

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children

Proper 20 (A)

Old Testament: Exodus 16:2-15

BACKGROUND

The Season After Pentecost is the longest season of the church year, spanning almost half the calendar year. The weeks after Pentecost are called 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 liturgical color of the season is green. It is often thought of as a season of growth both in our personal faith and in the life of the church. Common themes to focus on throughout the season are:

- Our relationship with God.
- Our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another through our prayers, the sacraments and life in the body of Christ.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- The Church and its work for God’s mission.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK’S READING

The Israelites and Moses have just walked through the Red Sea on dry ground, they have survived and witnessed a miracle and are now journeying in the wilderness areas of Shur and Elim. Our story picks up as they are in between Elim and Sinai in the wilderness, hungry and asking for bread and meat. One chapter earlier, God provided them with water, and yet now farther on their journey, they seem to forget that and be complaining again, asking Moses if he brought them out here to die. Wondering if they would have been better off in Egypt where they were at least fed and given drink. (Oh, how quickly they forget their slavery and the conditions that surrounded them.) So now, they challenge Moses. The Lord responds to Moses with our scripture today.

THEME

God provides

BEFORE CLASS

You will need a costume for Moses, sand, and snacks of bread and meat and a Bible or Children’s Bible with the story. If you are doing Option 2: Have the children bring in canned food or non-perishable items with them to class that day OR EVEN have the church have a food drive that Sunday!

Prepare:

- Option 1: Hide the food around the room for the children to find. Map out a route for your walk in the desert. Arrange ahead of time for a person who is to start complaining on the walk.
- Option 2: Make announcements and send home reminders about bringing food to church that day for a food bank in your area. Arrange ahead of time to visit the food pantry or soup kitchen.

BEGINNING

Welcome the children into the room and have them sit in your gathering area. Ask how their week was and what they had for dinner the night before or breakfast that morning.

OPENING PRAYER

God, our Creator and Sustainer, be with us as we hear your word that we might find you in the story and better understand your power and presence in our lives. Help us remember all that you give us and all that we are to give in your name. Amen.

THE STORY: EXODUS 16:2-15

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?" And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining that you utter against him-- what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD."

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.'" And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. The LORD spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

ACTIVITIES

Option 1: Reenact the Story and have a Food Hunt

Take the children on a walk "through the desert."

Note: You can use this basic script below or ad lib as you go. If you are leading the group, it might be fun to dress up as Moses, at least by putting on a robe and carrying a stick. This will help the children imagine they are there and get into the story a bit.

Beforehand, you will need to hide things like crackers, rolls, pita bread, pepperoni sticks, vacuum packed chicken and tuna, etc.

God told Moses he would "rain bread from heaven" for them. He provided Manna, a new food that appeared with the dew each morning as small, white, round pieces. The Israelites were to gather each day the amount of food they needed for that day. No more, no less. Each day God would give them that day's food. They were to trust him each day for the very food they ate. On the sixth day, he would provide two day's food, so no one would work to gather it on the Sabbath. If one of them was mistrustful, and tried to stock up, the food would melt or rot away. The Israelites baked, boiled and prepared the manna several ways. It tasted sweet, like wafers made with honey.

After the response time to the scripture lesson, let the children know that you are going to go on a journey today and engage them in a conversation about what it means to take a journey.

When we go on a long trip, where do we get the food that we eat? (allow them time to respond) As we just heard, the Israelites were on a long journey. Because they were constantly moving on foot, they weren't able to carry enough food with them and they couldn't stop and grow a garden, plus there were thousands of them to feed. Where were they going to get food? As they started to worry and wonder about this, they began to grumble.

This is where we start our journey today. We are going on a special journey through the desert. (Begin walking)

This is like the desert that Moses and the Israelites went to when they fled Egypt. If you have ever been to the desert, you know that it can be a very hot place especially when

you are out walking in the sun. Feel that sun beating down on us! Whew! (wipe your brow and fan yourself)

As we walk, feel the sand. I wonder what you notice about the sand? (have sand in a box or scattered somewhere on the ground outside. Encourage the children to feel, smell and take the time to reflect on what they are seeing or feeling or smelling. They can either walk through it or run their fingers through it. If it can be in a sunny place so it is hot, that would make it more like a desert experience.)

(Once they are done reflecting...) We must get on to our journey, so let's head out. We have the Promised Land to find and we have to keep going as the Lord has told us to do. I wonder what we are going to find on this journey. (let the children respond)

This is a long journey and I'm getting tired. I wonder, did any of you bring snacks with you? (This is a good time to have another teacher or volunteer in the group pipe up with complaints about being hungry, asking you where the food will come from, and complaining about you not being prepared. If you have the people power, have a few people help out with this part.) Well, I didn't bring snacks and you didn't bring snacks. What are we going to do?

Pause your journey and remind them that when the Israelites were out in the desert, they too began to complain, "We wish the Lord had killed us in Egypt, where we had plenty to eat. You brought us out to the wilderness to die of hunger." You see, the Israelites tended to focus on their current troubles and often forgot to remember what God had done for them in the past, like freeing them from slavery and providing them with water.

Well, I didn't bring snacks and you didn't bring snacks. What are we going to do? What did Moses do when the Israelites began to complain? (let the children respond)

(Someone playing Aaron or Moses if you don't have an Aaron then says,) "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining. At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

God has provided us food! Can you help me look around and see if we can find any meat or bread together? I wonder what kinds of meat and bread we will find! (Send everyone on a hunt to find your snack, making some easier to find than others.)

Once you have gathered your snack, invite the children to come together in your gathering place in the room to share snack and reflect on your journey asking wondering questions like:

- I wonder what you thought of our journey?
- I wonder what you remember most?
- I wonder what it was like to be the Israelites who were starving and then God provided them with food?

- I wonder if you can remember a time when you felt really hungry?
- I wonder how you feel when you are hungry? Etc.

Option 2: Food Pantry Education

Take this opportunity to educate the children about hunger. After you hear and respond to the scripture for today, ask the children if they have ever been to a food bank or helped at a feeding program. Explain to the children what a food bank is and how it helps people in need. (Food banks can help people who do not have enough food to feed their families as well as seniors and they also help those who have suffered losses such as after a natural disaster, a house fire, etc.)

Remind the children that just as God provided food for the Israelites when they were hungry in the desert, we are called to serve those who are in need of food. We are to share with others and not store up more than we need, sharing our daily bread.

If your church has a food pantry or helps in a feeding program, today is a good day to talk about and possibly experience that ministry. If you have a food pantry, can the children go and visit? If so, arrange for someone from that pantry to talk to the children about what kinds of foods they put into the food boxes (protein, grains, etc.) and why we have this ministry in the church. If possible, have the children help pack some of the boxes.

If you don't have a food pantry or if you can't go visit it that day, you can do other things to help the children participate in the program.

- Decorate large paper grocery bags
- Make colorful cards to share with the families or seniors who receive. (Depending on the food bank you are working with, you may need to make sure the cards are non-religious as they might be working with a diverse group of people who are not religious or are from other faith traditions.)
- Make tissue paper flowers or duct tape flowers to go in the food boxes.
- Make care packages to go along with the food boxes that include things like plates and utensils.
- See if they also need help gathering items like toothbrushes and soap for their clients. If they do, you can ask families to bring these items and package them in plastic bags with a note.

Other resources for food banks and food pantries:

- Second Harvest Food Bank (there are different websites for each local food bank)
 - UNICEF - <http://www.unicefusa.org/work/nutrition/>
- The Abundant Life Garden Project from Episcopal Relief and Development - <http://www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/christian-formation/christian-formation-for-children#Abundant>
- Check with your local food pantry or feeding program for more resources.

GETTING CLOSURE

Invite the children to help you clean up the supplies you have gotten out for class. Gather in a circle and invite them to share one thing they learned today or one thing they enjoyed.

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious and Loving God, we thank you for the food that you provide for us. Help us to remember those who do not have food or those who do not have enough food. Guide us on our journey as we discover how better to serve you. Amen.