Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Proper 21 (B)

New Testament: Mark 9:38-50

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

Jesus continues to teach, while gently holding a small child on his lap. "Whoever is not against us is for us." Then, do what you have to do to make sure you place no stumbling block before one of these little ones. If your foot causes you to stumble – cut it off! Hyperbole, perhaps, but the point is clear: pay attention. We are called to be salty people and at peace with one another.

THEME

Saltiness

BEFORE CLASS

You will need a small container of sea salt or kosher salt, glue sticks or glue, and dark colored construction paper cut in quarters.

BEGINNING

Ask the children to get their nametags, and perhaps play a game or sing a song that helps everyone remember each others names.

OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for the stories you told so we can learn about you. Thank you that you love us. Amen.

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THE STORY: MARK 9:38-50

Jesus is helping his friends understand what it means to follow him. Today, we hear him tell his friends three things. 1) People do not have to do things all the same way. If they are not against us, they are for us. 2) Be sure you make it easy for children to come be with me. So pay attention to what you are doing so you don't do bad stuff. And 3) he said we are to be like salt? Like salt? How odd! Let's see if we can figure out what Jesus means.

ACTIVITIES

Figuring out What Jesus Means

Jesus said: "if you are not against us, you are for us." Does anyone here use their right hand to write? Stick up your hand, if you do. Now, does anyone use their left hand to write? Stick up your hand if you do. (And, if you have no "lefties" who do we know that does use their left hand?) More people use their right hand than their left hand. Does this mean that lefties are not doing it the right way? No. If you are not against us, you are for us.

Jesus told his friends to make sure children could come to him. Here in our class, we are hearing stories Jesus told and praying to Jesus. Who else helps us learn about Jesus? Do our parents help us? Does going into our church help us? (Accept what the children respond.)

Saltiness

Let's think of foods that need salt. What do you like to put salt on? Corn on the cob? Baked potato? What else? What happens if we put too much salt on our food? (Yuk.) What would happen if the salt didn't taste like salt? (Boring.)

Jesus says we can be salt! I wonder what you think that means? (We, as individuals and as a group, can add flavor and life to the things in which we are involved. We each add our own flavor and interest to a group.)

What kinds of things can we do to be like salt? What do we do in our families to make things better? (Help the children see that who they are improves the lives of those around them.)

Give each child a piece of construction paper and have the glue stick handy. As the children to think of things they do and are to make life better for those around them. Tell them to take a salt crystal – or a pinch of salt – and put it on their paper, securing it with a glue stick or a dot of glue. If they are having trouble coming up with things, ask them if they ever make anyone in their family laugh? Do they sing a song they have learned? Do they give their parents a hug? (Etc.) The children can take their salt pictures home.

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Give the children another piece of dark-colored construction paper (each piece: one-quartered sheet so as to fit on the poster) and ask them to create a "Salt for Jesus" picture, gluing some salt to the paper and placing it on the poster you are creating.

Option: *If time permits – and the children need some movement – suggest they make up a "Salty Dance." Find a song you all can sing together (a nursery rhyme – even a commercial) and put new words to it. The words could be Jesus says: Be salty, be salty, be salty. Jesus says have salt in you. I've got salt, you've got salt, we all have salt in us. Then figure out motions. The idea is to have fun and move our bodies.*

GETTING CLOSURE

Ask the children to notice people who are "salt" for them – who puts flavor and interest into their lives? (their parents, friends, etc.) Tell them that when they notice these salty people they can say a quick "Thank you, God." (Either out loud or in their hearts.) Tell the children that they are salt to you and you are glad they are here with you.

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God, that Jesus wants us to be salt for him. Help us to remember that we all bring flavor and life with us as we come to be a part of Jesus' followers. Amen.

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