

LENTEN STEWARDSHIP TEACHING SERIES - 2

Second Sunday in Lent - Gospel: Mark 8:31-38

Fruits of Abundance - Children's Activity

OBJECTIVE: Students will identify people, places, and activities in their own lives that don't have a lot of appeal to them on an immediate contact, but will yield an abundance of fruit for them as young Christians. Students will relate how these fruitful activities have led them to appreciate the ways that God's abundance to us lasts longer than the more appealing choices culture offers us.

LEVELS: Pre-K through Grade 6.

CONCEPTS: Always seeking pleasure or fun, taking the easy way, sometimes keeps us from growing and learning from hard lessons in life. Many of the most important things we achieve come from a lot of work and unpleasant times. Some things that look initially negative come to have the most value to us on our Christian journeys.

SKILLS: Comprehending, Concept Forming, Comparing and Contrasting.

MATERIALS: Yellow construction paper or drawing paper, poster board (optional), crayons or markers, pencils, and glue. *Optional: Fruit snacks.*

TIME CONSIDERATIONS:

Preparation: 10 minutes

Activity: 30-45 minutes

ASSESSMENT:

Students will respond to the following questions:

Can you think of a time in your life when you had trouble looking towards accomplishing something because of how much hard work or pain you'd have before achieving that hope or dream?

Can you think of a time when you almost forgot how much hard work or even pain might you have had because you were so sure of the happy outcome of your undertaking?

What made the difference?

BACKGROUND (*Parallel with Adult Teaching Series*) Jesus seeks to prepare his followers for the bewildering sequence of events to come in Jerusalem. We are reminded of his Parable of the Seeds—how, in order to grow and bear abundant fruit, the grains must fall on the ground, die, and split open. The word die sounds terribly final.

Resurrection comes only after this frightening, seeming-end.

Peter may think Jesus is going negative and defeatist on them. Perhaps he thinks he is being helpful in verbally “knocking some sense” into Jesus, to get him to focus on the positive and hopeful. We often think that thinking positively can be our bulwark against any tragic outcome, so that we forbid ourselves or loved ones even to consider any other

possibility. But Jesus IS thinking positively! He is looking beyond the suffering to the resurrection life that follows it.

Bringing Jesus' faith into question would be the role of Satan, "the accuser." "You can't count on God to fulfill his promises," is Satan's great theme. (The Temptation comes to mind, as well as The Garden.)

The Cross is a peculiar image for use as ornamentation. It is a cruel instrument of torture, humiliation, and painful death. But it is also Jesus' Victory sign, and ours. When we take it/ ours up, we lift high not the reminder of our own death, but the proclamation of Jesus' victory over our death.

It is probably impossible for us to live every moment with the full panorama of eternity in our sight. Jesus reminds the Twelve, and us, that the long range view of eternal joy is far more to be desired than the short term relief of trying to avoid any pain or deprivation. Sometimes short-term inconvenience, frustration, even deprivation, can be the surest route to long-term well-being and fulfillment.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

OPENING JOKE:

What fruit is the most popular?

BANANAS, because they have A PEEL!

INTRODUCTION:

In today's Bible passage, Jesus talks about something that is certainly NOT appealing – his own suffering and death on the cross. The disciples don't want to hear about this and Peter actually takes Jesus aside and tells him to stop talking about all this gloom and doom. But listen, then, to how Jesus comes back at Peter and makes him face reality. God's way is not always the easy way, but it is the right way if our goal is to look ahead and proclaim the GOOD NEWS, God's victory over death!

GOSPEL READING: *Mark 8:31-38 (NIV)* **Jesus Predicts His Death**

³¹He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³²He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

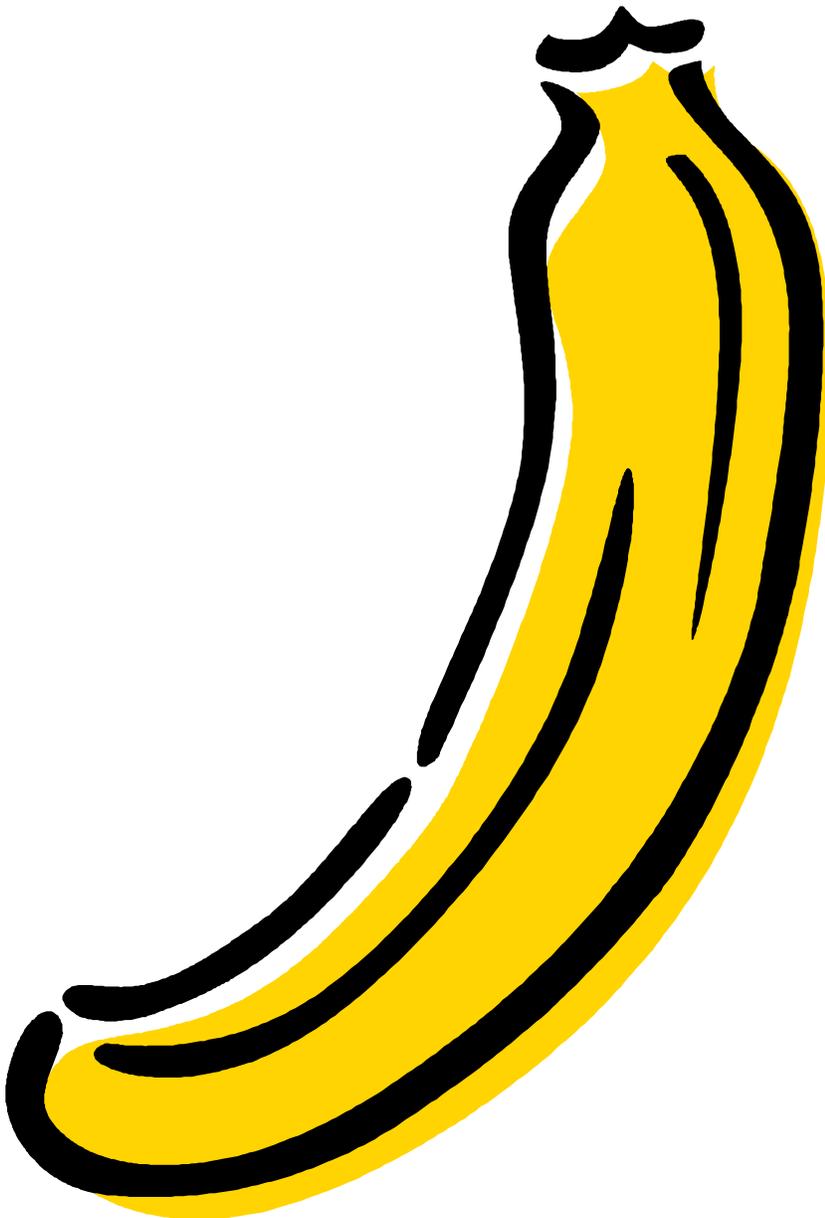
³³But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

³⁴Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

DISCUSSION:

1. Have students tell of things with a lot of appeal from culture (TV, fashion, games, music, food, sports) that only provide immediate gratification, but provide no real “fruit.”
2. Make a list on the board of things with less appeal, but more importance, worth or meaning for them now and as they grow up.
3. Why do they think culture tends to go for the appealing rather than the valuable in our everyday life? What might we be missing?
4. Compare and contrast what culture says is good and what the Gospel says is good; discuss which kind of “goodness” is easy and which takes more work.
5. Ask students if they remember things that were hard for them to accept/do when they were younger, but have made an important difference or made more things possible for them now and in the future?

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY



1. Ask each child to think about something they value that they had to work to achieve and/or maintain and has helped them to be better followers of Jesus.
2. Make group (poster board) or individual (drawing paper) posters of “FRUITFUL ABUNDANCE.”
3. Hand out construction/drawing paper and trace/cut out outline of a banana (can photocopy template found in this lesson.)
4. Have each child write/dictate a “fruitful” experience that has yielded abundance for them after a lot of work on the banana or bananas.

5. Decorate posters as time permits with more “bananas” or maybe try arranging them in bunches – *be creative!*

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gather the children with their posters and ask them to silently remember what it felt like to go through the hard time they did to yield their individual fruitful experiences and thank God for all he did to help them make the right choices along the way.

Close by praying:

Dear Lord, during this season of Lent we are following your travels to the cross. Today we remember that your life was not the easy or appealing way. But through your life and death on the cross, you gave us the fruit of greatest abundance -- life everlasting. Help us to recognize the many fruits we receive in our lives from following the lessons we learn about you; help us always to appreciate and be good stewards, to take care of these gifts that we receive from you. AMEN.