

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Proper 9 (A)

New Testament: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

BACKGROUND

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING

Today's lesson comes from a section in Matthew where John the Baptist and Jesus are talking about what Jesus' ministry is going to be. John the Baptist had a different picture of what Jesus' ministry would bring to the world. People are comparing what John had said and what Jesus was doing and wondering about their ministry. We hear Jesus' response in our passage today. Jesus recognizes John's ministry and at the same time, he tells people that his ministry is different. John's ministry was filled with austerity (no food and drink) as it is a period of waiting and repentance, and Jesus' ministry is filled with celebration (eating and drinking) as it is the time of fulfillment. The final verses lead us to see that Jesus' ministry is also full of compassion and mercy.

THEME

My Yoke is Easy

BEFORE CLASS

You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for each child. You will need strips of cloth and markers. You will need two small/medium buckets filled halfway with water, rope, and a piece of wood or something else that can serve as a yoke to tie the buckets to for the children to carry. Since water may be spilled, you may want to do this outside. Alternatively, you could fill the buckets with something else that is heavy (rocks, bricks, etc.) but make sure it is not too heavy so they can lift them without getting injured.

BEGINNING

Gather the children ask them if they have ever carried anything really heavy. What did that feel like?

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, we ask you to be with us as we explore what your words mean for our lives. Guide us as we seek to understand your ministry among us and how you can ease our burdens. Amen.

THE STORY: MATTHEW 11:16-19, 25-30

Today we have a story about Jesus telling the crowd about a new kind of life that involves following him. Jesus was in a crowd of people who were wondering how Jesus and John the Baptist could have been talking about living the same kind of life with God because John and Jesus did very different things. Jesus told them that John called them to fast and to do things very simply as a way to prepare for Jesus' coming. Now that Jesus was here among them, he was showing them God's promise and God's way of life that included things like eating with all people, talking with everyone, and including everyone.

Jesus began to pray to God saying, "Thank you God for showing us how to live and how to celebrate our life with you. We know that you like to work in different ways than we are used to."

Jesus told the crowd around him, "What I am showing you and what I am doing comes directly from God. You cannot know me as well as God knows me, but you can know God through me and because of the things I teach you. If you are tired and if you feel like you are carrying heavy things in your heart or on your body, come to me. If you follow me, I will show you a different life where you can rest. Come with me, work with me so you can learn how I do it. I will show you how I help you when you are carrying heavy things or things that are difficult for you. I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what you heard in today's lesson?
- I wonder what Jesus meant when he told them that they should come with him to learn how to carry heavy things.
- I wonder how Jesus helps us find rest in our souls.
- Do you know what a yoke is?

ACTIVITY: BEING YOKED

Ask the children if they have ever carried anything that is really heavy using just their hands. What happens to your hands when you are carrying something heavy? They get tired, cramped, sweaty, and blistered. Invite them to try to pick up the bucket filled with water (without the yoke) and carry it across the room. Ask them if they think they could carry it a long distance.

Then, attach the buckets of water to the yoke/board. Invite one of the children to try to carry that across the room. Was that easier or harder than just carrying the bucket alone?

A yoke is something that helps lighten our load and that helps us carry heavy things. In our reading today, Jesus said that “his yoke was easy and his burden was light.”

- I wonder what that means.
- I wonder what it means that Jesus helps us carry our heavy burdens?
- How might Jesus help us do that?
- What burdens does Christ help us carry?

The stoles that a priest wears has the symbol of being yoked, reminding us of the burdens that Christ helps us carry. Give each child a strip of cloth to symbolize their yoke. Invite them to write or draw what things Jesus helps them carry.

GETTING CLOSURE

Invite the children to share what they created.

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for helping us carry our burdens and for showing us celebration, compassion, and mercy. Guide our ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet that we may engage in your mission in the world. Amen.

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