

Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Acts 3:1-11, 12-19

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 Peter calls on the people to repent and turn their hearts to Jesus. Peter is addressing a crowd of people who did not believe Jesus was the Son of God when he was sent to the cross to die; however, after the resurrection, many people heard rumors of this miraculous event and questioned their own disbelief. Immediately before today's story, Peter and John offer the name of Christ to a crippled beggar on the road. At the name of Jesus the beggar is healed and jumps up and down in celebration. The people who witnessed that healing are amazed and confused. Peter's monologue from today's story is aimed at those people and at inviting them to believe in the One in whose name miraculous healing takes place.

Theme: I Believe

Before Class: You will need:

- Paper
- Coloring Utensils
- Pencils (for the adults)
- Safety Scissors
- Markers
- Heart stickers or cut out paper hearts (that will fit on the palm of the hand)
- Glue sticks

Beginning:

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen! People/Children: The Lord is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

Learning to give voice to our beliefs is a vital part of our faith in God and our membership in Christ's body. What are some ways we give voice to our faith? (Singing hymns, praying, participating in communion – other ways, in our daily life, might include showing acts of

kindness and mercy, volunteering to help others, sharing a story about God with our friends) There are many ways to give voice to our faith. What are some ways you have given voice to your faith either in church or out in the world? (Give the children time to respond.)

Opening Prayer: *Lord God, we pray that you would open our eyes to see you all around us. Amen.*

The Story:

Today's story tells of a time that Peter shared his faith with a group of people who didn't yet believe. Sometimes we encounter God in big and small ways – what would it be like if we encountered God but we didn't know that it was God? In today's story we are going to hear about a group of people who witness a miracle in Jesus' name and are struggling to make sense of that miracle. In response, Peter, one of Jesus' followers, explains why he believes in Jesus and encourages the people to believe in Jesus, too.

*For the purposes of today's lesson we are going to include verses 1-11 in addition to the assigned 12-19. Verses 1-11 give the context with which the story from today's lectionary makes sense.

Acts 3: (1-11)*, 12-19

One day, when Peter and John were going up to the temple to pray they passed by a disabled man who was begging. Peter healed the man in the name of Jesus. The man immediately jumped up and started praising God. All of the people who saw the healing were filled with wonder and amazement.

When Peter saw how amazed the people were, he said to them, 'You Israelites, why are you amazed? It wasn't John and I who made this man walk! The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God who is the father of Jesus, healed this man. But you did believe Jesus when he was here and you sent him to be crucified. But God raised Jesus from the dead! John and I saw Jesus after he was raised. We have faith in Jesus' name. Jesus' name has made this man strong. Faith in Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

'And now, friends, I know you didn't know any better and that is why you didn't believe Jesus when he was here. But now you have seen Jesus' miracles with your own eyes. Believe in Jesus now so God may forgive your sins.'

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder how Peter felt when he spoke to the people.
- I wonder what the people thought when Peter spoke to them.
- I wonder what God would say if God were speaking to the people in this story.
- I wonder if it would be easy to believe in Jesus if you lived back then.

Activity: Is it always easy to believe? As Christians we believe in a God who came down to earth, in the person of Jesus, walked among us. He went to the cross and died for our sins before being raised from the dead. We believe in a God who is the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of God that we believe still speaks in the world today. We believe in God the Creator who made all the

things we see, and even those things we don't see. We believe that God has made miracles, flooded the world, and loves us immeasurably.

In short, we believe in a pretty unbelievable God!

Every week in church we say together the words of the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed is a very old statement of faith that unites us with Christians around the world. One of the neat things about the creed is that it gives us words to declare our faith when we might not be able to think of words on our own.

The first thing we say in the creed is

“We believe in one God”

Today, we are going to make God hands to take home to remind us that to have faith in One God: Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit!

1. First, pass out the paper and help each of the children to trace and cut out a handprint. 2. After cutting out their handprints, write We, Believe, In, One, and God on the fingers as shown above. If you have some children who are beginning writers, invite them to write “God” on the index finger of their

God Hands craft – if some are more advanced they might be able to write more of the words. 3. Next, invite the children to stick a heart sticker to the palm of their God Hands. 4. Now, allow the children time to decorate their hands.

Getting Closure: After everyone has completed their God Hands it's time to teach them a way to remember the first line of the creed. Have everyone hold up their actual hand. Now, with each word of the first line of the creed they will fold down one finger (the finger associated with that word, according to our craft diagram) until their index finger (God finger) is the only one left

standing. They will leave the index finger raised as they complete the line – so that at the end of the line they are holding up the number 1!

Go over this a few times as they learn to say by heart, “We believe in one God.”

Closing Prayer: *One God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, strengthen our faith, day by day. Amen.*

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

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