

Year 1: *Session 4* – Jesus' Childhood

Class 11: Luke 2:22-40 – *Jesus receives a blessing*

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Explore what “reveals the inner thoughts of many” could mean
- Connect with other Jesus stories that illustrate what “revealing the inner thoughts of many” looks like once Jesus is an adult.
- Discuss/think about how the faith community around Jesus supports him and his parents and why that is important

Materials needed

- Video clip from BBC TV show of “Sherlock” (clip is on rfour.org)
- Electronics that show the video clip
- Long Spaghetti noodles (plan for 20 noodles per team; plan for 3 students per team)
- 1 yard of masking tape per team
- 1 yard of string per team
- 1 scissors per team
- 1 large marshmallow per team

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today’s class, I [the teacher] will ask the question, and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question:* What is a positive thing that an adult has told you about you that you think about from time to time? **Note to teachers:** *This is a fantastic time to 1. Reinforce supportive things that other adults are telling your students by saying “I AGREE!” and “THEY’RE RIGHT!” and 2. If a student cannot think of an answer, take that opportunity to share something positive right then and there with the class that you’ve noticed about that student.*

INTRO TO VIDEO CLIP

- The following clip is from the BBC TV show, "Sherlock."
- In the clip, Sherlock Holmes notices little things about a potential client that then helps Sherlock "see" what the man did in the day before he met Sherlock.
- Because they have British accents and talk pretty quickly, subtitles have been added to help with understanding what they are saying.
- The character of Sherlock in this series is not necessarily a likeable one. When he's bored, he's often rude. He has been bored up to this point in the episode, which is why he's a little bit rude in this clip. He's also recently stopped smoking, so that's making him irritable as well.
- The third character is, of course, Dr. Watson.
- Let's see what happens

VIEW VIDEO CLIP

ASK

- So what details did Sherlock notice? (mostly he noticed stains: Stains of coffee on a crumpled napkin, mustard stains on the man's mouth, nicotine stains around the man's fingernails as well as the phone number on the napkin and the punched ticket holes and the time of his arrival)
- Why did Sherlock think the man was interested in a girl and then less interested as the day went on? (because he wrote the number down on a napkin, then rewrote the number, but then used the napkin and by the time he's talking to Sherlock, has the napkin all balled up)
- So what conclusion did Sherlock arrive at about the man after regarding all these details that he noticed? (that something very important had happened the night before and the man was in a big hurry to have Sherlock help him with whatever had happened)

TELL

- In today's scripture story, there is no mystery to unravel or clues to notice in the way that Sherlock does it in the video clip.
- However, what the clip shows us is how in lots of little ways, we reveal our thoughts and feelings even when we don't mean to or are trying to, especially when something happens that creates feelings of unease or stress in us.
- But, for those details to actually reveal something about us, they have to be *noticed* by a keen observer.
- In today's scripture story, Jesus is still a very young baby. And his parents take him to the Temple in Jerusalem.
- While they are there, some people who seem to be keen observers have some things to say about who Jesus will be, including this idea that who Jesus will be will reveal the inner thoughts of others.
- Let's see what happens.

READ Luke 2:22-40 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse, including teachers*)

22 When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), 24 and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." 25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see

death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 27 Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 29 "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." 33 And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed 35 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too." 36 There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. 39 When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

ASK

- Verse 22 – Where do Mary and Joseph bring Jesus? (to the Temple in Jerusalem – note that it's not clearly stated until verse 27 that they brought Jesus specifically to the temple)
- Verse 22 -24: There are three reasons given for why they went to the Temple. What are those reasons? (for a rite of purification, a sacrifice and to present their firstborn son to God)
- Is the rest of the story about those three reasons for going to the temple? (Nope)
- What is the rest of the story about? (Simeon and Anna blessing Jesus)
- Did Mary and Joseph know Simeon or Anna? (No)
- Simeon calls Jesus “a light for revelation to the Gentiles (*Note: A Gentile is anyone who is not Jewish*) and for glory to your people Israel” – Any thoughts about what you think that means? (some basic ways to understand this: Jesus will be a light that helps the Gentiles see God better. In other words, we need light to see anything and in this case, Jesus will be a light that helps people see God. The glory part can mean things like blessing and honor. It can also mean feeling the weight (in a good way, like the weight of a warm blanket when you are cold) of God's presence.
- Simeon also says Jesus will be “a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed.” This part of the blessing connects with what we were seeing in the Sherlock clip. So, can you think of any Jesus stories where he is opposed, which then helps us to notice the inner thoughts of the other people? (Some example stories to share with the students once they share theirs: the crucifixion of Jesus, when Jesus is talking to his hometown and then they try to throw him off a cliff; there's a number of stories where Jesus heals someone on the Sabbath and the Pharisees try to turn Jesus into a criminal for doing so; when Jesus tells his disciples that he's going to die and Peter argues with him; during his Roman trial, we see that Pilate knows Jesus is innocent, but doesn't do his job as a judge and set Jesus free)
- Verse 38 – Who does Anna tell about Jesus? (“all who were looking for the redemption of Israel.”)
- What do you think that means? (It means that Anna wasn't telling the Pharisees or others who would be opposed to Jesus. She was telling the people who were at the Temple to seek God)
- Imagine that you are Mary or Joseph. You've traveled 3 days from home (which is a small town out in the country) and your first child was born in a barn during those travels. Since you are close to the one true city in your country, you choose to go to the Temple and while you are there, these two people seek you out and tell you that your newborn son is going to be a Very Important Person. What would you think about all of this? What would your thoughts be?

TELL

- At first this may not seem like much of a story: Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the Temple and some crazy old people talk to them for awhile.
- But, one reason this story is important is because it speaks to how the faith community noticed something about Mary and Joseph and then shared what they noticed.
- Think back to our opening question and your answer about positive things adults have said to you about you that you still think about.
 - And now, remember that Mary is somewhere between the ages of 13 and 15 in this story. SHE'S YOUR AGE!
 - Joseph was probably a little bit older, but for both of them, to have not just one, but two people who didn't know them, come up to them in the big city, in the Temple, and talk to them about their child like this **had** to have stuck in their brains.
 - It could've affected how they thought about parenting and raising Jesus. Or, at the very least, it would've helped them think, "We can do this. We can make it through this difficult time."
- Also, by sharing what they are noticing, Simeon and Anna are saying, "We hope you choose to notice what we are noticing."
- What we see Simeon and Anna doing is supporting the younger generations of their faith community.
- By supporting the next generations in this way, they are helping raise the next generation to a higher level.
- We're going to do an activity now that helps us to think about how support from a community **can** raise future generations to new heights.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- The task is simple: In 15 minutes (make it 10 minutes if you are worried about time), each team must build the tallest free-standing structure out of 20 sticks of spaghetti, one yard of tape, one yard of string.
- Free-standing means the structure cannot lean against the wall nor can you use the string or tape to attach the structure to a wall or furniture or another person. It must stand on its own.
- Not only must it stand on its own, but it must support the weight and bulk of a large marshmallow at its top.
- Any questions?
- If not, let's break into teams (2 to 3 students per team), get our materials ready, and get started.
- Note: Call out the time every 3 minutes to help teams track with how much time they have

DO ACTIVITY

ASK

- Well done on your attempts to build a free-standing structure that can support a marshmallow!
- Was it easy to create a stable structure while also building a tall structure that could support a marshmallow? (no, not really!)
- Was it pretty important to figure out the base/foundation of the building first? (yes!)

TELL

- So if you think about today's scripture story, Simeon and Anna were like the base/foundation of your spaghetti building: They were raising up Mary and Joseph with their words so that Mary and Joseph would do the same with Jesus (aka the marshmallow).
- That's how a faith community should work
- We do lots of teaching of the stories in these classes, but we don't very often share what our hopes, as a faith community, are for you.
- So we, the teachers, are going to have a Simeon and Anna moment here and tell you:
 - We hope that you learn what it means to be disciple of Jesus
 - We hope that you choose to be a disciple of Jesus
 - We hope that you then help others know what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in even better ways than we did
 - At the very least, we hope that when you are an adult in a church that you teach middle school Sunday school classes like this one.
- It is these hopes as well as our care and love for you for why we teach this class.
- Next week, we'll look at a story about Jesus when he was 12 years old.

CLOSING PRAYER