

Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

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.

Notation for this Scripture

This passage comes toward the end of Joshua. Joshua has led them into the promised land and brought them all together to renew their covenant, their promises with God. Joshua helps them understand the weight and importance of their decision by recounting the past for them, going back to what their ancestors went through and the choices they made on their journey. By going back to the beginning of their story, he is showing the Israelites that there has always been a place for them on the path with God.

As we hear the exchange between Joshua and the people, the refrain, “Serve the LORD,” comes again and again. This is not just about worship, but also about serving, about being the person of God in the world. Joshua knows

from history and experience that the people of Israel have trouble staying focused on God, especially then the going gets tough. He tries to impress upon them the weight and importance of this decision. This is a life choice and he wants them to understand that.

The Israelites pledge and choose to serve God because of what God has done for them. They retell their story of following God and say to Joshua, if God has done all these things, then this is our God.

Theme: Serving the Lord, Walking with God

Supplies Needed: Butcher Paper (large roll of paper or if you don't have that small pieces of paper that can be hung together to create a mural), markers, crayons, art supplies. Find a place to hang the mural when you are done.

Beginning: Welcome the children into the room and have them sit in your gathering area. Ask how their week was and what kinds of choices they get to make each day.

Opening Prayer: *Almighty God, we thank you for our time together as we come together again to hear the story of your people. Help us to understand what our part in that story is and how we can be people who serve you each day. Amen.*

The Story: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God's plan is for each of us too.

Read Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25. Note: There are challenging names in this passage. You can hear pronunciations and see them phonetically at: <http://netministries.org/Bbasics/bwords.htm>

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you liked about the story today?

- I wonder if it was hard for the Israelites to make their choice as to who to serve?
- I wonder what we would say to Joshua if we had to make that choice?

Introduction to the Activity:

Follow the Leader(s) Play a game of follow the Leader. Begin with just one leader who is doing the typical things like walking around, putting their hands out

Pause the game and explain that you are going to add a few more leaders and that the children have to choose which leaders they are going to follow.

Have one or two leaders doing crazy exciting things, but they don't really lead the children anywhere. Have one leader be the leader that does some fun things, as well as some actions like stopping to pray, or ask for God's guidance, and then eventually leads them to the gathering area where there are "special things" for those who have followed that person.

The special things need to be in a box and do not need to be anything extravagant. They could simply be heart shaped pieces of paper with the words "God loves you" written on them. Whatever special thing you choose, it needs to signify God's love for each of them. Each person that followed that person gets one of these things.

Once the game is done, gather together and ask what each of the groups did as they followed the leader and if they got anything important on the way.

Choosing to Serve God

Talk to the children about the choices that we all have to make each and every day. Brainstorm all those choices and write them up to help them understand how many little (and sometimes big) choices we make each day. Then, ask them how they choose to follow the person they did this morning? Why did they choose that person? Did they wish they had chosen to follow someone else?

In today's lesson, we hear of the Israelites having to make a choice about which God to serve.

Joshua, their leader, brought them all together to ask tell them that they had to make a choice between serving their gods that their ancestors and that other cultures worshiped, or serving the LORD, the God that had brought them out of Egypt, the God that had been with them from the beginning. Joshua asks them not just once, but over and over again, reminding them of the history of their people and God.

Joshua is saying to them, remember your past, who you have followed, and how that journey has gone. Now, in this moment, who do you want to be your guide for years to come? Who do you want to follow?

Like our Follow the Leader game, we had different leaders. Some of the leaders may have seemed fun at first, but they didn't really lead us anywhere. However there was one leader that brought us to where? To a place where we received God's love that will lead us through each day.

- I wonder, what does it look like for us to serve God? Allow the children time to respond.
- What are ways that we choose to serve God each day? Allow the children time to respond.

I want us all to work together to create a mural of what it looks like to serve God.

Roll out the large butcher paper or give the children individual pieces of paper that you will hang in one place. Encourage them to be creative as they think about how they serve God each day.

Getting Closure: Have everyone gather together again and tell briefly about what they contributed to the mural, then end in prayer.

Closing Prayer: *Gracious and loving God, thank you for guiding us each day as we try to serve you and those around us. Be with us as we leave this place and help us to remember that in serving you, we are given the gift of love from you. Amen.*

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors-- Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor-- lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. "Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God." But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD; for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good." And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the LORD!" Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are

among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.” The people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and him we will obey.” So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

Written by the Rev. Shannon Kelly