

Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 20:19-31

Background: Easter - the unearned gift of grace. The reflective season of “going in” that Lent provided (no matter what disciplines we undertook, nor even how well we attended to them) explodes on Easter. Of course, we cannot “figure it out.” How comforting, then, to have these Scriptures, showing first how the disciples struggled to grasp what had happened and then stories of Jesus before the crucifixion, which are written in the light of the Resurrection.

As Easter people we know, as Paul said, that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God. We are people who expect life out of death. And so, in Eastertide we celebrate the wonder and prepare ourselves to take the awesome message out into the world on Pentecost.

A Notation for this Week's Gospel

In fear, the disciples huddled behind locked doors – an obvious response to the crucifixion. (“Are we next?”) Suddenly, Jesus is right there, sensitively inviting the disciples to convince themselves that it is he – showing them the marks on his body. “Peace be with you,” Jesus says. The disciples are now to carry on the work Jesus had begun. Jesus breathes the power of the Holy Spirit upon them. As God sent Jesus, now the disciples are sent out. Their message is handed on to us, the torch of peace, so we can hand it on to those who come after us.

Theme: Peace Be with You

Before: You will need a copy of the “Peace be with you” sign. To continue the theme of Easter as a season and not just one day, select one of the two options for an Easter season class project.

- Easter tree - bare branches secured with stones in a deep jar, Easter symbols
- Easter mobile – string, hanger, Easter symbols

For Easter symbols, you can simply let the children create them, or you can print out symbols for them to decorate and color. If you print them out for them to color, have each child working on the same symbol each week. (see the end of the lesson)

You will need craft supplies such as construction paper, yarn, and crayons, and art supplies. You will notice that for these children, only verses 19-22 are used.

If your budget (financial and time) permits, you could purchase from a hobby store strips of magnetic tape and cut little pieces so that the symbol the child makes to take home would “stick” to the refrigerator.

Beginning: Especially if you have not met with these children since Palm Sunday, invite them to tell you what we have heard and seen in church since Palm Sunday. And if they cannot tell you, remind them that Jesus was killed. He died. All his friends were sad. But Jesus did not stay dead. He was resurrected or raised from the dead. Jesus showed his friends that he is still with us. On Easter, which was last Sunday, we celebrated that Good News. Easter is not just a day – it is a whole season. We are still celebrating Easter and will for seven weeks.

Opening Prayer: *Thank you, Jesus, for being right here with us although we cannot see you. Thank you for all of us who are here today. Amen.*

The Story: In this story, the friends of Jesus knew that Jesus had been killed. And they were very sad. So they all got together in the room where they had

been with Jesus and were very sad. They were all there, being sad, when suddenly they saw that Jesus was in the room with them. Jesus knew they were sad and, now, very surprised to see him. So Jesus wanted them to feel better. "Peace be with you," Jesus said to his friends. "Here, see my hands and my side where I was hurt. It is me." I'll bet they all crowded around Jesus, hugging him and hugging each other.

Then, Jesus said to them: "You have been learning from me all this time and now you are ready to go out and do all this work on your own. I am sending you to do the work." And then Jesus breathed on them so they knew that the Holy Spirit was in them and would help them do hard stuff.

Easter Activity: Show the children what you have chosen for the season (the tree or the mobile), and if possible invite them to help you get it set up (securing the branches in the pot) Tell them that each Sunday we will make more decorations for the Easter tree or Easter mobile.

Tell the children a word for today is "Peace." (Or if you want: "Peace be with you.") Then, put out the paper, crayons, or whatever you are using to decorate and invite the children to create symbols. If time permits, let each child make a symbol for your Easter tree or mobile and one to take home to put on the refrigerator. (If you have the magnet strips, a square secured to each symbol going home will make it possible to post it on the home refrigerator.)

Getting Closure: Decorate your Easter tree or mobile by letting each child place his or her symbol where the child believes it is appropriate. When you have finished decorating it, stand in a circle for your closing prayer.

Closing Prayer: *While holding hands, ask each child to turn to another child and all of you say together: "Peace be with you." Then say, "Thank you, God, for sending Jesus and for the Peace with us. Amen."*