

Jesus Predicts His Death

Grades
3-4

SACRIFICE • LENT 5 • YEAR B

JOHN 12:20-33



5

What is happening in this story?

Everyone expected the Messiah to exhibit an overwhelming power and victorious defeat of the world's evil forces. Instead, the Messiah was arrested and crucified. God's power is found in suffering, death, and the new life that comes from suffering and death. Jesus compares this "hour" ahead of him to a grain of wheat in the earth. Like a grain of wheat buried in order to bear new fruit, Jesus must die to bring new life into the world. This is true not only for Jesus but also for his followers. They are not to "love their life"; in fact, they are to "hate" their life—that is, to reject the unbelief in the world and to trust and follow Jesus.

Why does this story matter for kids?

Jesus is talking about the real possibility that we lose our very lives in self-centered living. The antidote to that is serving. Tangible ways include helping at home/school/church, learning and celebrating how others live and practice their faith, and working at various social safety-net organizations like food shelves—but it can also happen in worship and in regular observances of our faith such as praying for others.

What is the lectionary connection?

Jesus is trying to prepare his disciples—he's trying to tell them that he is going to die but that God is going to raise him, and therefore them, to new life, just as wheat grows from a wheat seed. We twenty-first-century readers of John 12 are also being prepared for chapter 13 and onward. Jesus speaks to us in this text too. It is a foreshadowing of all that is to come.

AGE LEVEL TIP

Hate. This difficult word is in today's Bible story. Kids in our culture hear this word as an ugly feeling toward others. Reassure kids that Jesus didn't use this word as a feeling, but to indicate setting priorities. "Hating" one's life simply means putting others' needs before our own.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers
- Scissors
- Glue
- Scrap paper
- Clear Tape
- Pencils

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Sticky notes
- Chart paper
- Cucumber seeds
- Small cups
- Dirt
- Black cloth

WHIRL SUPPLIES

• WHIRL NRSV BIBLES

• DVD

• WALL CHART

• LEAFLETS

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Before kids arrive, number a chart from 1 to 5 vertically. Give kids sticky notes, and ask them to write and place their five favorite subjects, teachers, or activities in school. Each kid adds their choices when they arrive. Work together to name the top responses.

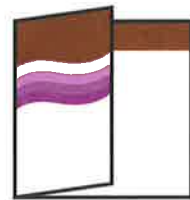
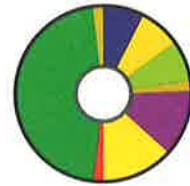
Invite kids to look at the Wall Chart.

Point out today's date, church season, color, and icon. **In the season of Lent, the church directs its attention to Jesus' great sacrifice for us. A seed can grow into something great, but it has to sacrifice—give up—its life. Sometimes sacrifice is a part of our life.** Invite each kid to put a dab of glue on a cucumber seed and place it on the Wall Chart. Ask a volunteer to draw a purple circle around all the seeds.

Give each kid a cup of dirt and a seed. **Make a hole with your finger and put the seed in the hole. What happens when a seed is buried in dirt and cared for?** Place all cups in one spot and cover with a black cloth.

Pass out leaflets, pencils, scissors, and glue.

What is something you have given or done that has helped people you know? That is one kind of sacrifice. It can make a difference in their lives. Now write something you can do (sacrifice) in the future for people in the yellow, green, and blue circles. Invite kids to cut out the cross and paste it into the center of the target. **God sacrificed God's own self for us in Jesus. How does God's sacrifice make our lives different?**



Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

Is it easy for you to give up something you really like? Why might it feel hard to do? Sometimes sacrifice takes extra effort.

View Episode 5, "Mysterious Benecrafter," on the Whirl Year B Spring Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- Name Mimi, Ruby, and Leo's jobs.
- How could you tell which character *really* likes the Arts and Crafts Club?
- What was the bad news Leo discovered about the club? How did it get fixed?
- What was the sacrifice Mimi felt she had to make to save the club?
- When have you worked *really* hard to do something for someone else?

Pass out Whirl NRSV Bibles and help kids find John 12:20-33.

Do the Lent 5 Preview Activity together on page 1257 and compare responses.

Read John 12:20-33 in this creative way together: **The Gospel of John can be tough to read sometimes. It may even feel like we are "sacrificing" something, putting in all the effort we have, just to understand it! Jesus' whole life was one of sacrifice. He sacrificed throughout his life to care for others and love others. Today's reading talks about Jesus' ultimate sacrifice—his life.**



Ask kids to get into groups of three or four and take turns reading verse by verse. **When you find something you have questions about or think is especially important, underline that part with a purple marker.**

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- What does it usually mean to be *glorified*?
- What is Jesus talking about in this story? (His death and resurrection.)
- What is going to happen to Jesus? Does he know?
- What does Jesus mean when he says he will be glorified?
- How do plants "bear fruit"? How will Jesus "bear fruit"?

BIBLE BIT

To be glorified and lifted up means that Jesus' death on the cross is for our salvation.

WATCH IT AGAIN

Encourage kids to think of things they would give up to save the craft club.

OUR CHURCH

Invite someone who pays the church's bills to talk about how congregations depend on individual people sacrificing some of their own money.

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out markers, scrap paper, and tape.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. What letters do you see at the top of the cross? These Latin letters represent *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum*.
2. In English, this means “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” John’s gospel uses this same phrase. Why do you think Jesus was called a king?
3. Do most kings end up dying on a cross?
4. During Lent, we remember Jesus died on the cross. He sacrificed his *life* for us.
5. On the scraps of paper, write things you are sad that you have done or feel frustrated with, or things you have difficulty with.
6. Use tape to “nail” the scraps of paper to the old rugged cross on your leaflet.
7. If you have access to a recording of “The Old Rugged Cross,” play it while kids “nail” their notes to the cross.
8. Jesus died to show us his great love. Your sins are forgiven and you can be free from guilt because of Jesus’ sacrifice.
9. How does it feel to know the things you put on the cross are taken care of now by Jesus?

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Jesus gave his life for us because he cares deeply for us. God’s selfless sacrifice of God’s self in Jesus led to something more—a deeper relationship with God and each other. How can you be thankful for God’s sacrifice for you? How can you offer a sacrifice for others so that they know God loves them too? Take time to hear kids’ responses.

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out markers.

Sacrifice means giving up something for someone else. Look at the panel. What does the seed give up when it is planted? Add the last three words of John 12:24.

Send kids out.

Remove the black cloth from the seed cups. **Right now the seeds look dead, buried in soil. Take your cup home to add water, sunlight, and loving care. What will happen?**

Pray together: **God, you sacrificed yourself for us that we might be with you always. Thank you for this great gift. Remind us to sacrifice our time for others. Amen.**

Thank kids for working in the dirt, in the nitty-gritty of life. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.