car? (No, of course not. They did not have cars, they walked.)
- Did someone read the story from a book? (No, they used a scroll.)
- Who gave the sermon? (Jesus.)
- What did the man need? (He needed to be healed.)

- What did Jesus do? (Jesus put his hand on the man's shoulder and the man got well.)
- If it is possible to walk around the building, tell the children that would be a way to "show" Jesus and his friends walking to church.

The Story Without Words: Tell the children you will watch while they show you the story without words. If they get stuck, ask them leading questions such as "What did Jesus do after everyone heard the story?"

Activity: Give the children paper and crayons and invite them to draw this story without words that they have just presented.

Getting Closure: Tell the children we are going to walk around our room once or twice, pretending we are walking with Jesus to go to church with Jesus. Then we can stop and sit in a circle for a minute.

Closing Prayer. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to show us what we need to do. Amen.