

LENTEN STEWARDSHIP TEACHING SERIES - 4

Fourth Sunday in Lent - Gospel: John 3:14-21

Fruits of Abundance - Children's Activity

OBJECTIVE: Students will identify the gift God gave us through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of his only Son. Students will create a Christingle as a tangible symbol that God sent Jesus to be the one true light and we are the recipients of abundant fruit from God's love as we lift up that light.

LEVELS: Pre-K through Grade 6.

CONCEPTS: Recognizing the most important gift we receive from God is eternal salvation; students will hear how God so loved all people that he sent Jesus to die for us so we might have eternal life. As students realize God sent Jesus to live on earth knowing that Jesus would suffer and die on the cross before ascending to heaven, they can begin to take on new appreciation of how being followers of Jesus means recognizing how much God loves us. Lent is a special time that Christians often spend time in meditation, prayer, and study that will help them appreciate God's love in his sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as they follow Jesus' journey to the cross and the Easter resurrection.

SKILLS: Discussing, Determining Cause and Effect, Summarizing.

MATERIALS: Paring knife and matches. (*Enough of the following for each child*) Orange (naval or any kind that will sit straight up), 3-4 inch tall candle, red ribbon, 4 cocktail skewers/tooth picks, gum drops, raisins, straight pins or staples for anchoring ribbon. *Optional: Fruit snacks*

TIME CONSIDERATIONS:

Preparation: 15 minutes

Activity: 30-45 minutes

ASSESSMENT:

Students will respond to the following questions:

What was God's cost for showing us that he loved us "so" much?

What are some things you could do to remember to live in the light?

BACKGROUND (*Parallel with Adult Teaching Series*)

Verse 14 refers to Numbers 21: 4 - 9. (As the people traveled through the wilderness with Moses they became impatient and began to complain bitterly against God and Moses. God sent venomous snakes to bite the people and many died. The people repented and asked Moses to intercede with God on their behalf and remove the snakes. God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it high. Those who turned and looked at it lived.) Here is a vivid example of the cycle of creation (people living under God's grace), sin (complaints, ingratitude), judgment

(death), repentance acknowledgement of sin) and redemption (a way to be saved). Now Jesus says He must be lifted up in the same way.

This whole passage moves from the work of Son (3:14-15) to that of the Father (3:16-21). In John's Gospel, the lifting up of the Son of Man through his exaltation on the cross, in the resurrection and ascension, are one single act of glorification, through which God offers life eternal by participation in God's life.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

OPENING JOKE:

Knock! Knock!

Who's there?

Banana

Banana who?

Knock! Knock!

Who's there?

Orange

Orange who!

ORANGE'nt (Aren't) you glad I didn't say banana again!

INTRODUCTION:

In the Bible passage today, the Gospel writer John lifts up Jesus as the ultimate gift from God. God loves all people so much he sent his son Jesus to live with us and to die, rise from the dead and ascended into heaven in a glorious act of love for the world. Through his life and death, he became the true light of the world, offering true believers eternal life by participation in God's life. If we believe Jesus and follow in his teachings, we are all children of the light. Therefore whenever we lift high this true light in the world and do God's work, we are never in darkness, but are surrounded by God's love.

GOSPEL READING: *John 3:14-21(NIV)* **Jesus as the Ultimate Fruit of God's Love for Us**

¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'

DISCUSSION:

1. How different were the world and people when Jesus was alive compared to now?
2. What seems better? What seems worse?
3. How does God show us how much he loved us?
4. What difference does that mean for us?

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY –

CHRISTINGLES (source: <http://www.thischurch.com/christianinfo/christingle.htm>)

Christingle – meaning 'Christ Light' is a symbol of the Christian Faith. Christingle services are held in churches, usually between Advent and Candlemas (February 2nd). It is an excellent opportunity for people of all ages to join in, using oranges to create visible symbols of the Christian message. The Christingle has its origins in a Moravian children's service held in a castle in Germany on Christmas Eve in 1747. The bishop conducting the informal service gave each child a lighted candle, tied with a red ribbon, in memory of the Savior's coming which he said has kindled a flame in each heart which keeps burning "to His joy, and our happiness". Much later, this simple candle was replaced by a more elaborate Christingle which is rich in symbolism. For many years churches all over the world have made Christingles to remind them that Christ is the light who came into the world at Christmas.



Our modern Christingle consists of:

- An ORANGE . . .
representing the world
- A RED RIBBON, tied round the orange . . .
representing the blood of Jesus
- FRUITS and SWEETS, skewered on 4 toothpicks
which are pushed into the orange . . .
representing God's good gifts - the fruits of the
earth and the four seasons
- A lighted CANDLE, pushed into the centre of the
orange . . .
representing Christ, the light of the world.

1. Sit children around a table and explain that because they learned Jesus is the one true light, they are going to make a very traditional symbol of our Christian faith, a Christingle – meaning 'Christ Light' - which is a symbol of the Christian Faith.
2. Distribute materials, and explain the symbolism of each item.
3. (*Can be done in advance*) Adults cut top off naval end of orange and make an “X” in the top; review the symbolism of the orange as the world God loved.
4. Help children insert candle in the hole; review the symbolism of the candle as the light of the world.
5. Help children place ribbon around the widest part of the orange; secure with pins or “staple” into the orange in 1-4 places; review the symbolism of the red ribbon as Jesus’ blood sacrificed for us.
6. Help children to insert 4 picks into the orange. Children can be creative, but the picks are usually placed at approximately 4 cardinal directions (north, south, east and west) and either near the top or into the ribbon to secure it; review the symbolism of the picks as the four seasons.
7. Help children push gum drops and raisins in an alternate pattern; *ending with a gum drop pushed over the sharp point reduces the safety hazard*; review the symbolism of the fruits and sweets as the abundant fruits of the earth we receive from God.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gather the children, holding their Christingles, then light the candles in their Christingles. If possible turn down the lights in the room, and begin by singing this familiar song, singing as many verses as time permits or just sing first and last verses. Even hesitant singers should be able to follow along by the second verse.

*This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine,
Let it shine,
Let it shine.*

*Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine x3
Let it shine, x3*

*Shine all over [name of town] I'm gonna let it shine x3
Let it shine, x3*

*This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine x3
Let it shine, x3*

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.

