Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Younger 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 simple art supplies: white paper (perhaps cut in quarters, so the drawings will fit on the poster begun last week), crayons or felt markers, scissors, and a glue stick. If you have access to colored tissue paper, you could show the children how to tear little pieces and glue them to a drawing to make bright-colored clothes for the people they draw. This art activity will add to the "What We Know About Jesus" poster the group has been creating. Today we will add pictures showing people who welcome children. Cut simple stars – about an inch in diameter – from gold-colored paper, one star for each child. (Cut a spare or two in case you have a visitor.) Bring the stars and glue stick with you.

BEGINNING
Ask the children to put on their nametags. Tell the children you are going to set up two races. In the first one, someone will win, and in the second one, everyone will win.

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Race One: Tell the children to line up on one side of the room. Explain that they must race by walking, heel to toe on each step. (Show the children how to do this.) Then indicate the goal line. "On your mark, get set, go!" You decide who won, and glue a gold star on that child's name tag. Especially if someone thinks your call was not correct, ask the children how they feel about one person winning and everyone else losing (probably not very good).

Race Two: Tell the child who won that the way this race is to be played is that the children all stand back where they began the last race, and one by one the winner will take the hand of a child and walk with him or her to the goal line. As each pair arrives, the child who won glues a star on the other child's nametag. Keep going until everyone has a gold star.

OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for loving each of us, just as we are. Thank you for not making us win a race to get to you. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 9:30-37

Explain to the children that Jesus is trying to get his friends to understand what was going to happen. He wanted to tell them that he was going to be killed but that he was not going to stay dead, which is pretty hard to understand. His friends had to try to figure out what he was saying. "Die? Oh no!" "Not stay dead? How?" Their heads were sore from thinking about it so they started to argue with each other. "I'm the greatest!" said Peter. "No, I'm the greatest!" said John. Then all of them got into the argument. When Jesus asked them what they were arguing about, no one said anything; they felt very silly. But Jesus had heard them. "Ok," Jesus said, "If you want to be the greatest, then you must treat others as if they are greater than you, you must love and help others." And then he asked a young child to come sit on his lap. "This is how you get to be great: by welcoming a child."

ACTIVITY

Ask the children to think of people who are glad when they see them. Maybe their parents and grandparents? Ask them if there are people they know in church who greet them and listen to them. Make a list as the children name these people, so you can pray in thanksgiving at the end of class. Give the children paper and crayons and ask them to draw a person who welcomes them so we can add these pictures to our poster showing what we are learning about Jesus.

GETTING CLOSURE

Ask each child to name the person they drew. You could name someone who always welcomes you. Then ask the children to be on the lookout for someone they could welcome. It might be someone standing all alone after church. Ask them to be on the lookout for people Jesus would want us to welcome.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for welcoming children. Thank you for the people who welcome us: (name them). Amen.

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