

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Background

Alleluia, Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Easter is nearing a close but we continue to celebrate with the same enthusiasm because Jesus was raised! 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

As we come toward the end of the season of Easter we go back to the beginning of the book of Acts. There is a very good reason for that! Ascension day, or the day Jesus ascended to heaven after his resurrected time on earth, was celebrated earlier this week. Because of that, our lectionary preparers have taken us to the passage in Acts immediately following the story of Jesus' Ascension. Our Scripture for today finds Peter standing up among the crowd of all the believers, both men and women (though only men were counted), who had been with Jesus during his teaching ministry, trial, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Now, to fulfill the Scripture, they must elect another disciple to fill the place of Judas, who betrayed Jesus. We hear this week, for the first time in strict numerical fashion, of the dozens of followers in addition to the disciples. This marks

the beginning of the church and introduces us to Peter as that church leader.

Theme: Called and Counted

Before Class: You will need:

- Bibles for each child
- Pens
- Paper
- 2 dice

Beginning: Have you ever been in gym class or out on the playground when a group was choosing a team to play a game? How did it feel when you were waiting to see if you would be picked? Do you think God would ever pick a team like that? Today we are going to learn about the way the disciples found a new person to become a disciple with them and we are going to think about all of the different ways there are to follow God.

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

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

Opening Prayer: God of Love and life, thank you for showing me the ways I can follow you, today and always. Amen.

The Story: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Earlier this week our church celebrated the Ascension of Jesus. Who knows what that means? Jesus ascended into heaven 50 days after his resurrection on Easter Sunday. When Jesus went to Heaven, that was when the work of starting the church began. Today our story comes from the time just after Jesus went up to heaven. The eleven disciples (remember, there are only eleven because Judas, one of the twelve, betrayed Jesus by bringing the soldiers to arrest him) and the disciples have not replaced Judas yet because they have been a little busy since the miracle of Jesus' resurrection!

Now that Jesus has gone from them they need to get to work building the church and sharing the Good News of Jesus with everyone they encounter. But how will they pick?

In today's story we will hear about the many people who have been following Jesus all along, but who we didn't hear about because they weren't part of the 12 disciples. We will hear how the 11 remaining disciples chose one of the other followers to join them in their work building the church.

Read Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 together.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder how Joseph/Barabbas/Justus and Matthias felt when the disciples were casting lots.
- I wonder what the other 120+ people thought when Peter didn't call their names to become a disciple.
- I wonder what Justus did after he wasn't chosen as a disciple.
- I wonder what God would say to the people who wished they were called by name.

Activity: Today we are going to reenact casting lots to see what it might feel like to have been the followers of Jesus going through this method. So, the first thing we need to do is figure out what is casting lots?!

Casting lots was a practice similar to rolling dice or drawing straws. The people had stones or sticks with symbols on them and then threw those into the center of the circle and then interpreted the result. This practice was used several times in the bible, one recent one was seen in Scripture was when Jesus was being crucified and the soldiers cast lots to determine who would get Jesus' cloak. For our version today we are going to use dice.

But before we cast our lots, we need to make a list of the special qualities God has blessed us with that make us uniquely qualified to spread God's love with others.

It's important to remember that in our story for today, Justus and Matthias were not randomly picked – they were selected because of the ways their special gifts and skills from God would enable them to be the best disciples they could be. What are the special skills you have that God has blessed you with?

*Give the children 5 minutes (or less) to make a short list of their special skills. Go around the room to help those who might need suggestions.

After the lists have been made, invite the children to share their lists out loud. Next, ask the children to pair up with someone whose list is similar to their own. Now the game begins.

Take the first pairing of children and ask them to name the traits they had in common on their lists. Then, ask each of the children to choose a number between 1-12. Now, invite one of the other children to roll 2 of the dice. Add the numbers on the dice together. Whichever child in the pair had pre-selected the closest number to that on the dice, without going over, is the one “selected.”

Repeat this process for the other pairings of children. After all of the groups have gone, half of the children are “selected” and half are not.

Now, put those two groups on opposite sides of the room. The half who has been selected will be the “disciples” while the other half are the “followers.” Ask the kids to take their lists of God-given special traits and to brainstorm what special helpful project or activity they could do because of the skills they have. (Examples: Could they write letters to folks who are lonely? Could they share God's word in song? Could they help younger children understand a bible story? Could they offer to sit with someone who is lonely? Could they organize a toy drive for kids in need? Etc.)

After a few minutes of brainstorming invite the Disciples and the Followers to share their ideas for special projects with the whole group.

Getting Closure: After sharing ideas, ask the class if they think one group is more important than the other? Do they think one group “won” while the

other “lost?” It’s easy to assume that because Matthias was chosen that means he was “better” or “more important” than Justus, and the other 120+ followers. But it just means he was called to the role of discipleship. In the same way, we are not all called or equipped or called to be musicians, priests, teachers, etc. we are all called though. God created and equipped each of us for our own unique ministries. If we were all called to do the same thing there wouldn’t be a lot of diversity in the world, and like the many colors of the rainbow, it is all of the differences that help make this such a beautiful world.

Closing Prayer: *Creator God, thank you for giving us special gifts and for calling us each in unique ways. Amen.*

Celebrant/Teacher: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

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