

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany – year A

Preparation

Read [Matthew 5:38-48](#). Pay attention to the words or phrases that jump at you. Read over the lesson so that you are familiar with what is intended to happen. Gather the materials that you will need for each section of the lesson. For deeper thinking or for ways to extend the lesson take a look at the following websites:

<http://www.textweek.com/yeara/epipha7.htm>
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109452_115820_ENG_HTM.htm
http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm?id=430
http://www.sermons4kids.com/love_your_enemies.htm
<http://www.msscrafter.com/newtestament/loveyourenemy.htm>
<http://children.calvarychapel.com/site/pdf/New/curr183.pdf>
<http://www.ebibleteacher.com/children/lessons/enemy.htm>
<http://www.word-sunday.com/Files/a/7-a/A-7-a.html>
<http://www.efree.mb.ca/lectionarypuzzles/in-awjj.htm#ep07>

Gathering

Materials needed

- Small table or end of one table
- Candle and candle lighter
- Bible and bookmark
- Green cloth
- Newsprint and markers
- White paper
- Scissors

Print up the prayer on the newsprint so that the readers can say the prayer with you. Gather around the small table or at the end of one table. With the children place the cloth on the table. Have them help you place the candle and the Bible on the cloth. Light the candle. Pray the following prayer together:

**Learning new things, we walk with God;
Loving new ways, we walk with Jesus;
Looking for hope, we walk with the Spirit. Amen.**

Blow out the candle. Ask the children what they think it means to love. Wait for their responses. Explain that you are going to show them how much Jesus loved us. Now take a piece of white paper. Fold the paper as if going to make a square by folding right corner to the left side so that you get a right angled triangle. Do not cut off the bottom strip. Fold the top left hand point down towards the right edge of the fold. It should look like the outline of a roof on a house at this point. Then fold that in half with the point in the middle. Fold it in half again lengthwise. Cut the folded paper straight up the middle of the long side. When you unfold it you should have a cross. Ask the children what the cross has to do with love. Wait for their responses. In today's story you will hear what Jesus has to say about love and how we are to act in the world.

Story Time

Materials

- poster from previous weeks
- begging-hand image at the end of the lesson
- scissors
- wall tack or tape
- construction paper
- marker

Instructions

- Copy the begging hand image at the end of the lesson and cut it out. Place it near the poster with the wall tack or tape. Print the following words up on separate pieces of construction paper and then post them up around your space on the walls or the backs of chairs: **Mountain, Cheek, Cloak, Neighbour, Love, Perfect.** You will be moving around the space with the children to tell this story.

Jesus was up on the mountain (*go and stand with the children by the mountain sign*) with his friends and other followers. He was teaching them still. Jesus knew that he had to tell them more about how God wanted them to live in the world.

Jesus said, “We know that we have been told that if someone has done something wrong to us then we should expect to get justice from them. I tell you that if someone strikes you on the cheek (*go with the children to the cheek sign*) you are not to hit them back. You are to show them the other cheek.”

Jesus went on to say, “If someone wants your coat then not only give them that but also give them your cloak (*go with the children to the cloak sign*). If someone makes walk a long with them, then keep on walking with them. Give to everyone who begs from you. Do not refuse anyone.”

Jesus said, “It has also been said that you should love your neighbour (*go with the children to the neighbour sign*) and hate your enemy. I tell you that you are to love (*go with the children to the love sign*) your enemy and pray for those who make your life hard. This is so that you may be children of God in heaven. God makes the rain fall on both those who do good things and those who do bad things.”

“Remember” said Jesus, “what good does it do you for you to just love those who love you? Those who do bad things love those who love them. You need to be perfect (*go with the children to the perfect sign*) just like God is perfect. Love everyone just as God loves you no matter what you do.”

Point out the poster to the children. Explain that each week that they are going to add a symbol (an object that reminds us of something) to the poster. Bring out the begging hand image. Ask the children why we put the begging hand on for today? To remind us of that we need to take care of each other and love each other as God wants us to do. Have one of the children tape it onto the poster on the side of the hill/mountain.

Response

Project Idea 1: Prayer Card

Regular prayer is to be part of every Christian's faith life. These cards will be a way for the children to make prayer a more regular part of their daily lives.

Materials needed

- card stock
- scissors
- tissue paper
- glue
- glitter
- clear contact paper
- prayer card note at end of lesson

Instructions

Copy the prayer card note so that you have one for each child. Cut the card stock in half horizontally, so that you have two rectangles. Make one for each child. With the children read over the prayer. Explain to the children that they are going to make a prayer card to keep at home to pray when they need to be reminded how to love others they meet and are with. Have the children tear the tissue paper up into small pieces and then glue them onto the card stock. When they have the whole piece covered have the children glue the prayer in the middle of the card. Help the children to cover their cards with clear contact paper and trim off the excess with scissors. Encourage the children to place their cards in their homes where they will see and regularly use it.

Project Idea 2: Prayer Flowers

Prayer is conversation with God and all of us need to be encouraged to begin that conversation. These flowers will engage the children and their families in this conversation.

Materials needed

- flower image from end of lesson
- construction paper
- scissors
- markers
- newsprint
- pipe cleaners
- strong clear tape
- glue

Instructions

Copy the flower image from the end of the lesson. Make enough so that each child will have four flowers. Cut out circles from the construction paper that are just slightly larger than the flowers themselves. Print up on the newsprint the following four words: **'Friends'**, **'Those who hurt us'**, **'The poor'**, **'Love'**. Give each child four flowers and four construction paper circle. Read what is printed inside the flowers and then point out what has been printed on the newsprint. Ask the children to print the prayer requests below 'Pray today for' – one for each flower. When they are done that have them glue those flowers on the construction paper circles. Then have the children tape a pipe cleaner to the back of the flower to act as a stem.

Use another pipe cleaner to tie the four flowers together. Invite the children to use the flowers with their families in their daily prayers – pick a flower and pray for the thing mentioned on the flower.

Project Idea 3: Hand Prayers Poster

Prayer is something that we are encouraged to do on our own but as a Christian community we all pray together. This poster will be a way for the children to share with the larger church community.

Materials needed

- poster board
- construction paper
- scissors
- markers
- glue

Instructions

Print the following up on across the top of the poster board: **‘We will pray together and use our hands for love’**. Give each child a piece of construction paper and have them trace one of their hands on the construction paper. Then have the children cut out their hands. While the children are working on their hands talk with them about what they would like to pray for – making the link to Jesus and his instruction to pray for those who don’t like us. When they are done cutting out their hand have them print their prayer on the hand and then have them glue them onto the poster board. With the children choose a place that it can be put up so that others can see their prayers.

Closing

Gather with the children around the worship table again. Relight the candle. Say the prayer line by line and encourage the children to repeat it after you:

**Thank you God for being with us;
Thank you Jesus for loving us;
Thank you Spirit for leading us. Amen.**

Image of a begging hand

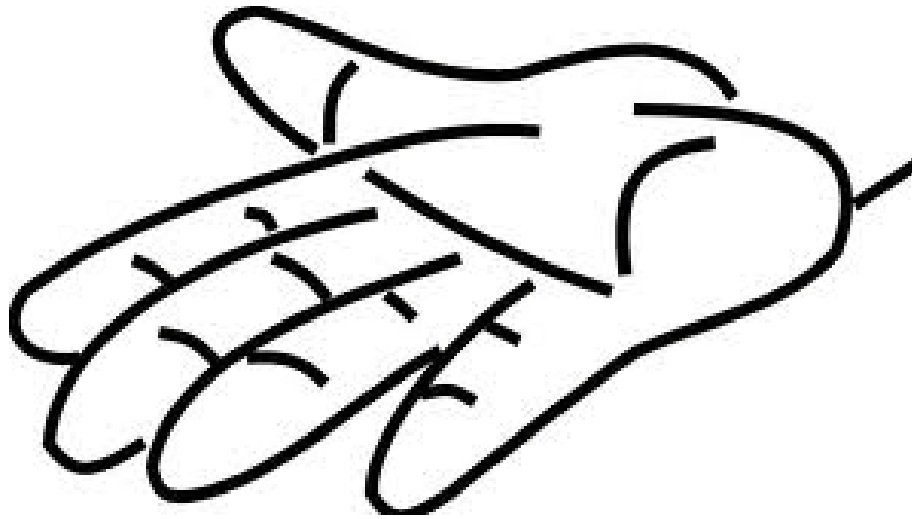


Image of a flower



Prayer Card

**Holy God,
For today I will love as you love,
I will love those who love me,
I will love those who don't love me.
I will act with your love,
I will show your love.
Jesus taught us how to love,
I will love as a friend of Jesus.
Amen.**