February 10, 2013

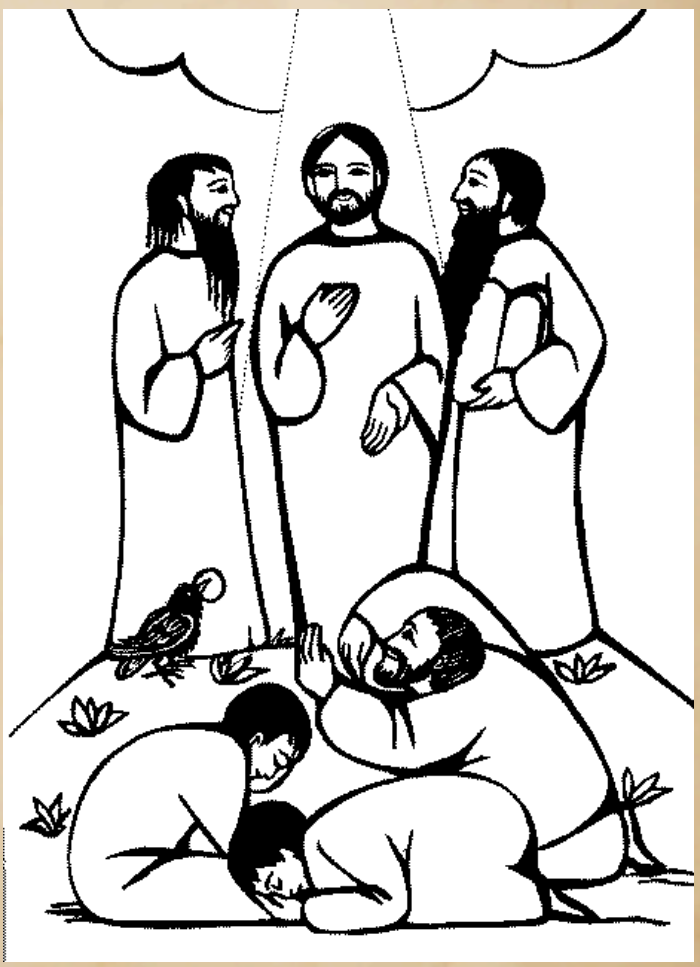
Lesson 25: Transfiguration

Luke 9:28-45

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, 'Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It throws him into convulsions until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.' Jesus answered, 'You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.' While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

While everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples, 'Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands.' But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was concealed from them, so that they could not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.



Transfiguration

Luke 9:28-45

For Your Reflection

1. What have you seen in your life that has helped to affirm your faith? Who have you told about the experience(s)?

2. Even the disciples with Jesus that day on the mountain had questions about who Jesus was and what it was that he was coming to do. What are some of the questions that you have about Jesus or about God's work in the world today?

3. Jesus heads down the mountain and straight into the deep need of the world. Who around you is in need of healing this week? How might you be a part of God's care for that person?

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The Big Story Truth: Jesus is God! The healing, forgiving, teaching, and preaching that Jesus' does is consistent with God's actions in the world in the past and what God will do in the future. If we want to know what God's will and mission is, we can look at Jesus!

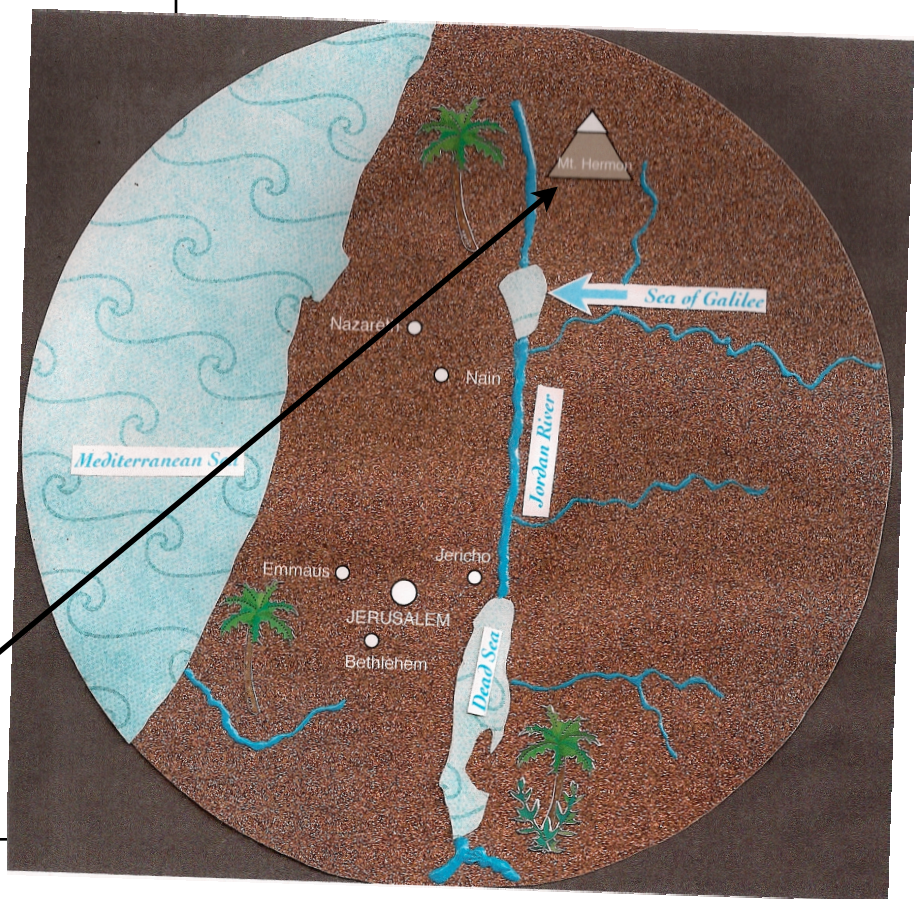
About this Scripture Passage: Prior to Jesus coming to earth, faith in God was based on two things: the law and the prophets. The law was the will of God that was given to the people through Moses. The prophets were those people who spoke the words of God to the people. Elijah was one of these prophets and one that the people looked to in discerning who the coming Messiah would be. For Jesus to be standing with Moses and Elijah on top of a mountain (Remember from earlier lessons how important mountains were as a place of God speaking?!?!) was well, the neon sign that Jesus was not only someone special but THE someone special. All throughout this text are signs that something big is happening here. Jesus comes with the authority of God because Jesus is God!

This passage has all the elements of a giant billboard proclaiming what Jesus has come to do, and yet the disciples don't quite understand what is happening. Peter steps in it when he makes his suggestion of building three "dwellings" or "altars." None of them understand what Jesus means when he says that he will soon be betrayed into human hands.

Making the Connection: Those people alive in Jesus' day had to struggle with how a person walking and talking and preaching among them could actually be God. Can you imagine their brains hurting as they tried to comprehend that Jesus at one moment could be glowing on top of a mountain and then the next be down with the demoniacs, talking about betrayal? When we learn our creeds, we learn that Jesus is both fully man and fully God. Sometimes even our thinking gets stretched when we try to wrap our minds around that! We can start to teach this concept to even the youngest of our kids this week by helping them recognize that something very ordinary can also be something very special... just like Jesus. For the older kids, this week is an opportunity to help them read scripture and pick up on the signs that should stand out like a neon billboard about who Jesus was and what he is about to do!

Great Big Word: TRANSFIGURATION
The event on a mountain where Jesus' clothes became all white, the prophets spoke with him, and God spoke from a cloud.

Where in the World Are We? That is an excellent question, and one that can't be answered. We know that we are on a mountain at the start of this story. But exactly which mountain Jesus was on is a question that scholars and archeologists are still debating. There are several options, but one of the most likely sites is Mt. Hermon.



Preschool/Early Elementary

Materials List:

-Spark Story Bible
-Epsom Salt
-Cups of Water
-Paintbrushes for each student
-Transfiguration Picture/ Story printed front to back on brown cardstock (1 per student)
-Bible Book Matching Game
-Ballons/Permanent Marker
-Bible Bookshelf Chart
-CD/MP3 player and books of the Bible songs

Before the Children Arrive:

A few minutes before Sunday School, combine 1 cup water with 2 cups of epsom salt. Heat until the mixture is clear. Allow the mixture to cool at room temperature while the kids are in opening so it will be ready to "paint" with during the lesson. Set out the salt water, paint brushes, and transfiguration pictures so that kids will see them as they enter the room.

If you are choosing to use the "Balloon Scramble" for your activity today, blow up a number of balloons and label them with books of the Bible in order. If you are teaching a preschool class, you could either begin with Genesis for the Old Testament or Matthew for the New Testament. If you have elementary level students, pick names to put on the balloon according to the books that follow next in the books that they are memorizing. (For example, which books are the next ones that they will be putting up on their sunflower charts). Blow up and label 5-7 balloons to start with, but have more on hand so that you add more in as you play.

Experiencing the Story:

Welcome kids as they enter the room. Show them a copy of the transfiguration picture. Ask the kids if they can guess who any people in the picture are. The person in the middle is Jesus. Then help them notice the one on the left and what he is holding in his arms. Those stone tablets are supposed to remind us of

the 10 Commandments. Do the kids remember who it was that went up the mountain when God gave the 10 Commandments? It was Moses. So that person in the picture is Moses. There is one more person in the picture. His name is Elijah. Remember the story that we learned about the prophet Elijah when he helped the woman and her son have food to eat when they were hungry? Elijah prayed and their oil and flour didn't run out. We know this is Elijah in the picture because of that bird by his feet. Before Elijah met the widow and his son, God fed Elijah by sending birds.

Today we are going to read a Bible story that has all three of these people in it! It's a surprising story. So before we read the story today, I want to show you a surprising thing. Ask the kids to "paint" Jesus' clothes with the water.

Then read "The Transfiguration" from the Spark Story Bible (Pages 358-359.)

After you are done reading the story, ask the kids what they think the disciples would have been thinking when they saw Jesus' clothes change to be sparkling white and two have those two important people suddenly appear! It would have been very surprising, wouldn't it!

After you are done reading the story, check the pictures that they painted. Is anything happening yet to Jesus' clothes? Tell the kids that we will watch today to see what happens to Jesus' clothes in their pictures. Maybe it will be something surprising! (Don't tell the kids now, but over the next hour, the "water" that they painted with should turn white and sparkling!)

When Jesus went up the mountain, he looked just like any other friend. But at the top of the mountain, the disciples got to see something special. They got to see that Jesus is God's son! What a wonderful surprise!

Activity:
While we are waiting for our surprise paintings to dry, let's play a game to help us learn some more of the books of the Bible.

Option #1: Balloon Scramble
Begin with 5-7 balloons labeled with the names of books of the Bible in order. (For example: Matthew-Acts). Turn on the books of Bible songs on CD player

or MP3 player and have the kids hit the balloons up into the air. Any kid can hit any balloon back and forth, the idea is just to keep the balloons up in the air and get them all mixed up. Stop the music at a random point. When the music stops, help the kids read (or read for the kids) the labels on the balloons. Help the kids scramble to line the balloons up on the floor against a wall in order of how they are found in the Bible. (Older kids may be able to use the Bible Bookshelf chart to help them get it the first couple of times). Time how fast they were able to do it. Start the music again. Again, when the music stops, see how fast the kids are able to put the balloons in order. Are they able to get faster? Repeat until they have the order of these few balloons/books down. Make a big deal of adding another balloon with the next book into the mix. Again, repeat the game and time. Add in as many balloons as needed to keep the game fun and challenging.

Option #2: Bible Book Memory
Select several matching pairs of Bible book cards (preferably those cards that represent books of the Bible that are next to be memorized). Shuffle the cards and lay them upside down on the table and play a game of memory matching with your class, helping name aloud the book of the Bible as each person takes a turn flipping over a pair of cards to see if they can make a match.

Before The Students Leave:
If you are teaching an early elementary class, help the kids put the pieces of the sunflower up on the wall for the books of the Bibles that they learned today in class.

Check the paintings they made. What's happening to the picture? Have kids take the picture with them to church today and watch as Jesus continues to get more white and sparkly throughout the church service!

The Transfiguration Story

One day, Jesus took some his disciples for a walk to find a place to pray. They climbed up, up, up a mountain before Jesus stopped.

The disciples watched while Jesus prayed. Something amazing happened! Suddenly, Jesus didn't look the same anymore! Suddenly his face looked shiny and his clothes became dazzling white! And all of a sudden Jesus wasn't alone! There were 2 men with Jesus!

The disciples looked closely. They remembered stories about these two men. One of the men was Moses, the one that God had given the 10 commandments to a long time ago. The other man was Elijah. He was the prophet that God fed with birds when he needed food and who helped a widow not to run out of oil and flour when there was nothing to bake bread with!

The disciples didn't know what to think about this! Then suddenly something else special happened. A loud voice, God's voice, came from heaven and said, "Jesus is my son, listen to him!"

The disciples knew then that Jesus was someone special! But they were kind of scarred to. Who would believe what they had seen? So they didn't tell anyone for a long time.

Transfiguration Art

Use some ordinary ingredients to make this extraordinary paint! Mix 1 part epsom salt with 1/2 part water. Heat the mixture until clear. Cool to room temperature and paint on dark paper. At first, the "paint" looks like regular water.... but as it dries it will show itself to be something special!

Try this kind of painting at home. As you watch the sparkles form with your child, start a conversation with your child about today's Sunday School story. Some starter questions might be:

1. Tell me the story about Jesus going up the mountain with his disciples. What happened up there?
2. How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus' clothes suddenly looked bright and sparkly? How would you feel if you saw that happen?
3. Most of the time Jesus looked just ordinary like any other person... because Jesus was a real person. But Jesus is also someone special isn't he! Jesus is God's son! God says in our baptisms that we get to be children of God too! What would you look like with sparkly clothes like Jesus?
4. On the mountain, God spoke from a cloud to let everyone watching know about Jesus. What do you think God is saying to you today?

Upper Elementary/Middle School

Materials:
-Megaphone, strobe light, noise makers, and/or any other attention getting devices you have access to!
-Neon poster board
-Copy of today's Gospel reading printed out (1 per student, plus a couple extras)
-Markers (Black or thick markers for making a poster)
-Neon colored highlighers

Before the Students Arrive:
Check a copy of the bulletin to see if your church has a lector assigned for this Sunday. If you do, give them a heads up that your students are going to be "interrupting" the reading this morning. Give them a copy of the reading ahead of time so that they will know what to expect! (If you're not sure who will be reading this morning, let the pastor know what your class is planning so that the reader can be appropriately warned!)

Experiencing the Story:
When kids arrive, begin immediately welcoming/giving instructions very loudly, through a megaphone. (If you don't have a plastic one, a piece of paper can be rolled up so it looks like a megaphone.) If you have a chalk board near the seating area in the room, have printed in big letters with huge arrows things like "Sit Here" with arrows to their seats. Do everything big and loud!

When everyone is seated and ready to go, give instructions as equally loudly and obnoxiously through the microphone or writing in huge letters on the board for them to turn in their bibles to Luke 9:28.

Read together Luke 9:28-35. Let each person who reads use the megaphone to read his/her part..... until you get to verse 36. You read this verse yourself. In a whisper.

Tell the kids in a quiet voice that all the way through the Gospel of Luke people have been wondering who Jesus is. The fishermen wondered about Jesus when they caught all those fish. The Pharisees wondered who Jesus was when he

healed on the Sabbath and when he forgave the sinful woman. Today, our story is like a neon sign... flashing lights... a shouting voice that Jesus is God the son.

Have the kids look back through the story in their bibles and find the clues that show the Jesus is someone very special. Have them highlight each one as they find it.

Clue #1: Jesus and the disciples went up a mountain

(Help the kids remember Moses' journey up the mountain to get the 10 commandments and how God spoke with Moses on the mountain. Mountains were often places in the Bible of God meeting humans and speaking with them.)

Clue #2: His clothes became dazzling white

(Besides the change being miraculous, can the kids think of any stories where someone appeared to be dazzling white? A couple include Moses after talking with God on Mt. Sinai and those "men" who appeared at Jesus' tomb after his resurrection.)

Clue #3: Moses appeared

(Moses had been long dead... so for Moses to show up was, well, a big deal. Remember again with the kids about the story of the 10 commandments being given. Moses in this story represents "the law" which was the most important instruction God had given to the people.)

Clue #4: Elijah appeared

(Elijah was one of the most important prophets in the Old Testament. He also had been gone for a long time!)

Clue #5: The cloud

(Remember how God talked to Moses in a cloud on Mt. Sinai)

Clue #6: The voice

(What bigger sign could be asked for then the booming voice of God! Pay attention to the words, they are similar to the words spoken at Jesus' baptism.)

Activity:
Tell the kids that your class has been asked to help with the church service this morning. Say: As we saw when we were reading this story this morning, this reading should be like a neon sign pointing to who Jesus is. But sometimes when we read stories in church, we read them in such a quiet way that people might not hear just how much this story is supposed to get our attention. So.... today we are going to help with the Gospel reading. Our class is going to make signs and have a plan for helping with the service so that no one will miss what is happening in this reading!

Have kids use the neon poster board and markers to make signs saying "Pay Attention" and/or large arrows that they can use to point to the reader. Get out the noisemakers and other attention getting items that you brought and have the kids practice making a lot of noise, jumping up and down, gesturing, etc. to get attention.

Hand out copies of the script for today's Gospel reading. The highlighted parts are parts for your class to yell out during the reading. Talk though how your class could do the parts. Will your whole class say each part together or will each person take a turn? Take a walk up to the front of the church and figure out where each person will be during the reading. Talk about whether it would be best to have everyone standing in the front of the church or scattered around the sanctuary? Will they pop up from their pew or be positioned up front from the start of the reading? Make a plan and practice it a time or two.

Additional Activities:
If you have time left over, head back to your room and use any remaining time to either:

1) Have the kids work in their Smash books answering the question "How does God get our attention in our lives today?" OR
2) Continue working on memorizing the books of the Bible

Gospel Reading Script - February 10, 2013

Luke 9:28-45

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

Pay Attention! God speaks on mountains!

And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Pay attention! That happens when God is speaking!

Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him.

Pay Attention! They represent all the law and the prophets!

They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Pay Attention! Something big is going to happen!

Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.

Pay attention! The majesty of God is often cloaked in a cloud!

Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!'

Don't you get it? God says Pay Attention!

When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

Pay attention to Jesus and Jesus alone! He is God the Son.

And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

(Sunday School Class: Put down your props and sit down where you are.)

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, 'Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It throws him into convulsions until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.' Jesus answered, 'You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.' While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.
While everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples, 'Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands.' But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was concealed from them, so that they could not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

The Gospel of the Lord.

(Sunday School Class: You may be seated up front for the children's sermon.)