

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults

Proper 6 (B)

New Testament: Mark 4:26-34

BACKGROUND

We are now in the long season known as Ordinary Time, which runs through Christ the King Sunday. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING

Jesus has begun his ministry; fresh with the capacity to notice abundance wherever he looks. But how to describe the richness of the Kingdom of God so people can grasp it? Seeds. Maybe that is it – everyone has seen seeds.

THEME

Seeds Scattered on the Ground

BEFORE CLASS

You will need Bibles for the group. Bring a handful of seeds: birdseed, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, garden seed packets – whatever you have handy.

BEGINNING

Ask the group to think of a time they had a life-changing experience and how hard it was to communicate what had happened. Example: holding your child for the first time, climbing to the top of a mountain, event you went to, etc. Keep that in the back of your mind as we read Jesus' attempt to describe the Kingdom of God to his hearers.

OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for the kingdom you invite us to share with you. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 4:26-34

Today's scripture is mostly Jesus speaking, so we have divided it by sentence. Invite someone to begin by reading the first sentence, then have the next person read the next sentence and so on. If someone does not want to read, they can simply pass.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What stood out for you in the reading today?
- Mark refers to “the Kingdom of God” in his Gospel. Why do we think Mark chose the words? (The Hebrew Scriptures are full of references to the Kingdom of God and the Messiah who would bring the kingdom. And even if his hearers were not familiar with these passages, everyone in his time would know what a kingdom was.)
- The word “kingdom” may not resonate as well with us since the political implications may get in the way. How else might we describe this “kingdom”? (Perhaps we could focus on the attributes: being at one with God, perfect peace, unconditional love, etc.)
- As we discuss the Kingdom of God, what are some other attributes of this new way of life? (All invited, a place for all, growth, truth, real peace, etc.)
- If the Kingdom of God is “as if someone would scatter seed on the ground” what does this say about our tendencies to try to control things? (We cannot control the process, rules we might have thought would pertain, do not, etc.)
- How might we paraphrase the message of the mustard seed? (One option: things that start out small may turn into really big things. Note: This may have been a subtle aside to the Pharisees, because it would not have been kosher to plant a mustard seed in with other shrubs.)
- What surprised you about this reading and our discussion today?
- What challenged you?

GETTING CLOSURE

Tell the group they will not be called on to share, but they may do so if they choose. Give each person 2 or 3 seeds. Ask them to hold the seeds and reflect on 2 or 3 “seeds” God has planted in them. The seeds might be things like creativity, patience, resourcefulness, manual dexterity, courage, openness, etc. Ask them to notice what these seeds are and be grateful. After a few minutes ask if anyone noticed something they would like to share.

CLOSING PRAYER

For the seeds you plant in us, God, we give you thanks. Amen.

MARK 4:26-34

Jesus also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Jesus also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.