

Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 3:14-21

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Jesus patiently prepares his followers for what is to come. Jesus is to be “lifted up” so that he may then lift up all of us. The light has come into the world – a light some will seek at all costs. For others, the darkness is preferable to the penetrating brightness of the light. God reaches out to all of us, sending the Son into the world so that all might be saved through him. We do not know what the disciples made of this revelation. Our concern is what we make of it and what re- alignment we may be called to make.

Theme: Come to the Light

Before Class: You will need Bibles for each person. You might check with your church office if you are not aware of special prayer requests in your church. You will need paper and art supplies if you are doing the optional activity.

Beginning: Ask the group if there are special needs anyone wants to bring to this group for prayer. You may wish to include prayers you know have been requested.

Remind the class that this is the Fourth Sunday of Lent, and we are more than halfway through Lent. In some churches, this Sunday is taken a bit more lightly.

Opening Prayer: *Gracious God, we come before you today, open to hear your word and explore what it says to us today. We offer special prayers for (Pray for those needs requested and thank God for inviting us into prayers of intercession.) Amen.*

The Scripture (John 3:14-21): To make it easier to follow, you could break the Scripture into these units, taking turns reading the verses: verses 14-15; verse 16; verses 17-18; verses 19-21. If time permits, take a minute or two to reflect and then read the passage again, from the beginning – perhaps this time with just one voice.

Reflection Questions:

- Jesus knows that time is at a premium and he has so much he wants to teach. Has anyone here had the experience of knowing that the person you want to talk with may well be leaving before you can say all you want to say? What is it like to be in such a situation?
- Many of us have heard John 3:16 in a variety of contexts or seen the verse all by itself. Where have you seen or heard it? “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”
- I wonder what you think John 3:16 means?
- Jesus speaks of light and darkness right after John 3:16. How do you think these two fit together?

- Remembering the hints of a new order that we saw in last week's lesson, what signs of darkness giving way to light can we find? (From condemnation to saved through Jesus; people with the clear choice: darkness or light – those whose deeds are evil and those who do what is true.)
- "...light has come into the world..." Where do you see light today?

Optional Activity: Invite the participants to take a piece of paper and draw, write, or illustrate in some way where they see light or Jesus in the world around them today.

Getting Closure: Invite the participants to share what they did during the Activity time. If you don't have time to do the activity, invite them to talk about those thing that bring them light or show them the love of God.

Closing Prayer: *Thank you, God, for your unconditional love pouring out on us and on those we love. Amen.*

John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

"And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that

their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”