

Family Connections

March 10 - April 21



Lent

Family Connections

Unit 6: March 10 - April 21

During the season of Lent our lessons will be focused on three stories: The Baptism & Temptation of Jesus, the parable of the Prodigal Son, and the raising of Lazarus.

After Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River, the spirit led him into the wilderness where he fasted for forty days. During that time, he was tempted by Satan. The younger children will focus primarily on baptism and what it means to become a member of God's family through baptism. Lessons for older children will be directed toward learning that Jesus chose the WORD of God over bread, TRUST of God over testing, and the worship of GOD over wealth and power. The lessons are designed not only to teach about how we should deal with temptations, but also on the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ.

As we do our "Prodigal Son" lessons you will be seeing a lot of "pig" crafts! In this story, a rebellious son rejects his father's upbringing, asks for his inheritance, and heads off to a far-away land where he leads a wild life of adventure, and squanders everything of value (literally and symbolically). When he is confronted with failure and despair (and work on a pig farm), he decides to return home, and ask for forgiveness. He is willing to do anything to win back his father's favor. To his surprise, and the surprise of others (especially his older brother), he is welcomed without question into his father's loving and forgiving arms. No amount of time, money, or rebellion could get in the way of the father's patience and unconditional love for his son. Of course, the wonderful message of this parable is that God is infinitely more patient and gracious with all of us. God desperately wants to welcome each of us home with a loving and forgiving embrace. Older students will also examine the reaction of the older brother and Jesus' message to the religious leaders of his day who frowned upon him for eating with "sinners."

Finally, in the lesson of the raising of Lazarus, the students will learn how Jesus raised a beloved friend from the dead. The story begins

when Jesus gets a message that Lazarus is ill. Jesus does not appear concerned. Instead, he stays two days longer before making an announcement that he will return to Judea. The disciples do not want him to go since they fear Jesus will be killed. When Jesus arrives, he finds Lazarus has already been in the tomb for four days. Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary both say, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." But there the difference ends. Martha adds "but even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him," and the two of them have a theological discussion of sorts. When Mary arrives, there is no theological discussion. She is weeping and Jesus' response is to weep also. Some see this as a sign of Jesus' love for Lazarus, but others blame him because they think he could have helped. For us, the reason for Jesus' weeping is somewhat more perplexing. The gospel writer indicates that he knew that Lazarus would rise again, so why was Jesus "greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved?" Jesus orders the rock to be rolled away from the tomb. Pragmatic Martha warns Jesus against entering the tomb as her brother had been dead for four days and the body would smell. Jesus chides her to believe. He offers a prayer thanking God, then says, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus comes out and Jesus tells them to unbind him and let him go.

Throughout this story, and the entire gospel of John, Jesus talks very differently than he does in the other three gospels. While some adults consider the long speeches of Jesus the most beautiful and comforting part of this passage, the metaphorical language of John's gospel is difficult for children to understand. We will try to help the children understand that God is eternal and, therefore, God's life is eternal. Through baptism and faith we can join in that life now and after death. We can be a part of God's eternal life now when we believe in Jesus.



March 6: Jesus' Baptism and Temptation

- Fasting and prayer for 40 days in the wilderness deepened Jesus' understanding of his ministry and mission. But Jesus was human, and he experienced all the human cravings and physical needs that all humans experience. Because Jesus was tempted, he understands what we are faced with from day to day.
- Why didn't Jesus use the power he had been given for personal gain, or to impress others? (That was not God's purpose for him)
- Why does God's word need to be stored in our hearts? (We don't always have time to look something up! It is best to have God's word in our hearts and minds - as Jesus did - so we can respond and act in a faithful way when we are faced with temptations.

March 13-20: The Prodigal Son

- God gives us free will to make choices in our lives. In our story, what did the older son choose to do? (Stay and work with his father). What did the younger son choose to do? (Take his inheritance and go into the world). Did they make good or bad choices? Why?
- God is like the father in this story. God loves us even when we make bad choices. Can you imagine what it would feel like to run into God's open arms just as the younger son ran to his father?
- It is comforting to know that God forgives us, but when we make bad choices we can hurt ourselves and others. Is there something you would like to ask forgiveness for? Do you need to say, "I'm sorry" to God or to someone else?
- The older son was angry at the end of the story. Why? (He didn't think he was treated fairly for being a faithful son.) Was his father treating him fairly? Why or why not? (All the father had would belong to him).

March 27-April 3: The Raising of Lazarus

- Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were personal friends of Jesus. Imaginewhat that must have been like!
- Jesus did not go to see Lazarus as soon as he heard that he was sick. Why? Did he really think Lazarus was only sleeping?
- Jesus is the way to eternal life with God. What does that mean? If God is “eternal” then God’s life is “eternal.” God is “always” and “every- where.” We can be a part of God’s eternal life every day when we allow God’s Holy Spirit to guide our lives.
- If we believe in God as Martha and Mary did, does that mean that bad things will never happen to us? No, we know that very sad things hap-pen even to the most faithful people. God allowed this miracle so that people would come to believe in Jesus. The most important thing is tobring all people to a belief in the love and power of God.

Sources:

- Liz Weingart and Lisa Martin as posted on www.rotation.org
- DWMA Curricula, Jill Williams



April 14 - Palm Sunday: The children will participate in the palm procession with the congregation (gather in Fellowship Hall at 10:00). The procession will move to the narthex. When it is time for the congregation to process into the worship space, the children will go to Fellowship Hall for a whole group Passions lesson. The children will rejoin their parents at 10:40.

No Church School on Sunday, April 21 - Easter