

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Isaiah 50:4-9a

Background

Today is the start of the long walk of Holy Week. Some churches read the whole passion narrative today while others observe only Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and wait to read the passion until later this week. Regardless of the tradition at your church, today is a day when we have the benefit of knowing what is to come. Today we enter Jerusalem with Jesus knowing that he is going to die – but we also know that he will be raised.

A Notation for This Week's Scripture

In this section of Isaiah we hear what is sometimes called the third servant song. Isaiah 40-55 are passages that talk about the image of a suffering servant. The lectionary preparers likely chose this reading for Palm Sunday as a foreshadowing of the suffering Jesus was going to endure in Jerusalem. The servant illustrated in the servant songs is a wise and loyal follower of God who will have a gentle heart, a trained tongue, a listening ear, and the courage to love with sacrificial love. The way the passages are written invites the reader to imagine him/herself as the servant just as we so often try to insert the image of Christ into this servant role.

Theme: God gives; God opens; and God helps

Before Class: make sure you have the supplies needed for class,

Supplies needed:

- A Radio that had a tuning dial and antennae attached. Before class tune the dial to a static station.

Beginning: Begin by asking each child how he/she is feeling today. Today is a day with many emotions. We've come to the end of Lent and are almost to the excitement of Easter; but this week between the waiting and the celebrating will be filled with many emotions. Today as Jesus enters Jerusalem we have joy and excitement. As the week goes on Jesus will eat one last supper with his friends and will wash their feet bringing with it feelings of love and togetherness. Later in the week, as Jesus stands trial, there is confusion and fear. When Jesus is sentenced and crucified there is pain and sadness. But we know that joy will return next Sunday when Jesus is raised. Feelings are important things to note in our bodies and in our lives because they help us to check in with ourselves, one another, and God.

Opening Prayer: *Holy God, open our hearts, minds, and ears to hear and experience all you want to share with us this Holy Week. Amen.*

The Story:

The author of this story, Isaiah, was known as a prophet. Prophets are people who God blessed with the ability to share the word of God with God's people. Sometimes prophets could even tell the people about things that had not happened yet. Today's reading from Isaiah is a story where the narrator is telling us about the ways God has blessed the narrator so they can share God's love with other people. As we read the story today, let's pay special attention to the things God does for this person.

Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, So I know what to say to make people who are sad or tired feel better. Every day God opens my ears-- to listen like a student. The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was did just like God asked, I followed where God called me. When people were mean to me, I did not fight back. When people said mean things to me I did not say mean things in response. The Lord GOD helps me; I know the mean

things people say are not true. Who can be stronger than me? I have God on my side. It is the Lord GOD who helps me; No one can make me feel bad.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you heard in this story.
- I wonder how the person feels about God.
- I wonder what you thought was the most important part of this story.

Let's review a few lines of this story:

Verse 4a: The Lord God has GIVEN me

Verse 5a: The Lord God has OPENED MY EAR

Verse 7a: The Lord God HELPS me

Verse 9a: It is the Lord God who HELPS me

From this we see that God gives; God opens; and God helps.

The key to all of these things is that we must be good listeners so we can hear God's voice when God is speaking to us.

Activity: God speaks to us in all sorts of ways. God speaks to us in prayer. God speaks to us in the beauty all around us. God speaks to us in music. God speaks to us in stillness. God is always speaking! Today we will practice listening to God so that we can be ready to hear, receive, and share the love God is giving us.

Listening to God can be hard sometimes because there are so many other voices out there. It can be like trying to find a good song on the radio...

Have you ever been in the car and your favorite song comes on but there is a lot of static? Or maybe you are trying to listen and your brother or sister change the station? Maybe you are looking forward to hearing a song but the station keeps playing loads of commercials? It can be hard to keep

paying attention when these distractions happen but you know it will be worth it when the song finally comes in loud and clear.

Let's practice listening for God:

Turn on the radio you've brought to class. Before class began you should tune the radio to a station where there is just static. Invite the children up to try and tune in for some music. Some of the children may have never used a radio like this before so you might need to explain the process of tuning the radio. Let each child have a turn. The goal is so find a clear signal. If you live in a large city with easy tuning, you could make it more challenging by saying the students need to find a particular type of music, etc...

After everyone has had an opportunity to tune the radio ask about their experience. Was it easy or hard? Was anything about it frustrating? Have they had to do anything like that before.

Now move the conversation back to God: What are the noises/distractions that make it hard for us to "tune into" God? What are some things we could do in our own lives to make listening to God easier?

Finally, we will play a listening game – the game of telephone. Have the children sit in a circle, cross-legged on the floor or in chairs very close together. Think of a phrase about God to say to the person on your right. Start with "God opens my ears." Whisper that phrase into the ear of the child on your right and ask them to whisper it to the person on their right... and so on until the phrase comes to the last person in the circle. Invite that person to say the phrase out loud. Now, to play another round, think of another phrase: God is Love, God has given me, The Lord God helps me, etc... for an added challenge, tune the radio to a music station and play music softly in the background. Ask the children to focus very hard to see if they can pass the phrase all the way around the circle.

When mistakes are made and the phrase isn't exactly correct, this is a great opportunity to talk to the children about the importance of listening for God at all times and trying to focus our attention on God even when there are lots of things going on around us.

Getting Closure: Repeat together the key phrases of the story:

The Lord God has GIVEN me The Lord God has OPENED MY EAR The Lord God HELPS me It is the Lord God who HELPS me

God gives; God opens; and God helps.

Remember, we must be good listeners so we can hear God's voice when God is speaking to us.

Closing Prayer: *Loving God, Thank you for giving us ears to hear the wonder of your voice. Travel with us through this coming Holy Week. Amen.*