

Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 15:9-17

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

God's love: God's love for us, enabling us to love God. God's joy in us making joy complete. We are invited into this vast collaboration of love, invited to be part of God's team, considered friends, no longer servants. God has, so to speak, looked each one of us in the eye and said, “You did not choose me but I chose you.” Chosen, by God, to bear the fruit of love.

Theme: Abide in my Love

Before: If your budget (finances and time) allows, purchase small, inexpensive mirrors from a hobby store. Shiny metal (not breakable glass) is safer, but if glass is all you can find, get very small and use hot glue to secure the mirrors to a piece of cardboard so they are safe for the children to handle. Construction paper, crayons, glue will also be needed. You may wish to write these words on each sheet for the child: “God loves” (sufficient

space for the child to glue the mirror under the words.) Also, bring a hand mirror for the children to look into.

Beginning: Greet the children as they arrive. When all the children have arrived and are seated, get the mirror and sit along with the children. Look into the mirror and say something like: “Hmmm. Who do I see in this mirror?” If the children say your name, say something like this: “Yes, I do see (whatever the child’s name is), but I see something else. I see a person God loves.” Then, pass the mirror to the child next to you and ask the child if they see someone who God loves? “Who is that person?” Keep passing the mirror along until each child has looked into the mirror and seen a person God loves.

Opening Prayer: *Thank you, God, for choosing to love each of us. Thank you for wanting each of us to be your happy child. Amen.*

The Story: Jesus is talking to his friends. Maybe he asked them this question: “Do you think God loves Jesus?” What do you think? Do you think God loves Jesus just a little bit or a whole lot?

Well, everyone agreed that God loves Jesus a whole lot. Jesus said to his friends that the ‘whole lot’ that God loves Jesus is how much Jesus loves us – a whole lot. So, since Jesus loves me a whole lot, and Jesus loves you a whole lot (going around the circle, including each child) and you a whole lot, etc., we are all connected. So, what does Jesus expect us to do? We need to do the things he told us to do: love God, love each other. If we do these things we will have joy. Do you know what joy is? It is a word for “happy” that is even happier than happy. What happy things can you think of? (Help them come up with happy things: Birthday cake, splashing in a puddle, holding a puppy, whatever.) Well joy is like all those things at once. And you know what? God wants us to have joy – and gives us joy even during sad times because Jesus loves us so much.

Activity: If weather and your surroundings allow, this game can be played outside. Indicate a starting line and a goal line. The distance between the

two will be determined by the ages of the children and their energy level and capability. All the children stand at the start line. One child goes first. (Choose the sequence by their birthday month, if they know it, or some other non- discriminatory method.) Tell the children to be thinking about different things that make them happy. The first child runs as fast as he or she can to the goal line, shouts out the happy thing she or he has thought of, and then runs back as all the children applaud and shout the word the child has offered: "YAY for ice cream!" The next child runs. When that child names a word, and starts to run back, the others all shout that word and the first word: "YAY for baseball and for ice cream." Continue until each child has had a run. Play it again if time permits.

Easter Project: Back inside, ask the children again, whose picture did they see in the mirror. (Hand the mirror around again if the running around has distanced them from the concept.) Then, tell them we are going to make a little mirror to take home and one mirror for our Easter tree or Easter mobile. Give each child a piece of construction paper, the small mirror you have prepared, glue sticks to glue the mirror to the paper.

Encourage them to decorate the paper so it can go home and perhaps be displayed on the refrigerator.

Engage as many children as possible in constructing the paper that will be placed on or under the Easter tree or Easter mobile.

You can also decorate one of the Easter symbols to put on the tree or mobile.

Getting Closure: Ask each child to hold the paper they have decorated and look in the mirror as you pray.

Closing Prayer: *Thank you, God, for wanting us to have joy and for loving each and every one of us. Amen.*



