

Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Mark 8:31-38

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

Just prior to our reading today, Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they offer the various responses that they have heard from others. "But who do YOU say that I am?" asks Jesus. Who are you following? Today, Jesus once again teaches those around him who he is, therefore, what is ahead for the Son of God and what that means for the followers of Jesus.

Theme: Take Up Your Cross

Before Class: You will need copies of the cross (found on the last page) for each child and any art supplies if you are going to do the craft activity. If you are doing the sanding of the cross (see Lent 1), you will need those supplies as well.

Beginning: Invite the children to gather together and ask them if they remember what season we are in at this time in the church year. Last week they explored what the season of Lent was and they may have talked a little

bit about what they were giving up or taking on during Lent. Ask if they have done anything special this week to mark Lent in their home.

Praying: Gracious Lord, we ask you to guide us today as we discover more about who you are and how we are to follow you in our lives each day. Amen.

The Story: You might tell the story something like this. Jesus and his friends had just had a long walk down the road as they journeyed to a new place. And on that walk, they were talking about who Jesus was. They disciples told Jesus who other people thought he was, and then Jesus asked the disciples who they thought he was. They said, "The Messiah." Who is the Messiah? Well, for thousands of years, people hoped the Messiah would come and be a good king and take care of them.

"Hmm," said Jesus. "OK, but it is not going to be the way you think. I am not going to be a fancy king. In fact, I am going to get killed for what I am telling you. But I will not stay dead. After three days, I will be alive again. So, if you want to be one of my followers, you need to keep remembering to do the things I do." Jesus said, "If anyone wants to follow me, they have to leave things behind and take up their cross and follow me."

Sanding the Cross and Discussion: If you are working on smoothing the cross, encourage the children to both sand and talk about the story they just heard. If you are using the doing an offering project, you will want to allow time for that. And if you have chosen to talk about either giving up -- or adding -- something for Lent, leave time for the children's input.

Take Up Your Cross: You can also hand out the cross illustration located at the end of the lesson and invite them to illustrate what it means to follow Jesus. What does it mean that they have to take up their cross and follow Jesus? If they have done anything special at home to mark the season of Lent, how might that help them follow Jesus?

Getting Closure: Ask the children to share any thoughts they have had during the time together - the story, the activities, etc. You may want to then incorporate them in the closing prayer.

Closing Prayer: *Thank you, Jesus, for showing us the ways to follow you.
Thank you for loving us as we learn how to do what you call us to do.
Amen.*

