

Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Acts 4:5-12

Background

Alleluia, Alleluia! Christ is Risen! We are now firmly rooted in the Easter season and we continue to celebrate as Jesus' time with his disciples marches on. We've walked with Jesus through the wilderness into Jerusalem and to the grave. Easter is a season of 50 days in which we name and claim our identity in Christ as an Easter People. Easter is a season of baptism and rebirth. Many of the Scripture passages we will hear are about baptism or about Jesus' sacrifice for us. Many churches use this as a season for baptisms and receptions into the church. It is the season when we re-explore our identity as Christians as it is the key to our faith tradition: that Jesus, the Son of God, died for our sins and rose to new life again from the grave. In doing so, Jesus has opened the pathway to everlasting life for all of us. Thanks be to God!

A Notation for This Week's Scripture

During Eastertide, the Old Testament readings are replaced in the lectionary with passages from the book of Acts. This week we hear from Peter once again! Last week we heard as Peter preached repentance after he and John healed the crippled beggar. This week we learn that there were further consequences for that miracle and for the increased membership in this fledgling religion. As the church has grown drastically in membership in just a short time, the temple authorities are weary of the apostles and their actions. This week's Scripture finds Peter and John speaking testimony to the Authorities the morning after their arrest.

Theme: What's in a Name?

Before Class:

Write the various names of “Jesus” on some rectangular blocks. Emmanuel, Jesus, Messiah, Christ, Lord, Rabbi, Teacher, Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace etc...

Supplies needed:

- Building Blocks of any sort, except Lego (you will need a whole set, not just those you’ve written on)

Beginning:

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

People/Students: The Lord is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

How many names for Jesus can we think of together? Let’s make a list on the board: Jesus, Lord, King of the Jews (was written on the plaque where Jesus was crucified,) Son of God, Messiah, Emmanuel, Brother, Teacher, Rabbi... Jesus has a lot of names! How many names do you have? Our names are an important part of our identity: they tell the world who we are and allow us to

feel known. Our names have special meanings too. Today we are going to think about the importance of our names and how God might use them and us.

Opening Prayer: *Loving Jesus, Holy Emmanuel, help us to know you better with each passing day. Amen.*

The Story:

Last week we learned about the time Peter and John healed the crippled man on the road using the name of Jesus. This week we learn that Peter and John got in trouble with the religious authorities for that healing. They were put in jail for proclaiming beliefs that were different than the beliefs of the

temple authorities. Much like Jesus was crucified for claiming to be God's Son, his followers were now getting in trouble for speaking the truth about Jesus' resurrection. This made the temple authorities nervous because a lot of people were turning their faith to Jesus.

Today's story comes the morning after John and Peter have been put in jail for preaching about Jesus.

Acts 4:5-12

The rulers all got together in Jerusalem, with several of the important people from the temple authority. They brought out Peter and John who were in prison and asked them, "By what power or by what name did you do heal that man?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people, the only thing we did was a good deed because we helped a sick man get better. But if you must know how we did this, we healed the man in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Jesus, whom you crucified and who God raised from the dead." Peter continued, "This Jesus is like the foundation upon which a strong building can be built. There is no other name under heaven with as much power as Jesus' name."

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what made Peter brave enough to speak to the officials like he did.*
- I wonder what the officials thought about Peter's speech.*
- I wonder what the most important part of the story was to you.*

Activity: Names are important

When people call us by name we pay attention. Sometimes, when we are in trouble or when our parents are serious they might call us by our full name. When we are baptized the priest calls us by name saying: "_____ you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own, forever." Our name is an important part of who we are.

Jesus' name is very important, too. At Christmas time we hear a lot about Jesus' name. We hear in the Scriptures that the Angel Gabriel tells Mary she is to bear a son and she should name him Emmanuel, which means "God with Us." On Christmas Day, we read in the book of the prophet Isaiah, "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) Jesus' name tells us a lot about him and what he has come to do.

Today, we are going to build a strong tower, like the one Peter talked about in the story today. Peter said that the name of Jesus was like the foundation of a strong building. Who knows what a foundation is? That's right, it is the base upon which the rest of a building stands. We are going to work together to build a strong, tall tower.

First we will need to find our foundation blocks. Peter said the name of Jesus is the best foundation... let's see if any of our blocks have the name of Jesus.

At this time, show the children the blocks with the various names of Jesus on them. Talk to the children about where those names come from. We have the 4 names from the Isaiah passage listed about, Teacher or Rabbi is what the disciples often called Jesus, etc. Go through all of the name block you have as you assemble the 2-layer foundation for your tower. Try to make the names show on the side of the block so you can see the words as you build.

After you have a foundation assembled as the children to work together to build a tower. You may want to ask the children to place new blocks one at a time. Try to make the tower as tall as possible. If the tower spills over, point out how many of the foundation "Jesus blocks" remain in place and start building again.

After you've built your tower, ask the children if they think the building will stand if you take away the "Jesus blocks?" Is there a way to pull out the Jesus blocks without letting the tower fall?

If one of the children has an idea for how to remove one of the Jesus blocks without letting the tower fall invite her/him to try. After it begins to fall over,

ask if another child would like to try pulling out a Jesus block without letting the tower fall. Give them the chance. Continue this until the whole tower has collapsed.

Getting Closure: After getting the giggles out of the way, talk with the kids about the importance of Jesus as the foundation in our lives. When we are sad or hurt or confused, Jesus can be there to support us. When we are happy or joyful, Jesus is grateful to share those feelings with us. Jesus is the basis for all we say and do.

You could send one of the “Jesus blocks” home with each child as a reminder of today’s lesson if you had blocks to spare.

Closing Prayer: *Loving God, Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to be our foundation. Amen.*

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

People/Students: The Lord is Risen indeed, Alleluia!