Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children

Proper 20 (B)

New Testament: Mark 9:30-37

BACKGROUND

During this "Ordinary Time" our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. 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.

The Pharisee in each of us wants to "get it right." In the gospel passages for Propers 17-22 from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is concerned that we "get it." So Jesus takes the ordinary things of life, from washing hands to attending to a child, and meets us where we are and helps us to "get it," finding blessings in the ordinary.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING

As Jesus prepares his disciples for what is to come, they not only do not "get it," they begin to jockey for position. Jesus is succinct: whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all. He takes a small child gently in his arms and tells his disciples that as you welcome this child, you welcome not only me – but the one who sent me.

THEME

Welcome the Children

BEFORE CLASS

You will need Bibles and something to write on, such as poster paper, newsprint, or white board.

BEGINNING

On a large piece of paper or on a chalkboard if your class has one, write these words: "Who is the greatest?" Then ask the children to take turns writing who they would list there. It could be a sports star, a rock star, a political figure, a coach, a teacher, whoever they want to add to a list of greats. Ask the children what it is that makes a person "great." Take their answers and write them in a column on the paper.

OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for the people who give us the courage to keep on improving our skills. Thank you for those who set a good example for us to follow. Amen.

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Option: *Pass out copies of the Bible and the bookmarks the children made previously. Ask the children to find the index in the Bible. Invite them to find the book of Jeremiah. Then have them find Chapter 11, verses 18-20. Invite a child could read this passage. Be sure the children know that Jeremiah was a prophet and that they know what a prophet is.*

A prophet is a person who speaks for God. In the Old Testament, a prophet is often a person chosen to speak for God and to guide the people of Israel (like Moses or the Major and Minor prophets).

THE STORY: MARK 9:30-37

Ask for two volunteers, one will read verses 30-32, the other 33-37.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what you remember most about the story we just heard.
- I wonder why Jesus does not want anyone to know what he is teaching? (The disciples are not even "getting it," so others would not either. And it is not yet time for others to know this.)
- Can anyone remember what Jesus told the disciples in the passage we read last week? (See Mark 8:31.)
- Verse 32 describes what the disciples were feeling. How would we describe what was going on? (Perhaps the disciples could make no sense of what Jesus was saying. How could he die and rise again? Perhaps they were beginning to understand and felt safer in denial. Perhaps they did not want to ask Jesus because they were afraid they would understand.)
- I wonder what Jesus overhear the disciples arguing about? (In verses 33-34 they were trying to convince each other which one was the greatest.)
- How did the disciples answer to Jesus' question? (They said nothing; they were not proud of what they had been doing.)
- I wonder what we think it means when Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and a servant to all"? (The "greater" you are, the more you are called to serve and help those of lesser status or ability.)
- How did Jesus show the disciples what it took to be "the greatest"? (He took a little child, held the child in his arms. See verse 37.)
- I wonder what the reaction of the disciples might have been? (They were probably stunned and amazed. Children had no rights and little value in their culture. Welcoming children had not been a priority for them.)

ACTIVITY

Ask the children to look at the list they produced at the beginning of the class. Now, develop another list: "Who is the Greatest Nominated by Jesus?" Ask the children if they can think of people who would go on this list. Some of the people on the other list may go here also (a sports figure who donates time and funds to helping underprivileged children, for example). Invite the children to place names on this list, noticing that they

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may be people few have heard of: their grandparents, for example, or a soccer coach or a teacher.

GETTING CLOSURE

Ask the children to consider who Jesus might be calling them to welcome. Who stands alone after church? Who in our neighborhood is lonely? Who might be bullied at school? Who is always alone on the playground?

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you for making each of us 'the greatest' to you, Jesus. Help us to notice those you want us to welcome. Amen.

MARK 9:30-37

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to
know it; 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be
betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he
will rise again.' 32 But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask
him.

33 Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What
were you arguing about on the way?' 34 But they were silent, for on the way they had
argued with one another about who was the greatest. 35 He sat down, called the twelve,
and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' 36
Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to
them, 37 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever
welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

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