



Community of Christ

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

ADULT

2 December 2018–24 November 2019

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS



Lifelong Disciple Formation in Community of Christ is the shaping of persons in the likeness of Christ at all stages of life. It begins with our response to the grace of God in loving community and continues as we help others learn, grow, and serve in the mission of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, discipleship is expressed as one lives the mission initiatives of the church through service, generosity, witness, and invitation.

Lectionary-based: The weekly lessons connect the *Revised Common Lectionary* for worship with Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

Quick, easy: The lessons are designed for approximately 45-minute class sessions with two to three pages of ideas, discussion starters, and activities. Additional preparation help may be found in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

Lessons are available for these age groups:

Children (multiage, 6–11): Help children engage in the Bible and introduce mission and beliefs with stories, crafts, and activities.

Youth (ages 12–18): Engage teens in scripture study and provocative questions about identity, mission, and beliefs.

Adult (ages 19 and older): Deepen faith and understanding with reflective questions, theological understanding, spiritual practices, and discussion ideas.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Bible scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (HOPE)

LESSON 1
2 December 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 21:25–36

Lesson Focus: The *advent* (coming) of hope is found in the sacred story of Jesus Christ and continues in the life of the church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share signs of hope in the world today.
- explore the focus scripture passage and understandings of God's reign on Earth.
- discuss what it means to cultivate a culture of stubborn hope.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 21:25–36 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

As people gather, greet one another and share responses to the following question:

- Where do you see signs of hope in the world today?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today is the first Sunday of Advent (which means coming), and the lectionary passage from Luke's gospel takes us to the close of Jesus' teachings in the temple in Jerusalem.

Read Luke 21:25–36 two times, pausing briefly between each reading.

- As the passage is read the first time, make note of significant words, phrases, or ideas. Make note of questions that come to mind. (The response sheet may be used to make notes.)
- As the passage is read a second time, consider the significance of this passage being used on the first Sunday of Advent.
- What images and phrases in this passage communicate a message of hope?

Luke’s audience lived in 70 CE after the temple’s destruction and the fall of Jerusalem. In a time of harsh rule, the hope they heard in this passage was redemption and liberation through God’s reign. They hoped for the coming of the Messiah and God’s kingdom of justice and righteousness at the end of history. The “coming of the Son of Man” connects with language and features from the Law and the Prophets. In Luke’s theology, the time of Jesus is seen as a midway point between the time of Israel and the time of the church. According to Luke’s two-volume work of Luke-Acts, God’s activity to redeem the world is found in the story of Israel, manifested in Jesus Christ, and continued through the Holy Spirit in the work of the church.

- How does the hope of God’s reign for Luke’s audience differ from your hope of God’s reign? How is it the same?
- How does your idea of God’s reign differ from the ideas of Luke’s audience? How is it the same?
- What do you think the first hearers of this passage would have understood about “being prepared”?
- In what ways are we being called to prepare for the reign of God?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read the following excerpts taken from *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, pp. 4, 22–23 and Stephen M. Veazey, “God Weeps...and Hopes,” *Herald*, January 2015, p. 7.

We Share a Vision for Creation

God’s vision of peace for creation clearly was revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who

proclaimed the coming kingdom or peaceful reign of God on Earth. The gospel or “good news” was then entrusted to the church—the community of disciples called to be the body of Christ. The purpose of the church is to form disciples who faithfully share the gospel of peace in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We Proclaim Jesus Christ

By the mystery of the incarnation, Jesus, born of Mary, came into the world to live and dwell among us to reveal God’s nature and will....The promises of God in Jesus Christ are sure—that by the Holy Spirit we will be given grace to do the things we have been asked: courage in the struggle for justice, passion for peace in the midst of violence, forgiveness of our sin, stewardship in place of materialism, healing of body and spirit where there is hurt, and eternal life in the face of death....We live and serve in hope that God’s kingdom of justice and peace will indeed come, bringing healing to the whole, groaning creation.

Cultivate Stubborn Hope

“We must cultivate a spirit of stubborn hope!” (Stephen M. Veazey, “God Weeps...and Hopes,” *Herald*, January 2015, p. 7). In his sermon at the 2014 Peace Colloquy, Prophet-President Stephen M. Veazey shared the following statement from the late, former apostle Geoffrey F. Spencer’s book, *The Brightness of Hope*:

...The [Latin word] *adventus* has been used by Christians to point to the unexpected and surprising way God’s future constantly breaks in on us...Although we normally use the word only to name a certain period in the Christian year, leading up to the birth of the Christ Child, it is the quality of Advent that characterizes God’s future. People of hope are Advent people.

Refer to the Luke passage and the excerpts above to respond to the following questions:

- What connections can be made between the Luke passage and the excerpts above?
- How would you describe a Community of Christ understanding of the reign of God?
- What does it mean to “cultivate a spirit of stubborn hope” in our world? Does this signal an active or passive hope?
- What specific actions are you (or your congregation) doing to cultivate hope in your community?
- In what ways are we challenged to actively promote communities of hope?

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Respond to the following questions on your response sheet or share in groups of two or three. These questions may also serve as reflection questions for personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

- How is God's hope made real in you?
- In what new ways are you being called to cultivate hope in others? In your community?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "View the Present through the Promise" CCS 401 as a moment of blessing to close this time of learning.

LESSON 1 RESPONSE SHEET

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (HOPE)

2 December 2018

Luke 21:25–36 NRSV

²⁵There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

²⁶People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

- As the passage is read the first time, make note of significant words, phrases, or ideas. Make note of questions that come to mind.

- As the passage is read a second time, consider the significance of this passage being used on the first Sunday of Advent.
- Where do you find messages of hope in this passage?

We Share a Vision for Creation

God’s vision of peace for creation clearly was revealed in the life, death, and resurrection

of Jesus Christ, who proclaimed the coming kingdom or peaceful reign of God on Earth. The gospel or good news was then entrusted to the church—the community of disciples called to be the body of Christ. The purpose of the church is to form disciples who faithfully share the gospel of peace in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*,
3rd Edition, p. 4

We Proclaim Jesus Christ

By the mystery of the incarnation, Jesus, born of Mary, came into the world to live and dwell among us to reveal God’s nature and will....The promises of God in Jesus Christ are sure—that by the Holy Spirit we will be given grace to do the things we have been asked: courage in the struggle for justice, passion for peace in the midst of violence, forgiveness of our sin, stewardship in place of materialism, healing of body and spirit where there is hurt, and eternal life in the face of death....We live and serve in hope that God’s kingdom of justice and peace will indeed come, bringing healing to the whole, groaning creation.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*,
3rd Edition, pp. 22–23

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...The [Latin word] *adventus* has been used by Christians to point to the unexpected and surprising way God’s future constantly breaks in on us...Although we normally use the word only to name a certain period in the Christian year, leading up to the birth of the Christ Child, it is the quality of Advent that characterizes God’s future. People of hope are Advent people.

- How is God’s hope made real in you?

- In what new ways are you being called to cultivate hope in others? In your community?

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (PEACE)

LESSON 2
9 December 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 3:1–6/3: 3–11 IV

Lesson Focus: Preparing the way of the Lord is lived in the journey of discipleship.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider their daily activities and time spent in preparation.
- explore the focus scripture passage and Community of Christ understanding of salvation.
- connect “preparing the way of the Lord” with developing as disciples.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 3:1–6 NRSV/3:3–11 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

On the back of your response sheet or on a scrap piece of paper, make a list of what you prepared for in the past week (examples: meals, going to work, meetings, going to church, personal spiritual practices). Choose one item on your list that consumed the most time of all the

items listed. While quantity of time does not accurately measure one’s priorities or discipleship, consider the following questions:

- How does the time spent on this task reflect my priorities?
- What does this reveal about my life as a disciple?

Offer a prayer for openness to new awareness and understanding as you engage in study and discussion.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

This is the second week of Advent, and the lectionary passage from Luke tells of John the Baptizer's proclamation of repentance, forgiveness, and preparation for the one who is to come. Read Luke 3:1–6 NRSV/3:3–11 IV. **Note to instructor:** Use the following to guide discussion in groups of two or three or as a larger group.

The list of territorial rulers and religious leaders in the prologue of Luke's Gospel and the first verse of this passage places the Jesus story directly amid world history.

- Why is this significant in understanding Luke's Gospel?
- How is this reflected in today's culture, especially in the season of Advent?

"Prepare the way of the Lord," (v. 4) is quoted from Isaiah 40:3, "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord." John's proclamation of repentance and forgiveness of sins connects the prophets of the Old Testament with the one who is to come. To first-century Judaism, this was heard as a promise of God's salvation at the end of days. Announcing the forgiveness of sins reveals John as a witness to salvation and connects to Jesus as the one who brings forgiveness. The New Testament reference to repentance mainly uses the Greek word *metánoia*, which means understanding something differently after thinking it over. It involves a change of mind and heart which leads to a change in actions.

- How do we hear the call to "prepare the way of the Lord" differently from those who first heard these words? In what ways is the call the same?
- How does repentance, as defined above, and forgiveness of sins relate to "preparing the way of the Lord"?
- Why is this passage significant for life as a disciple?
- Why is this passage significant for a community of disciples?

The final verse of this passage, "and all flesh shall see the salvation of God," proclaims the universally inclusive nature of Jesus' ministry. Community of Christ basic belief statement of salvation includes:

The gospel is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ: forgiveness of sin, and healing from separation, brokenness, and the

power of violence and death. This healing is for individuals, human societies, and all of creation. This new life is the loving gift of God's grace that becomes ours through faith and repentance... We experience salvation through Jesus Christ, but affirm that God's grace has no bounds, and God's love is greater than we can know.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*,
3rd Edition, p. 15

- In what ways does this passage contribute to Community of Christ understanding of salvation?
- How does this form us as individual and collective disciples?
- Why is this understanding significant during Advent?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read the following passage from Doctrine and Covenants 163:2.

2a. Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God's peace and discover the blessings of all the dimensions of salvation.

b. Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

Discuss the following in groups of two or three. Share responses with the larger group.

- Where do you find connections between the Luke passage and the Doctrine and Covenants passage?
- What new understanding does the Doctrine and Covenants passage reveal about "preparing the way of the Lord"?
- How is this understanding reflected in the Mission Initiatives of Invite People to Christ and Develop Disciples to Serve?

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

The Way is central to Luke's theology. It highlights life as a disciple is a journey, not a destination. Spend a few moments reflecting on the following questions. Consider these questions in prayer throughout the coming week.

- In what ways am I being challenged through these passages to develop as a disciple?

- In what ways am I being challenged to help others develop as disciples?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Sing or read the words to "Spirit, Open My Heart" CCS 564 as a closing blessing.

LESSON 2 RESPONSE SHEET

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (PEACE)

9 December 2018

Luke 3:1–6 (NRSV)

¹In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, ²during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of the one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁵Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; ⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

Community of Christ Basic Beliefs: Salvation

The gospel is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ: forgiveness of sin, and healing from separation, brokenness, and the power of violence and death. This healing is for individuals, human societies, and all of creation. This new life is the loving gift of God’s grace that becomes ours through faith and repentance... We experience salvation through Jesus Christ, but affirm that God’s grace has no bounds, and God’s love is greater than we can know.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*,
3rd Edition, p. 15

Doctrine and Covenants 163:2.

2a. Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in

the way that leads to God’s peace and discover the blessings of all the dimensions of salvation.

b. Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

The Way is central to Luke’s theology. It highlights life as a disciple is a journey, not a destination. Spend a few moments reflecting on the following questions. Consider these questions in prayer throughout the coming week.

- In what ways am I being challenged through these passages to develop as a disciple?

- In what ways am I being challenged to help others develop as disciples?

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (LOVE)

LESSON 3
16 December 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 3:7–18/3:12–25 IV

Lesson Focus: We proclaim the good news as we generously respond to God's grace in ways that promote communities of justice and peace.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share moments of blessing and joy.
- explore the focus scripture passage.
- discover connections between the scripture passage and Community of Christ Enduring Principles.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 3:7–18/3:12–25 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Moments of Blessing and Joy

The focus on this third Sunday of Advent is love. Take a few moments to share good news from the past week. Offer a prayer of gratitude for blessings of love.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's passage has three sections. Discussion questions are provided for each section of the text. Begin by reading Luke 3:7–18 NRSV, pausing for a few moments to rest with the text.

Note to instructor: Discuss the following sections together as a group or divide into three discussion groups. Assign each group a section to discuss for five minutes. At the end of five minutes, assign a new section to each group. Continue a third time so each small group has five minutes with each section. Invite one person from each group to share an “aha” from each section and compare responses.

Read verses 7–9.

The foundation of John’s message is repentance. Beyond a feeling of being sorry, repentance is to be understood as a change of mind and action. John makes clear that salvation is not a matter of belonging to the *right* group (descendants of Abraham), but “bearing fruits worthy of repentance.” To first-century hearers, the motive for repentance is the coming judgment of the Lord. Judgment is reflected in the imagery of “the ax [placed] at the root of the trees.”

- How do you understand the imagery of “the ax...at the root of the trees”?
- What does it mean to “bear fruits worthy of repentance”?
- What do these verses reveal about belonging to a faith community and living as disciples?

Read verses 10–14.

John’s message is directed to the crowds. His response to the people as a whole reflects Luke’s understanding of the justice for which God calls. All are called to share their coats and food with those who have none. Tax collectors and soldiers are not called away from their positions in corrupt systems, but are called to respond within their social structures with justice and compassion.

- How does this passage illustrate Luke’s setting the Jesus story amid world history (refer to lesson 1)?
- What does this passage reveal about repentance, justice, and generosity?
- How does this passage affirm the importance of personal response without promoting individualism?

Read verses 15–18.

The imagery of the threshing floor depicts a mixture thrown into the air by a winnowing fork with the heavier grain falling back to earth and the chaff being carried away by the wind. The metaphor of unquenchable fire suggests final judgment. In the Christian community, wind became Spirit with a distinction between John’s baptism (water) and Jesus’ (Holy Spirit). For Luke, baptism of the Holy Spirit no longer represents final judgment. Rather, it is fulfilled in the wind, fire, and Spirit

imagery of Pentecost.

- What is the good news proclaimed in this passage?
- How does this passage offer hope in place of fear?
- Why is this passage significant during this season of joyous expectation?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

John’s message of repentance is experienced in acts of justice and generosity. Our lives are transformed as we generously respond to God’s grace in ways that promote communities of justice and peace. Read through the following Community of Christ Enduring Principles. Select one statement from each Enduring Principle that connects with your understanding of today’s passage from Luke. Respond to the following in groups of two or three, or with the larger group.

- In what ways does this statement connect with an understanding of today’s passage from Luke?
- How do you see this lived in your congregation or community?

Grace and Generosity

- God’s grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.
- Having received God’s generous grace, we respond generously and graciously receive the generosity of others.
- We offer all we are and have to God’s purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)

- God wants shalom (justice, reconciliation, well-being, wholeness, and peace) for all creation.
- Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom (peace), reveals the meaning of God’s peace in all aspects of life.
- The vision of Zion is to promote God’s reign on Earth, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, through the leavening influence of just and peaceful communities.

- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.
- We celebrate God's peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.

Blessings of Community

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed best in community life where people become vulnerable to God's grace and each other.
- True community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and oppressed.
- True community upholds the worth of persons while providing a healthy alternative to self-centeredness, isolation, and conformity.
- Sacred community provides nurture and growth opportunities for all people, especially those who cannot fully care for themselves.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Choose one phrase from the scripture passage or an Enduring Principle to which you feel drawn to prayerfully consider. Commit to using it in daily spiritual practice throughout the week. Pay attention to the ways your thoughts and actions become shaped through prayerful attention to the phrase or statement.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry" CCS 391 as a closing prayer of blessing.

LESSON 3 RESPONSE SHEET

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (LOVE)

16 December 2018

Luke 3:7–18 (NRSV)

⁷John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” ¹¹In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” ¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” ¹⁸So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

John’s message of repentance is experienced in acts of justice and generosity. Our lives are transformed as we generously respond to God’s grace in ways that promote communities of justice and peace. Select one statement from each Enduring Principle that connects with your understanding of today’s passage from Luke.

- In what ways does this statement connect with an understanding of today’s passage from Luke?

- How do you see this lived in your congregation or community?

Grace and Generosity

- God’s grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.
- Having received God’s generous grace, we respond generously and graciously receive the generosity of others.
- We offer all we are and have to God’s purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)

- God wants shalom (justice, reconciliation, well-being, wholeness, and peace) for all creation.
- Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom (peace), reveals the meaning of God’s peace in all aspects of life.
- The vision of Zion is to promote God’s reign on Earth, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, through the leavening influence of just and peaceful communities.
- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.
- We celebrate God’s peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.

Blessings of Community

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed best in community life where people become vulnerable to God’s grace and each other.
- True community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and oppressed.
- True community upholds the worth of persons while providing a healthy alternative to self-centeredness, isolation, and conformity.
- Sacred community provides nurture and growth opportunities for all people, especially those who cannot fully care for themselves.

Choose one phrase from the scripture passage or an Enduring Principle to which you feel drawn to prayerfully consider. Commit to using it in daily spiritual practice throughout the week. Pay attention to the ways your thoughts and actions become shaped through prayerful attention to the phrase or statement.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (JOY)

LESSON 4
23 December 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 1:39–55/1:39–54 IV

Lesson Focus: God’s vision for creation is made real as disciples in community reflect Christ-like hospitality, justice, and peace.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- connect Mary’s Song with Community of Christ hymns.
- consider what God is bringing forth in individual disciples, communities, and the church.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 1:39–55/1:39–54 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the lectionary text is Luke’s account of the Visitation. Read Luke 1:39–55 with openness to and gratitude for the Living Word to which scripture points.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The following section provides opportunity for further exploration in the text; questions may be used for moments of personal reflection and small or large group discussion.

The story lines of the old and new are brought together in this scripture passage. Elizabeth is old, and her son will represent the end of an old era. Mary is young, and her son will fulfill the old and begin the new. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. She is prophetic in her recognition of the One whom Mary carries, and she engages in the priestly act of speaking words of blessing to Mary.

- Christ is carried within us and around us. Where or how have you most recently recognized the Incarnate One?

“There are few things more powerful than finding ourselves in a situation beyond our imagining, and there encountering someone who knows, from the inside of it, something of what it is to be in that place. Someone who can meet us there....It is a dramatic scene, intense with the intimacy of the reaching out of these two women toward one another, holding on to one another for dear life” (Jan Richardson, “The Sanctuary They Make in Meeting,” *adventdoor.com*).

- What does it mean to find sanctuary in one another? What does it look like and feel like?
- What is required of us to offer this kind of hospitality to another? To receive from another?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The Magnificat

Mary’s Song in verses 46–55 is offered in humility as a statement of faith in God’s goodness and mercy. It mirrors the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1–10). The use of this Jewish-Christian canticle adds a note of joy and praise to the Birth Story and provides opportunity to ponder the nature of God’s justice expressed in the song. Mary’s Song highlights reversing proud and lowly, rich and hungry, resulting from the in-breaking of God in Jesus Christ. Luke is helping the church change its perspective of the reign of God.

Community of Christ Sings offers various texts which communicate this reversal expressed in Mary’s song. Divide the group into smaller groups and assign one of the following hymns to each group.

“Leftover People in Leftover Places” CCS 275

“Canticle of the Turning” CCS 404

“Tomorrow Christ Is Coming” CCS 406

“Christ Has Changed the World’s Direction!” CCS 356

Have each group discuss the following questions, then share responses with the larger group.

- In what ways does this hymn connect with Mary’s song?
- What does this hymn reveal about God’s nature?
- How does this hymn express God’s reign or God’s vision for creation?
- What is the challenge to the church through this hymn?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Use the following as personal reflection throughout the coming week.

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb....And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord” (Luke 1:42, 45).

- What do you believe God may be bringing forth in you?
- What might God be bringing forth in your congregation or community?
- What might God be bringing forth in the church?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Have each group read one verse of their chosen hymn (from the Respond section) to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 4 RESPONSE SHEET

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (JOY)

23 December 2018

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, the lectionary text is Luke’s account of the Visitation. Read Luke 1:39–55 with openness to and gratitude for the Living Word to which scripture points.

Luke 1:39–55 (NRSV)

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

⁴⁶And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

- Christ is carried within us and around us. Where or how have you most recently recognized the Incarnate One?

- What does it mean to find sanctuary in one another? What does it look like and feel like?

- What is required of us to offer this kind of hospitality to another? To receive from another?

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb....And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord” (Luke 1:42, 45).

- What do you believe God may be bringing forth in you?

- What might God be bringing forth in your congregation or community?

- What might God be bringing forth in the church?

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

LESSON 5
30 December 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 2:41–52

Lesson Focus: Lifelong learning in sacred community is an important practice in developing as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on significant traditions or experiences that impacted their development as disciples.
- explore the focus scripture passage and its primary role in the Luke account.
- discuss the symbolism of the Temple for Community of Christ in developing as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Photos or drawings of the Kirtland Temple and the Temple in Independence, online or in print (optional)

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 2:41–52 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite members of the group to share a religious tradition or experience that significantly impacted their development as disciples of Jesus Christ.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today’s passage is the account of Jesus as a twelve-year-old boy in the temple during his family’s pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

Read Luke 2:41–52.

The story of the boy Jesus in the temple has three roles in Luke's setting.

1. This story affirms that Jesus and his family were observant Jews and provides connection between Judaism and Christianity.
2. A glimpse into the boyhood of Jesus reveals both a divine and human nature. Like other Jewish boys, Jesus attended pilgrimage festivals with his family, prayed to God as "our Father," and worshiped in the temple, listening to those who taught. Luke also portrays Jesus being rather precocious and serious about matters of faith and his relation to God, astounding those who were teaching in the temple.
3. In Luke's setting, the story serves as a literary bridge from the birth story to the story of Jesus' ministry. There is also a theological connection to the journey Jesus will make to Jerusalem as an adult, meeting the teachers in the temple and fulfilling the will of the Father. (Note: The phrase, "in my Father's house" [NRSV] and "about my Father's business" [IV] are translated from the same Greek phrase.)

Use the following questions for discussion as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

- Which phrases from the scripture passage reveal the nature of a typical twelve-year-old boy?
- Which phrases reveal the divine nature of Jesus?
- What do you think is the most important role of this story as Luke tells it?
- What is important for us to learn about developing as disciples?
- Where do you find connections between this passage and Community of Christ Enduring Principles? Mission Initiatives?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The focus of the story of Jesus as a boy in the temple is not that the temple in Jerusalem has significance, but what the story reveals about the life of Jesus and the importance of growing in wisdom and obedience to the will of God. In Community of Christ tradition, the temples in Kirtland [Ohio, USA] and Independence [Missouri, USA] are significant. The significance is not in worshiping the buildings, but in what they symbolize for us as disciples of Jesus Christ. Read and discuss the following passages.

Temple as Life-giving Symbol

As a faith community, we have been given ample gifts, scriptural resources, sacraments, spiritual insights, and symbols that orient our lives toward Christ so that we may deepen our faith relationship. Among these gifts are the temples in Kirtland [Ohio, USA] and Independence [Missouri, USA]. Both temples, through their breathtaking architecture, call us to reverence and awe in the face of beauty that awakens our souls to the need to worship God as creator and sustainer of all that is....Both temples remind us that, above all else, Jesus Christ seeks to restore us to life as we were created to experience it; life as God intends it to be; life characterized by love, generosity, relationships of mutuality, sharing, and peacefulness.

The temples, places of beauty, worship, education, and church guidance, are compasses and lighthouses for our faith journey. They serve as constant reminders that we are called to live counter to the cultures of isolation, individualism, greediness, and suspicion that surround us. They constantly point beyond themselves to steer us to our true calling to become God's spiritual house, built on the witness and sacrifice of Jesus Christ—a household that unites, heals, restores, and frees people through community to express their best selves no matter who they are...a household in which Jesus would truly feel at home!

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*,
3rd Edition, p. 19

Doctrine and Covenants 161:2a,b

Become a people of the Temple—those who see violence but proclaim peace, who feel conflict yet extend the hand of reconciliation, who encounter broken spirits and find pathways for healing.

Fulfill the purposes of the Temple by making its ministries manifest in your hearts. It was built from your sacrifices and searching over many generations. Let it stand as a towering symbol of a people who knew injustice and strife on the frontier and who now seek the peace of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

- What experience have you had with either Community of Christ temple? How has this experience affected your life as a disciple?
- What does it mean to "become a people of the Temple"?
- What is the important connection between the two temples and growing in wisdom and responding to the will of God?

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

The passage from Luke and the description of Community of Christ temples present lifelong learning as an important practice of discipleship. Prayerfully consider and respond to the following questions. (This may be done as part of the current session or used in personal spiritual practice throughout the week.)

- I will engage in _____ as a practice of lifelong learning.
- I will encourage _____ to develop as a disciple by _____.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Close this time of learning and sharing by reading or singing one of the following hymns:

“Living Stones” CCS 279

“No Obvious Angels” CCS 418

LESSON 5 RESPONSE SHEET

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

30 December 2018

Luke 2:41–52 (NRSV)

⁴¹Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." ⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Temple as Life-giving Symbol

As a faith community, we have been given ample gifts, scriptural resources, sacraments, spiritual insights, and symbols that orient our lives toward Christ so that we may deepen our faith relationship. Among these gifts are the temples in Kirtland [Ohio, USA] and Independence [Missouri, USA]. Both temples, through their breathtaking architecture, call us to reverence and awe in the face of beauty that awakens our souls to the need to worship God as creator and sustainer of all that is. Both temples remind us

that, above all else, Jesus Christ seeks to restore us to life as we were created to experience it; life as God intends it to be; life characterized by love, generosity, relationships of mutuality, sharing, and peacefulness.

The temples, places of beauty, worship, education, and church guidance, are compasses and lighthouses for our faith journey. They serve as constant reminders that we are called to live counter to the cultures of isolation, individualism, greediness, and suspicion that surround us. They constantly point beyond themselves to steer us to our true calling to become God's spiritual house, built on the witness and sacrifice of Jesus Christ—a household that unites, heals, restores, and frees people through community to express their best selves no matter who they are...a household in which Jesus would truly feel at home!

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*,
3rd Edition, p. 19

Doctrine and Covenants 161:2a, b

Become a people of the Temple—those who see violence but proclaim peace, who feel conflict yet extend the hand of reconciliation, who encounter broken spirits and find pathways for healing.

Fulfill the purposes of the Temple by making its ministries manifest in your hearts. It was built from your sacrifices and searching over many generations. Let it stand as a towering symbol of a people who knew injustice and strife on the frontier and who now seek the peace of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

The passage from Luke and the description of Community of Christ temples present lifelong learning as an important practice of discipleship. Prayerfully consider and respond to the following questions.

I will engage in _____ as a practice of lifelong learning.

I will encourage _____ to develop as a disciple by _____.

EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

LESSON 6
6 January 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 2:1-12 / 3:1-12 IV

Lesson Focus: What Gifts Do You Bring?

Objectives

The learners will...

- discover and explore the characters in this traditional post-nativity narrative.
- consider possible reasons for the gift-giving of the magi.
- consider what gifts we bring in our ministry.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Scriptures
- Marker board or large poster, markers
- Copies of Response Sheet

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 2:1–12 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament (with focus on the Gospel according to Luke)*, pp. 31–32, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Ask participants to think about starting a long spiritual journey. Imagine God has called you to embark on a trip to visit the infant Jesus today. Consider what you would need for the journey:

- It’s a spiritual trip—don’t focus too much on the mode of travel.
- What preparation would you need to make to visit Jesus as an older infant or young toddler? What spiritual preparation would you need to make?
- Whom would you see during this trip?
- What would be the expected outcome of this trip?
- How might this encounter change you?

Share together in reading or singing “We Three Kings of Orient Are” CCS 438 stanzas two, three, and four.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Matthew 2:1–12 as a group and remember key words and phrases from the passage.

This scripture passage reflects the fear of those in power when potential change threatens. Discuss as a group the players of this story—especially those for whom we have no real “back story.”

- King Herod—“Herod the Great” was a puppet king of the ruling Romans. He was of Idumean rather than Jewish descent and attempted to bridge that gap by marrying a woman in the Jewish royal line. His killing of his relatives gives us a glimpse into his personality.
 - Discuss what Herod’s motivations might be.
 - The scripture passage referenced in v. 6 is from Micah 5:2. What might Herod have thought when he heard this scripture?
 - Herod creates alliances with the traveling “wise men” or dignitaries from the east. Again, read his statements and discuss his motivation.
- The Wise Men—Very little is known about these people. Tradition has three wise men because of the number of gifts given, but it’s not written how many there were. It is believed they were astronomers who linked something happening in the skies to the birth of a great leader among the Jews.
 - Discuss what the wise men’s motivations might be.
 - What were their encounters with Herod like?
 - What might motivate these people to travel (months or maybe years) to present this child expensive gifts?
 - How did the relationship change between the wise men and Herod in this short verse?
- Jesus’ family—This story most likely takes place well after the birth narrative. The story takes place in a “house” and mentions Herod’s decree to kill all male children under the age of two so it could have been known that Jesus was under two years of age.

- How might Jesus’ parents have responded to the visiting wise men and their entourage?
- Immediately after this verse, the family is warned about Herod’s plan to kill the children, and they leave to become refugees in Egypt. How might this visit of the wise men help them for this flight?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The three gifts of the magi are not typical for a baby today. They seem a bit strange of a baby—in fact, none of them would be considered “baby appropriate” by today’s standards. Some scholars say the wise men represent the divine recognition of Jesus in his infancy. Let’s consider what each of these items could have meant in their context:

- Gold—currency. We don’t know how much gold, but it would have been uncommon for a family of Jesus’ means to have any gold. A small amount would have been worth more than their annual income. A baby has little use of such a valuable gift.
 - Discuss what this might have meant to Jesus’ family.
 - Theorize what Jesus’ family might have used the gold for.
 - Could it have been used to help them escape to Egypt?
- Frankincense—This oil starts out as a white resin or gum. It is highly fragrant when burned as a pleasant offering to God (Exodus 30:34) in temple rituals ceremonially led by the priests. This gift was precious in both meaning and value.
 - Discuss what this offering might have meant to Jesus’ family.
 - Theorize what Jesus’ family might have used the frankincense for.
 - What connection might the frankincense have with Jesus’ perceived role?
- Myrrh—This oil had been imported to Egypt in large amounts for embalming rituals and distributed throughout the neighboring countries. It was commonly connected with death and burial.

- Discuss what this offering might have meant to Jesus' family.
- Theorize what Jesus' family might have used the myrrh for.
- What connection might the myrrh have with Jesus' perceived role?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Gifts are important in our own cultural context. Consider you are invited to a baby shower with the following understandings:

- You have nearly unlimited funds to purchase a gift.
- You know you're visiting a future king—one with whom you hope to have good relations with in the future.
- You are traveling to the baby shower over a great distance and time.

What gift today would you purchase? What is your gift attempting to say to the family? Write the gifts on

a marker board or large paper. As a group try to settle on only three gifts. How do these gifts express what you want to say to this new king? What other types of "gifts" do we bring the Christ child? If the magi brought symbolic gifts, what symbolic gifts do we bring to our ministry as disciples of Jesus?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

End this time together in the joy the magi must have felt after presenting their gifts before the Christ child. Briefly discuss:

- What might have been the wise men's conversations after presenting their gifts to Jesus' family?
- How might their feelings have changed after the dream in which they were told not to report back to Herod, but flee the country? How would they have felt about Jesus' family's safety?

In many biblical stories, we're confronted with the need to change plans and find there are those who seek to manipulate us for evil. End the class with a prayer to help us to be used as vessels of good news and not of evil.

LESSON 6 RESPONSE SHEET

EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

6 January 2019

Matthew 2:1–12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

What do you think Herod’s motives were when he asked the magi to report back to him? The magi’s motives for going to Bethlehem and then returning a different way?

What significance do you attach to each of the three gifts? Do you think they were practical or symbolic—or both?

What gifts would you select if you were visiting a new baby of such importance?

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY— BAPTISM OF THE LORD

LESSON 7
13 January 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 3:15–17, 21–22/ 3:22–24, 28–29 IV

Lesson Focus: Baptism of water and Spirit invites all disciples into God’s redeeming purposes.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share experiences of the good news of Jesus Christ.
- explore the focus scripture passage and the details of Luke’s account of the baptism of Jesus.
- compare ideas from the focus scripture passage with Community of Christ understandings of the Holy Spirit.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 3:15–17, 21–22 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

This Sunday immediately follows the Epiphany which is January 6 each year. “This is the meaning of Epiphany—God in Christ Jesus has been revealed to the world” (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 33).

Respond to one of the following in groups of two or three or as a large group.

- Share an “epiphany” experience when God in Christ Jesus was made real to you.
- Share an experience when you were moved to share the good news of Jesus Christ with another.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's passage includes Luke's account of the baptism of Jesus. In the liturgical calendar, this Sunday is also recognized as Baptism of the Lord Sunday. Read Luke 3:15–17, 21–22.

- What images or phrases are significant to you as you read or hear this passage? Why?
- What images or phrases challenge you in this passage? Why?

Luke's theology of salvation includes three distinct eras: the era of Israel (John, as the last prophet, represents the end of this era), the era of Jesus (the Messiah, who fulfills the Law and the Prophets), and the era of church (described in Acts, the second part of Luke's two-part volume). The Holy Spirit, present at Jesus' baptism and at Pentecost, is important to Luke throughout all eras.

Read the following details found in Luke's account of Jesus' baptism.

1. John's ministry is completed before Jesus' begins. This highlights what Luke upholds as the three distinct periods included in the story of salvation: the time of Israel (John serves as the end of this period), the time of Jesus (beginning in this passage), and the time of the church (references in vv. 15–17 of wind and fire on Pentecost).
2. Some early Christians would have understood Jesus' baptism by John as representative of Jesus being a disciple of John. Jesus' baptism is part of his obedience to God as established by the Law and the Prophets (the same as circumcision and engaging in temple rituals).
3. John was preaching to the people in general, and Jesus' baptism takes place after *all the people* had been baptized. This is not meant to be literal or absolute; rather, it represents God's justice as called for by John and highlights the aspect of community in this experience. Baptism is personal, but it is not individualistic. It is a symbol of being renewed people of God.
4. Jesus receives the Spirit *as he is praying*. This points to the importance of prayer in Jesus' ministry.
5. Only in Luke does the Spirit descend in the bodily form of a dove. Luke stresses the tangible presence rather than just a subjective feeling.

Discuss how the distinctions in Luke's account connect with the images and phrases discussed at the beginning

of the Engage section.

- What new understandings have you discovered?
- What is the "good news" revealed in this passage?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read the following passages about the Holy Spirit and discuss the questions which follow.

Confirmation (Of Water and Spirit)

After Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit, represented as a dove, descends on him. This, as well as Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit comes on the disciples and the church is sent into the world, is the basis for our understanding of confirmation.

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

—Acts 8:14–17

As followers of Jesus, we are baptized of water and the Holy Spirit. Following baptism of water, new disciples take part in the sacrament of confirmation. Confirmation "confirms" membership in Community of Christ, and affirms the Holy Spirit's continued blessing for each disciple. The prayer of confirmation seeks God's blessing to help new members grow in their covenant and generously share their giftedness in support of the church's mission. The commitment made through baptism and confirmation is active "discipleship expressed through covenant with God and others in sacred community" (Doctrine and Covenants 164:2d). Confirmation helps weave people into the fabric of community—both congregations and worldwide church—so they can grow in life as disciples.

The Holy Spirit (Sharing in Community of Christ, 3rd Edition, p. 14)

We believe in the Holy Spirit. Giver of Life, holy Wisdom, true God. The Spirit moves through and sustains creation; endows the church for mission; frees the world from sin, injustice, and death; and transforms disciples. Wherever we find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control, there the Holy Spirit is working.

- How would you explain the following phrase: “Baptism (of water and Spirit) is personal, but it is not individualistic”?
- In what ways does this shape an understanding of what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What idea has been an “epiphany” for you as you have read and considered the scripture from Luke with the above passages?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

The Spirit named over us in baptism is not “part” of God, but is God: indwelling all creation and drawing us to Christ. We experience the Spirit’s revealing, redeeming, restoring, renewing presence in our midst. The Spirit, who through the prophets called Israel to walk justly, is calling us to the same path today. The Spirit poured out on Jesus is calling us in his name to make real today God’s vision of the world that will be.

—Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, *Understanding the Way: Exploring Our Christian Faith*, Revised Edition, p. 38

Spend a few moments in silence and prayerfully consider the following questions. Make these questions part of your daily spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

- In what ways do you need to experience the Spirit’s revealing, redeeming, restoring, or renewing presence?
- In what ways are you being called to share the Spirit’s revealing, redeeming, restoring, or renewing presence with another?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read Doctrine and Covenants 10:6 as a closing blessing for this time of learning.

Put thy trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good; yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

LESSON 7 RESPONSE SHEET

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY— BAPTISM OF THE LORD

13 January 2019

Luke 3:15–17, 21–22 NRSV

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Confirmation (Of Water and Spirit)

After Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit, represented as a dove, descends on him. This, as well as Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit comes on the disciples and the church is sent into the world, is the basis for our understanding of confirmation.

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

—Acts 8:14–17

As followers of Jesus, we are baptized of water and the Holy Spirit. Following baptism of water, new disciples take part in the sacrament of confirmation. Confirmation “confirms” membership in Community of Christ, and affirms the Holy Spirit’s continued blessing for each disciple. The prayer of confirmation seeks God’s blessing to help new members grow in their covenant and generously share their giftedness in support of the church’s mission. The commitment made through baptism and confirmation is active “discipleship expressed through covenant with God and others in sacred community” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:2d).

Confirmation helps weave people into the fabric of community—both congregations and worldwide church—so they can grow in life as a disciple.

The Holy Spirit (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 14)

We believe in the Holy Spirit. Giver of Life, holy Wisdom, true God. The Spirit moves through and sustains creation; endows the church for mission; frees the world from sin, injustice, and death; and transforms disciples. Wherever we find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control, there the Holy Spirit is working.

The Spirit named over us in baptism is not “part” of God, but is God: indwelling all creation and drawing us to Christ. We experience the Spirit’s revealing, redeeming, restoring, renewing presence in our midst. The Spirit, who through the prophets called Israel to walk justly, is calling us to the same path today. The Spirit poured out on Jesus is calling us in his name to make real today God’s vision of the world that will be.

—Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, *Understanding the Way: Exploring Our Christian Faith*, Revised Edition, p. 38

- In what ways do you need to experience the Spirit’s revealing, redeeming, restoring, or renewing presence?

- In what ways are you being called to share the Spirit’s revealing, redeeming, restoring, or renewing presence with another?

Doctrine and Covenants 10:6

Put thy trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good; yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 8
20 January 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: John 2:1–11

Lesson Focus: God’s generosity is revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the focus scripture passage through *Lectio Divina*.
- discuss and respond to specific portions of the focus passage.
- consider personal response to God’s generosity for all creation.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 2:1–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge,
prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Respond to the following:

I have been surprised by God’s generosity when...

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Lectio Divina (Latin for *sacred reading*) is a method of praying with scripture that draws on the strength of all four spirituality types (head, heart, mystic, kingdom)

building). It provides holistic engagement with a text through senses, thought, emotion, and intuition.

Note to instructor: Provide descriptions of *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio* (below) prior to beginning the practice. Offer a brief reminder before each reading of the passage. Invite participants to make notes on their response sheets after each reading. You may choose to assign each participant a different character from the story to encourage different perspectives for group discussion.

Sit comfortably and enter a time of prayerful reflection. Relax your body and breathing and offer a prayer for guidance as you interact with the text. Read John 2:1–11 four times, allowing time for meditation and prayer between each reading.

1. *Lectio*—read or hear the passage in a careful attentive way. Get a sense of the atmosphere of the passage. How is the setting described? What are the sights, smells, and sounds? *Be there* in the story.
2. *Meditatio*—think about the passage. What does it mean and why is there record of this passage? Assume the role of a character in the passage to help you find the meaning.
3. *Oratio*—use feeling to respond to the text in prayer. As you begin to address God, or whatever you do as a way of praying, think about how you now feel about this scripture passage. Respond to God with “I feel...”
4. *Contemplatio*—use intuition to internalize the passage. In contemplation there is nothing to *do*. It is merely an attentive waiting or being present. Breathe deeply. Quietly listen and receive, even to receive silence.

Share what you experience in small groups of two or three or with the larger group.

- What new understanding do you have of this passage?
- What was it like to consider this passage from the perspective of a specific character?
- What questions do you have about this passage?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Commentary is provided for the following portions of today’s passage from John. Read and discuss these as a large group, or print on strips of paper and hand out to

individuals or small groups of two to three. Discuss and share ideas with the larger group.

“On the third day...”

John’s Gospel was written sometime between 80–110 CE. This story is a pre-Easter event, but it is understood in a post-resurrection setting. First-century hearers of this passage would have understood “the third day” as a hopeful reminder of the resurrection.

- What is the message of hope for 21st-century hearers of this passage?

Wedding Celebration

Wedding celebrations often lasted for a week. The fact that the host ran out of wine halfway through the celebration showed lack of preparation. This story could be representative of Christ as the bridegroom and the bride as the redeemed people of God. New life together symbolizes an understanding God’s peaceful reign on Earth.

- In what ways are we called to prepare for and celebrate new life in Christ?

“Woman...My hour has not yet come.”

Jesus’ address to his mother may sound rude to us, but it was a common address in first-century Palestine and not meant to be disrespectful. His above response appears dismissive to his mother’s question. As John’s account unfolds, it becomes more clear that “hour” is pointing to the events of the cross and resurrection. Although John’s Gospel does not include an account of the miraculous conception, the mother of Jesus (not referred to as Mary in this account) seems to know of his power and authority.

- When have you experienced Christ-like authority through the ministry of another?

Twenty or Thirty Gallons

The water for purification (removing what keeps people from being acceptable to God) turned to wine (salvation) symbolizes God’s extravagant grace and generosity. Old, empty symbols of ritual become sources of rich celebration. Jesus represents the “good wine” of salvation.

- How have you found new meaning in old symbols, rituals, or traditions?

“His disciples believed in him.”

This story, unique to John’s Gospel, is the first of several signs which point to Jesus as the Christ. Believing in signs is superficial, but this serves as something which points to a greater understanding of who Jesus is.

- What present-day circumstance relates to what this passage reveals about God in Christ?

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Spend a few moments reflecting on the following questions. Make this a matter of prayerful consideration throughout the coming week.

- In what new ways can I generously share my time, testimony, and invitation with others?

- How can I respond more fully to God's generosity for all creation?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read verses one and four of "The Wedding Guests Were Waiting" CCS 37 to close this time of sharing.

LESSON 8 RESPONSE SHEET

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

20 January 2019

John 2:1–11 NRSV

¹On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. ⁹When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Lectio Divina (Latin for *sacred reading*) is a method of praying with scripture that draws on the strength of all four spirituality types (head, heart, mystic, kingdom building). It provides holistic engagement with a text through senses, thought, emotion, and intuition.

Sit comfortably and enter a time of prayerful reflection. Relax your body and breathing and offer a prayer for guidance as you interact with the text. Read John 2:1–11 four times, allowing time for meditation and prayer between each reading.

1. *Lectio*—read or hear the passage in a careful attentive way. Get a sense of the atmosphere of the passage. How is the setting described? What are the sights, smells, and sounds? *Be there* in the story.

2. *Meditatio*—think about the passage. What does it mean and why is there record of this passage?

Assume the role of a character in the passage to help you find the meaning.

3. *Oratio*—use feeling to respond to the text in prayer. As you begin to address God, or whatever you do as a way of praying, think about how you now feel about this scripture passage. Respond to God with "I feel..."

4. *Contemplatio*—use intuition to internalize the passage. In contemplation there is nothing to *do*. It is merely an attentive waiting or being present. Breathe deeply. Quietly listen and receive, even to receive silence.

For prayerful consideration:

• In what new ways can I generously share my time, testimony, and invitation with others?

• How can I respond more fully to God's generosity for all creation?

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 9
27 January 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 4:14–21/13–21 IV

Lesson Focus: Embrace Christ's mission.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share personal understandings of Christ's mission.
- explore the focus scripture passage and consider connections with baptism and confirmation, God's shalom, and transformation.
- respond to how this passage is fulfilled in the lives of individuals, congregations, and the church.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 4:14–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Christ's Mission, Our Mission

We proclaim Jesus Christ...

The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

The statements represent who we are as Community of Christ, and whom we are called to become. Reflecting on these statements, respond to the following:

Christ's mission is...

Note to instructor: You may choose one of the following videos as an introduction to the response statement: *Missio Dei* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G5v0lqmXR0&feature=youtu.be>) or *Change Your Life, Change the World* (www.CofChrist.org/what-we-offer-you).

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus scripture passage has become well known in Community of Christ. The challenge is to hear the text in new ways and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in new understanding of what it means to claim Christ's mission as our mission. Read Luke 4:14–21 and the following commentary; then respond to the questions for discussion.

Pay close attention to the setting of Luke's account which leads to this passage. Following his baptism, Jesus "was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:1–2). He returned to Galilee "filled with the power of the Holy Spirit" and began his teaching ministry in the synagogues. This passage takes place in the synagogue of his home town of Nazareth. That Jesus was an observant Jew who regularly attended worship in the synagogue is highlighted by his invitation to read the Scripture and address the congregation. The text Jesus reads is a combination of Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6.

Anointed (English) has the same meaning as Christ (Greek) and Messiah (Hebrew). The reference is to an inauguration ceremony for prophets, priests, and kings, and points to Jesus as the Christ. Jesus is not anointed with oil, but with the Holy Spirit, which connects with the account of his baptism.

The "year of the Lord's favor" proclaimed in Isaiah is already interpreted as the law of the jubilee year. According to Luke's theology, the "year" of Jesus' ministry represents the time that God's kingdom was on Earth, embodied in the ministry of Jesus.

The ministry of Jesus Christ, which brings good news to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed, is continued in the church by disciples of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:44–47, 3:6, 4:32–35, 11:27–30).

- What is the important connection between this text and the sacraments of baptism and confirmation? (*Baptism is a commitment to Christ's mission; confirmation is strength to engage in Christ's mission.*)
- How does the commentary connect the passage in Luke to Community of Christ understanding of God's shalom?
- How does this passage connect with our historical understanding of Zion (God's peaceable reign)?
- How does proclaiming Jesus Christ promote personal and societal transformation?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Respond to the following using response sheets or sharing in groups of two or three.

- How is this scripture fulfilled in your life today?

Respond to the following in groups of two or three, or as a large group.

- How is this scripture fulfilled in the life of your congregation or community today?

Respond to the following as a large group.

- How is this scripture fulfilled in the life of the church today?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Spiritual formation and mission are interwoven through intentional daily practices and encounter with the Holy Spirit. Choose one of the following hymns and consider what the verses reveal about encounter and mission. If time allows, you may divide the group into two smaller groups and assign one hymn to each group. Share responses with the larger group.

"To Be Your Presence" CCS 351

"For Such a Time" CCS 376

Throughout the coming week, prayerfully consider what it means for you to *be* and *do* mission.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Close with the mission prayer.

God, where will your Spirit lead today?

Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.

Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace.

Amen.

LESSON 9 RESPONSE SHEET

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

27 January 2019

Luke 4:14–21 NRSV

¹⁴Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country.

¹⁵He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

- How is this scripture fulfilled in your life today?

- How is this scripture fulfilled in the life of your congregation or community today?

- How is this scripture fulfilled in the life of the church today?

Spiritual formation and mission are interwoven through intentional daily practices and encounter with the Holy Spirit. Throughout the coming week, reflect on one of the following hymns and prayerfully consider what it means for you to be and do mission.

"To Be Your Presence" CCS 351

"For Such a Time" CCS 376

Mission Prayer

God, where will your Spirit lead today?

Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.

Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace.

Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 10
3 February 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 4:21–30/4:21–31 IV

Lesson Focus: The mission of Jesus Christ is to bless all people.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss the context of the focus passage and the radical nature of Jesus' inclusive mission.
- examine the context of the congregation and how it shapes mission.
- consider personal context and response to Christ's inclusive mission.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Large poster paper or dry-erase surface

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 4:21–30 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Share an experience when you felt like an outsider and someone welcomed you into a group.

- How did the person's ministry change your view of the group?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 4:21–30.

The scene in this passage is also found in Mark 6:1–6 and Matthew 13:53–58. Luke provides an expanded account which focuses on proclaiming Jesus' mission.

Today refers to Jesus' ministry as the time of salvation, not just a reference to a particular time. In verse 21, Luke suggests the early Christian understanding of Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Testament. The response from the crowd was first positive because they were proud of Jesus being "one of them" and speaking with such "gracious words." Luke uses the book of Mark for source information, but his account differs from Mark 6:1–6. In Mark, Jesus had already been to Capernaum; in Luke, Jesus goes to Capernaum following his rejection in Nazareth. "No prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown" was a common view in first-century Judaism. Jesus' rejection by Jews serves as an opening for accepting Gentiles. Jesus references two instances where prophets offer healing ministry and acceptance to Gentiles. Jesus' "own people" are enraged because Jesus challenges their exclusive image of God. Despite the response of the crowd, Jesus continues his mission.

- Describe the context of this passage. What was the setting? What precedes this passage in Luke's account? Why do the people at first find hope in and favor with Jesus?
- How does Jesus' message of inclusion challenge disciples and congregations today?
- What examples of "Christian behavior" display an exclusive image of God?
- How does this passage affect your understanding of salvation?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Understanding the context of our communities (work, church, school, neighborhood) helps us discover how the message and mission of Christ can bring blessing to particular needs, struggles, and hopes. On a large piece of poster paper or dry-erase surface, describe the context of your congregation or community (demographics, cultural identities, religious practices, and affiliations).

- What has been the biggest change to the context of the congregation over the past 10–20 years (depending on how long the congregation has been organized)?
- What condition is most challenging to the congregation in fulfilling Christ's mission?
- Where do you see the greatest need for the radically inclusive message of God's blessing?
- How do we uphold a healthy balance of self-identity while embracing the worth of all persons?
- What does it mean to be the church in a changing world?
- How does Jesus' message of inclusion go beyond "getting people in the pews"?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Take a moment to reflect on your personal context. Record responses to the following questions on the response sheet or share in groups of two or three.

- What circumstances shape who you are as a disciple?
- Where do you sense a need to be included?
- How can you offer God's blessing to another who is an outsider?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "Too Often, God, Your Name Is Used" CCS 342 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 10 RESPONSE SHEET

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

3 February 2019

Luke 4:21–30 NRSV

²¹Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” ²³He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” ²⁴And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. ²⁵But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” ²⁸When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

- Describe the context of this passage. What was the setting? What precedes this passage in Luke’s narrative? Why do the people initially find hope in and favor with Jesus?

- How does Jesus’ message of inclusion challenge disciples and congregations today?

- What examples of “Christian behavior” display an exclusive image of God?

- How does this passage impact your understanding of salvation?

Understanding the context of our communities (work, church, school, neighborhood) helps us discover how the message and mission of Christ can bring blessing to particular needs, struggles, and hopes.

- What has been the biggest change to the context of the congregation over the past 10–20 years (depending on how long the congregation has been established)?

- What condition is most challenging to the congregation in fulfilling Christ’s mission?

- Where do you see the greatest need for the radically inclusive message of God's blessing?

- How do we uphold a healthy balance of self-identity while embracing the worth of all persons?

- What does it mean to be the church in a changing world?

- How does Jesus' message of inclusion go beyond "getting people in the pews"?

Take a moment to reflect on your personal context.

- What circumstances shape who you are as a disciple?

- Where do you sense a need to be included?

- How can you offer God's blessing to another who is an outsider?

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

LESSON 11
10 February 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 5:1-11

Lesson Focus: Fishers of People.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider how Jesus made connections to people “where they were.”
- re-explore their early encounters with God and how they were shaped by the experience.
- discern how God continues to connect to us through the familiar as we grow.

Supplies

- Bibles
- Copies of Response Sheet or paper and pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 5:1–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament (with focus on the Gospel according to Luke)*, p. 40, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Begin today’s class inviting them to remember their first few expressions of God’s presence in their lives. Ask them recall as much detail as possible.

- The location
- The time of year
- Whom they were with
- How old they were
- Sights, sounds, smells of the experience

Spend moments of silence between each section in which they attempt to recall a “first” experience of connection to God’s presence or personal calling.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Before reading the scripture passage, ask the students to be aware of the sights, sounds, smells, and emotions surrounding this gospel story. Read from Luke 5:1–11, considering the context of what is happening.

Discuss:

- What sensory experiences did you feel from this story?
- Who are the characters in the story (Jesus, the crowds, Simon, other fishers, etc.)?
- What is each of these characters seeking in the story?
 - Why did Jesus need a boat?
 - Why might Jesus have picked Simon Peter’s boat in this story?
 - Why were Simon, James, and John even a part of this story?

This story is about the first few people who left their occupations and companions to follow Jesus. The other gospels may suggest there was more than this one story that led these people to begin their discipleship; yet this part of the story was significant and one of their early encounters with Jesus.

Ask those willing to share to explain to the group their first “encounter” with God. What did you sense? What was the setting? How did it change you? These “first stories” shape our understanding of God and our role as a disciple. How often have you revisited the location of your first stories? Ask those who are willing to share their experiences.

The outcome of this story was unexpected. Simon, James, and John had never seen so many fish! And they were seasoned fishers! Discuss what “unexpected outcomes” have occurred from your first or early experiences with God’s Spirit.

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Jesus meets Simon Peter, James, and John in their place of work—the fishing boats. We don’t know if Jesus was acquainted with fishing or not. If you look at a map of Nazareth where he grew up, you see the Sea of Galilee was about a half-day walk from Nazareth. Was Jesus, the son of a carpenter, that knowledgeable about fishing among these seasoned fishers?

- Have you ever had someone new come in and attempt to tell you how to do your job? How did that make you feel? How would you have felt about that person?
- Look at the scripture passage again and discuss how Simon reacted to Jesus’ request to throw the nets on the other side of the ship. Can you “read between the lines” to uncover how Jesus and Simon were feeling and what their motivations might have been?
- Ships’ riggings were set up to fish off one particular side of the boat. How much difference would it make to change to the other side as Jesus suggested? What was Jesus trying to do?
- Discuss Simon Peter’s change of attitude after the great catch of fish. What changed him from a possible skeptic to a believer?

After seeing the miracle of the great catch of fish, Simon Peter asks Jesus to depart from him because he views himself as a sinner. In Jesus’ time, many found themselves out of favor because the spiritual leaders created so many rules to divide the righteous from the sinners. Simon Peter, James, and John are not apprentices of any spiritual authorities—yet Jesus calls them to be his disciples.

- Discuss how Jesus’ way of calling followers differs from others in his day as well as today.
- Read what Jesus says to Simon Peter after he requests Jesus to leave his boat (v. 10). How does Jesus connect his mission with the occupation of the fishers in the boat?
- How might we use the same example with people in modern occupations today?
- In the last sentence, the new disciples left their boats behind to follow Jesus. What might we need to leave behind when considering following Jesus?

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Now read the story found in John 21:1–14. This story takes place after Jesus' resurrection. Discuss:

- The similarities to the story found in Luke
- The differences to the story found in Luke
- Why were the two experiences so similar? What might have been the reason Jesus was offering the same advice he had given his disciples in their early relationship?
- How did Peter respond differently? What might that say about his understanding regarding discipleship?
- Do you have any experiences that link your early understanding of discipleship and your present understanding? How has your discipleship matured over time?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

On your Response Sheet or on a piece of paper, write one or two words that express your earliest understanding of being in God's presence or your call to follow Jesus. On the other side of the page write one or two words that express your understanding today. Draw a bridge with symbols that represent how you've made the journey from one side to the other. Meditate on how God has called you throughout and how God is calling you still.

LESSON 11 RESPONSE SHEET

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

10 February 2019

Luke 5:1–11

¹Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ²he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." ¹¹When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

John 21:1–14

¹After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ²Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now

they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. ⁸But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

⁹When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Write one or two words that express your earliest understanding of being in God's presence or your call to follow Jesus. On the other side of the page write one or two words that express your understanding today. Draw a bridge with symbols that represent how you've made the journey from one side to the other. Meditate on how God has called you throughout and how God is calling you still.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY (PROPER 1)

LESSON 12
17 February 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 6:17–26

Lesson Focus: Jesus Teaches about Blessings

Objectives

The learners will...

- discover new insights on the Sermon on the Plain.
- learn how this sermon reflects Jesus' mission.
- discern how this message connects to the Mission Initiative Abolish Poverty, End Suffering.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Bibles

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 6:17–26 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament (with focus on the Gospel according to Luke)*, pp. 41–42, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Consider a time you gathered with a large group of people. It might have been a concert, a convention, a World Conference, or other event with many people.

- What was the purpose for so many to gather? What would the group have had in common?
- What did it feel like to be with such a large group? What made you uncomfortable? What made it exciting?
- One of Jesus' first sermons is recorded in our scripture passage subtitled "The Sermon on the

Plain.” Why might the crowd have gathered? Are there some parallels to your answers to the first two questions?

Share in a brief prayer of gathering asking for our recognition of God’s presence as well as community that is shared in common with those who were in attendance at the Sermon on the Plain.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Provide a Response Sheet for each person. First, have someone read the entire scripture passage while the class follows along. Explain that this passage takes place relatively early in Jesus’ ministry soon after the calling of the twelve apostles. This large assembly was a unique gathering of people from many different communities and began with healings and sermons. Though the Sermon on the Mount is more familiar, the message is similar.

- Have class members read the scripture passage silently, circling words that stand out. Have them draw lines between linked or connected thoughts.
- Share for a few moments what each person discovered from this exercise.

Share with the class that these verses are considered to be an early recorded sermon of Jesus—thus expressing their importance to the church. Discuss:

- What might be the main message of Jesus in this passage?
- In short words or phrases, write these on a marker board or poster.
- Compile the words and phrases to summarize Jesus’ message in the Sermon of the Plain.

Explain to the class there are two sections to this sermon: the blessings and the woes.

Discuss:

- Are the blessings things to strive for, or are they for empathy and assistance for those in these conditions?
 - How would you interpret Jesus’ blessing “Blessed are the poor”?
 - How would you interpret Jesus’ blessing “Blessed are you who are hungry now”?
 - How would you interpret Jesus’ blessing “Blessed are you who weep”?
 - How would you interpret Jesus’ blessing “Blessed are you when people hate you, exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man”?
- Do the woes mean condemnation or consideration and calling for those found in these conditions?
 - How would you interpret Jesus’ words “Woe to you who are rich”?
 - How would you interpret Jesus’ words “Woe to you who are full now”?
 - How would you interpret Jesus’ words “Woe to you who are laughing now”?
 - How would you interpret Jesus’ words “Woe to you when all speak well of you”?

How might these blessings and woes be a part of Jesus’ radical kingdom in which the powers are turned upside down? How might these blessings and woes apply to our current culture?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

With an understanding of Jesus’ message in the Sermon on the Plain, have the group create their own list of blessings and woes that mimic Jesus’ message. On their Response Sheets, have persons create two or three blessings and woes in the community. Remember, this is not to become a political statement as much as a reflection on how Jesus’ message might be translated into our present cultural situations

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

As disciples, we are faced with choices and temptations. Like Jesus, we must cultivate a trusting relationship to God that does not expect miraculous exceptions to an authentic human life. Choose one of the Mission Initiatives from the group discussion to which you feel drawn in ministry. (You may feel drawn because of your passion and giftedness, or you may feel drawn because it challenges you in some way.)

- How are you engaging in Spirit-led ministry?
- In what ways are you called to go deeper in ministry and mission?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Share in the singing or reading of “Oh, How Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit” CSS 378.

Close with this prayer or one of your choice.

Help us bless the poor,

Help us bless the hungry,

Help us bless the weeping,

Help us bless those we hate, exclude, revile, and defame.

Help us turn woes into blessings in our community, homes, and our own hearts. Amen.

LESSON 12 RESPONSE SHEET

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY (PROPER 1)

17 February 2019

Blessings and Woes (Luke 6:20–26)

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

“Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

“Blessed are you when people hate you, and
when they exclude you, revile you, and defame
you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on
that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is
great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors
did to the prophets.

“But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

“Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

“Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

“Woe to you when all speak well of you,
for that is what their ancestors did to the false
prophets.”

What might be the main message of Jesus in this passage?

With an understanding of Jesus’ message in the Sermon on the Plain, create a list of blessings and woes that mimic Jesus’ message. Create two or three blessings and woes in the community.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY (PROPER 2)

LESSON 13
24 February 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 6:27–38

Lesson Focus: Love Your Enemies

Objectives

The learners will...

- better understand Jesus' teaching of reversal of violence and power.
- learn of God's abundant generosity.
- understand how revenge is counter to the ways of Jesus.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Marker board and markers or poster and pens

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 6:27–38 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament (with focus on the Gospel according to Luke)*, p. 43, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Start your time together with a breath prayer using part of the text in Luke. Make sure the students are comfortable, and have them listen to their breathing for a few moments.

Have the class engage in a breath prayer by first listening to their breathing. Instruct the students to slowly breathe in...and breathe out. Incorporate using parts of today's scripture passage in the breathing...

Breathe in saying, "Love your enemies..."

Breathe out, "...and be children of God."

Breathe in saying, "Be merciful..."
Breathe out, "...as God is merciful."

Breathe in saying, "Forgive"
Breathe out, "...and be forgiven."

Try this a couple times with the group.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's text continues Luke's account of the Sermon on the Plain. Read together Luke 6:27–38 and discuss some of the phrases or words that stand out to you.

Though we're quick to remember Jesus' admonition to love our enemies, we're not so quick to remember the harsh examples given in this passage. There are a number of "things" being done to the listeners in Jesus' discourse. Have the class write on a marker board or paper the violation and the response given in this verse (examples below):

Violation	Response
Those who hate you	Do good
Those who curse you	Bless
Those who abuse you	Pray for... (continue though scripture)

Which of these responses do the students find especially difficult, and why?

Most will find it difficult to pray for those who have abused us, allow additional slaps on the face, or giving away whatever is asked of us. Ask the group to again consider vv. 31–38. Ask the group these questions:

- Verse 31 is Christianity's Golden Rule (found in almost all world religions). What do you feel is at the heart of this rule?
- What is the potential benefit in a disciple choosing to love when he or she doesn't expect to be loved back?

- Verses 35–36 share how we should reflect the personality of God: "kind to the ungrateful...merciful." How is this expressed in our discipleship?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read again verses 37–38:

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

The phrase "a good measure" actually refers to a unit of measurement for grain in a basket commonly used in the markets in Jesus' time. Shoppers would bring this basket to the market and fill it up to the top with the grain they had purchased. You can imagine many arguments took place over how close to the top of the basket the grain had been measured. Here in this verse, Jesus explains the generous nature of God: "...good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over...into your lap." In other words "more than you expect or deserve."

In small groups or on your Response Sheet, consider how this concept applies to the other verses in this passage.

- What has God given you in "...good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over...into your lap"?
- Recognizing God's generosity, in what one area of your life do you need to reflect this radical expression of love?
 - In your home?
 - In your occupation?
 - In your neighborhood/community?
 - In your congregation?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

A popular theme in our modern culture is revenge. It is common in our myth and storytelling as well as our news stories. We seem to feel better when we see those wronged get their “just rewards.” Share for a few moments how this theme is found in examples of popular culture.

- Share a book, movie, or TV show in which someone gets “paid back” for being bad.
- Consider some of the top stories in the news recently—do any have a “revenge” element?
- Each nation has a war story where revenge is a part of the narrative. What are some of your nation’s stories that illustrate this?

Now, using today’s scripture passage—how would these stories change if this passage was applied? Consider:

- But I say to you that listen, love your enemies.
- Do good to those who hate you.

- Bless those who curse you.
- Pray for those who abuse you.
- If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also.
- Anyone who takes away your coat, do not withhold even your shirt.
- If anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.
- Do to others as you would have them do to you.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Share together in reading or singing “Can We Calculate Our Giving” CCS 617.

End in a time of prayer asking for God’s generous nature to be our nature, too.

LESSON 13 RESPONSE SHEET

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY (PROPER 2)

24 February 2019

Luke 5:27–38

²⁷“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

What has God given you in “...good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over...into your lap”?

Recognizing God’s generosity, in what one area of your life do you need to reflect this radical expression of love?

- In your home?
- In your occupation?
- In your neighborhood/community?
- In your congregation?

LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY— TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

LESSON 14
3 March 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 9:28–43a

Lesson Focus: Christ, the Son of God, walks amid our human frailties and extends healing, peace, and hope to all.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share personal experiences of divine encounter.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- make connections between the focus passage and recent words of counsel or hymn text.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 9:28–43a in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Respond to the following in groups of two or three or as a large group.

- Describe a time when you experienced God’s presence.
- What were the circumstances surrounding this experience?
- What was most surprising about the experience?
- How did you respond?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today is Transfiguration Sunday and the last Sunday of the season after the Epiphany. It is a pivotal moment in the liturgical calendar when we close the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, and we turn toward the season of Lent and the journey to Jerusalem. The ninth chapter of Luke begins the account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. It highlights the importance Luke places on the journey of discipleship following Jesus as "the way" (see lesson 2).

Read Luke 9:28–43a and pay attention to what stands out to you in this passage. (You may choose to circle phrases or ideas on the response sheet as you read or listen to the passage.) Divide the group into smaller discussion groups or pairs for the following passages, or discuss each section with the larger group.

Luke 9:28–31

The mountain's location is not mentioned, nor is it significant. It provides a connection to encounters that Moses and Elijah had with God. Luke places significant moments in his account of Jesus in the setting of prayer (6:12; 9:18, 28; 22:40–46; 23:34, 46). It is in the practice of prayer that Jesus' appearance reveals his Divinity.

- What experiences or practices shape your understanding of who Jesus is? In what ways do these experiences or practices shape your understanding?

Luke 9:32–36

Luke's account is the only one that includes a conversation with Moses, Elijah, and Jesus in glory addressing Jesus' departure (exodus) in Jerusalem. In this passage, Peter, James, and John recognize the significance of this divine encounter and want to build shelters for the three figures to remain in this incredible experience. Earlier, Peter accepted Jesus as "the Messiah of God" (9:20), but in this passage Peter tries to equate Jesus with Moses and Elijah. The disciples are disrupted by God's voice proclaiming Jesus as God's Son, and they are urged to listen to him.

- When have you encountered a proclamation of who Christ is? How has the encounter impacted your life as a disciple?

Luke 9:37–43a

The "mountaintop experience" is followed by Jesus stepping back into the reality of human suffering.

"Jesus knew his mission was not on the mountain, but with people" ("Exploring the Scripture," *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*). The closing passage reveals the disciples do not fully grasp what it means to follow Jesus, the Son of God, in mission.

- In what ways are "mountaintop experiences" separated from Christ's mission? In what ways are they interwoven?
- In what ways does congregational life mirror this passage from Luke?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Proclaiming Christ's mission as our mission draws us into life-changing, world-changing encounters with God, with neighbor, and with all creation. We are transformed through divine encounter, and we are challenged to embrace fully the interwoven nature of divine encounter and mission.

Divide the group into three smaller groups or pairs. Assign each group one of the following passages or the hymn text to read and discuss in response to the following questions. Share responses with the larger group.

- How does the text correlate with the focus passage from Luke?
- What does it reveal about Christ's mission?
- How does it challenge individual discipleship or congregational life?

1. Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a

Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God's peace and discover the blessings of all the dimensions of salvation.

2. From words of counsel presented to the 2013 World Conference

As a spiritual venture, boldly follow the initiatives into the heart of God's vision for the church and creation. Then, in response to growing insight about God's nature and will, continue to shape communities that live Christ's love and mission.

3. "When the Church of Jesus" CCS 358

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Prayerfully consider your response to the question, "Who is Jesus to me?" Write your response or share in groups of two or three. Reflect on the question as part of your personal spiritual practice in the coming week, and be open to new ways of receiving, embodying, and sharing the peace of Christ.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "When the Church of Jesus" CCS 358 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 14 RESPONSE SHEET

LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY— TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY

3 March 2019

Luke 9:28–43a NRSV

²⁸Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. ³⁴While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” ³⁶When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

³⁷On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸Just then a man from the crowd shouted, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. ³⁹Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. ⁴⁰I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” ⁴¹Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” ⁴²While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a

Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God’s peace and discover the blessings of all the dimensions of salvation.

From words of counsel presented to the 2013 World Conference

As a spiritual venture, boldly follow the initiatives into the heart of God’s vision for the church and creation. Then, in response to growing insight about God’s nature and will, continue to shape communities that live Christ’s love and mission.

“When the Church of Jesus” CCS 358

Questions for reflection:

- How does the text correlate with the focus passage from Luke?

- What does it reveal about Christ’s mission?

- How does it challenge individual discipleship or congregational life?

Prayerfully consider your response to the question, “Who is Jesus to me?” Reflect on the question as part of your personal spiritual practice in the coming week, and be open to new ways of receiving, embodying, and sharing the peace of Christ.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 15

10 March 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 4:1–13/4:1–12 IV

Lesson Focus: Disciples of Jesus Christ are called to Spirit-led ministry and mission.

Objectives

The learners will...

- enter the time of learning and the season of Lent with the practice of breath prayer.
- discuss the temptations found in the focus scripture passage.
- connect the focus scripture passage with Mission Initiatives.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 4:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the first Sunday of Lent. We fast for 40 days remembering Christ’s own fast in the wilderness. Our journey through Lent gives us a chance to reorder

priorities and to make space in our lives for being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality. As we practice self-examination and conversion through prayer, fasting, self-denial, and generosity, we open ourselves to God’s creative purposes in our lives and in our world.

Use one of the following breath prayers to center in God’s presence.

(inhale) Lord, Jesus Christ,
(exhale) have mercy on me.

OR

(inhale) Open me
(exhale) to receive more of you.

Read or sing "Lead Me, Lord" CCS 450.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 4:1–13 and the following paragraphs. Divide the group into three smaller groups or pairs and assign each group one of the three temptations to discuss. Following a few minutes of sharing, assign each group a different temptation and repeat until each group has discussed all three temptations. Share insights with the larger group.

The forty days Jesus spends in the wilderness following his baptism connects with the forty years Israel wandered in the desert after their deliverance from Egypt and before entering the Promised Land.

The devil appears as a character in Luke's story. "Satan" or the "devil" has become the English proper name for the generic word "adversary" found in the Hebrew Scriptures. The use of language in the New Testament about Satan and the devil suggests an understanding of the transcendent power of evil, both as a cosmic power and as demon possession of individuals, rather than suggesting "Satan" or the "devil" is a personage.

The three temptations are presented as invitations to the greater good; there is no choosing between what is clearly good and what is clearly evil. The responses Jesus gives to each temptation are expressions found in Deuteronomy, which documents Israel's testing and failure in the wilderness. The issue of the temptations is not whether Jesus is the Son of God, but how he understands himself as the Son of God and how he will apply his ministry.

Temptation 1: "...command this stone to become a loaf of bread" (Luke 4:3–4).

- What is the greater good for humanity that could be served by changing stones into bread?

- What does Jesus' response reveal about his humanity? His divinity?

Temptation 2: "...worship me and all authority will be yours" (Luke 4:5–8).

- What is the greater good for humanity that could be served by Jesus' authority over all the world?
- What does Jesus' response reveal about the nature of God and human agency?

Temptation 3: "...throw yourself down, and his angels will protect you" (Luke 4:9–12).

- What is the greater good for humanity that could be served by Jesus displaying his power to save?
- How does Jesus' response challenge the way we think about God intervening in human life?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Consider the conditions of greater good represented by the temptations above: an end to world hunger, the peaceful reign of Christ, and miraculous power to save human life. As a large group, smaller groups, or pairs, discuss comparisons of the greater good to the following Community of Christ Mission Initiatives:

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering

- How does Jesus' response in verse 4 inform our understanding of abolishing poverty and ending needless suffering?
- How does this connect with ministry that is *servicing for* and ministry that is *servicing with*?

Invite People to Christ

- How does Jesus' response in verse 8 inform spirit-led ministry?
- What does this reveal about relational ministry's significance?

Pursue Peace on Earth

- How does Jesus' response in verse 12 inform ministry of justice and peace?
- What is the role of Responsible Choices in God's vision of shalom for all creation?

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

As disciples, we are faced with choices and temptations. Like Jesus, we must cultivate a trusting relationship to God that does not expect miraculous exceptions to an authentic human life. Choose one of the Mission Initiatives from the group discussion to which you feel drawn in ministry. (You may feel drawn because of your passion and giftedness, or you may feel drawn because it challenges you in some way.)

- How are you engaging in Spirit-led ministry?
- In what ways are you called to go deeper in ministry and mission?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read the Lenten Prayer included on the response sheet.

LESSON 15 RESPONSE SHEET

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

10 March 2019

Luke 4:1–13 NRSV

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." ⁴Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

⁹Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' ¹¹and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" ¹²Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

As disciples, we are faced with choices and temptations. Like Jesus, we must cultivate a trusting relationship to God that does not expect miraculous exceptions to an authentic human life. Choose one of the Mission Initiatives from the group discussion to which you feel drawn in ministry. (You may feel drawn because of your passion and giftedness, or you may feel drawn because it challenges you in some way.)

- How are you engaging in Spirit-led ministry?

- In what ways are you called to go deeper in ministry and mission?

Lenten Prayer

It begins with ashes
and a fiery promise
to walk these forty days
with you, O Christ, as my companion.

As your journey of self-discovery
began with Satan in the desert
so, too, am I tormented during this Lenten season
by my personal demons.

Help me to see why even you, O Christ,
had to face Satan's temptations of
Power, Wealth, and Fame.

Did Luke leave out some of the details
of your struggles with Satan?
Were you really able to resist so easily, or is that why
Lent is a forty-day journey?

Worldliness beckons each day of my life
with fantasies that steal my vitality
leaving no energy for seeing the
Image of God within me.

As I wait for stone to be turned into bread
the world goes hungry
As I wait to be the one in power
evil prevails because I do nothing
As I wait to be rescued by angels
the miracles in the ordinary go unnoticed.

How patient you are Jesus
as I stumble along my journey
hesitating, instead of walking boldly on The Way.

O Christ,
may I learn to walk without fear
facing my own darkness.
Let my journey lead me
at last
to Easter.

Written by Melodee Kistner, "Words Matter"
pleasantstreetumc.blogspot.com/2012/03/lenten-devotion-for-march-26.html

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 16

17 March 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 13:31–35/13:31–36 IV

Lesson Focus: Despite rejection, Jesus continues compassionately seeking people in need.

Objectives

The learners will...

- review the week of Lent through the practice of examen.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and the countercultural mission of Christ.
- explore lament as a spiritual practice.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 13:31–35 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the second Sunday of Lent. As we practice self-examination through prayer, fasting, self-denial, and generosity, we open ourselves to God’s creative purposes in our lives and in our world.

The prayer of examen encourages us to review our day(s) with God, remember our connection to God and neighbor, and open ourselves to new encounter with the Divine. Praying the examen during Lent is an opportunity to review our lives and realign with the mission of Christ.

Enter this time of learning by praying the examen over the past week. You may choose to pray silently during this time, or you may choose to write or draw your thoughts on the back of the response sheet.

- Begin by recognizing God’s presence and give thanks for this awareness.
 - Gently enter a time of prayer with the expectation and permission to be guided by the Holy Spirit.
 - Look back over the week without judgment or justification. Express gratitude as you recognize the many and diverse ways you have sensed God’s presence throughout the week. Notice when you recognized God’s presence and were most Christ-like.
 - Also notice when you were not as cooperative and perhaps even resistant. Pray for forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, or release as needed.
 - How are you being invited to release certain attitudes or behaviors and embrace others?
 - Beginning tomorrow (or today), how will you live differently?
 - Close with gratitude, receive God’s grace, and rest.
- What are the “Herods” that challenge your life as a disciple? Your congregation? Your community?
 - What ministry has helped you face the challenge?

Lament

By naming Jesus as a prophet, Luke affirms his messianic role as God’s promised “anointed one.” Although Jerusalem is considered the Holy City, it is also a place where God’s messengers have been persecuted. Jesus laments the fate he foresees for Jerusalem and longs to gather them “as a hen gathers her brood under her wings.” This maternal imagery connects with the feminine figure of divine Wisdom who was also rejected (Proverbs 1:20–33). Jesus’ lament for his people expresses the grief of God who consistently reaches out in love to heal a broken world.

- How does the imagery in this passage challenge or affirm your image of God?
- What are conditions in your congregation or community over which God laments?
- What ministries are addressing these conditions?

Read or sing “Lead Me, Lord” CCS 450.

2 ENGAGE
Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today’s scripture passage from Luke continues the Travel Narrative of Jesus’ journey toward Jerusalem. The passage is preceded by Jesus teaching what the kingdom of God is like. Read Luke 13:31–35 and discuss the following.

Mission without Fear

This passage is puzzling because the Pharisees, who repeatedly challenged Jesus, now are described as concerned friends of Jesus. Their warnings result from Herod’s brutal rule of fear and violence. (Herod had John the Baptizer imprisoned and later beheaded.) Despite their warnings, Jesus boldly proclaims he will continue his freeing and life-giving ministry. Luke’s account is told from a post-Easter perspective, so “on the third day” is understood through the lens of the Resurrection. Aware of what lies ahead, Jesus continues toward Jerusalem, determined in his mission.

- How is Jesus’ mission counter to the culture of his day?
- How is Christ’s mission counter to the culture of our day?

3 RESPOND
Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Lament: A crying out in grief. Laments are identifiable and important types of biblical writing, found in Psalms, Lamentations, and other places. They complain or grieve about tragic conditions, generally and specifically (*The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2nd Edition).

Lament is part of the sacred rhythm of joy and pain found in all life. The world is saturated with unresolved pain and ache. To lament is to grieve and, through grieving, find openness toward healing. Lament does not represent loss of faith in God. It is not uttered to a stranger. Lament is addressed to God as expressive of personal relationship to God. Lament offers release of grief and opens new space for receiving blessing and healing. Lament is an important personal spiritual practice, but it is not limited to the narrow range of self. Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem does not represent his concern for self; it is a cry of grief for his people. Lament over conditions in the world allows us to enter those conditions, to affirm our connection with all life, and to engage in God’s healing and redemptive purposes.

"God Weeps" CCS 212 expresses God's grief for conditions which diminish the worth of persons and the sacredness of all life. The text also affirms our connection to such conditions. Consider the text of each verse as a large group, or assign verses to four small groups, pairs, or individuals. Discuss the following questions about the assigned verse and share responses with the larger group.

Note to instructor: The purpose of this activity is to connect the ministry of each disciple or the congregation to conditions of need in the world. Personal or controversial topics should be handled with sensitivity.

Make a list of personal and societal conditions represented by the selected verse.

- What personal, relational, or congregational ministry could address each condition?
- Where have you seen a change in these conditions because of Spirit-led ministry?
- Choose one or two conditions most closely connected to you or your congregation. What personal or congregational change would create opportunities for healing in this condition?

4 SEND
Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

The rhythm of lament echoes the rhythm of releasing and receiving that is part of the labyrinth experience. Use the spiral and cross symbol on the response sheet

as a finger labyrinth. As you trace the spiral moving inward toward the cross, *release* distractions and resistances. Pause as you arrive in the center, rest in God's presence, and *receive* God's invitation to you. As you *return* from the center, be open to God's call in your life. How will you respond?

Community of Christ Sings includes a section of hymns devoted to lament (198–205). As part of your personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week, prayerfully consider a hymn of lament or a lament from Psalms. Be open to where the Spirit leads as you connect with conditions of suffering in the world. (You may also choose to write your own psalm or prayer of lament.)

5 BLESS
Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

As you close this time of learning and sharing, invite participants to complete the following prayer of commitment.

(Personal address to God) _____,

In response to _____

_____ (a condition for which God weeps),

I commit to _____

_____.

Amen.

LESSON 16 RESPONSE SHEET

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

17 March 2019

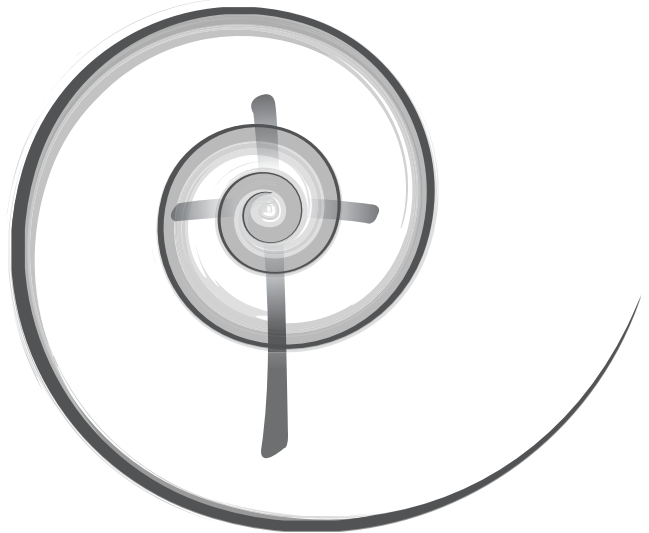
Luke 13:31–35 NRSV

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³²He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Lament

Lament is part of the sacred rhythm of joy and pain found in all life. The world is saturated with unresolved pain and ache. To lament is to grieve and, through the process of grieving, find openness toward healing. Lament does not represent loss of faith in God. It is not uttered to a stranger. Lament is addressed to God in the context of personal relationship to God. Lament offers release of grief and opens new space for receiving blessing and healing. Lament is an important personal spiritual practice, but it is not limited to the narrow range of self. Jesus' lament over Jerusalem does not represent his concern for self; it is a cry of grief for his people. Lament over conditions in the world allows us to enter into those conditions, to affirm our connection with all life, and to engage in God's healing and redemptive purposes.

The rhythm of lament echoes the rhythm releasing and receiving that is part of the labyrinth experience. Use the spiral and cross symbol as a finger labyrinth. As you trace the spiral moving inward toward the cross, *release* distractions and resistances. Pause as you arrive in the center, *rest* in God's presence and *receive* God's invitation to you. As you *return* from the center, be open to God's call in your life. How will you respond?



As you close this time of learning and sharing, invite participants to complete the following prayer of commitment.

(Personal address to God) _____,

In response to _____

_____ (a condition for which God weeps),

I commit to _____

_____.

Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 17
24 March 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 13:1–9

Lesson Focus: All are called to live as fruitful disciples.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on Lenten experiences and practice holy attention.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- explore Community of Christ understanding of judgment, the Reign of God, and Responsible Choices and their connection to the focus scripture passage.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 13:1–9 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the third Sunday of Lent. Invite people to share thoughts or insights from their Lenten journey, or respond to one of the following questions.

- What practices have been helpful?

- What new awareness has emerged?
- To what person, group of people, or portion of creation have you been drawn as you intentionally consider your journey as a disciple?

Holy Attention

Note to instructor: If class time allows, spend a few minutes practicing holy attention.

The practice of holy attention allows us to suspend inner conversations and personal agendas and give reverent and receptive focus to a specific person or portion of creation. We do this in the spirit of Christ who saw into the hearts of people and recognized their true identities as God's beloved. During Lent, as we continue practices of fasting and examen, we make space for deeper awareness of where, and in what ways, God is showing up in the world around us.

Enter a time of quiet reflection. Relax your body and breathing, and bring to mind a particular person, group of people, or portion of creation. Ask God to bless you with curiosity and gratitude as you consider the life journey of others and the interconnectedness of all creation.

- In what ways do you feel connected to this sacred creation?
- In what ways do you experience separation from this sacred creation?
- How are you being called to act in ways that promote the well-being of this sacred creation?

Gently bring your attention back to the space around you and close with the following prayer statement:

Awaken me to your presence in and through all creation.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 13:1–9. This passage has two parts and, typical of Luke's narrative, the second part interprets the first. Discuss each section as a group, or divide into smaller discussion groups of two or three and share insights with the larger group.

Part 1 (vv. 1–5) Sin, Suffering, and Repentance

Jesus is asked about two unexplainable tragedies: one at the hands of Pilate, the other a natural disaster. People are trying to understand why such tragedies occur and wonder if they are God's punishment for sin. Jesus' response affirms that tragedy (natural or human) is not God's punishment for sin, but points to the reality that we live in a world where circumstances are beyond our control. There is no need to explain the evils that exist; we recognize life is fragile. The call to repentance (Greek *metanoia*—to turn around or make a change) involves reconciling relationships and turning toward a new way of living.

- How does Jesus' call to repentance connect to circumstances of needless suffering in the world?
- How do you understand sin and suffering in connection to God's will and human choice?
- In what ways does this passage connect to the season of Lent and the journey with Jesus to Jerusalem?

Part 2 (vv. 6–9) Bear Good Fruit

The parable of the fig tree shows Jesus' teaching and example of living in a way that produces acts of justice and compassion. A fruitless tree takes up valuable soil. The gardener's reprieve of one more year is an example of God's mercy and wish for all people to "bear good fruit." The one-year reprieve is a direct correlation to Luke's treatment of Jesus' ministry as one year amid God's saving plan of Israel-Jesus-the church. Jesus' call for repentance is about more than remorse for bad decisions. Beyond a resolve to do better, it means reorienting one's life and confronting the reality of God's kingdom as present in Jesus.

- How does understanding God's kingdom as present in Jesus shape your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- How is this parable explained in Jesus' ministry and mission?
- Where do you see examples of Christ's mission bearing good fruit in your congregation? In your community?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Divide the larger group into three smaller groups or pairs. Assign each group one of the following descriptions from Community of Christ Enduring Principles and Basic Beliefs. Discuss how each one connects to the focus passage from Luke. Share insights with the larger group.

Responsible Choices

- God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve. Some people experience conditions that diminish their ability to make choices.
- Human choices contribute to good or evil in our lives and in the world.

- Many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible and sinful human choices.
- We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.
- What is the call and challenge to individual disciples through this understanding? To congregations?

The Reign of God

The Reign of God is the coming triumph of love, justice, mercy, and peace that one day will embrace all of creation. Jesus' life and ministry were the living expression of this promise. He taught his disciples to pray for the kingdom's full coming and sent them out into the world to be living emblems of that new creation. "Zion" expresses our commitment to herald God's peaceable kingdom on Earth by forming Christ-centered communities in families, congregations, neighborhoods, cities, and throughout the world.

Judgment

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation's gifts. It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture's light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead.

- How does this Enduring Principle or Basic Belief reflect a current understanding of the focus passage in Luke?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

We are called, through Luke's passage and our Lenten journey, to reorder our lives according to Christ's mission. Prayerfully consider what change you can make toward a new way of living.

- In what act of justice and compassion will you engage to reflect this change?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing verses one and three of "Lord, Lead Me by Your Spirit" CCS 209.

LESSON 17 RESPONSE SHEET

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

24 March 2019

Luke 13:1–9 NRSV

¹At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

⁶Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ ⁸He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Holy Attention

Note to Instructor: If class time allows, spend a few minutes practicing holy attention.

The practice of holy attention allows us to suspend inner conversations and personal agendas and give reverent and receptive focus to a specific person or portion of creation. We do this in the spirit of Christ who saw into the hearts of people and recognized their true identities as God’s beloved. During Lent, as we continue practices of fasting and examen, we make space for deeper awareness of where, and in what ways, God is showing up in the world around us.

Enter a time of quiet reflection. Relax your body and breathing and bring to mind a particular person, group of people, or portion of creation. Ask God to bless you with curiosity and gratitude as you consider the life journey of others and the interconnectedness of all creation.

- In what ways do you feel connected to this sacred creation?
- In what ways do you experience separation from this sacred creation?
- How are you being called to act in ways that promote the well-being of this sacred creation?

Gently bring your attention back to the space around you and close with the following prayer statement:

Awaken me to your presence in and through all creation.

Responsible Choices

- God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve. Some people experience conditions that diminish their ability to make choices.
- Human choices contribute to good or evil in our lives and in the world.
- Many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible and sinful human choices.
- We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.

The Reign of God

The Reign of God is the coming triumph of love, justice, mercy, and peace that one day will embrace all of creation. Jesus’ life and ministry were the living expression of this promise. He taught his disciples to pray for the kingdom’s full coming and sent them out into the world to be living emblems of that new creation. “Zion” expresses our commitment to herald God’s peaceable kingdom on Earth by forming Christ-centered communities in families, congregations, neighborhoods, cities, and throughout the world.

Judgment

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation’s gifts. It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture’s light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead.

We are called, through Luke’s passage and our Lenten journey, to reorder our lives according to Christ’s mission. Prayerfully consider what change you can make toward a new way of living.

- In what act of justice and compassion will you engage to reflect this change?

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 18
31 March 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32

Lesson Focus: God’s extravagant grace welcomes all.

Objectives

The learners will...

- practice centering prayer.
- discuss parables and personal correlations to the focus scripture passage.
- explore connections between the focus passage and Enduring Principles: Grace and Generosity and Worth of All Persons.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the fourth Sunday of Lent. Invite people to share thoughts or insights from their Lenten journey, or respond to one of the following questions.

- What practices have been helpful?

- What new awareness has emerged?

Following a brief time of sharing, spend a few moments in the practice of centering prayer.

Centering Prayer

Centering prayer simply uses breath and a prayer word to stay focused on God’s presence. The intent of this prayer is to spend time with God, seeking no answers but merely connection to the Divine. It is called

centering prayer because one's attention is gathered in and centered on being open to and receiving God. During Lent, centering prayer helps us dwell more deeply in the mystery of God.

Note to Instructor: The following information is to help guide this practice. It is also included on the response sheet for use in personal practice. Use what is helpful guiding the practice for the time that best fits your setting.

- Gently enter a time of prayer expecting to be guided by the Holy Spirit in this practice of opening and receiving.
- Use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Breathe deeply, slowly, calmly, allowing the deep breaths to release you of tension throughout your body.
- Focus on breathing in God and breathing out all else until you feel calm and centered.
- Be aware that you are in this space intending to love and be loved by God.
- Listen for a word or phrase that comes to you, expressing the wish of your heart. Repeat it silently in rhythm with your breathing.
- As you become distracted—and you will—bring yourself back to that centered place by using your breath and prayer word. Simply note the thoughts that pull you away and let them go.
- When the time of prayer has finished, offer a prayer of thanks to God, take several more breaths, and gently return your awareness to your surroundings.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus passage is a familiar parable. A parable can be understood as a metaphor drawn from ordinary life circumstances that challenges the mind to consider new application. Parables begin with what is familiar, but challenge the listener's expectation by presenting a different vision of the world. Jesus' parables challenge the hearer to respond.

The fifteenth chapter of Luke contains a series of three similar parables, typically called the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son. The series could also be referred to as the Joy of Finding. Note that assigning titles to the parables, or indicating what they are about, interprets them in a certain way. Luke places these

three parables together in the context of criticism from the Pharisees and scribes about Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners, which provides particular meaning in Luke's Gospel. In Luke, Jesus not only tolerates sinners; he welcomes them, accepts them, and shares in table ministry with them.

Read Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32. Choose one of the following suggestions for discussing this passage.

1. Divide the group into smaller discussion groups based on the character with whom they most closely relate. Discuss the questions below and share insights with the larger group.
2. Assign each person one of the following characters. Form small groups with one representative of each character and discuss the questions below. Share insights with the larger group.

Younger Son

The younger son is understood to represent repentant sinners. He breaks family relationships by seeking his inheritance while his father is still alive, which is offensive and implies his father is already dead. He goes to a distant (Gentile!) land and squanders his inheritance in wild living (prodigal means "recklessly wasteful"). Losing his money, friends, and religious scruples, he takes a job feeding pigs, which is disgusting to any Jew. In returning home, his transformation goes from "give me" to "shape me."

- In what ways do you relate to the younger son in this parable?
- In what ways are you challenged by what the younger son represents?

Father

The father is understood to represent God. He acts in an unexpected and, in that culture, undignified way by running to meet his lost son. His response was embarrassing, even scandalous, in the eyes of the community, much like Jesus eating with sinners. He welcomes his son with no apology, no punishment, no cause for guilt; but with extravagant forgiveness and restoration.

- In what ways do you relate to the father in this parable?
- How does the father's response shape your understanding of God?

Older Son

The older son is understood to represent the Pharisees and scribes. Traditionally, this story focuses on the

younger son's repentance and the father's forgiveness, but in Luke, this story's setting is for the sake of those represented by the older son. He has remained faithful to the Jewish customs and to his father, and has been hard at work, which contrasts with his brother's "wild living." While the father did not seek the younger son, he sought the older son, which fits the pattern of the two preceding parables (the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, the woman seeking the lost coin). Even though his father affirms he is always with him and "all that is mine is yours," it is difficult for the older son to reconcile his anger. In his mind there appears to be no distinction in his father's eyes between his righteous living and his brother's irresponsible living.

We are left without knowing if the older son joins the celebration.

- In what ways do you relate to the older son in this parable?
- In what ways are you challenged by what the older son represents?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Discuss the following questions as they connect to the descriptions of two Enduring Principles. You may choose to discuss the two Enduring Principles as a group, or copy each statement on a small strip of paper to be drawn by smaller groups of two or three. Share responses with the larger group.

- How does this Enduring Principle or statement connect to the parable of the Prodigal Son?
- How does this Enduring Principle or statement shape an understanding of God? Of personal relationships? Of life as a disciple?

Grace and Generosity

- God's grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.
- Having received God's generous grace, we respond generously and receive graciously the generosity of others.

- We offer all we are and have to God's purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

Worth of All Persons

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Parables begin with what is familiar, but challenge the listener's expectation by presenting a different vision of the world. Jesus' parables challenge the hearer to respond.

- How is your congregation challenged to respond to this parable today?
- How are you being called to love like the father and imitate God's generosity?
- What barriers keep you from loving like the father? From being loved like the son?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "I Will Arise and Go" CCS 223.

LESSON 18 RESPONSE SHEET

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

31 March 2019

Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32 NRSV

¹Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." ³So he told them this parable:

^{11b}"There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me! So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Now his elder son was in the fields; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me

even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' ³¹The father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

Parables begin with what is familiar, but challenge the listener's expectation by presenting a different vision of the world. Jesus' parables challenge the hearer to respond.

- How is your congregation challenged to respond to this parable today?

- How are you being called to love like the father and imitate God's generosity?

- What barriers keep you from loving like the father? From being loved like the son?

Centering Prayer

Centering prayer simply uses breath and a prayer word to stay focused on God's presence. The intent of this prayer is to spend time with God, seeking no answers but merely connection to the Divine. It is called centering prayer because one's attention is gathered in and centered on being open to and receiving God. During Lent, centering prayer helps us dwell more deeply in the mystery of God.

- Gently enter a time of prayer expecting to be guided by the Holy Spirit in this practice of opening and receiving.
- Use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Breathe deeply, slowly, calmly, allowing the deep breaths to release you of tension throughout your body.
- Focus on breathing in God and breathing out all else until you feel calm and centered.
- Be aware that you are in this space intending to love and be loved by God.
- Listen for a word or phrase that comes to you, expressing the wish of your heart. Repeat it silently in rhythm with your breathing.
- As you become distracted—and you will—bring yourself back to that centered place by using your breath and prayer word. Simply note the thoughts that pull you away and let them go.
- Continue in this pattern of focused breathing for about 20 minutes, though you may want to begin with five–10 minutes and increase your time with practice. Set a timer so you will not have to check the time.
- When the time of prayer has finished, offer a prayer of thanks to God, take several more breaths, and gently return your awareness to your surroundings.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 19
7 April 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: John 12:1–8

Lesson Focus: Disciples are called to respond to God’s extravagant generosity with actions as well as with words.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share thoughts and insights from their Lenten journey.
- engage in the focus scripture passage through the practice of *Lectio Divina*.
- discuss connections between the focus passage and recent counsel to the church.
- consider their personal call and response to God’s extravagant generosity.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 12:1–8 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the fifth Sunday of Lent. Invite people to share thoughts or insights from their Lenten journey, or respond to one of the following questions.

- What has been most meaningful to you in your journey through Lent?
- What new awareness has emerged?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

The anointing at Bethany is a similar story appearing in all four Gospels (see Matthew 26:6–13, Mark 14:3–9, and Luke 7:36–50). The placement of this story in John’s account points to the events of Passion Week.

Use the practice of *lectio divina* to engage with today’s focus scripture passage. *Lectio divina* (Latin for *sacred*

reading) provides opportunity for encountering God through sacred text. Listening deeply to the words opens us to an awareness of God's invitation to us through a particular scripture passage.

Sit comfortably and enter a time of prayerful reflection. Read the text four times, allowing time for meditation and prayer between each reading.

Note to instructor: It is helpful to describe each of the following steps before entering the practice. Gently remind people of the focus before each reading. Encourage people to make notes of their responses on the response sheet or journal.

1. *Lectio*—listen to the text and get a sense of the story or setting. Imagine the scene, senses, emotions, and tensions involved in the text.
2. *Meditatio*—focus on meaning and understanding. What are the surface and underlying meanings? What does the text tell you about God? How do you connect with the text?
3. *Oratio*—focus on your emotional response. Do you feel joy, sorrow, fear, anger, or guilt? Share your feelings with God in prayer. Ask for help in listening deeply to these emotions and meanings.
4. *Contemplatio*—continue in a time of receptive prayer. Breathe deeply and wait for what God may bring to you in the quietness. Record any impressions or insights that come to you and return to receptive listening. When the time has ended, offer a word of thanks to God to close your time with this practice.

Discuss the following questions.

- What new insights emerged as you prayerfully considered this passage?
- How does Mary's response of extravagant generosity imitate God's generosity? When have you experienced such extravagant generosity?
- How does Mary's response give witness to the events which are to follow during Passion Week and beyond?
- What current circumstances are suggestive of Judas' reaction to Mary's act of generosity?
- How do we (as individuals, congregations, or society) justify our actions or complacency with the phrase "there will always be poor among you"?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read the following paragraphs from Doctrine and Covenants 163:3. Divide the group into three smaller

groups or pairs and assign each small group one paragraph to discuss.

3a. You are called to create pathways in the world for peace in Christ to be relationally and culturally incarnate. The hope of Zion is realized when the vision of Christ is embodied in communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness.

b. Above all else, strive to be faithful to Christ's vision of the peaceable Kingdom of God on earth. Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God. Pursue peace.

c. There are subtle, yet powerful, influences in the world, some even claiming to represent Christ, that seek to divide people and nations to accomplish their destructive aims. That which seeks to harden one human heart against another by constructing walls of fear and prejudice is not of God. Be especially alert to these influences, lest they divide you or divert you from the mission to which you are called.

Use the following questions to help connect the passage from John with the assigned paragraph above.

- In what ways does this counsel connect to the passage from John?
- How does this counsel encourage new insight about the passage from John?
- What current circumstances (cultural, political, or religious) are being challenged through this counsel?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Take a few moments to reflect silently on what you have discovered through this lesson. Record your response to the following questions on a response sheet, extra paper, or journals; or share in groups of two or three.

I am disrupted by...

I will respond by...

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "A Prophet-Woman Broke a Jar" CCS 603.

LESSON 19 RESPONSE SHEET

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

7 April 2019

John 12:1–8 NRSV

¹Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵"why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c

3a. You are called to create pathways in the world for peace in Christ to be relationally and culturally incarnate. The hope of Zion is realized when the vision of Christ is embodied in communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness.

b. Above all else, strive to be faithful to Christ's vision of the peaceable Kingdom of God on earth. Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God. Pursue peace.

c. There are subtle, yet powerful, influences in the world, some even claiming to represent Christ, that seek to divide people and nations to accomplish their destructive aims. That which seeks to harden one human heart against another by constructing walls of fear and prejudice is not of God. Be especially alert to these influences, lest they divide you or divert you from the mission to which you are called.

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina (Latin for *sacred reading*) provides opportunity for encountering God through sacred text. Listening deeply to the words opens us to an awareness

of God's invitation to us through a particular scripture passage. Pay attention to the questions that come to you as you engage in this practice. Live in the questions and see how they begin to shape your journey of repentance and renewal.

Sit comfortably and enter a time of prayerful reflection. Read the text four times, allowing time for meditation and prayer between each reading.

Note to instructor: It is helpful to describe each of the following steps before entering the practice. Gently remind people of the focus before each reading. Encourage people to make notes of their responses on the response sheet or journal.

1. *Lectio*—listen to the text and get a sense of the story or setting. Imagine the scene, senses, emotions, and tensions involved in the text.
2. *Meditatio*—focus on meaning and understanding. What are the surface and underlying meanings? What does the text tell you about God? How do you connect with the text?
3. *Oratio*—focus on your emotional response. Do you feel joy, sorrow, fear, anger, or guilt? Share your feelings with God in prayer. Ask for help in listening deeply to these emotions and meanings.
4. *Contemplatio*—continue in a time of receptive prayer. Breathe deeply and wait for what God may bring to you in the quietness. Record any impressions or insights that come to you and return to receptive listening. When the time has ended, offer a word of thanks to God to close your time with this practice.

Prayerfully consider what you have discovered through these passages.

I am disrupted by...

I will respond by...

PALM SUNDAY

LESSON 20

14 April 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 19:28–40/19:27–39 IV

Lesson Focus: Jesus comes in the name of the Lord to proclaim the reign of God, a peaceable kingdom.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share reflections from their Lenten journeys in preparation for Passion Week.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- compare characteristics of worldly kingdoms and God's peaceable kingdom.
- introduce the practice of silence and connect with scripture passage of Passion Week.

Supplies

- Large poster paper or writing surface and markers
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 19:28–40 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the final Sunday of Lent. Invite people to share thoughts or insights from their Lenten journeys, or respond to one of the following questions.

- How has your Lenten journey prepared you to enter Passion Week?
- What new awareness do you have because of intentional Lenten practices?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 19:28–40.

Assign one of the following phrases, taken from the focus passage, to each individual or small group of two or three. Invite each individual or group to consider how this phrase reflects a new or different understanding of kingship and what it reveals about the kingdom of God. Share responses with the larger group.

1. *A colt that has never been ridden*—Triumphal processions of a ruler or conqueror on a mighty warhorse were common in the first-century Roman world. Jesus enters on a young donkey.
 2. *The Lord needs it*—Luke refers to Jesus as “Lord” using the post-Easter Christian title in the story of Jesus’ pre-Easter life.
 3. *Spreading their clothes on the road*—A sign of spontaneous jubilation and recognition of Jesus as king. (Notice there are no leafy branches as in Mark and no palms as in John.)
 4. *The whole multitude of the disciples*—This verse is Luke’s addition to what has followed closely to Mark’s account. The significance of disciples recognizing Jesus as king goes beyond the Twelve, but is not the same as “crowds.”
 5. *Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord*—While Jesus was not the kind of king the Jewish leaders, Pilate, or even his disciples understood him to be; the reversal of conventional values in the kingdom of God does indeed have political implications.
 6. *Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven*—Luke adds this to source material in Mark to agree with the birth account in Luke 2:14. The disciples sing the same song of praise as the angels at Jesus’ birth. (Just as there are no palms in Luke, there are also no hosannas.)
 7. *Pharisees*—The Pharisees appear in the Gospel of Luke for the last time. The disciples who celebrate Jesus as humble king of the coming kingdom of God contrast to the Pharisees who consider it scandalous and try to silence their declaration.
 8. *The stones would shout out*—Jesus accepts the disciples’ praise as fitting. God’s redemptive act that is about to take place in Jerusalem calls forth worship and praise as its suitable response, not only from human beings, but from the creation itself.
- Where do you see evidence of each in your community? In the world?
 - Where do you see the greatest differences between the two in your community? In the world?
 - Where do you see division in your congregation or community because of living in the kingdom of the world and proclaiming the kingdom of God?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Throughout this coming Passion Week, make the story of Christ’s passion part of your daily spiritual practice. Spend time with Luke’s narrative of the events leading to Christ’s crucifixion, death, and resurrection; practice silence (described below) as you prepare to experience new life in Christ.

Practicing silence reminds us that relationship to God is a reciprocal act. In silence, we take the time to listen intently and be present with God without words. Intentional time in silence allows us to be fully present with God without confines of language. As we enter Passion Week, the full implication of life as a disciple brings with it a weighted hush. There are moments when words are inadequate and our most faithful response is to stand humbly before the mystery.

- Find a place free from noise or distractions.
- Practicing silence may be difficult at first. Your mind may run wild, and centering in God’s presence could take some spiritual effort! Allow yourself grace in this practice and the ability to ease slowly into longer periods of silent reflection. Perhaps you begin in silence for five–10 minutes and then write in a journal or pray about your experience.
- Breathe deeply. Focusing on each breath in and out can help quiet the mind and center you in God’s Spirit.
- Become aware of your surroundings; notice how the air feels on your skin; trust that you are in the presence of the Holy—fully surrounding you and embracing you.
- Don’t expect God will speak to you in a certain way. Just open yourself to what is. Allow your inner conversations to stop for a while, being fully present with the one who is fully present with you.
- After being silent for a while, offer a prayer of gratitude for God’s constant presence whether you are fully aware of it or not. Pray that you may continue to draw closer to God and discover what God is saying and doing within you.

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Jesus’ provocative act symbolizes a different understanding of kingship. It also points to the division between those who celebrate Jesus’ redefinition and those who find it scandalous.

On a large poster paper or writing surface, make two columns with one titled “Kingdom of the World” and the other titled “Kingdom of God.” List characteristics of each in the respective column.

Day 1: Read Luke 22:1–23
Find a quiet space and allow yourself at least five minutes alone in silence.

Day 2: Read Luke 22:24–38
Before you begin your day of work or activity, silently offer this prayer:
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am.
Be still and know.
Be still.
Be.

Day 3: Read Luke 22:39–46
Repeat this prayer phrase as you enter the practice of silence:
Holy Mystery, I am speechless in your presence.

Day 4: Read Luke 22:47–62
Incorporate times of silence into your daily routine.

Day 5: Read Luke 22:63–23:49
As you practice silence, allow yourself to be filled with awe before the mystery of God.

Day 6: Read Luke 23:50–56
Preparing to experience new life in Christ, what is it that leaves you speechless?

5 BLESS
Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Offer a prayer of blessing, or close this time of learning and sharing with a few moments of silence. (You may choose one of the recommended silent practices above.)

LESSON 20 RESPONSE SHEET

PALM SUNDAY

14 April 2019

Luke 19:28–40 NRSV

²⁸After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

²⁹When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" ³²So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴They said, "The Lord needs it." ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." ⁴⁰He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

Throughout this coming Passion Week, make the story of Christ's passion part of your daily spiritual practice. Spend time with Luke's account of the events leading to Christ's crucifixion, death, and resurrection; practice silence as you prepare to experience new life in Christ.

Practicing silence reminds us that relationship to God is a reciprocal act. In silence, we take the time to listen intently and be present with God without words. Intentional time in silence allows us to be fully present with God without confines of language. As we enter Passion Week, the full implication of life as a disciple brings with it a weighted hush. There are moments when words are inadequate and our most faithful response is to stand humbly before the mystery.

- Find a place free from noise or distractions.
- Practicing silence may be difficult at first. Your mind may run wild, and centering in God's presence

could take some spiritual effort! Allow yourself grace in this practice and the ability to slowly ease into longer periods of silent reflection. Perhaps you begin in silence for five–10 minutes and then write in a journal or pray about your experience.

- Breathe deeply. Focusing on each breath in and out can help quiet the mind and center you in God's Spirit.
- Become aware of your surroundings; notice how the air feels on your skin; trust that you are in the presence of the Holy—fully surrounding you and embracing you.
- Don't expect God will speak to you in a certain way. Just open yourself to what is. Allow your inner conversations to stop for a while, being fully present with the one who is fully present with you.
- After being silent for a while, offer a prayer of gratitude for God's constant presence whether you are fully aware of it or not. Pray that you may continue to draw closer to God and discover what God is saying and doing within you.

Day 1: Read Luke 22:1–23
Find a quiet space and allow yourself at least five minutes alone in silence.

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Holy Mystery, I am speechless in your presence.

Day 4: Read Luke 22:47–62
Incorporate times of silence into your daily routine.

Day 5: Read Luke 22:63—23:49
As you practice silence, allow yourself to be filled with awe before the mystery of God.

Day 6: Read Luke 23:50–56
Preparing to experience new life in Christ, what is it that leaves you speechless?

EASTER SUNDAY— RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

LESSON 21
21 April 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: John 20:1–18 and Luke 24:1–12/24:1–11 IV

Lesson Focus: Christ Has Risen!

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on the meaning of the Resurrection.
- compare accounts of the Resurrection from John and Luke.
- discuss connections between Resurrection encounter and mission.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 20:1–18 and Luke 24:1–12 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is Easter Sunday or Resurrection of the Lord. Respond to one of the following questions as a large group or in smaller groups of two or three.

- What does the Resurrection mean to you?
- How have you experienced new life in Christ?
- How has the Resurrection been made real to you?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Jesus’ resurrection is at the core of Christian faith. The Resurrection moment is not described in any of the Gospel accounts, but is left as divine mystery. The empty tomb alone does not produce faith; it is personal experience of resurrection through the Living Christ that transforms lives. While Matthew and Luke draw from Mark’s account as a source for content, the Gospels differ according to the following:

- who went to the tomb and when
- the nature of the resurrected body of Jesus
- location and chronology of Jesus' post-Resurrection appearances

In all accounts, the Resurrection affirms that God acts for those who are dead. Christian hope is in the Resurrection (God) and not ourselves (immortality).

Compare the Resurrection accounts from John and Luke. Read each passage and make a list of the key points, characters, and events.

- What are the likenesses and differences between the two accounts?
- What do you understand about the Resurrection through each account?

Each Gospel account reflects the theology of the author. Read the following statements reflected in each account and discuss the questions which follow.

John

- The Resurrection is the final proof of Jesus' identity.
- Resurrection is not resuscitation; Jesus is raised to a new way of being beyond this life.
- Mary's recognition and confession reflect John's love for personal encounter with Jesus.
- There is a kind of "seeing" that does not result in faith. People come to Christian faith not by judging evidence by their own criteria, but as a response to the voice of the Living Christ.

Luke

- Luke follows Mark's account. The risen Christ does not appear to the women who have come prepared to give Jesus' body a proper burial. The women are not directed to tell the apostles about the empty tomb but act on their own initiative.
- "He...has risen" is better translated as "He has been raised (by God)." Just as Jesus did not die but was killed, Jesus did not rise (resuscitate) but was raised.
- Peter runs to the tomb to see for himself, but still there are no Christian believers.
- Luke's additions to Mark's account (personal encounters in later passages) provide important reflection on how the Christian faith in the Resurrection came to be.

Questions for Discussion

- Which one of the statements above resonates with your understanding of the Resurrection?

Which one challenges your understanding of the Resurrection?

- With which account do you most closely identify? Why?
- What new awareness do you have after comparing the two accounts?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Community of Christ Christology (understanding of who Jesus Christ is) affirms the following:

- On the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead, vindicating his life and ministry, and triumphing over all injustice, even death itself. He ascended into heaven, having entrusted his followers with authority to minister in his name to the ends of the earth. He sent the Holy Spirit to be with them in their witness of the good news of the Resurrection.
- Christ...promises us the redemption and healing of our relationships with God, one another, and all creation.
- As disciples of Christ, we are called to conform our lives to his by living in loving community with others, seeing Jesus in the faces of the least of God's children, and serving those whom the world has forgotten.
- The promises of God in Jesus Christ are sure—by the Holy Spirit we will be given grace to do the things we have been asked: courage in the struggle for justice, passion for peace in the midst of violence, forgiveness of our sin, stewardship in place of materialism, healing of body and spirit where there is hurt, and eternal life in the face of death.

Discuss the following questions based on previous discussion of the passages from John and Luke, and the statements above taken from Community of Christ Christology. (For full statements, see *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, pp. 22–23.)

- What does it mean to live the hope of the Resurrection as a disciple of Jesus Christ? As a community of Christ?
- How does Resurrection encounter lead to mission?
- Where do you see evidence of Resurrection hope in your congregation? In your community? In the world?

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

“Resurrection is not a onetime event that came and went. It is a daily event as people receive God’s grace, love, and new life through Jesus Christ” (“Exploring the Scripture” for John 20:1–18, *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*). Just as Mary is told not to cling to the earthly Jesus, we are called to live the Resurrection hope by experiencing and creating a new present.

Spend a few moments in silent reflection and complete the following challenge statement:

I will live the Resurrection hope and create a new present by...

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Offer a prayer of blessing for all in personal challenge and commitment to live the hope of the Resurrection.

LESSON 21 RESPONSE SHEET

EASTER SUNDAY— RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

21 April 2019

John 20:1–18 NRSV

¹Early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Luke 24:1–12 NRSV

¹But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled

away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸Then they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stopping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Community of Christ Christology (understanding of who Jesus Christ is) affirms the following:

- On the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead, vindicating his life and ministry, and triumphing over all injustice, even death itself. He ascended into heaven, having entrusted his followers with authority to minister in his name to the ends of the earth. He sent the Holy Spirit to be with them in their witness of the good news of the Resurrection.
- Christ...promises us the redemption and healing of our relationships with God, one another, and all creation.
- As disciples of Christ, we are called to conform our lives to his by living in loving community with others, seeing Jesus in the faces of the least of God’s children, and serving those whom the world has forgotten.
- The promises of God in Jesus Christ are sure—by the Holy Spirit we will be given grace to do the things we have been asked: courage in the struggle for justice, passion for peace in the midst of violence, forgiveness of our sin, stewardship in place of materialism, healing of body and spirit where there is hurt, and eternal life in the face of death.

“Resurrection is not a one-time event that came and went. It is a daily event as people receive God’s grace, love, and new life through Jesus Christ” (“Exploring the Scripture” for John 20:1–18, *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*). Just as Mary is told not to cling to the earthly Jesus, we are called to live the Resurrection hope by experiencing and creating a new present.

Spend a few moments in silent reflection and complete the following statement:

I will live the Resurrection hope and create a new present by...

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 22
28 April 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: John 20:19–31

Lesson Focus: Faith is a journey of doubt and trust which transforms belief into kingdom-building action.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on experiences of Resurrection hope.
- explore how the focus scripture passage connects with personal faith journeys.
- consider what it means to share the peace of Jesus Christ.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Doctrine and Covenants
- Poster paper or large writing surface and markers

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 20:19–31 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the second Sunday of Easter. Spend a few moments at the beginning of this session reflecting on experiences of the past Easter week. Respond to one

of the following questions as a large group, in small sharing groups, or on response sheets.

- How have you witnessed or experienced Resurrection hope in the past week?
- Who is someone in your life who most embodies Resurrection hope? Explain.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Even though John’s Gospel was written many years after Jesus’ resurrection, it remains a powerful witness to all that transpired. It clarifies many of the author’s concerns for the early struggling church. Connecting with last week’s passage from John, today’s passage provides another example of people coming to belief amid fear and doubt.

Read John 20:19–31. On large poster paper, flip chart, or erasable writing surface, make two columns. At the top of one column write “Particular,” and at the top of the other column write “Universal.” In the “Particular” column, list important elements from the passage and discuss their significance and context (when they happened). Then, in the “Universal” column, discuss the broader, universal understanding of each element and how it applies to circumstances today. You may choose to assign small groups of two or three a “Particular,” have them discuss the “Universal,” and then share with the larger group.

Example:

Particular	Universal
Jesus came and stood among the disciples who were hiding behind locked doors. They had not seen the Risen Christ and were in fear of what might happen to them.	We can experience divine peace amid our fears and misgivings. Sometimes this happens in unexpected ways.

For further reflection, read and discuss the following.

John 20:19–23

- “Peace be with you” was a typical Jewish greeting, but here it represents fulfillment of Jesus’ promise.
- “So I send you.” The resurrection was not just an individual and private religious experience. It was a reality that involved a mission to the world. It represents a continuation of God sending Jesus, of Christ’s mission.
- “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The breath of Jesus, in this passage, is like the Pentecost experience recorded in Acts. Jesus speaks words which comfort, encourage, and strengthen the disciples.

What examples do you see today of disciples “hiding” because of fear, doubt, or misgiving?

What are the “locked doors” we sometimes hide behind?

John 20:24–31

- John’s Gospel is the most graphic in its account of the Crucifixion. It is the only one with nails, blood, and spear. In this passage, Thomas cannot believe in the Resurrection without personal witness of Jesus’ wounded body.
- “My Lord and my God.” The original Gospel account ended with this climactic note suggesting to the reader that it is God who has become incarnate in Christ. (Most scholars consider chapter 21 as added after the original composition of the main body.)
- “...that you may come to believe...” directly addresses the reader and signals a shift from an account to a summary of the intent through the Gospel’s witness: “that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

In what ways can doubt increase one’s faith?

How have you (or someone you know) struggled with doubts and misgiving on your journey of faith, but then come to a place of trust and belief? How did this transformation take place?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

God’s revelation in Jesus Christ and continuing presence through the Holy Spirit, as proclaimed by scripture, is the foundation of our faith, identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

Early in its history, the church, often referred to as the Restoration movement, perceived the call to share the fullness of the gospel throughout the world (Doctrine and Covenants 1:4) and to “seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 6:3). Today, we understand this as the call to share the peace of Jesus Christ in all of its personal, interpersonal, community, and worldwide dimensions.

Sharing the peace of Jesus Christ involves generously and compassionately offering witness, ministry, sacraments, and community life that reconcile and restore people to right or righteous relationships with God, themselves, others, and creation. This holistic approach to proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel is faithful to our best understanding of God’s will. This approach is the fullest meaning of restoration (“We Share the Peace of Jesus Christ,” *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, p. 7).

- How does your idea of Zion compare with sharing the peace of Jesus Christ, as reflected above? In what ways are they the same or different?
- What does it mean to “share the peace of Jesus Christ in all of its personal, interpersonal, community, and worldwide dimensions”?
- How is sharing the peace of Jesus Christ reflected in specific congregational ministries?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

We proclaim Jesus Christ, yet we can also doubt, just like Thomas. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” For John, to believe in the promises of God through Christ is to trust the healing, saving action of God in the world and live as if it were true. Belief leads to action.

Read the following passage and prayerfully consider how you would complete the statements which follow.

Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a

Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God’s peace and discover the blessings of all of the dimensions of salvation.

I long for divine peace amid _____
_____.

I will share the peace of Jesus Christ with _____

by _____

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing verses one and two of “The Risen Christ” CCS 477.

LESSON 22 RESPONSE SHEET

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

28 April 2019

John 20:19–31 NRSV

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

From "We Share the Peace of Jesus Christ," *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, p. 7:

God's revelation in Jesus Christ and continuing presence through the Holy Spirit, as proclaimed

by scripture, is the foundation of our faith, identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

Early in its history, the church, often referred to as the Restoration movement, perceived the call to share the fullness of the gospel throughout the world (Doctrine and Covenants 1:4) and to "seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:3). Today, we understand this as the call to share the peace of Jesus Christ in all of its personal, interpersonal, community, and worldwide dimensions.

Sharing the peace of Jesus Christ involves generously and compassionately offering witness, ministry, sacraments, and community life that reconciles and restores people to right or righteous relationships with God, themselves, others, and creation. This holistic approach to proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel is faithful to our best understanding of God's will. This approach is the fullest meaning of *restoration*.

We proclaim Jesus Christ, yet we can also doubt, just like Thomas. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." For John, to believe in the promises of God through Christ is to trust the healing, saving action of God in the world and live as if it were true. Belief leads to action.

Read the following passage and prayerfully consider how you would complete the statements which follow.

Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a

Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God's peace and discover the blessings of all of the dimensions of salvation.

I long for divine peace amid _____
_____.

I will share the peace of Jesus Christ with _____
_____ by _____
_____.

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 23
5 May 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: John 21:1–19

Lesson Focus: Christ invites us to partner with him in mission.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on experiences of divine peace.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- explore the invitation to Christ's mission through the focus passage.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 21:1–19 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the third Sunday of Easter. Spend a few moments reflecting on experiences of the past Easter week. Respond to one of the following questions as a large group, in small sharing groups, or on response sheets.

- How have you witnessed or experienced divine peace in the past week?
- Who is someone in your life who most embodies divine peace? Explain.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read John 21:1–19 and the following commentary. Discuss the questions which follow as a large group or in small sharing groups of two or three.

Some scholars believe John's original Gospel ended with 20:31, with today's passage being added after the death of the beloved disciple. The beloved disciple is referenced throughout John, and was likely someone revered by the community out of which the fourth

Gospel originated. Some scholars believe the beloved disciple was not an actual person, but a representation of the ideal follower of Jesus. This section is not an unrelated afterthought, but more like an epilogue or final phase of composition.

John 21:1–4 “I am going fishing.”

In contrast to the previous passage in John’s Gospel, when the disciples were together in the presence of the resurrected Jesus, here they have returned to their former way of life. It is hard to imagine how Peter, who had received the Holy Spirit from the resurrected Jesus, could return to his old life as if nothing happened.

- What represents “old fishing boats” in your life? In your congregation?

John 21:5–8 “Cast the net to the right side of the boat...”

Having caught nothing the night before, the direction to cast their nets on the other side of the boat is a new approach. If fishing represents mission (“I will make you fishers of people”), following our own initiatives can be fruitless, but following Christ’s direction leads to unimagined capacity for embracing all.

- In what new ways is God calling you or your congregation to engage in mission?

John 21:9–14 “Come and have breakfast.”

The meal prepared by the resurrected Jesus parallels, in location and substance (bread and fish), the pre-Easter feeding of the 5,000. It represents the importance of relational ministry and symbolizes the restoration Christ offers as the bread of life.

- How have you experienced the bread of life through relational ministry?
- How can relational ministry be expanded in your congregation or community?

John 21:15–19 “Do you love me more than these?”

The setting of the charcoal fire and the pattern of three questions to Peter are reminiscent of the earlier scene when Peter denies Christ. In this setting, Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me more than these?” This could mean his fishing business, former way of life, or the other disciples. Peter reaffirms his love, is assured of forgiveness, and is recommissioned to the mission of Christ. The risen Christ continually restores disciples and renews their commission to serve him.

- How have you experienced restoration and recommissioning in your life? In your congregation? In the church?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Christ’s Mission Is Our Mission

The kingdom was present in Jesus’ ministry, as described in the Gospels, and his disciples’ actions as described in Acts. Those first believers continued Christ’s mission by proclaiming the Living Christ, inviting all people into community, valuing the worth of each person, generously and compassionately meeting their needs, and pursuing justice and peace for everyone.

Our call is to reclaim that same vision and passion for the whole mission of Jesus Christ today through five life-changing, church-changing, and world-changing Mission Initiatives:

- Invite People to Christ—Christ’s mission of evangelism
- Abolish Poverty, End Suffering—Christ’s mission of compassion
- Pursue Peace on Earth—Christ’s mission of justice and peace
- Develop Disciples to Serve—Equip individuals for Christ’s mission
- Experience Congregations in Mission—Equip congregations for Christ’s mission

We will be a prophetic people characterized by uncommon devotion to the compassion and peace of God revealed in Jesus Christ (“We Share a Mission,” *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, p. 9)!

- How have the Mission Initiatives explained a new way of being as disciples? As a congregation? As a church?
- What new congregational ministries have resulted from embracing the Mission Initiatives?
- How can you reimagine old ways of being (old habits or old ways of doing church) to increase your capacity, or your congregation’s capacity, to respond to Christ’s mission?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Prayerfully consider your response to the following:

Restoring God,

Release my burden of _____
_____ so I may partner with you in
mission and bring blessing to your world by _____
_____.

Amen.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing verses three and four of "The Risen Christ"
CCS 477.

LESSON 23 RESPONSE SHEET

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

5 May 2019

John 21:1–19 NRSV

¹After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ²Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. ⁸But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

⁹When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love

me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." ¹⁹(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Christ's Mission Is Our Mission

The kingdom was present in Jesus' ministry, as described in the Gospels, and his disciples' actions as described in Acts. Those first believers continued Christ's mission by proclaiming the Living Christ, inviting all people into community, valuing the worth of each person, generously and compassionately meeting their needs, and pursuing justice and peace for everyone.

Our call is to reclaim that same vision and passion for the whole mission of Jesus Christ today through five life-changing, church-changing, and world-changing Mission Initiatives:

- Invite People to Christ—Christ's mission of evangelism
- Abolish Poverty, End Suffering—Christ's mission of compassion
- Pursue Peace on Earth—Christ's mission of justice and peace
- Develop Disciples to Serve—Equip individuals for Christ's mission
- Experience Congregations in Mission—Equip congregations for Christ's mission

We will be a prophetic people characterized by uncommon devotion to the compassion and peace of God revealed in Jesus Christ ("We Share a Mission," *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, p. 9)!

Restoring God,

*Release my burden of _____
_____ so I may partner with you in
mission and bring blessing to your world by _____
_____.*

Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 24
12 May 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: John 10:22–30

Lesson Focus: We are called to make God’s love alive in the world.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share reflections of God’s love alive in the world today.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and its application to living as disciples.
- find connections between the focus scripture passage and current hymnody.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-3rd-edition.pdf

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 10:22–30 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the fourth Sunday of Easter. Spend a few moments reflecting on experiences of the past Easter week. Respond to the following question as a large group, in small sharing groups, or on response sheets.

- Where do you see evidence of God’s love alive in the world today?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read John 10:22–30 and the following commentary from “Exploring the Scripture” for John 10:22–30 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*. Discuss as a large group or in small groups of two or three. (Alternative: divide the group into three smaller groups or pairs. Assign each group one of the following sections to

discuss. Invite each group to share thoughts and insights with the larger group. What is significant about each section? How does each section give a better understanding of the whole passage?)

Temple Dedication and Messiah (vv. 22–24)

The author of John's Gospel had a purpose setting this scene during the Feast of Dedication (an eight-day celebration of rededicating the temple in 164 BCE, now known as Hanukkah). There were political overtones to the celebration, as the rededication fueled a rise in expectations for a Messiah to conquer the Israelites' foes. The crowd raised questions that mimicked the questions of the Sanhedrin inquiry recorded in the Synoptic Gospels as part of Jesus' trial before his death. John's Gospel does not record this trial; rather it portrays Jesus' entire ministry as a trial in front of a hostile court where he openly confesses to being the Messiah. The questions and impatience of the crowd reflect a common theme in John of hearing or seeing and not understanding. Jesus plainly states, "You don't understand because you don't believe."

- Where have you seen evidence (in your own life or the lives of others) of "seeing or hearing and not understanding," or believing who Jesus is?
- How do we show impatience with the way God is present in our lives?

Sheep and Shepherd (vv. 25–28)

Jesus repeatedly uses imagery of the Good Shepherd. The imagery comes from Ezekiel 34, where Ezekiel describes the kings of Israel as bad shepherds and God as the Good Shepherd who will tend God's flock. Jesus' use of this imagery represents Jesus' fulfillment of God's promise to love and care for God's people. One who believes belongs to those who hear and know Jesus' voice.

- What personal or congregational practices create openings for individual and community response to Jesus' voice? How does one know and hear Jesus' voice?
- How does the imagery of shepherd and sheep connect to personal faith?

The Father and I Are One (vv. 29–30)

Theologians in the second and third centuries used the final verses of this passage as part of the scriptural foundation for the doctrine of the Trinity (God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). John's inclusion of this phrase was not about making a statement about the nature and person of God and Jesus. It was another example of the message throughout John's Gospel: God's love is made alive in the world in the life and ministry of Jesus.

- How have you experienced God's love through the life of another?
- How is your congregation or community making God's love alive in the world?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Community of Christ understanding of what it means to follow Jesus is reflected in every part of our identity, mission, message, and beliefs. It is also reflected in our hymns. Divide into small groups of two or three and have each group select one of the following hymns (or another from *Community of Christ Sings* 22–41). Discuss the questions which follow and share thoughts with the larger group.

"You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd" CCS 22

"Hidden Christ, Alive Forever" CCS 24

"Who Is This Jesus" CCS 38

"Jesus, Partner, Lover, Friend" CCS 40

- In what ways does the hymn express or challenge your belief in Jesus Christ?
- How does the hymn reflect or explain your understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What connections do you find between this hymn and today's focus scripture passage?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

We are called to make God's love alive in the world by our words and actions. We do this through daily choices in response to God's call in our lives. Prayerfully consider your response to the following statements of commitment.

I will choose to follow Jesus with greater awareness and intention by...

I will make God's love alive in the world by...

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing one of the selected hymns, or invite each small group to read one verse from their selected hymn.

LESSON 24 RESPONSE SHEET

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

12 May 2019

John 10:22–30 NRSV

²²At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” ²⁵Jesus answered, “I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me; ²⁶but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰The Father and I are one.”

Community of Christ understanding of what it means to follow Jesus is reflected in every part of our identity, mission, message, and beliefs. It is also reflected in our hymns. Form small groups of two or three and have each group select one of the following hymns (or another from *Community of Christ Sings* 22–41). Discuss the questions which follow and share thoughts with the larger group.

“You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd” CCS 22

“Hidden Christ, Alive Forever” CCS 24

“Who Is This Jesus” CCS 38

“Jesus, Partner, Lover, Friend” CCS 40

- In what ways does the hymn express or challenge your belief in Jesus Christ?

- How does the hymn reflect or explain your understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

- What connections do you find between this hymn and today’s focus scripture passage?

We are called to make God’s love alive in the world by our words and actions. This is done through daily choices in response to God’s call in our lives. Prayerfully consider your response to the following statements of commitment.

I will choose to follow Jesus with greater awareness and intention by...

I will make God’s love alive in the world by...

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 25
19 May 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: John 13:31–35

Lesson Focus: Jesus gives a new commandment that you love one another.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider a personal understanding of the commandment to love one another.
- explore the commandment through the focus scripture passage.
- discover expressions of the commandment to love one another in Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-3rd-edition.pdf
- Faithful Disagreement Definition and Principles www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/FAITHFUL-DISAGREEMENT-PRINCIPLES.pdf (optional)

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 13:31–35 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

- What does “love one another” mean to you?
- How has the love of another disciple made a difference in your life?

Share with the group, or with another, your response to one of the following:

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read John 13:31–35 and the following commentary. Discuss the questions which follow as a large group or in smaller groups of two or three.

This passage appears in a pre-Easter setting in John's Gospel, but we must remember the Gospel was written in the latter first century from a post-Easter perspective. We read this passage on the fifth Sunday of Easter and hear Jesus teaching his followers what it means to be disciples. Previously in the thirteenth chapter, Jesus displayed servant ministry by washing the feet of his disciples and sharing in table ministry. In this setting, glorified means "crucified"; the "lifting up" on the cross represents Jesus' return to the preexistent glory of God, which Christ shared with the Father. Although difficult to interpret, remember John proclaims the Father's and the Son's glorification, beginning with the incarnation. This glorification continues in the life and works of Jesus and was revealed fully in Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. "Little children" is not a condescending label, but a reflection of the first-century Johannine community where believers referred to one another as children of God.

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus refers to the Old Testament when citing the greatest commandment to love God and love neighbor (Deut. 6:4–5; Lev. 19:18; Mt. 22:34–40; Mk. 12:28–34; Lk. 10:25–28), and even commands love of one's enemies (Mt. 5:43–48; Lk. 6:27–36). In John's Gospel, it is recorded in this passage as a new commandment, given on his own authority, to love one another. Love in John's Gospel reflects the love of God for all people. There was an encouraging message for the early Johannine community to find comfort in the solidarity of a loving community amid trials and persecution. God's universal love is realized in communities of faith, but it is not an individualistic personal blessing. Disciples of Jesus Christ are called beyond being "nice people" to being the bearers of God's love for the world as revealed in Christ.

- What is the difference between "loving God and loving neighbor" and the new commandment to "love one another"?
- How is loving those who are closer to us more difficult than loving people (neighbors) in general?
- What is the deeper understanding of "bearing God's love for the world as revealed in Christ" which goes beyond a Christian "being nice"?
- How have you seen the transforming effects of Christ's mission through loving relationships in your life? Your congregation? Your community?

- Where do you see the need for a deeper understanding and application of "love one another" in your congregation or community?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The commandment to love one another has implications for us as disciples and for our church community. It is expressed through various parts of Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs. Discuss the selected features from Community of Christ identity and beliefs (below) with the questions that follow. You may choose to do so as a group, or you may assign to smaller groups or pairs to discuss and share with the group.

Community of Christ Name and Mission Statement

We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.

Enduring Principle, Worth of All Persons

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

Right Relationships

Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b

Faithful Disagreement

Faithful disagreement is defined as actions and/or responses by a person holding a different view about a specific policy, belief, principle, or other position of Community of Christ. This disagreement with a Community of Christ position or direction is helpful, responsible, faithful, and bounded by loyalty and

commitment to the identity, mission, message, and beliefs of Community of Christ. A person who faithfully disagrees is welcome to share about the church position with which she or he disagrees. The intent of the sharing is to improve the overall faithful response of the church to God's intended direction without classifying others as unfaithful.

- How does this belief express the commandment to love one another?
- What is the challenge to disciples through this belief? The church community?
- Where do you see evidence of disciples living this belief? How is it making a difference in the lives of others or in the church community?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Read the verses of "The Church of Christ Cannot Be Bound" CCS 347 and discuss how the text explains the commandment to love one another.

- What is the challenge to individual disciples?
- What is the challenge to the church community?

Prayerfully consider your personal commitment to living the commandment to "love one another."

- What personal relationships will be affected by your commitment in the coming week, month, or year?
- How will living this commandment shape you in new ways as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Offer a prayer of blessing for the commitments of each person to bear God's love to the world and love one another.

LESSON 25 RESPONSE SHEET

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

19 May 2019

John 13:31–35 NRSV

³¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Community of Christ Mission Statement

We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.

Worth of All Persons

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

Right Relationships

Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b

Faithful Disagreement

Faithful disagreement is defined as actions and/or responses by a person holding a different view about a specific policy, belief, principle, or other position of Community of Christ. This disagreement with a Community of Christ position or direction is helpful, responsible, faithful, and bounded by loyalty and commitment to the identity, mission, message, and beliefs of Community of Christ. A person who faithfully

disagrees is welcome to share about the church position with which she or he disagrees. The intent of the sharing is to improve the overall faithful response of the church to God’s intended direction without classifying others as unfaithful.

- How does this belief express the commandment to love one another?

- What is the challenge to disciples through this belief? The church community?

- Where do you see evidence of disciples living this belief? How is it making a difference in the lives of others or in the church community?

Prayerfully consider your personal commitment to living the commandment to “love one another.”

- What personal relationships will be impacted by your commitment in the coming week, month, or year?
- How will living this commandment shape you in new ways as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LESSON 26
26 May 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: John 14:23–29

Lesson Focus: Jesus promises the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on personal and community experiences of the Holy Spirit.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- explore the Enduring Principle of Continuing Revelation and recent words of counsel.
- consider Jesus' message of comfort and encouragement to individuals and the church today.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 14:23–29 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Share with the group, or with another, your response to one of the following:

- How have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life?
- How have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in community?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus scripture passage from John is a farewell speech from Jesus to his followers. Farewell speeches of well-known people were common literary forms in the ancient world. Examples of farewell speeches in the Bible include these: Jacob (Genesis 49), Joshua (Joshua 23–24), Moses (Book of Deuteronomy), David (1 Chronicles 28–29), and Paul (Acts 20:17–28).

Read John 14:23–29 and discuss the following as a large group or in smaller groups of two or three.

In the fourteenth chapter of John, Jesus offers three promises:

1. His followers will not be abandoned but will have the presence of the Holy Spirit to comfort, encourage, and guide.
2. Jesus will return, which reconnects us with appearances of the resurrected Jesus.
3. The promise of divine peace. Rather than an absence of conflict (the peace the world gives), Christ's peace includes wholeness, justice, and right relationships amid the struggles of life.

With all scripture, it is important to consider the layers of meaning in a particular passage. For example, this passage includes the message of Jesus to his followers, the message of the author of John's Gospel to the first-century community, and the message to readers today. Consider responses to the following questions based on the various audiences and layers of meaning in this passage.

- The previous lesson focused on Jesus' commandment to love one another. In this passage, how is the commandment reinforced for Jesus' followers? For the first-century followers? For disciples today?
- What is the meaning of Jesus' statement, "If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father...?"
- How does Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit connect with his promise to return?
- How would you explain to a new disciple the idea of Jesus returning? How has your idea changed or remained the same?
- How does the term "Advocate" affirm or change your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
- How would you describe the Holy Spirit to a new disciple?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

God's revelation in Jesus Christ and continuing presence through the Holy Spirit, as proclaimed by scripture, is the foundation of our faith, identity, mission, message, and beliefs (*Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, p. 12).

Community of Christ embraces the Enduring Principle of Continuing Revelation. It is most often associated

with Community of Christ's open canon of scripture. Embracing Continuing Revelation challenges us to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in discovering divine truth and God's will for us as individuals and as sacred community. Considering this Enduring Principle through the lens of today's passage from John's Gospel allows for deeper understanding and application. Discuss the following questions focusing on each description of Continuing Revelation. You may choose to assign one description to different small groups or pairs to discuss and share with the larger group.

- How does the description connect with Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit?
- How does the description connect with Jesus' promise to return?
- How does the description connect with Jesus' promise of divine peace?

Continuing Revelation

- Scripture is an inspired and indispensable witness of human response to God's revelation of divine nature.
- God graciously reveals divine will today as in the past.
- The Holy Spirit inspires and provides witness to divine truth.
- In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God's will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Prayerfully consider the invitation to you through today's scripture passage. Consider the following questions as part of your daily spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

- What is Jesus' message of comfort, encouragement, or challenge to you today?
- What is the invitation to your congregation? To the church?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read John 14:27 as a prayer of blessing to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 26 RESPONSE SHEET

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

26 May 2019

John 14:23–29 NRSV

²³Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

God’s revelation in Jesus Christ and continuing presence through the Holy Spirit, as proclaimed by scripture, is the foundation of our faith, identity, mission, message, and beliefs (*Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition, p. 12).

Continuing Revelation

- Scripture is an inspired and indispensable witness of human response to God’s revelation of divine nature.
- God graciously reveals divine will today as in the past.
- The Holy Spirit inspires and provides witness to divine truth.
- In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God’s will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

Prayerfully consider the invitation to you through today’s scripture passage. Consider the following questions as part of your daily spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

What is Jesus’ message of comfort, encouragement, or challenge to you today?

What is the invitation to your congregation? To the church?

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER—ASCENSION OF THE LORD

LESSON 27
2 June 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 24:44–53/24:43–52 IV

Lesson Focus: Christ is proclaimed through the sacred story in scripture and by the church.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on past, present, and future experiences with the risen Christ.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- explore Community of Christ affirmations of scripture and connections to the focus passage.
- discover Christ's call through the sacred story of individuals and community.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-3rd-edition.pdf (optional)

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 24:44–53 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

In the weeks of Easter, we have focused on scripture passages from John's Gospel. Today, we return to the final passage of Luke's Gospel which culminates with

the Lord's ascension. Spend a few moments reflecting on your journey of discipleship and respond to one of the following as a large group, in small groups of two or three, or on response sheets.

- How has the risen Christ been revealed to you in the past?
- How is the risen Christ revealed to you in the present?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 24:44–53.

The closing passage of Luke’s Gospel affirms the message found throughout the book: Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Israel. The Gospel closes with the risen Christ commissioning his disciples to bear the good news of what God has done in Christ to the world. The community of Jesus’ disciples is called to be more than a support group for personal salvation and spirituality. It is called to continue Christ’s mission in the world. The closing passage connects the past (Israel), the present (Jesus), and the future (the church), which is a foundational message for the author of Luke-Acts.

The disciples’ response to Jesus’ death included fear, loss, and misgiving. In this passage, after the resurrected Jesus blessed and commissioned the disciples and after the Ascension, the disciples respond in joy and blessing. The Greek word “bless” means “to speak well of.” Jesus speaks well of his disciples, who in turn speak well of God. We are called to “speak well of” God by the way we live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Respond to the following questions as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

- What traditions (congregation, church, or broader Christian tradition) “speak well of” the nature of God revealed in Jesus Christ?
- In what ways have you seen the Christian message represented in ways that did not “speak well of” God?
- Luke’s author records that Jesus opened the minds of the disciples to understand the scriptures. How has your mind been opened to scripture?
- What was Jesus revealing to the disciples about scripture in this passage?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Today’s passage reveals an important understanding of scripture. This understanding is found in Community of Christ affirmations about scripture in *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition www.CofChrist.org

</common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-3rd-edition.pdf>. They reflect and expand our understanding of the Enduring Principle of Continuing Revelation. **Note to instructor:** If possible, provide copies of “Scripture in Community of Christ” from pp. 25–26 of *Sharing in Community of Christ*. If time allows, read each affirmation and consider how it connects with today’s passage.

Read and discuss the Preamble and following Affirmations of Scripture in Community of Christ.

Preamble

Scripture provides divine guidance and inspired insight for life when responsibly interpreted and faithfully applied. Scripture helps us believe in Jesus Christ. Its witness guides us to eternal life and enables us to grow spiritually, to transform our lives, and to participate actively in the life and ministry of the church.

Affirmation One

We declare that Jesus Christ—who lived, was crucified, was raised from the dead, and comes again—is the Living Word of God. It is to Christ that scripture points. It is through Christ that we have life (John 5:39–40). It is Christ whom we must hear (Mark 9:7).

Affirmation Two

We find the Living Word in and through scripture. Scripture is the indispensable witness of the saving, transforming message that God has entrusted to the church. The church formed the canon of scripture so that it might always have a way to hear the good news, nurture its faith, measure its life, test its experience, and remember its identity.

- How does each affirmation reflect “Jesus opening minds of disciples” to understand scripture?
- How is the author of Luke’s message that Jesus is the fulfillment of scripture reflected in each affirmation?
- What is important for us to understand about interpreting scripture?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

We Share a Sacred Story

The sacred story is the unfolding drama of God’s reconciling work in the world. This story reveals God as

the One who calls humanity into relationship and seeks the well-being of all creation. This revelation, first made known in the books of the Hebrew Bible, continues in the New Testament with the coming of Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God. This library of books called the Bible roots the church in the sacred story and nurtures and informs Community of Christ's faith, identity, and mission to the world.

The story of God's transforming work in the world did not end with the testimony of the biblical writers. It continued in the life and witness of the whole Christian church, as well as in other places. The sacred story is the all-encompassing saga of God's redeeming action in the world. Generations of Christian followers have written new chapters to this continuing story. The sacred story, as found in scripture and in the larger Christian tradition, anchors and nurtures our understanding of ourselves and our call. Our unique identity includes claiming our place within the wide circle of those who in every time and place have called on the Lord Jesus Christ. With them, we continue to write new chapters

to the old, old story of Jesus and his love (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, pp. 10-11).

Prayerfully consider your response to the following. Reflect on these questions as part of your daily spiritual practice in the coming week.

- How have you been shaped by the sacred story of Jesus and his love?
- How are you being called to continue the sacred story in your life as a disciple? In your congregation? In your community?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "God, Whose Grace Redeems Our Story" CCS 570 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 27 RESPONSE SHEET

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER— ASCENSION OF THE LORD

2 June 2019

Luke 24:44–53 NRSV

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Scripture in Community of Christ

Preamble

Scripture provides divine guidance and inspired insight for life when responsibly interpreted and faithfully applied. Scripture helps us believe in Jesus Christ. Its witness guides us to eternal life and enables us to grow spiritually, to transform our lives, and to participate actively in the life and ministry of the church.

Affirmation One

We declare that Jesus Christ—who lived, was crucified, was raised from the dead, and comes again—is the Living Word of God. It is to Christ that scripture points. It is through Christ that we have life (John 5:39-40). It is Christ whom we must hear (Mark 9:7).

Affirmation Two

We find the Living Word in and through scripture. Scripture is the indispensable witness of the saving, transforming message that God has entrusted to the church. The church formed the canon of scripture so that it might always have a way to hear the good news, nurture its faith, measure its life, test its experience, and remember its identity.

We Share a Sacred Story

The sacred story is the unfolding drama of God’s reconciling work in the world. This story reveals God as the One who calls humanity into relationship and seeks the well-being of all creation. This revelation, first made known in the books of the Hebrew Bible, continues in the New Testament with the coming of Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God. This library of books called the Bible roots the church in the sacred story and nurtures and informs Community of Christ’s faith, identity, and mission to the world.

The story of God’s transforming work in the world did not end with the testimony of the biblical writers. It continued in the life and witness of the whole Christian church, as well as in other places. The sacred story is the all-encompassing saga of God’s redeeming action in the world. Generations of Christian followers have written new chapters to this continuing story. The sacred story, as found in scripture and in the larger Christian tradition, anchors and nurtures our understanding of ourselves and our call. Our unique identity includes claiming our place within the wide circle of those who in every time and place have called on the Lord Jesus Christ. With them, we continue to write new chapters to the old, old story of Jesus and his love (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, pp. 10–11).

Prayerfully consider your response to the following. Reflect on these questions as part of your daily spiritual practice in the coming week.

How have you been shaped by the sacred story of Jesus and his love?

How are you being called to continue the sacred story in your life as a disciple? In your congregation? In your community?

DAY OF PENTECOST: ENDOWMENT SUNDAY

LESSON 28

9 June 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Acts 2:1–21

Lesson Focus: The Holy Spirit strengthens the church for mission.

Objectives

The learners will...

- express personal understanding of the Holy Spirit through hymns.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and connections between Jesus Christ and the church through the Holy Spirit.
- explore Community of Christ understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Acts 2:1–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the Day of Pentecost in the Jewish tradition (celebrated fifty days after Passover) and the day recognized in the Christian tradition as Endowment Sunday (celebrated fifty days after Easter). It signifies the Holy Spirit’s endowment of the church. Hymns 42–50 in *Community of Christ Sings* provide expressions about the Holy Spirit. Invite individuals or small groups to select one of the hymns which expresses their

understanding of, or experience with, the Holy Spirit.

- What verse or phrase best expresses the Holy Spirit to you? Why?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

For the author of the two-volume work of Luke–Acts, the Holy Spirit is present in the life and work of Jesus

in Luke and the church in Acts. “The promise of John the Baptist in Luke 3:16 that people would be baptized by the Holy Spirit and by fire, is fulfilled in today’s text. The Spirit that descended on Jesus (Luke 3:22) now descends on the disciples giving power to the church. Just as Jesus began his ministry filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples are beginning their ministry filled with the Spirit” (“Exploring the Scripture” for Acts 2:1–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*).

Read Acts 2:1–21 and discuss the following questions as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

- The Holy Spirit is described as a rush of wind (from the same word as spirit and breath) and tongues of fire (representing divine energy). How have you experienced the Holy Spirit as “breath” or divine energy? How would you describe the Holy Spirit?
- Describe an experience when you were filled with the Holy Spirit.
- In this passage, all who were present could understand the experience of the Holy Spirit in their own way. Some who were skeptical thought those speaking in different languages were drunk. When has the Holy Spirit disrupted your life? Your congregation? The church?
- Peter’s proclamation to the crowd in this passage was the first public Christian witness. When have you witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of another?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Divide the group into three small groups or pairs. Have each group or pair discuss one of the following passages using the questions which follow. Share insights with the larger group.

- How is the Holy Spirit described through this passage?
 - What does the passage reveal about Community of Christ identity or beliefs?
 - What is the call to disciples through this passage?
1. “Community of Christ believes in the Holy Spirit. We experience the Spirit’s revealing, redeeming,

restoring, renewing presence in our midst. The Spirit, who through the prophets called Israel to walk justly, is calling us to the same path today. The Spirit poured out on Jesus is calling us in his name to make real today God’s vision of the world that will be” (Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, *Understanding the Way*, Revised Edition, pp. 39–40).

2. Put thy trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good; yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit (Doctrine and Covenants 10:6).
3. We believe in the Holy Spirit, Giver of Life, holy Wisdom, true God. The Spirit moves through and sustains creation; endows the church for mission; frees the world from sin, injustice, and death; and transforms disciples. Wherever we find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control, there the Holy Spirit is working (“We Share Basic Beliefs,” *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 14).

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

The Holy Spirit fulfills Jesus’ promise to his disciples that he will return and they will not be abandoned. We are to hear the same promise of comfort and challenge today. Prayerfully consider your response to the following. Make these questions part of your daily spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

Like a rushing wind, the Holy Spirit is challenging me to engage in Christ’s mission by...

The Holy Spirit is breathing new life in me by...

I see the Holy Spirit at work in my congregation or community when...

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Invite class members to read the phrase or verse from their selected hymns (in the Gather section) to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 28 RESPONSE SHEET

DAY OF PENTECOST: ENDOWMENT SUNDAY

9 June 2019

Acts 2:1–21 NRSV

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and

your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall see dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

"Community of Christ believes in the Holy Spirit. We experience the Spirit's revealing, redeeming, restoring, renewing presence in our midst. The Spirit, who through the prophets called Israel to walk justly, is calling us to the same path today. The Spirit poured out on Jesus is calling us in his name to make real today God's vision of the world that will be" (Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, *Understanding the Way*, Revised Edition, pp. 39–40).

Put thy trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good; yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit (Doctrine and Covenants 10:6).

We believe in the Holy Spirit, Giver of Life, holy Wisdom, true God. The Spirit moves through and sustains creation; endows the church for mission; frees the world from sin, injustice, and death; and transforms disciples. Wherever we find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control, there the Holy Spirit is working ("We Share Basic Beliefs," *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 14).

The Holy Spirit fulfills Jesus' promise to his disciples that he will return and they will not be abandoned. We are to hear the same promise of comfort and challenge today. Prayerfully consider your response to the following. Make these questions part of your daily spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

Like a rushing wind, the Holy Spirit is challenging me to engage in Christ's mission by...

The Holy Spirit is breathing new life in me by...

I see the Holy Spirit at work in my congregation or community when...

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: TRINITY SUNDAY

LESSON 29

16 June 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: John 16:12–15

Lesson Focus: We are guided by the Holy Spirit.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on different descriptions of the Triune God.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and the significance of the Trinity.
- explore Community of Christ understanding of Trinity through hymns.
- write a prayer addressing the Triune God.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 16:12–15 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

In the Christian liturgical calendar, today is the first Sunday after Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. It invites us to reflect on what it means to believe in the Trinity or Triune God.

We believe in one living God who meets us in the testimony of Israel, is revealed in Jesus Christ, and

moves through all creation as the Holy Spirit. We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons. All things that exist owe their being to God: mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination. This God alone is worthy of our worship (“We Share Basic Beliefs,” *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 14).

Share your response to one of the following questions in a large group or in small groups of two or three. **Note to instructor:** the Trinity is a complex theological idea. Encourage all to respond however they are comfortable. Accept all responses without discussion.

The following have been used to describe the Trinity or Triune God:

Father, Son, Holy Spirit
God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit
Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer
Lover, Beloved, Power of Love
Giver, Gift, Giving

- With which description do you most closely connect? Why?
- How would you describe the Trinity to a new disciple? How has it been described to you?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read John 16:12–15 as a practice of Dwelling in the Word. Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God; it is to Christ that scripture points. After the passage is read the first time, pause for a moment allowing the words to fill your mind. After the passage is read the second time, pay attention to the invitation you hear through the text. Circle the words or phrases to which your mind is drawn. Share these with another or with the larger group.

In this passage we hear again Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit to guide his disciples. While there is more he wanted to teach them, he showed compassion for them knowing they were overwhelmed by what he had already revealed about his departure. The author of John's Gospel uses *Spirit of truth* and the verb *guide* (meaning *lead in the way*) to highlight Christ's promise of continuing revelation for all generations of disciples. The author also affirms that the Spirit of truth comes from the Father and the Son and expresses the nature of God as loving relationship.

Discuss the following questions as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

- What was the message of hope in this passage for Jesus' disciples? What is the message of hope for disciples today?
- How does the Triune God reveal both unity and diversity?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Many Christians use the term *Trinity* to describe God. Early Christian ministers and scholars developed the idea of Trinity. They studied, discussed, and wrote during

the first 500 years after Christ's resurrection. During this time people had different ideas about God's nature, some of which were not compatible with each other. The primary question had to do with the relationships among God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Many volumes have been written on this question. Finally, God is "mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination" (Basic Beliefs of Community of Christ). However, it is helpful to speak of God as *Trinity* or *Triune God*. When we use these terms we mean that God is a community of three persons and one eternal being. When we use the word *person*, we do not mean *individual* like we do when we talk about humans. We mean the ways in which God's being or self is revealed. God is revealed as God the Father (Eternal, Heavenly Parent), God the Son (Jesus Christ—God's being in the flesh), and God the Holy Spirit (God's personal, enduring presence) (*Of Water and Spirit*).

The following hymns from *Community of Christ Sings* express the nature of God as Trinity. Discuss how each hymn expresses the triune nature of God and connects with the focus scripture passage. You may choose to do this as a full group or in small groups of two or three. Pay attention to rare insights and discoveries within the group.

"God of Dawn, Each Day's Renewal" CCS 51

"The Play of the Godhead" CCS 56

"Praise with Joy the World's Creator" CCS 57

"God of Still Waiting" CCS 58

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Write a brief prayer reflecting your understanding of the Trinity. You may use descriptions from the Gather section, from one of the hymns, or your own choice of metaphor. **Note to instructor:** the following example is the fourth verse of CCS 58. You may choose to create your own example before this lesson to share with the group.

Word true and faithful, hope-bringing Spirit, God of enfolding love: come in your fullness and grace; work through our lives for your praise.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Invite someone to close with the prayer he or she has written, or read a verse from one of the above hymns to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 29 RESPONSE SHEET

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST— TRINITY SUNDAY

16 June 2019

John 16:12–15 NRSV

¹²"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

We believe in one living God who meets us in the testimony of Israel, is revealed in Jesus Christ, and moves through all creation as the Holy Spirit. We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons. All things that exist owe their being to God: mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination. This God alone is worthy of our worship (“We Share Basic Beliefs,” *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 14).

The following have been used to describe the Trinity or Triune God:

Father, Son, Holy Spirit
God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit
Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer
Lover, Beloved, Power of Love
Giver, Gift, Giving

Many Christians use the term *Trinity* to describe God. Early Christian ministers and scholars developed the idea of Trinity. They studied, discussed, and wrote during the first 500 years after Christ’s resurrection. During this time people had different ideas about God’s nature, some of which were not compatible with each other. The primary question had to do with the relationships among God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Many volumes have been written on this question. Finally, God is “mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination” (Basic Beliefs of Community of Christ). However, it is helpful to speak of God as *Trinity* or *Triune God*. When we use these terms we mean that God is a community of three persons and one eternal being. When we use the word *person*, we do not mean *individual* like we do when we talk about humans. We mean the ways in which God’s being or self is revealed. God is revealed as God the Father (Eternal, Heavenly Parent), God the Son (Jesus Christ—God’s being in the flesh), and God the Holy Spirit (God’s personal, abiding presence) (*Of Water and Spirit*).

Write a brief prayer reflecting your understanding of the Trinity. You may use descriptions from the Gather section, from one of the hymns, or your own choice of metaphor. The following example is the fourth verse of CCS 58.

Word true and faithful, hope-bringing Spirit, God of enfolding love: come in your fullness and grace; work through our lives for your praise. Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 7)

LESSON 30

23 June 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 8:26–39/8:26–40 IV

Lesson Focus: Jesus restores broken lives.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider conditions which lessen the worth of persons.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- explore pathways for healing through the compassionate mission of Christ.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Large flip chart or dry erase surface and markers
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 8:26–39 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 92.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today’s focus passage tells of Jesus healing a man controlled by demons. Make a list of “demons” which bind individuals or groups (addictions or conditions of extreme poverty, for example) and lessen their worth and inclusion in the community. (Note: You may choose to

have individuals make lists on the back of their response sheets or scrap paper and then share responses with the larger group. This allows opportunity to consider their perspectives individually before hearing the responses of others.) Write responses from the group on a large writing surface to remain visible throughout the lesson.

Invite someone to offer a prayer for conditions which separate individuals and groups from the community and for courage to offer the healing peace of Jesus Christ where lives are broken.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 8:26–39 and the following commentary. Discuss the questions which follow as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

The use of language about Satan and demons found in the New Testament is a way of expressing an understanding of evil as a transcendent power. It is used mainly in two ways: (1) evil as cosmic power and (2) evil as demon possession of individuals. People of the ancient world often credited evil spirits to various mental and physical illnesses. Luke's post-resurrection audience understood Jesus' act of casting out demons through an eschatological (see box below) understanding of Christ conquering evil. While modern readers have a different scientific worldview than first-century readers and hearers, human beings in every age must confront the powers of evil at work in their lives and in the world. Stories of Jesus casting out demons must not be dismissed as lacking scientific explanation, nor taken as absolute literalism. They must be responsibly interpreted and faithfully applied to help us understand and actively engage in the compassionate ministry of Jesus Christ.

- What were the conditions of the man controlled by demons that kept him separated from his community? (naked, homeless, ritually unclean, out of control, loss of personal identity)
- In v. 28 the demons recognize the divinity of Jesus as the Son of God and plead not to be sent to the abyss (depth of gloom and darkness where demonic powers are confined by God). In what ways is Jesus' response to their pleas surprising?
- What does Jesus' response suggest about the nature of God and the worth of persons?
- What is the crowd's response to Jesus casting the demons into the swine?
- How is salvation understood through this passage?

Eschatology (Gr. *eschatos*, "last" and *logos*, "study") Study of "last things" or the end of the world. Theological factors include the second coming of Jesus Christ and the last judgment ("eschatology," Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2nd Edition, pp. 105–106).

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Consider the list of "demons" created during the Gather portion of this class session and read the following:

Sin is the universal condition of separation and alienation from God and one another ("Sin," *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 15).

The gospel is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ: forgiveness of sin and healing from separation, brokenness, and the power of violence and death. This healing is for individuals, human societies, and all of creation ("Salvation," *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 15).

As disciples of Christ, we are all called to conform our lives to his by living in loving community with others, seeing Jesus in the faces of the least of God's children, and serving those whom the world has forgotten ("We Proclaim Jesus Christ," *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 23).

Arrange the group in smaller groups of two or three. Assign or have each group select one "demon" from the group list and discuss the following. Share insights with the larger group.

- How does the "demon" cause or represent separation from God? From others?
- In what ways is the separation a result of human choice?
- In what ways is the separation a condition of society beyond individual control?
- What is the community's response to this condition?
- How does living the Mission Initiative of Invite People to Christ offer a pathway to healing regarding this condition?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

When the community learned the man controlled by demons was healed, they responded in fear. What was it about Jesus that left them speechless? Perhaps it resulted from the loss of livestock and resources, or perhaps they did not believe the man could be healed

and were hesitant to welcome him back into the community. Their response causes us to consider our own response to the transforming power of Christ to restore broken lives. Prayerfully consider your response to the following, and make this part of your daily spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

Whom can I invite to experience the transforming power of Christ's peace?

How can our congregation or community embrace those who are separated from God and others?

How can I speak out against conditions which lessen the worth of persons?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing selected verses from "Come and Bring Light" CCS 287 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 30 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 7)

23 June 2019

Luke 8:26–39 NRSV

²⁶Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"—²⁹for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) ³⁰Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

³²Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed.

Sin is the universal condition of separation and alienation from God and one another ("Sin," *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 15).

The gospel is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ: forgiveness of sin and healing from separation, brokenness, and the power of violence and death. This healing is for individuals, human societies, and all of creation ("Salvation," *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 15).

As disciples of Christ, we are all called to conform our lives to his by living in loving community with others, seeing Jesus in the faces of the least of God's children,

and serving those whom the world has forgotten ("We Proclaim Jesus Christ," *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 23).

- How does the "demon" cause or represent separation from God? From others?
- In what ways is the separation a result of human choice?
- In what ways is the separation a condition of society beyond individual control?
- What is the community's response to this condition?
- How does living the Mission Initiative of Invite People to Christ offer a pathway to healing about this condition?

When the community learned that the man who had been controlled by demons was healed, they responded in fear. What was it about Jesus that left them speechless? Perhaps it resulted from the loss of livestock and resources, or perhaps they did not believe the man could be healed and were hesitant to welcome him back into the community. Their response causes us to consider our own response to the transforming power of Christ to restore broken lives. Prayerfully consider your response to the following, and make this part of your daily spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

Whom can I invite to experience the transforming power of Christ's peace?

How can our congregation or community embrace those who are separated from God and others?

How can I speak out against conditions which lessen the worth of persons?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 8)

LESSON 31

30 June 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 9:51–62

Lesson Focus: Jesus Christ calls disciples to proclaim God's kingdom as the highest priority.

Objectives

The learners will...

- gather with a practice of centering in God the Source.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and the challenge to disciples of Jesus Christ.
- make a personal commitment to living the mission of Jesus Christ in new ways.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Equipment for projecting "The Long Journey" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJnyY6jA6bs&feature=youtu.be> (optional)
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 9:51–62 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 93.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Show the video "The Long Journey" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJnyY6jA6bs&feature=youtu.be> as a way of centering in God the Source of being.

If it is not possible to show the video, spend a few moments centering on the following prayer statement:

Source of all Being, open me to new ways of living your mission.

Offer a prayer of invitation for this time of learning and sharing.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 9:51–62 and discuss the following as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

“...he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

The author of Luke follows the outline of Mark’s Gospel, his primary source material, which includes Jesus’ Galilean ministry (Mark 1–9), his transitional journey to Jerusalem (Mark 10), and the passion story in Jerusalem (Mark 11–16). Luke significantly expands the story of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9–19), which is known as the Travel Narrative. Luke highlights the cost of discipleship in following Jesus as The Way.

- How do you understand discipleship as a journey?
- In what ways have you experienced the cost of discipleship?
- How has this been joyful? How has it been challenging?

Luke’s first reference to Samaritans is found in today’s passage. While the Samaritans and Jews shared a common history and ethnicity, they differed in religious practices and harbored racial and national prejudices. Jesus wanted to associate with the Samaritans, but they did not receive him. This could be because he was traveling to Jerusalem, the site of the Jewish temple, and did not recognize their temple on Mt. Gerazim. The disciples wanted to bring destruction to the Samaritans in the manner of Elijah (see 1 Kings 18:20–40) because the Samaritans would not receive Jesus’ ministry. Jesus rebuked them and followed the way of peace.

- How does the example of Samaritans rejecting Jesus reflect the challenge of discipleship?
- Where do you see examples of conflict resulting from different religious beliefs and practices in your community? In the world?
- Where do you see examples of interfaith ministry in your community? In the world?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.

The scenarios in vv. 57–62 highlight the radical nature of discipleship. “Son of Man” can simply mean human being, but in v. 58 it symbolizes the rejected Christ. Jewish tradition upheld the sacred nature of burying the dead from the Old Testament, as well as respect of parents. Jesus’ response in v. 60 is meant to be shocking and disruptive to priorities of tradition that interfere with proclaiming the kingdom of God. In v. 62 Jesus makes reference to Elijah (see 1 Kings 19:19–21) and the need to align one’s life and priorities to focus on what matters most.

- What have you witnessed or experienced as a radical change in a person or community to align priorities with the mission of Jesus Christ?
- What radical changes have taken place in the church to align priorities with the mission of Jesus Christ?
- What radical change would allow your congregation to more boldly proclaim and live the mission of Jesus Christ?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

I will follow you wherever you go, but...

Does Jesus expect us to be homeless and neglect the needs of our families to be his disciples? Or does this passage expose barriers that keep us from fully living the mission of Jesus Christ? Proclaiming Jesus Christ is a verbal act, but how do we live differently as we are engaged in Christ’s mission?

Prayerfully consider the questions above and consider your personal commitment to responding radically and living differently as a disciple of Jesus Christ. As time allows, write or draw your personal commitment on the response sheet or scrap paper. Share your commitment with someone who will journey with you as you live your commitment.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Offer a prayer of blessing for the ways God is leading individuals and the church in the radically inclusive and compassionate mission of Jesus Christ.

LESSON 31 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 8)

30 June 2019

Luke 9:51–62 NRSV

⁵¹When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵²And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; ⁵³but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶Then they went on to another village.

⁵⁷As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." ⁵⁹To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ⁶⁰But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." ⁶²Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

I commit to living the mission of Jesus Christ in the coming month by...

I commit to living the mission of Jesus Christ in the coming year by...

I will follow you wherever you go, but...

Does Jesus expect us to be homeless and neglect the needs of our families to be his disciples? Or does this passage expose barriers that keep us from fully living the mission of Jesus Christ? Proclaiming Jesus Christ is a verbal act, but how do we live differently as we are engaged in Christ's mission?

Prayerfully consider the questions above and consider your personal commitment to responding radically and living differently as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Share your commitment with someone who will journey with you as you live your commitment.

I commit to living the mission of Jesus Christ in the coming week by...

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 9)

LESSON 32
7 July 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 10:1–11, 16–20/10:1–11, 17–21 IV

Lesson Focus: The work of preparing the world for Christ belongs to all disciples.

Objectives

The learners will...

- prayerfully reflect on the focus scripture passage.
- discuss the focus passage and its instructions about the mission of Jesus Christ.
- consider challenges and opportunities of relational mission.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Equipment for projecting “Mission Is Relational” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7iiSA2uReM&feature=youtu.be>
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 10:1–11, 16–20/10:1–11, 17–21 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 94.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Dwelling in the Word

When using the practice of Dwelling in the Word, it is important to uphold the following affirmation

from “Scripture in Community of Christ” (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 25).

We declare that Jesus Christ—who lived, was crucified, was raised from the dead, and comes again—is the Living Word of God. It is to Christ that scripture points. It is through Christ that we have life (John 5:39–40). It is Christ whom we must hear (Mark 9:7).

Sit in a comfortable position, breathe deeply, and center yourself in God's peace. As Luke 10:1–11, 16–20 is read aloud, let the words wash over you and fill your mind. Spend a few moments in silent reflection. As the passage is read a second time, respond to the following questions on the response sheet or in small groups of two or three.

- What words or phrases capture your attention in this passage? Why?
- What does this passage say to you about the mission of Jesus Christ?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read and discuss the following as a large group, or in smaller groups of two or three.

Jesus Issues a Plan of Ministry

The passage in Luke 10 is the second of Luke's commissioning scenes (see 9:1–6). The number 70 (72 in some manuscripts) reflects the list of nations in Genesis 10 and symbolizes the call to proclaim the kingdom of God in all nations. Jesus' instructions to the Twelve and the seventy look forward to the later mission of the church in Acts.

- How is Jesus' plan of ministry reflected in the ministry of disciples and priesthood in your congregation? In Community of Christ?

All Are Called to Respond

The use of the harvest has eschatological (see definition in Lesson 30) symbolism of the final gathering when the wheat is separated from the chaff. The imagery of the plentiful harvest with few laborers suggests all disciples are charged with the mission of Jesus Christ.

- How would you describe the "plentiful harvest" in your community?

Mission Is Relational

Instructions to go without sandals or supplies reflect solidarity with the poor as well as the importance of receiving the hospitality of others. There is also a sense of urgency reflected in responding without the barrier of self-concern. Relational mission is highlighted through table ministry, healing ministry, and proclaiming the kingdom of God which is present in the life of Jesus.

- What cultural traditions support or challenge relational mission in your community?

There Will Be Challenges

The passage points out challenges inherent in proclaiming the mission of Jesus Christ to all nations (particularly to the Gentiles in this passage). Jesus stresses the importance of receiving hospitality, even when it contradicts cultural traditions. Ministry cannot be forced on an individual or community. When it is rejected, it is best to leave it to God and move on.

- What traditions make it difficult to engage in mission outside your congregation or community?

Joy in Proclaiming the Kingdom of God

The disciples experience joy when engaging in the compassionate, healing mission of Jesus Christ. Proclaiming the kingdom of God is not a burdensome task. It is a way of being and living the blessings of Christ-like community.

- How have you experienced joy when engaging in Christ's mission?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Show the video "Mission Is Relational" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7iiSA2uReM&feature=youtu.be> and discuss the questions which follow.

- How is a "transactional relationship" depicted in this video?
- What are examples of "transactional relationships" in your congregation or in your community?
- How does relational mission, as pointed out in the video, change your idea about mission and congregational life?
- What connections can be made between the video and today's focus passage?

OR

Read the verses of "For Everyone Born" CCS 285 and discuss the questions which follow.

- In what ways does this hymn reflect the importance of relational mission?
- How does this hymn challenge your idea of congregational life?

- What phrases or verses present the greatest challenge to relational mission?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Opportunities Abound!

“Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them” (words of counsel presented at World Conference 2013).

Prayerfully consider to whom (in your life, community, or world) you are being called to share the peace of Jesus Christ. Be aware of opportunities each day for

you to engage in relational mission. During the coming week, record (on the response sheet or in a journal) those opportunities, how you engaged in relational mission, and the response of the person(s) with whom you shared Christ’s peace.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Close with the mission prayer:

God, where will your Spirit lead today?

Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.

Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen.

LESSON 32 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 9)

7 July 2019

Luke 10:1–11, 16–20 NRSV

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ²He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'

¹⁶"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects the one who sent me." ¹⁷The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" ¹⁸He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Dwelling in the Word

When using the practice of Dwelling in the Word, it is important to uphold the following affirmation from "Scripture in Community of Christ," *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 25.

We declare that Jesus Christ—who lived, was crucified, was raised from the dead, and comes again—is the Living Word of God. It is to Christ that scripture points. It is through Christ that we have life (John 5:39–40). It is Christ whom we must hear (Mark 9:7).

Sit in a comfortable position, breathe deeply, and center yourself in God's peace. As Luke 10:1–11, 16–20 is read aloud, let the words wash over you and fill your mind. Spend a few moments in silent reflection. As the passage is read a second time, respond to the following questions:

- What words or phrases capture your attention in this passage? Why?

- What does this passage say to you about the mission of Jesus Christ?

Opportunities Abound!

"Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them" (words of counsel presented at World Conference 2013).

Prayerfully consider to whom (in your life, community, or world) you are being called to share the peace of Jesus Christ. Be aware of opportunities each day for you to engage in relational mission. During the coming week, record those opportunities, how you engaged in relational mission, and the response of the person(s) with whom you shared Christ's peace.

<u>Opportunity</u>	<u>Response</u>
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Day 1:

Day 2:

Day 3:

Day 4:

Day 5:

Day 6:

Day 7:

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 10)

LESSON 33
14 July 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 10:25–37/10:26–38 IV

Lesson Focus: Disciples practice love for others on the journey toward abundant life.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider personal responses to the story of the Good Samaritan.
- compare features of the setting in Luke’s passage and a similar setting in Mark.
- explore why the focus passage is significant for us as disciples today.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Large paper or dry erase surface and markers (optional)
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 10:25–37/10:26–38 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 95–96.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today’s focus scripture passage includes the story of the Good Samaritan. It is one of the most familiar scripture passages to Christians of all ages and is often

recognized in civil laws of some countries that protect those who aid strangers.

Ask participants what comes to mind when they think of the story of the Good Samaritan. Record responses on a large paper or dry erase surface to be seen throughout the class session.

Offer a prayer for openness to the ways God is leading all disciples to practice love for others.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 10:25–37.

The story of the Good Samaritan is only in Luke’s Gospel. Verses 25–28 provide a setting for the story, which is similar to what is found in Mark 12:28–34. Compare the two settings and discuss the likenesses, differences, and significance of the following features. (Note to instructor: You may choose to assign each feature to a smaller group or pair to discuss and share responses with the larger group.)

- Placement within the each account: Mark (Passion Week—Jesus as suffering servant); Luke (Travel Narrative—Jesus as The Way)
- People involved in conversation: Mark (Jesus and scribe); Luke (Jesus and lawyer)
- Question posed to Jesus: Mark (“Which commandment is the first of all?”); Luke (“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”)
- Jesus’ response: Mark (“You are not far from the kingdom of God.”); Luke (“...do this and you will live.”)

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Who Is My Neighbor?

The lawyer’s follow-up question to Jesus’ response is a question disciples of all generations must consider. When Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan in response to the lawyer’s question, he highlights the boundaries of culture and religion that keep us from responding to the needs of others.

- In your culture or community, what divides people?
- If you were to rewrite the story, who in your culture or community would represent the victim, the robbers, the Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan?
- When have you witnessed religion used as a barrier to meeting the needs of others?
- What does this passage reveal about treating the law as gospel and treating the gospel as law?

The Samaritan Acts

The Samaritan showed mercy without consideration for the boundaries of culture and religion. The number of verbs used in describing the Samaritan’s response highlights his extravagant care, as well as the significance of taking action for another in need.

- When have you witnessed the kind of extravagant hospitality displayed by the Samaritan in this passage?
- What ministries in your congregation await active response?
- What does the passage say to you (to your congregation, or to the church) about responding to the needs of others according to your true capacity?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

“Go and do likewise.” Jesus’ final statement to the lawyer serves as a call to action for all disciples.

Respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two or three, or on response sheets.

- Where do you find yourself in the text today?
- What barriers keep you from responding with your whole self (heart, soul, strength, and mind) to the needs of others?
- Who is your neighbor in need, and what action will you take toward that need in the coming week?

Prayerfully consider your personal commitment to practicing love of God and love of others.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing “When the Poor Ones” CCS 290 or “Bear Each Other’s Burdens” CCS 374 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 33 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 10)

14 July 2019

Luke 10:25–37 NRSV

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” ²⁷He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” ³⁷He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Who Is My Neighbor?

The lawyer’s follow-up question to Jesus’ response is a question disciples of all generations must consider. When Jesus uses the story of the Good Samaritan in response to the lawyer’s question, he highlights the boundaries of culture and religion that keep us from responding to the needs of others.

- In your culture or community, what divides people?
- If you were to rewrite the story, who in your culture or community would represent the victim, the robbers, the Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan?
- When have you witnessed religion used as a barrier to meeting the needs of others?

- What does this passage reveal about treating the law as gospel and treating the gospel as law?

The Samaritan Acts

The Samaritan showed mercy without consideration for the boundaries of culture and religion. The number of verbs used in describing the Samaritan’s response highlights his extravagant care, as well as the significance of taking action on behalf of another who is in need.

- When have you witnessed the extravagant hospitality displayed by the Samaritan in this passage?
- What ministries in your congregation await active response?
- What does the passage say to you (to your congregation, or to the church) about responding to the needs of others according to your true capacity?

“Go and do likewise.” Jesus’ final statement to the lawyer serves as a call to action for all disciples.

Where do you find yourself in the text today?

What barriers keep you from responding with your whole self (heart, soul, strength, and mind) to the needs of others?

Who is your neighbor in need, and what action will you take toward that need in the coming week?

Prayerfully consider your personal commitment to practicing love of God and love of others.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 11)

LESSON 34

21 July 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 10:38–42/10:39–43 IV

Lesson Focus: Disciples are challenged to know, be, and do that which brings the kingdom of God near.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider personal spirituality types.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- consider “what matters most” in congregational life.
- examine personal disciple practices.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Large, erasable writing surface and marker

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 10:38–42/10:39–43 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 97–98.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Arrange the group in smaller groups based on how they most identify with the following:

1. Head spirituality—intellectual “thinking” spirituality that favors what can be seen, touched, and vividly imagined (for example: scripture study, sermons, theological understanding)

2. Heart spirituality— affective, charismatic spirituality with the aim of achieving holiness of life (witnessing, testimony, music, transformation)
3. Mystic spirituality—union with the Holy; satisfied in the journey (nature, contemplation, introspection)
4. Kingdom spirituality—obey God and witness of God’s coming reign (intent on “doing,” passionate about transforming society)

Note: If the full group is small, you may choose to respond together rather than forming smaller groups.

Invite members of each group to share in response to the following questions:

- Why did you choose this spirituality type?
- With which spirituality are you least comfortable? Why?

The spirituality types are from *Discover Your Spiritual Type* (Corrine Ware, ISBN 9781566991490). Ware upholds Jesus, who practiced radical inclusivity, as the model for all types. Ware promotes understanding how we are the same, how we differ, and how we can enhance and enrich one another's spirituality. Embracing comprehensive disciple formation, we must be willing to move from what is most natural for us to that which causes us to grow and gain new awareness and understanding.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus scripture passage is a familiar account of Jesus in the home of Martha and her sister Mary.

- What do you think of when you consider the story of Mary and Martha?
- What are your assumptions about the text?

Read Luke 10:38–42 and discuss the following.

On his journey to Jerusalem, Jesus is welcomed into the home of Martha. There is no mention of a male head of the household, so Martha is portrayed as someone who supported Jesus' mission from her own resources. Mary is seated at the feet of Jesus, which suggests she is a student or disciple of a respected teacher. Note that both roles, Martha as an independent owner and Mary as a student, break from the cultural tradition and affirm Jesus' inclusivity of women in all facets of discipleship. Jesus does not place value on one woman's work over the other. Rather, he points out his concern over Martha's distraction and anxiety. In early Christian literature, "distracted" referred to the concerns of the world which draw someone away from God. Mary showed a focused center for her attention while Martha was distracted by many things.

- In what ways do you relate to a character in this passage?

- What are the concerns of the world which draw your attention away from God?

This passage follows the story of the Good Samaritan and precedes Jesus' teaching about prayer. The placement makes it easy to infer that sometimes we need to act and sometimes we need to be still and listen. Following the technique of wisdom teachers in Israel who placed opposing truths side by side without explanation, Luke points to a deeper reflection by holding these two practices in tension.

- What does the tension between *being* and *doing* reveal about discernment?
- What does this reveal about holistic disciple formation?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Disciples should:

- **Know:** Understand what it means to promote justice, generosity, and peacemaking as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- **Be:** Model the nature and love of God through intentional spiritual formation, sacramental living, and right relationships with God, self, others, and all creation.
- **Do:** Invite others to take part in sacred community, engage in activities upholding the Worth of All Persons, and create a welcoming congregation.

—*Ministry and Priesthood: Ministry of the Disciple*, p. 10

On a flipchart or large writing surface, make three columns labeled "Know", "Be", and "Do." In each column, list congregation activities and ministries which best support the categories as described above.

- In what ways does your congregation focus on what matters most?
- Where do you see the busyness of congregation life serving the institution and drawing focus away from God's purposes?
- What changes would help your congregation "position itself at Christ's feet" and focus on what matters most?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Today's passage challenges all disciples to examine their personal disciple practices within the circumstances of their own lives. Discerning a life balance that lets us focus attention on God is freeing, but it is not always easy. It challenges cultural expectations, demands of responsibilities, and personal choices. Prayerfully consider your responses to the following, and make this part of your personal spiritual practice in the coming week. Pay attention to what causes anxiety and what feels freeing.

- What daily practices focus my attention on God?
- What is it that distracts me most from God's purposes?

- What changes in my life, small or significant, will allow me to focus more intentionally on God?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Close with the following prayer. Allow moments of silence after each prayer statement for personal reflection.

God who is present in action and in stillness,
Help me to **know** your purposes, (pause)
Be in me a presence of love and peace, (pause)
Strengthen me to **do** your will, (pause)
Lead me toward what matters most. Amen.

LESSON 34 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 11)

21 July 2019

Luke 10:38–42 NRSV

³⁸Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Disciples should:

- Know: Understand what it means to promote justice, generosity, and peacemaking as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Be: Model the nature and love of God through intentional spiritual formation, sacramental living, and right relationships with God, self, others, and all creation.
- Do: Invite others to take part in sacred community, engage in activities upholding the Worth of All Persons, and create a welcoming congregation.

—*Ministry and Priesthood:
Ministry of the Disciple*, p. 10

Today's passage challenges all disciples to examine their personal disciple practices within the circumstances of their own lives. Discerning a life balance that lets us focus attention on God is freeing, but it is not always easy. It draws us into the tension of cultural expectations, demands of responsibilities, and personal choices. Prayerfully consider your responses to the following, and make this part of your personal spiritual practice in the coming week. Pay attention to what causes anxiety and what feels freeing.

- What daily practices focus my attention on God?

- What is it that distracts me most from God's purposes?

- What changes in my life, small or significant, will allow me to focus more intentionally on God?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 12)

LESSON 35
28 July 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 11:1–13/11:1–14 IV

Lesson Focus: Disciples are taught to ask, search, and knock through persistent prayer.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share experiences of learning and blessing through the Lord's Prayer.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and compare with other passages.
- discuss the nature of God and understanding of prayer reflected in hymn texts.
- commit personally to practices of persistent prayer.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Audio or video recording of the Lord's Prayer (optional)
- Various versions of the Bible (NRSV, IV, Common English Bible, The Message, others) (optional)
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 11:1–13/11:1–14 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 99.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Recite together, or invite one person to recite, the Lord's Prayer. If possible, you may choose to play an audio or video recording of the Lord's Prayer.

As a large group, or in smaller groups of two or three, share your response to one or more of the following questions:

- When and how did you learn the Lord's Prayer? What version of the Lord's Prayer did you learn?
- Has your understanding about the Lord's Prayer changed over the years? If so, how?

- How have you experienced blessing (in community worship or personal spiritual practice) through the Lord's Prayer?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 11:1–13 and compare with Matthew 6:9–13 and 7:7–11. If different versions of the Bible are available, assign groups of two or three to different versions. Have small groups respond to the following and share insights with the larger group.

- In what ways do the passages differ? What is significant about the differences?
- What is common to both passages? (recognizing God's holiness, desire for God's kingdom to come on Earth, our dependence on God, our vulnerable and sinful human nature)
- How do the settings differ between the Luke passage and the Matthew passages? (Matthew places this instruction within the Sermon on the Mount; in Luke, the instruction on prayer is part of the travel narrative of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.)

While the passages in Luke and Matthew share common themes, Luke's version is a bit shorter and includes a piece on persistence in verses 5–8. In Matthew 7:11 the promise is "your Father in heaven [will] give good things to those who ask him!" In Luke 11:13 the promise is "the heavenly Father [will] give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" This is consistent with the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the two-volume Luke-Acts account.

- How does this difference help you understand the statement, "For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened"?

Luke's placement of this instruction about prayer occurs within the account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Luke 9:51 records that Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem." Luke chapters 10–19 make up the travel account and reinforce the idea that Jesus is The Way. That passage also reinforces understanding discipleship as a journey.

- How is Jesus' instruction on persistent prayer significant to understanding discipleship as a journey?
- In what ways has persistent prayer been part of your journey as a disciple? What have you received because of persistent prayer?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The instruction about persistent prayer is not about proper techniques; it is about praise, worship, and our response to Christ's mission. Today's passage affirms the nature of God as a loving parent who desires to bless all children and all creation.

Choose one of the following hymns from *Community of Christ Sings* and discuss how various phrases or verses agree with what has been revealed in today's focus passage. In a larger group, you may assign smaller groups or pairs to discuss a hymn and share insights with the larger group.

- How does the hymn connect with or challenge your understanding of prayer?
- How does the hymn reflect God's desire to bless all creation?

"Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ" 182

"For Everyone Born" 285

"Sometimes We Wait, Expecting God" 304

"Touch Me, Lord, with Thy Spirit Eternal" 574

"I Have Called You by Your Name" 636

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Consider a personal concern, a concern you have for another, or a community condition (local or global) for which you are concerned. Prayerfully consider how you would complete the following statements, and make this a matter of persistent prayer throughout the coming week. As you engage in this practice, record insights gained or blessings received on the response sheet or in a journal. You may choose to share this experience with a prayer partner or spiritual companion.

I will pray for _____

_____.

In my prayer I will ask for _____

_____.

As I seek _____

may I become _____.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read phrases or verses from the hymn(s) discussed earlier in the lesson to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 35 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 12)

28 July 2019

Luke 11:1–13 NRSV

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ²He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

³Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.

⁵And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' ⁸I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

⁹So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹²Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

The instruction about persistent prayer is not about proper techniques; it is about praise, worship, and our response to Christ's mission. Today's passage affirms the nature of God as a loving parent who desires to bless all children and all creation.

Consider a personal concern, a concern you have for another, or a community condition (local or global) for which you are concerned. Prayerfully consider how you would complete the following statements and make this a matter of persistent prayer throughout the coming week. As you engage in this practice, record insights gained or blessings received on this response sheet or in a journal. You may choose to share this experience with a prayer partner or spiritual companion.

I will pray for _____

_____.

In my prayer I will ask for _____

_____.

As I seek _____

may I become _____.

Insights gained and blessings received:

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 13)

LESSON 36
4 August 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 12:13–21/12:15–23 IV

Lesson Focus: Disciples are challenged to be rich toward God and not be consumed by possessions.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider attitudes toward wealth.
- explore attitudes toward wealth upheld in the focus scripture passage.
- compare scripture passages with principles of a Disciple's Generous Response.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Optional: *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 12:13–21/12:15–23 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 100

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

After one minute, invite people to share items included in their lists. Where are there likenesses and differences? What do the lists reveal about attitudes toward possessions?

In one minute, make a list (on response sheet or scrap paper) of everything in your life that makes you wealthy.

Offer a prayer of gratitude for the plentiful blessings of life.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 12:13–21.

Today's passage is preceded by an exchange between Jesus and some Pharisees. Jesus challenges the Pharisees' concern with outward appearances, particularly with tithing, over justice and love of God (Luke 11:42). Economic justice is an important theme throughout Luke-Acts.

Assign the following passages to individuals, pairs, or small groups. Discuss and share insights with the full group.

Setting (vv. 13–15)

The question from the crowd references Deuteronomy 21:17 which states the oldest son is entitled to double the younger son's inheritance. Jesus does not wish to arbitrate the discussion and warns against greed.

- What is significant about Jesus refusing to arbitrate the brothers' financial matters?
- What is your understanding of the statement, "for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions"?
- How does this passage relate to or challenge your understanding of a Disciple's Generous Response?

Parable (vv. 16–19)

Jesus shares the parable of the rich fool who is faced with what he should do because of his unexpected wealth.

- What does the man's monologue (conversation with self or soul only) reveal about his attitude toward wealth?
- What examples in your life, congregation, or community parallel the man's attitude toward his good fortune?
- How does this passage relate to or challenge your understanding of a Disciple's Generous Response?

Lesson (vv. 20–21)

God's response in this parable uses strong language: "Fool!" This is not a reflection of the man's intelligence or ability to gain wealth; it is, rather, a reflection on his greed and self-interest.

- What is the lesson to be learned from this parable?
- What does this passage reveal about wealth and economic justice?
- How does this passage relate to or challenge your understanding of a Disciple's Generous Response?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read the following passage from Doctrine and Covenants 163:9.

Break free of the shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests. Give generously according to your true capacity. Eternal joy and peace await those who grow in the grace of generosity that flows from compassionate hearts without thought of return.

Assign one of the sentences above to an individual, pair, or small group. Have each discuss the following and share with the larger group.

- In what ways does each statement relate to the passage from Luke?
- Which of the following principles of a Disciple's Generous Response connect to each statement?
- How does applying the principle(s) shape your attitude toward wealth and possessions?

Principles of a Disciple's Generous Response (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 32–35)

Principle 1. A disciple practices generosity as a spiritual discipline in response to God's grace and love.

- Share with a sense of gratitude rather than indebtedness.
- Extend our lives in service to others; receive even as we give.

Principle 2. A disciple is faithful in response to Christ's ministry.

- Respond faithfully with steadfast love and commitment to God.
- In response to Christ's ministry, we are accountable to one another, God, and ourselves.

Principle 3. A disciple's financial response, while unique to individual circumstances, expresses love of God, neighbor, creation, and oneself.

- Using our resources to the glory of God aligns our hearts with God's heart.
- Purposeful financial response keeps us focused on God, Christ, and building God's kingdom.

Principle 4. A disciple shares generously through tithing so others may experience God's generosity.

- Tithing is a gift of thanksgiving to God in response to God's generous gifts to us.
- Tithing is given from our income before we save or spend.

Principle 5. A disciple saves wisely to create a better tomorrow for self, family, the church's mission, and the world.

- One method for increasing savings is to determine a sustainable standard of living at current income, and then maintain it when income increases.

Principle 6. A disciple spends responsibly as a commitment to live in health and harmony with God and the world.

- The teachings of Jesus challenge us to make lifestyle choices that often are countercultural.

- Learning the importance of living within our means and the appropriate use of debt helps us become disciples who spend responsibly.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Choose a passage of scripture or a principle of a Disciple's Generous Response explored in this session that you would like to explore further. Consider the following as part of your personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

- How does this passage or principle challenge or inspire you?
- In what ways is this passage or principle already part of your response as a disciple?
- How are you being challenged to grow in your understanding and application of this passage or principle?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "My Gratitude Now Accept, O God (Gracias, Señor)" CCS 614 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 36 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 13)

4 August 2019

Luke 12:13–21 NRSV

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” ¹⁴But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” ¹⁶Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ ¹⁸Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ ²⁰But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

Setting (vv. 13–15)

The question from the crowd references Deuteronomy 21:17 which states the oldest son is entitled to double the younger son’s inheritance. Jesus does not wish to arbitrate the discussion and warns against greed.

- What is significant about Jesus refusing to arbitrate the brothers’ financial matters?
- What is your understanding of the statement, “for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions”?
- How does this passage relate to or challenge your understanding of a Disciple’s Generous Response?

Parable (vv. 16–19)

Jesus shares the parable of the rich fool who is faced with what he should do as a result of his unexpected wealth.

- What does the man’s monologue (conversation with self or soul) reveal about his attitude toward wealth?
- What examples in your life, congregation, or community parallel the man’s attitude toward possessions?
- How does this passage relate to or challenge your

understanding of a Disciple’s Generous Response?

Lesson (vv. 20–21)

God’s response in this parable uses strong language: “Fool!” This is not a reflection of the man’s intelligence or ability to gain wealth; rather, it is a reflection on his greed and self-interest.

- What is the lesson to be learned from this parable?
- What does this passage reveal about wealth and economic justice?
- How does this passage relate to or challenge your understanding of a Disciple’s Generous Response?

Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

Break free of the shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests. Give generously according to your true capacity. Eternal joy and peace await those who grow in the grace of generosity that flows from compassionate hearts without thought of return.

Principles of a Disciple’s Generous Response (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 32–35)

Principle 1. A disciple practices generosity as a spiritual discipline in response to God’s grace and love.

- Share with a sense of gratitude rather than indebtedness.
- Extend our lives in service to others; receive even as we give.

Principle 2. A disciple is faithful in response to Christ’s ministry.

- Respond faithfully with steadfast love and commitment to God.
- In response to Christ’s ministry, we are accountable to one another, God, and ourselves.

Principle 3. A disciple’s financial response, while unique to individual circumstances, expresses love of God, neighbor, creation, and oneself.

- Using our resources to the glory of God aligns our hearts with God’s heart.
- Purposeful financial response keeps us focused on God, Christ, and building God’s kingdom.

Principle 4. A disciple shares generously through tithing so others may experience God’s generosity.

- Tithing is a gift of thanksgiving to God in response

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 14)

LESSON 37
11 August 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 12:32–40/12:35–47 IV

Lesson Focus: Practice wise stewardship.

Objectives

The learners will...

- reflect on experiences of the past week.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and what it means to practice wise stewardship and prepare for service.
- compare Community of Christ belief of judgment with the passage from Luke.
- explore principles of a Disciple's Generous Response.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 12:32–40/12:35–47 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 101–102.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Begin by reviewing the previous week's lesson, themes from which will continue in this lesson. Invite people to share their experiences from the past week of making a

scripture passage or principle of a Disciple's Generous Response part of their personal spiritual practice.

- What new insights have been revealed?
- How have you been challenged to respond in new ways?

Read or sing the first verse of "Seek Ye First" CCS 599.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's passage is found within a larger discourse (Luke 12:22–52) directed to disciples with themes about anxiety, alertness, and faithfulness. Preceding this passage, disciples are counseled not to be anxious, but to trust in God to provide. Today's passage upholds the importance of preparing our lives and practicing wise stewardship.

Read Luke 12:32–34 and discuss the following.

In v. 31, disciples are taught to “strive for his kingdom, and these things [food and drink] will be given to you as well.” This counsel contrasts with v. 32, “for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” which affirms the kingdom as God's gift. In Luke-Acts, the kingdom of God is both already (present in Jesus' ministry) and not yet (future hope proclaimed by the church). Disciples must recognize the importance of both. Disciples are responsible for living in a Christ-like way (the kingdom of God as present), while upholding the gift of God's generosity (the kingdom of God as what can be).

- How are these instructions about the kingdom of God reflected in the Enduring Principle Grace and Generosity?

“Sell all your possessions, and give alms” is neither a universal directive, nor is it merely symbolic. Luke upholds this practice by the early Christian communities, affirming Luke's emphasis on social justice. Verse 34 makes a clear statement that how we handle our “treasure” matters to God. As discussed in the previous lesson, if we invest in selfish pursuits neglecting of the needs of others, we cannot claim to be in service to God.

- Where do you see examples of disciples practicing selfless generosity in Christ's mission?
- How is this passage inviting us (congregation, community, or church) to grow in generosity?

Read Luke 12:35–40 and discuss the following.

Luke's audience is a couple of generations removed from the first-generation Christians who expected Christ's immediate return. There was not an understanding of the kingdom of God being present in the life of the church. Disciples were to live in readiness for final judgment at any time. The final verse affirms that it is impossible to predict when Christ will return, so this is not to be the motivation for Christ-like living.

- What personal and community spiritual practices help you prepare for serving in Christ's mission?
- How does this passage about preparation connect to the previous passage about generosity?
- What does the passage as a whole say about living into the reality of God's reign?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read and discuss the following.

Judgment

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation's gifts. It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture's light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16).

- What connections are there between this belief statement and the passage from Luke?
- How is this belief statement life-giving?
- How does this shape your understanding of living as a disciple?

Assign one of the following principles (further descriptions can found in the previous lesson) to each individual or pair. Discuss the following and share insights with the full group.

- How does the principle connect with the statement about judgment?
- How does the principle connect with the passage from Luke?

Principles of a Disciple's Generous Response (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 32–35)

Principle 1. A disciple practices generosity as a spiritual discipline in response to God's grace and love.

Principle 2. A disciple is faithful in response to Christ's ministry.

Principle 3. A disciple's financial response, while unique to individual circumstances, expresses love of God, neighbor, creation, and oneself.

Principle 4. A disciple shares generously through tithing so others may experience God's generosity.

Principle 5. A disciple saves wisely to create a better tomorrow for self, family, the church's mission, and the world.

Principle 6. A disciple spends responsibly as a commitment to live in health and harmony with God and the world.

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

"If the gospel is our priority, then the way we handle our earthly treasure matters" (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 101).

Prayerfully consider what God's invitation is to you, to your congregation, and to the church through today's passage.

- How are you being challenged to more fully live the principles of a Disciple's Generous Response?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "Seek First" CCS 600 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 37 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 14)

11 August 2019

Luke 12:32–40 NRSV

³²“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

³³Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

³⁹“But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Judgment

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation’s gifts.

It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture’s light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16).

Principles of a Disciple’s Generous Response (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 32–35)

Principle 1. A disciple practices generosity as a spiritual discipline in response to God’s grace and love.

Principle 2. A disciple is faithful in response to Christ’s ministry.

Principle 3. A disciple’s financial response, while unique to individual circumstances, expresses love of God, neighbor, creation, and oneself.

Principle 4. A disciple shares generously through tithing so others may experience God’s generosity.

Principle 5. A disciple saves wisely to create a better tomorrow for self, family, the church’s mission, and the world.

Principle 6. A disciple spends responsibly as a commitment to live in health and harmony with God and the world.

“If the gospel is our priority, then the way we handle our earthly treasure matters” (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 101).

Prayerfully consider what God’s invitation is to you, to your congregation, and to the church through today’s passage.

- How are you being challenged to more fully live the principles of a Disciple’s Generous Response?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 15)

LESSON 38
18 August 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 12:49–56/12:58–65 IV

Lesson Focus: Discipleship is radical.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share personal experiences of life as a disciple.
- discuss the focus passage and how it teaches about life as a disciple.
- discuss cultural, political, and religious trends contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God.
- consider personal response to the radical nature of discipleship.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 12:49–56/12:58–65 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 103–104.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite people to complete the following statements on response sheets or in groups of two or three.

In my life as a disciple, the greatest reward has been...

In my life as a disciple, the most difficult choice has been...

As people feel comfortable, share responses with the larger group. Where do you see likenesses or differences in responses to each statement? Do the challenges reflect circumstances of cultural setting or personal circumstances?

Read or sing verses one and five of “God Who Cares for All Creation” CCS 14 as an opening prayer.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 12:49–56, inviting all to listen with a sense of openness. Pause for a few moments of silence.

Read the passage a second time, this time inviting all to make note of phrases that are challenging or that stimulate curiosity. Invite the group to share the phrases which challenge them or about which they are curious.

- What does this passage say to you about Christ's mission?
- How does it make you feel?

The opening verses of this passage reveal the personal turmoil Jesus felt as he made his way toward Jerusalem and the cross. Luke's author connects Jesus' statement about bringing fire with John the Baptizer's proclamation (3:16) and the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:3). The baptism to which Jesus refers is his death.

"The peace of God is not an anesthetic that makes one numb to the conflicts of the world; it may indeed sharpen them. As Christ contemplates the cross he will endure in God's service, he is not peaceful, but under stress and turmoil. The road to God's peace is not a detour around the cross but goes through it" (M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock, *The People's New Testament Commentary*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2009, p. 230).

- How does this statement and Luke's passage challenge your understanding of Jesus bringing peace?
- What do the statement and passage reveal about choices in following Christ?
- How does following Jesus sometimes cause division, even among those close to us?

The people of first-century Palestine could determine the weather by signs in the wind and sky, but they could not recognize Jesus as the sign of God's kingdom among them.

Consider what distracts us (individuals, congregations, or church) from the "fullness of God's kingdom-living" (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 103). Complete the following and share responses with the larger group.

Are we as concerned about _____

as we are about _____?

Do we fail to recognize _____

because we are busy _____?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Doctrine and Covenants 163:3b reads: "Above all else, strive to be faithful to Christ's vision of the peaceable Kingdom of God on earth. Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God. Pursue peace."

Arrange the group into three smaller groups, pairs, or individuals. Assign each a category of cultural, political, or religious. Have the group or pair consider a trend of their category that is contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God (example: cultural trend of consumerism). Discuss the following questions and share responses with the larger group.

- How is the trend contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God?
- What is required of disciples to courageously challenge this trend?
- What makes challenging this trend difficult?
- Who would be helped most if this trend were reversed?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Prayerfully consider what cultural, political, or religious trend you are called to courageously challenge. Make a personal commitment to take action toward this in the coming week.

- What choices will be affected?
- How will challenging this trend pursue peace?
- With whom would you like to partner in this personal commitment?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read the following from words of counsel presented to World Conference 2013:

And, always remember, the way of suffering love that leads to the cross also leads to resurrection and everlasting life in Christ's eternal community of oneness and peace. Trust in this promise. Amen.

LESSON 38 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 15)

18 August 2019

Complete the following statements:

In my life as a disciple, the greatest reward has been...

In my life as a disciple, the most difficult choice has been...

Luke 12:49–56 NRSV

⁴⁹“I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! ⁵¹Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! ⁵²From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

⁵⁴He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, ‘It is going to rain’; and so it happens. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat’; and it happens. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”

Consider what distracts us (individuals, congregations, or church) from the “fullness of God’s kingdom-living” (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament, p. 103*).

Are we as concerned about _____
as we are about _____?

Do we fail to recognize _____
because we are busy _____?

Prayerfully consider what cultural, political, or religious trend you are called to courageously challenge. Make a personal commitment to take action toward this in the coming week.

- What choices will be affected?

- How will challenging this trend pursue peace?

- With whom would you like to partner in this personal commitment?

From words of counsel presented to World Conference 2013:

And, always remember, the way of suffering love that leads to the cross also leads to resurrection and everlasting life in Christ’s eternal community of oneness and peace. Trust in this promise. Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 16)

LESSON 39
25 August 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 13:10–17

Lesson Focus: All persons are of worth and set free in God’s vision of shalom.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share personal experiences of healing and wholeness.
- discuss the focus passage and conditions that bind and oppress.
- explore opportunities for Christ’s mission through the sacraments.
- engage in Praying the Sacraments.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Flipchart or large erasable writing surface and marker (optional)
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 13:10–17 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 105.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite all who would like to share their experiences of personal commitment from the previous lesson.

Respond to one of the following questions in groups of two or three, or as a larger group.

- How have you been set free as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

- How have you experienced healing and wholeness through sacraments?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 13:10–17.

On a large writing surface, make a list of all the possible meanings for the woman crippled by a spirit and unable

to stand (examples: physical injury or weakness, bent over by unjust conditions, marginalized by society, crippled by self-doubt). Next to each example listed, list possible meanings for Jesus' touch setting the woman free (examples: physical healing, release from unjust conditions, welcomed by the community, affirmed self-worth).

The second part of today's passage involves an exchange between Jesus and the leader of the synagogue over interpretation of the Sabbath laws, or what makes up work on the Sabbath. Jesus' mission was to bring good news to the poor, release the captives, bring sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free, and proclaim liberation (4:18–19 adapted). He set the woman free from what bound her as an act of compassionate ministry that affirmed her worth as a beloved child of God.

- What practices or traditions in your congregation or community limit opportunities for compassionate ministry?
- How could new or changed practices increase opportunities for compassionate ministry in your congregation or community?
- What person or group of people is excluded from your community?
- What would it take to restore them to the community?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Community of Christ has received the following counsel about sacraments:

Look especially to the sacraments to enrich the spiritual life of the body (Doctrine and Covenants 158:11c).

Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community (Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b).

Arrange the group in pairs or small discussion groups. Refer to the list of conditions which could have crippled the woman in today's passage. Assign each pair or group one of the conditions from the list. Discuss the following questions and share responses with the larger group.

- Where do you see examples of this condition in your congregation or community?
- How could the sacraments restore a person in this condition to wholeness in the community?
- When have you witnessed a person in this condition being restored through the sacraments?
- In what ways does your congregation invite and welcome those who are marginalized to take part in sacraments?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

In God's kingdom, the worth of everyone will be upheld; those who are wounded will be made whole; what is broken will be mended (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 105).

Engage in the following practice as time allows. This practice can be done as a group or as a personal spiritual practice.

Praying the Sacraments

Prayerfully consider a sacrament you have experienced with openness and gratitude.

- Bring to mind the details of the experience as you remember or as you have been told. Give thanks for each person who was a part of this sacrament: ministers, family, or community. Give thanks for the blessing you received through this sacrament.
- Bring to mind a person in your community who could experience healing and wholeness through this sacrament. How can you share the sacrament with this person?
- Give thanks for God's restoring and self-giving nature revealed through the sacraments.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "Lay Your Hands" CCS 545 as a closing blessing. You may choose to have one or two members of the group place their hands on the shoulder of each member of the group while this hymn is read or sung.

LESSON 39 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 16)

25 August 2019

Luke 13:10–17 NRSV

¹⁰Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." ¹³When he laid his hand on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. ¹⁴But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

Community of Christ has received the following counsel about sacraments:

Look especially to the sacraments to enrich the spiritual life of the body (Doctrine and Covenants 158:11c).

Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community (Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b).

- Where do you see examples of unjust conditions in your congregation or community?

- How could the sacraments restore persons in these conditions to wholeness in the community?

- When have you witnessed a person in such conditions being restored through the sacraments?

In God's kingdom, the worth of everyone will be upheld; those who are wounded will be made whole; what is broken will be mended (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 105).

Praying the Sacraments

Prayerfully consider a sacrament you have experienced with openness and gratitude.

- Bring to mind the details of the experience as you remember or as you were told. Give thanks for each person who was a part of this sacrament: ministers, family, or community. Give thanks for the blessing you received through this sacrament.
- Bring to mind a person in your community who could experience healing and wholeness through this sacrament. How can you share the sacrament with this person?
- Give thanks for God's restoring and self-giving nature revealed through the sacraments.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 17)

LESSON 40
1 September 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 14:1, 7–14

Lesson Focus: Servant ministry is about the “other.”

Objectives

The learners will...

- share experiences of anonymous gifts given and received.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and what is revealed about humble, servant ministry.
- explore hymns which reflect the focus passage and ideas about inclusive ministry.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 14:1, 7–14 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 106–107.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Respond to one of the following in groups of two or three, or as a full group.

- Share an experience when you received a significant gift anonymously. Why was the gift important? How

did it feel not being able to recognize the person who gave the gift?

- Share an experience when you gave a significant gift anonymously. What led you to give anonymously? How did it feel to not receive recognition for giving the gift?

Offer a prayer of gratitude for gifts humbly given and received.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

This passage is another of Luke's Sabbath conflicts. Although the Pharisees are trying to catch Jesus in violation of biblical or traditional laws, Jesus does not respond with skepticism. Highlighting an important Lukan theme of table ministry, Jesus reveals God's inclusive nature by eating with society's elite just as he eats with those whom society turns away.

- When have you experienced blessing through hospitality and table ministry?
- In what ways does your congregation offer inclusive table ministry? How could this ministry become even more inclusive?

The parable in verses 7–14 mirrors guidance provided in Proverbs 25:6–7. In a culture that highly regarded honor and shame, this counsel was practical for honoring hosts without bringing shame by misinterpreting one's status in the community. It is reflective of a hierarchical society. The deeper meaning in these verses goes beyond table manners to reflect the justice of God's shalom. Those who are marginalized will be lifted up, and those who exalt themselves will be humbled (see Luke 6:20–26).

- Where do you see examples of similar hierarchical customs or practices in your community?
- What examples have you seen of ministries that challenge these customs or practices?

The final verses of this passage provide counsel to those who extend hospitality to others out of their own selfish ambition. Jesus proclaims humble servant ministry that is inclusive of all.

- Consider the people with whom you share in table ministry (family, friends, neighbors, or congregation). In what ways do these reflect an extension of self? (similar interests, socio-economic status, religious beliefs)
- When have you shared in table ministry with someone who was different from you? What did you learn from this experience?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

"Ministry is not about us. Ministry is about the 'other'" (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament, p. 106*).

- How do these statements shape your understanding of ministry offered and received?

Select one of the following hymns to discuss as a group, or assign each hymn to smaller groups or pairs to discuss.

"For Everyone Born" CCS 285

"Coming Together for Wine and for Bread" CCS 516

"We Are Pilgrims on a Journey" CCS 550

- What phrases or verses of this hymn affirm your understanding of ministry?
- What phrases or verses of this hymn challenge or expand your understanding of ministry?
- How do you find today's passage from Luke reflected in this hymn?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Complete the following prayer statements on response sheets or as part of community spiritual practice.

Creator God,
Thank you for opportunities to offer humble servant ministry, such as...
Forgive me when I fail to minister to another because...
Give me courage to reach out in love to...
In the name of Jesus Christ, who welcomes all to the table. Amen.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing a verse from one or more of the hymns discussed above, or invite someone to close by reading his or her completed prayer statements.

LESSON 40 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 17)

1 September 2019

Luke 14:1, 7–14 NRSV

¹On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath, they were watching him closely.

⁷When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. ⁸“When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; ⁹and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

¹²He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid.

¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

“Ministry is not about us. Ministry is about the ‘other’”
(*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 106).

- How do these statements shape your understanding of ministry offered? Ministry received?

Select one of the following hymns and discuss the questions which follow.

“For Everyone Born” CCS 285

“Coming Together for Wine and for Bread” CCS 516

“We Are Pilgrims on a Journey” CCS 550

- What phrases or verses of this hymn affirm your understanding of ministry?
- What phrases or verses of this hymn challenge or expand your understanding of ministry?
- How do you find today’s passage from Luke reflected in this hymn?

Complete the following prayer statements on response sheets or as part of community spiritual practice.

Creator God,

Thank you for opportunities to offer humble servant ministry, such as...

Forgive me when I fail to minister to another because...

Give me courage to reach out in love to...

In the name of Jesus Christ, who welcomes all to the table. Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 18)

LESSON 41
8 September 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 14:25–33/14:25–34 IV

Lesson Focus: Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is costly.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share thoughts about costly discipleship.
- explore how the focus scripture passage shapes our lives as disciples.
- discuss how the Enduring Principles challenge us to live as disciples.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Optional: *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition (copies of pp. 12–14 as needed)
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 14:25–33 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 108.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is costly.

- In what ways do you agree with this statement?
- In what ways do you disagree with this statement?

Read or sing together “What Does the Lord Require of You?” CCS 580.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 14:25–33. If read literally, what is required of disciples in this passage? (hate family, and even life itself; carry the cross and follow Jesus; consider the cost before committing; give up all your possessions)

Hyperbole (exaggeration used to make a point) is a common literary device in biblical writing. The use of

extremes in this passage should not be taken literally, nor should they be dismissed or taken lightly. They point to the importance of making discipleship the priority in one's life, not something that is casually incorporated into other duties. Love and hate are words which evoke strong emotion. Rather than expressing literal demands, in biblical writing these words are often used to represent personal choices. Compare Luke's interpretation with Matthew 10:37–38. "High-cost discipleship includes making sacrifices. Because this is difficult, some are tempted to soften Jesus' demands and define them in more comfortable terms" (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 108).

Form small groups or pairs and assign one of the requirements of discipleship from the Luke passage to each group or pair. Discuss the following and share insights with the larger group. Note to instructor: To aid discussion, refer to examples of requirements in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 108.

- How could a literal interpretation of this requirement be contrary to God's purposes (or lead to radical extremism)? (avoiding personal relationships, neglecting the needs of loved ones, military reference used as justification of war, unwise stewardship)
- How does this requirement represent a counter-cultural understanding of the kingdom of God? (In God's kingdom all are family; disciples are called to be self-giving for the sake of others and all creation; discipleship is a whole-life response; disciples are called to abolish poverty and end needless suffering.)
- What is your understanding of this requirement?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

In Luke, there is a continuous theme of justice and the kingdom of God. Community of Christ understandings of justice and the kingdom of God are expressed through Mission Initiatives and Enduring Principles. Enduring Principles define the essence, heart, or soul of church identity, mission, and message (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 12). The "we" statements included with each Enduring Principle highlight calling and desired response of disciples in community.

Assign one or more of the Enduring Principles to the same groups or pairs formed above. Discuss the following questions and share insights with the larger group. Note to instructor: Further descriptions of each Enduring Principle may be found in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 12–14.

- How does this principle represent a countercultural understanding of justice and the kingdom of God?
- What personal sacrifices or choices are required to live this principle into full expression? How do those sacrifices or choices represent a cost of discipleship?
- What change(s) would be possible in your community if this principle was lived into full expression? Dream big!

Grace and Generosity

- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

Sacredness of Creation

- We join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation.

Continuing Revelation

- In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God's will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

Worth of All Persons

- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

All Are Called

- We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God's call.

Responsible Choices

- We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)

- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.

Unity in Diversity

- We seek agreement or common consent in important matters. If we cannot achieve agreement, we commit to ongoing dialogue and lovingly uphold our common faith in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church.

Blessings of Community

- We are called to create communities of Christ's peace in our families and congregations and across villages, tribes, nations, and throughout creation.

4

SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Read the following description of discipleship and respond by completing the statements which follow.

Discipleship

Being a Christian is more than holding a list of right ideas; it is about radical obedience to Jesus in every part of life. God's boundless love sets us free for lives of responsible stewardship in which we generously offer our lives in service to God's reign. Discipleship is both an inward and outward journey. Jesus calls us to follow him and to invite others to experience the transforming power of his grace (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16).

Respond as personal spiritual practice, record your response on a response sheet or journal, or share in groups of two or three.

In my life, costly discipleship means...

Costly discipleship is life-giving and world-changing when...

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Offer a prayer of blessing to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 41 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 18)

8 September 2019

Luke 14:25–33 NRSV

²⁵Now large crowds were traveling with him; he turned and said to them, ²⁶“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Grace and Generosity

- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

Sacredness of Creation

- We join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation.

Continuing Revelation

- In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God’s will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

Worth of All Persons

- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

All Are Called

- We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God’s call.

Responsible Choices

- We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)

- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.

Unity in Diversity

- We seek agreement or common consent in important matters. If we cannot achieve agreement, we commit to ongoing dialogue and lovingly uphold our common faith in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church.

Blessings of Community

- We are called to create communities of Christ’s peace in our families and congregations and across villages, tribes, nations, and throughout creation.

Discipleship

Being a Christian is more than holding a list of right ideas; it is about radical obedience to Jesus in every part of life. God’s boundless love sets us free for lives of responsible stewardship in which we generously offer our lives in service to God’s reign. Discipleship is both an inward and outward journey. Jesus calls us to follow him and to invite others to experience the transforming power of his grace (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16).

High-cost discipleship includes making sacrifices. Because this is difficult, some are tempted to soften Jesus’ demands and define them in more comfortable terms (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 108).

In my life, costly discipleship means...

Costly discipleship is life-giving and world-changing when...

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 19)

LESSON 42
15 September 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 15:1–10

Lesson Focus: God’s kingdom is for all people.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share personal experiences of being lost and found.
- discuss the focus passage from Luke.
- explore connections between the Luke passage, passages from Doctrine and Covenants, and hymns from *Community of Christ Sings*.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 15:1–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 109–110.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Share reflections from the previous lesson. What awareness or insight have you gained as you considered what costly discipleship means in your life?

Share responses to the following in groups of two or three, or as a large group.

- Share a time in your life when you were lost (physically or spiritually). Who helped you find your way home?
- What did you learn from this experience?

Read or sing the first verse of “Amazing Grace” CCS 19.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus passage includes two of three parables focused on finding what was lost. Read Luke 15:1–10 and discuss the following in groups of two or three, or as a large group. You may divide the group into three small groups or pairs and have each discuss one of the following parts, then share insights with the larger group. Note to instructor: Provide copies of the following commentary and questions to each group or pair to aid discussion.

Welcoming Sinners (vv. 1–2)

Luke's setting of these parables is significant. The Pharisees and scribes do not approve of Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. Not only does Jesus tolerate them, but he welcomes them and shares in table ministry with them. Table ministry is an important theme in Luke-Acts. Jesus eating at the table with sinners points to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and God's reconciling purposes revealed in Jesus Christ. It is tempting to point accusing fingers at the Pharisees and scribes saying they do not realize the importance of Jesus' ministry for all. We must, however, recognize the ways we represent the Pharisees and scribes.

- Who is someone with whom you could not imagine sharing a meal? Explain.
- What act of reconciliation or healing would allow you to welcome this person to the table?

Note to instructor: These questions could be challenging for people who have experienced tragic loss or abuse at the hands of another.

The Lost Sheep (vv. 3–7)

This parable is shared in the form of a question to those listening. Rather than a directive, Jesus presents it as a question to ponder. In the Old Testament, a shepherd was a positive image connected with God's presence. In the New Testament, the image of shepherds is less positive and connected with those who are poor and marginalized by society. In Luke's account of Jesus' birth, there are no wealthy visitors from the East. The message of Jesus' birth is delivered to the shepherds, highlighting Luke's themes of justice and Jesus' solidarity with those who are poor and marginalized.

- What imagery from biblical accounts comes to mind when you think of shepherds?
- How does Luke's setting affirm or change your image of shepherds?

- How does Luke's setting affirm or change your understanding of this passage?

The Lost Coin (vv. 8–10)

The author of Luke-Acts highlights women in the story of Jesus (Luke) and the development of the Christian movement (Acts). The value of the lost coin is modest (about a day's wage for a laborer in first-century Palestine). The woman does not settle for the remaining coins, but actively seeks the one that is lost.

- What is it that you actively seek? What motivates you to be persistent in seeking?
- What might the lost coin in this passage represent in your congregation? In your community?
- How does your congregation persistently seek what is represented by the coin?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Luke's setting of these parables stresses rejoicing for repentant sinners, not for self-righteous behavior. Today's passage is a reminder for us to consider how we represent self-righteous exclusion, as well as consider those we are called to invite and welcome to the table.

Read and discuss the following passages from the Doctrine and Covenants.

That Spirit is even now touching alive the souls of those who feel the passion of discipleship burning deeply within. Many others will respond if you are persistent in your witness and diligent in your mission to the world.

—Doctrine and Covenants 162:3b

- What is the invitation to disciples in this passage? What is the invitation to your congregation?
- What connections do you find between this passage and the passage from Luke?
- How do both passages stress the Mission Initiative, Invite People to Christ?

Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b

- What is the invitation to disciples in this passage? What is the invitation to your congregation?
- What connections do you find between this passage and the passage from Luke?
- What do both passages reveal about the peace of Jesus Christ?
- What do all three passages reveal about God's shalom and the Worth of All Persons?

Prayerfully consider the invitation to disciples in these verses. What phrases or verses challenge your life as a disciple? What phrases or verses challenge your congregation?

Who are the lost, forgotten, or leftover people in your community?

How are you being challenged to invite them, and others to Christ?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Read all verses of "Leftover People in Leftover Places" CCS 275. Discuss how this hymn connects with the scripture passages discussed previously. If time permits, you may also compare the words of this hymn and "Amazing Grace."

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Have each person share one phrase from a scripture passage or hymn discussed in this lesson to serve as a personal commitment from this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 42 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 19)

15 September 2019

Luke 15:1–10 NRSV

¹Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him, ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³So he told them this parable: ⁴"Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸"Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Doctrine and Covenants 162:3b

That Spirit is even now touching alive the souls of those who feel the passion of discipleship burning deeply within. Many others will respond if you are persistent in your witness and diligent in your mission to the world.

- What is the invitation to disciples in this passage? What is the invitation to your congregation?
- What connections do you see between this passage and the passage from Luke?
- How do both passages stress the Mission Initiative, Invite People to Christ?

Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b

Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships

in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith.

- What is the invitation to disciples in this passage? What is the invitation to your congregation?
- What connections do you see between this passage and the passage from Luke?
- What do both passages reveal about the peace of Jesus Christ?
- What do all three passages reveal about God's shalom and the Worth of All Persons?

Read all verses of "Leftover People in Leftover Places" CCS 275.

Discuss how this hymn connects with the scripture passages discussed previously.

Prayerfully consider the invitation to disciples in these verses. What phrases or verses challenge your life as a disciple? What phrases or verses challenge your congregation?

Who are the lost, forgotten, or leftover people in your community?

How are you being challenged to invite them, and others to Christ?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 20)

LESSON 43
22 September 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 16:1–13

Lesson Focus: Disciples of Jesus Christ are called to serve God faithfully.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share lessons, practices, and experiences of money management.
- explore the focus passage and what is revealed about faithful response to God.
- explore comparisons and new understandings found in Doctrine and Covenants 163:9.
- respond to prayer statements of personal commitment.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Flipchart or large writing surface and markers

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 16:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 111.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two or three, or as a large group.

- How did you learn to manage money?
- Who helped you learn, and how did they help you?
- How have you seen relationships damaged by dishonest management of money?

- How have you seen relationships strengthened through responsible money management?

Offer a prayer of gratitude for people and practices that help us faithfully serve God.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today’s passage is challenging because it seems to promote the behaviors of a dishonest manager. It

includes the first of two parables found in Luke 16 that begin with, "There was a rich man..." It affirms two themes common in Luke: (1) economic justice is important, and (2) how we manage our resources matters to God.

As the passage is read, note the places where you are challenged.

Read Luke 16:1-13.

- What is familiar to you in this passage?
- In what ways are you challenged by this passage? Explain.

On a flipchart or large writing surface, make two columns. Write "Rich Man" at the top of one column and "Manager" at the top of the other column. Make a list of the qualities of each revealed in the passage.

- What does the list reveal about the rich man? Whom does the rich man represent?
- What does the list reveal about the manager? Whom does the manager represent?

Jesus' parable ends with v. 8a, in which the manager is praised for being shrewd (responding quickly and decisively), not for being dishonest. For the author of Luke, wealth is corruptive, and therefore all wealth is dishonest. Verse 9 upholds the importance of letting go of wealth for the sake of others.

- How does this affirm or challenge your understanding of wealth and generosity?
- How does this affirm or challenge your understanding of a disciple's generous response?

This passage closes with verses 10-13 and various sayings about faithfulness, integrity, and choice.

- What sayings are familiar, and what new understandings are revealed?
- What does the passage as a whole reveal about relationships, money, and generosity?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read and discuss the following passage.

Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint. Break free of the shackles of conventional

culture that mainly promote self-serving interests. Give generously according to your true capacity. Eternal joy and peace await those who grow in the grace of generosity that flows from compassionate hearts without thought of return. Could it be otherwise in the domain of God, who eternally gives all for the sake of creation?

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

Make a list of "shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests" in your community.

- What keeps people from breaking free of each "shackle"?
- What ministries of invitation and generosity would help people break free of the "shackles" listed?
- Where do you see opportunities for new or developed ministries in your congregation which would meet these needs?
- What likenesses and differences do you find between this passage and the passage from Luke?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Complete the following prayer statements on response sheets or in silent meditation.

Gracious God,

I am grateful for the awareness of your abundant generosity when _____

_____.

Help me break free of _____

_____ which keeps me from generously responding to the needs of others.

Thank you for the joy and peace I experience when responding to _____

_____.

Amen.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read the prayer (above) together and invite people to share their responses aloud or silently.

LESSON 43 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 20)

22 September 2019

Luke 16:1–13 NRSV

¹Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' ³Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' ⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' ⁷Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of the light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

¹⁰ "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint. Break free of the shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests. Give generously according to your true capacity. Eternal joy and peace await those who grow in the grace of generosity that flows from compassionate hearts without thought of return. Could it be otherwise in the domain of God, who eternally gives all for the sake of creation?

Complete the following prayer statements. Make this part of your personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week and see what new insights emerge.

Gracious God,

I am grateful for the awareness of your abundant generosity when _____

_____.

Help me break free of _____

which keeps me from generously responding to the needs of others.

Thank you for the joy and peace I experience when responding to _____

_____.

Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 21)

LESSON 44
29 September 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 16:19–31/16:24–36 IV

Lesson Focus: Disciples are called to practice generosity motivated by love.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider challenges presented in CCS 289.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and comparisons in the congregation or community.
- explore connections between the focus passage and Community of Christ basic beliefs and Enduring Principles.
- consider personal response to passage, beliefs, and principles discussed.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Optional: *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 16:19–31 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 112.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Read or sing verses 1–3 of “Friend of the Streetwalker” CCS 289.

Respond to the following question as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

- How are you challenged or inspired by these verses? Explain.

Offer a prayer for openness during this time of learning and sharing.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 16:19–31 and discuss the following.

This passage does not describe, in a literal sense, what happens after death. Rather, it is a parable affirming common themes throughout Luke: (1) how one uses resources matters to God, and (2) justice for the poor and suffering is a significant facet of the kingdom of God. The parable contrasts rich and poor, proud and humble, in life and after death. Parables are intended to provoke thought rather than provide specific answers to theological questions. To get caught up in the imagery of life after death is to miss the point of this parable. The rich man is not condemned for being wealthy, but for neglecting the poor and suffering. We must repent of the ways we are blind to those in need.

- In the Roman Empire, purple was a sign of royalty, wealth, or high social status. Who in your community represents the rich man? (This is less about naming names and more about recognizing divisions of class or status in your community.)
- Where do you see examples in your congregation or community of people using wealth to meet the needs of those who are suffering?
- Where do you see examples of the rich man's behavior in your congregation or community?
- Who in your community represents Lazarus?
- What ministries does your congregation offer to address the conditions of "Lazaruses" in your community?
- Where do you find connections between this passage and verses 1–3 of CCS 289?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Form three small groups or pairs and assign one of the following passages to each group or pair. Discuss connections between the basic belief or Enduring Principle and the passage from Luke. Share responses with the larger group.

- In what ways does the belief or principle affirm or challenge your understanding of Luke's passage?

- What is the invitation to your congregation or community relevant to Luke's passage and this belief or principle?

Judgment (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16)

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors and enemies and how we make use of creation's gifts. It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture's light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead.

End Time (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16)

We press forward together in service to God, knowing that our labor is not in vain. The future of the creation belongs to the Prince of Peace, not to those who oppress, dominate, or destroy. As we anticipate that future, we devote ourselves to seek Christ's peace and pursue it. We do not know the day or hour of Christ's coming but know only that God is faithful. With faith in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we face the future in hopeful longing, and with the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray: "Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Worth of All Persons (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 13)

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Respond to the following on response sheets, in small groups of two or three, or in silent reflection.

- Who in your life represents the rich man?
- Who in your life represents Lazarus?
- How are you called to minister to both?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Spend a few moments in silent prayer for repentance and forgiveness.

Read verse four of “Friend of the Streetwalker” CCS 289 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 44 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 21)

29 September 2019

Luke 16:19–31 NRSV

¹⁹There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' ²⁵But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' ²⁷He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house—²⁸for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' ²⁹Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' ³⁰He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Judgment (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16)

The living God whom we serve is a God of justice and mercy. God cares about how we treat our neighbors

and enemies and how we make use of creation's gifts. It matters supremely to God how we welcome the poor, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the rejected. We affirm in scripture's light that Jesus Christ is advocate and judge of the living and the dead.

End Time (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16)

We press forward together in service to God, knowing that our labor is not in vain. The future of the creation belongs to the Prince of Peace, not to those who oppress, dominate, or destroy. As we anticipate that future, we devote ourselves to seek Christ's peace and pursue it. We do not know the day or hour of Christ's coming but know only that God is faithful. With faith in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we face the future in hopeful longing, and with the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray: "Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Worth of All Persons (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 13)

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

Prayerfully consider your response to the following questions.

Who in your life represents the rich man?

Who in your life represents Lazarus?

How are you called to minister to both?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 22)

LESSON 45
6 October 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 17:5–10

Lesson Focus: Discipleship is a whole-life response to God's grace.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider "impossible" circumstances to overcome.
- discuss the invitation to disciples through the focus scripture passage.
- explore how the Mission Initiatives work together to address impossible circumstances.
- affirm the importance of disciples responding together in community.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Flipchart or large writing surface and markers

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 17:5–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 113–114.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

On a flipchart or large writing surface, make a list of circumstances in your local or global community which seem impossible to overcome. (Examples might include war, poverty, mass incarceration, homelessness, and social unrest to name a few.)

Leave the list visible and offer a prayer inviting openness and awareness to the needs in our local and global communities.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

In today's passage, which is part of Luke's travel narrative (Jesus' journey to Jerusalem found in chapters 9–19), we are reminded that discipleship is a journey, not a destination. Following Jesus as The Way is a whole-life response.

Read Luke 17:5–10 and discuss the following parts. Forming small discussion groups of two or three will allow time for more people to respond to the questions.

Verses 5–6

This passage is preceded by Jesus' instruction to his disciples (crowds of followers) about forgiveness. The apostles (the twelve chosen by Jesus to be leaders in his mission) respond to this instruction by recognizing the demands of discipleship and asking for help. Jesus' response, "If you had faith..." implies they already have what they need; they just need to act on that faith. His example using mustard seed-size faith to uproot a mulberry bush and plant it in the sea is a literary device explaining how the impossible becomes possible through the whole-life response of disciples in community.

- In what ways do you find living as a disciple challenging?
- Who inspires you when the demands of discipleship seem overwhelming?
- How have you witnessed the impossible, or unlikely, becoming possible through disciples responding in community?

Verses 7–10

It is difficult to understand passages in the Bible which have been misrepresented to promote slavery. It is important to affirm this passage in no way promotes slavery in any form. The use of this imagery is in the setting of the first-century Mediterranean world, with the understanding that slaves represent Christians and that full obedience to God as the master is demanded. Luke's author uses this imagery to uphold the demands of whole-life discipleship, but affirms God's grace is not something that can be earned. It is a gift, and we are given what we need to respond to that gift with our whole selves.

- How does this imagery affirm or challenge what it means to belong to God?
- How does Community of Christ understanding of Grace and Generosity affirm or challenge your understanding of this passage?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Community of Christ upholds five Mission Initiatives which reflect the holistic mission of Jesus Christ.

- Invite People to Christ—*Christ's mission of evangelism*
- Abolish Poverty, End Suffering—*Christ's mission of compassion*
- Pursue Peace on Earth—*Christ's mission of justice and peace*

- Develop Disciples to Serve—*Equip individuals for Christ's mission*
- Experience Congregations in Mission—*Equip congregations for Christ's mission*

Discuss the following questions for each Mission Initiative. Note to instructor: You may choose to discuss each initiative as a full group or form small groups or pairs to discuss one Mission Initiative each and share responses with the larger group.

- In what ways does this Mission Initiative seem impossible—or challenging?
- What ministries in your congregation support this Mission Initiative?
- How do you see this facet of Christ's mission realized through disciples responding in community?
- How is this Mission Initiative made possible by engaging in all five Mission Initiatives together?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Ask each person to select one circumstance from the list created at the beginning of this lesson about which they feel passionate.

Prayerfully consider your response to the following questions about this circumstance. Record your response on the response sheet, share in groups of two or three, or consider your response in silent reflection.

- What do I need to learn about this circumstance?
- What daily practice can I add, change, or take away to make a difference in this circumstance?
- How can I partner with disciples in community to have an even bigger effect in this circumstance?
- How do all five Mission Initiatives working together address this circumstance?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Offer a prayer of blessing for the whole-life response of disciples responding in community to make a difference in the world.

LESSON 45 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 22)

6 October 2019

Luke 17:5–10 NRSV

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” ⁶The Lord replied, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.

⁷“Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table?’ ⁸Would you not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink?’ ⁹Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’”

Community of Christ upholds five Mission Initiatives which reflect the holistic mission of Jesus Christ.

- Invite People to Christ—*Christ’s mission of evangelism*
- Abolish Poverty, End Suffering—*Christ’s mission of compassion*
- Pursue Peace on Earth—*Christ’s mission of justice and peace*
- Develop Disciples to Serve—*Equip individuals for Christ’s mission*
- Experience Congregations in Mission—*Equip congregations for Christ’s mission*

Select one circumstance from the list created at the beginning of this lesson about which you feel passionate. Prayerfully consider your response to the following questions about this circumstance.

What do I need to learn about this circumstance?

What daily practice can I add, change, or take away to make a difference in this circumstance?

How can I partner with disciples in community to have an even bigger effect on this circumstance?

How do all five Mission Initiatives working together address this circumstance?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 23)

LESSON 46
13 October 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 17:11–19

Lesson Focus: Gratitude is a fundamental response to God’s grace and generosity.

Objectives

The learners will...

- practice gratitude.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and the invitation to disciples about gratitude.
- explore deeper understanding of Grace and Generosity.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 17:11–19 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 115.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Practice Gratitude

On the back of response sheets or on scrap paper, make lists of everything in your life for which you are grateful. Note to instructor: Decide the time limit for this practice according to the needs of the group and time available

for this lesson. At the end of the appointed time, discuss the following questions as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

- What did you learn about yourself as you made your list?
- What is surprising to you about your list?
- How did you feel as you made your list?

Offer a prayer of gratitude for God’s abundant grace and generosity.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 17:11–19 and discuss the following.

Note the significance of this passage opening with “On the way to Jerusalem...” It reminds us of the passage’s place in Luke’s Travel Narrative. We are also reminded that discipleship is a journey. In this passage, the lepers are separated from the community by their condition. One can compare this to the condition of sin which separates humans from God and from others. Jesus sends the lepers to the priests, and they are made clean.

- How would you compare the healing of the lepers, as it is recorded in this passage, to *living into a new way of being*?
- How does this represent acting in faith?

The spontaneous response of one leper, who is identified as a Samaritan or “outsider,” is gratitude and praise to God. The healing was not a result of the leper’s response. All ten were healed, even though only one responded with gratitude. We are reminded that God’s grace is a gift offered to all, regardless of response. Jesus’ response to the one who is grateful is “...your faith has made you well.” This does not refer to the leper’s belief, but to the leper’s response.

- How have you experienced wholeness through the practice of gratitude?
- How does gratitude heal us from self-centeredness?
- Why is it significant the grateful leper is identified as a Samaritan?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Compare the following descriptions of the Community of Christ Enduring Principle of Grace and Generosity with the passage from Luke. In what ways is each description represented, or not represented, in Luke’s passage?

Grace and Generosity

- God’s grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.
- Having received God’s generous grace, we respond generously and receive graciously the generosity of others.

- We offer all we are and have to God’s purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

In his book *Understanding the Way*, Community of Christ Seminary professor, Anthony J. Chvala-Smith states, “Grace calls us to discipleship, and discipleship is nothing less than radical obedience to Jesus” (p. 56). This radical obedience to Jesus is not a means for earning salvation, but a way of expressing its reality (p. 55).

- How has your understanding of grace changed over the years?
- How has the church’s understanding of grace and generosity evolved over the years? What policies and practices reflect new understanding?
- How does radical obedience to Jesus express the reality of God’s grace?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Consider the times in your life when you take God’s grace for granted, as well as times when you express gratitude for God’s grace. Commit to making gratitude part of your personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week. You may choose to do this by keeping a gratitude journal each day or making gratitude part of a daily prayer of examen.

Practice of Examen

- Find a comfortable and quiet place where you can reflect on your day.
- Begin by recognizing God’s presence and give thanks for this awareness.
- Gently enter a time of prayer with expectation and permission to be guided by the Holy Spirit.
- Express gratitude as you recognize the many and diverse ways you have sensed God’s presence throughout the day.
- Look back over your day objectively, without judgment or justification. Notice when you recognized God’s presence, when you were most Christ-like, and when you expressed gratitude.
- Also notice when you were less Christ-like and resistant to expressing gratitude. Pay attention to your feelings as you review and reflect. Pray

for insight, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, or release as needed.

- Offer God the next day with gratitude for God's abundant grace and generosity.
- Close your practice with a brief benediction. Receive God's grace and rest.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "Teach Me, God, to Wonder" CCS 176.

LESSON 46 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 23)

13 October 2019

Luke 17:11–19 NRSV

¹¹On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" ¹⁴When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?" ¹⁸Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

Grace and Generosity

- God's grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.
- Having received God's generous grace, we respond generously and receive graciously the generosity of others.
- We offer all we are and have to God's purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

In his book *Understanding the Way*, Community of Christ seminary professor, Anthony J. Chvala-Smith states, "Grace calls us to discipleship, and discipleship is nothing less than radical obedience to Jesus" (p. 56). This radical obedience to Jesus is not a means for earning salvation, but a way of expressing its reality (p. 55).

- How has your understanding of grace changed over the years?
- How has the church's understanding of grace and generosity evolved over the years? What policies and practices have resulted from new understanding?
- How does radical obedience to Jesus express the reality of God's grace?

Consider the times in your life when you take God's grace for granted, as well as times when you express gratitude for God's grace. Commit to making gratitude part of your personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week. You may choose to do this by keeping a gratitude journal each day or making gratitude part of a daily prayer of examen.

Practice of Examen

- Find a comfortable and quiet place where you can reflect on your day.
- Begin by recognizing God's presence and give thanks for this awareness.
- Gently enter a time of prayer with expectation and permission to be guided by the Holy Spirit.
- Express gratitude as you recognize the many and diverse ways you have sensed God's presence throughout the day.
- Look back over your day objectively, without judgment or justification. Notice when you recognized God's presence, when you were most Christ-like, and when you expressed gratitude.
- Also notice when you were less Christ-like and resistant to expressing gratitude. Pay attention to your feelings as you review and reflect. Pray for insight, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, or release as needed.
- Offer God the next day with gratitude for God's abundant grace and generosity.
- Close your practice with a brief benediction. Receive God's grace and rest.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 24)

LESSON 47
20 October 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 18:1–8

Lesson Focus: Disciples have a sacred responsibility to address injustices.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share personal experiences of persistence and prayer.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and how it connects with circumstances in their community.
- explore justice and peace issues upheld by Community of Christ.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Computer, tablet, smartphone, smart TV, or printed copies of Justice and Peace Issues found at www.CofChrist.org/justice-and-peace-issues

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 18:1–8 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 116.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Share responses to one of the following questions as a large group or in small groups of two or three. Note to instructor: Have the following questions printed or projected for people to ponder as they gather.

- When have you experienced blessing through persistent prayer? What did you learn through this experience?
- When have you been rewarded by working persistently for something important to you? What did you learn through this experience?
- When have you become frustrated because your persistence in some effort did not produce wanted results? What did you learn through this experience?

Read or sing one of the following verses as an opening prayer and affirmation.

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (verse one) CCS 11

“Herr, du mein Gott—You Are My God” (verse three) CCS 12

“With God All Things Are Possible” CCS 15

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 18:1–8 and discuss the following.

- Which of the hymns best represents this scripture passage? Explain.

Today’s passage affirms Luke’s themes of justice and persistent discipleship. In the passage Jesus provides an opportunity for disciples to learn from the actions of the unjust. Widows in this society were vulnerable, often victimized, and relied on judges to settle disputes and restore justice. The persistent widow is reflective of women throughout Luke-Acts who are persistent in following Jesus and setting up the church in various communities. As with the dishonest manager in Luke 16:8 (Lesson 43), the judge makes the right decision in the end, but for the wrong reason. Using this lesson to make a stronger point, Luke’s author points to God’s justice and compassion in responding to those in need. The last verse connects to the preceding passage, intended to discourage disciples from trying to predict when the Son of Man (Son of Humanity) will return. This connection upholds discipleship as a long-term journey and whole-life response to God’s grace and generosity.

- What unjust actions or systems in your community are represented by the unjust judge in today’s passage?
- Who are the vulnerable or victimized in your community represented by the widow in this passage?
- What invitational and compassionate ministries in your congregation help meet the needs of the “widows” in your community?
- With what actions of justice are you encouraged to speak out against unjust systems?
- Where do you see examples of persistent discipleship changing lives and changing communities?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a–c. Make a list of unjust circumstances represented in this passage. Where do you see these circumstances in your community?

Arrange the group into four small groups, pairs, or individuals and assign one of the following Justice and Peace Issues upheld by Community of Christ to each group:

- Earth Stewardship
- Human Rights
- World Peace
- Hunger

Using Internet access to www.CofChrist.org/justice-and-peace-issues or printed copies prepared in advance, invite each group, pair, or individual to explore the programs and ministries highlighted in each issue of justice and peace.

- How does this issue address a circumstance represented in the Doctrine and Covenants passage?
- What can you learn about this issue from the information provided?
- What organizations, programs, or ministries would be helpful for addressing unjust circumstances in your community?
- Select one action item or piece of information that would help your congregation make a positive difference in your community.
- Imagine what could be possible if your congregation took persistent action toward an unjust circumstance in your community. Dream big! Share responses with the larger group.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a–c again. Respond to the following questions on response sheets, in small groups of two or three, or in silent reflection.

What is the invitation to my life as a disciple in this passage?

What is the invitation to my congregation in this passage?

What action will I take this week to address an unjust circumstance in my community?

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Invite three people to read the verses of hymns suggested in the Gather section as a closing affirmation of God's faithfulness, justice, and desire to bless all creation.

LESSON 47 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 24)

20 October 2019

Luke 18:1–8 NRSV

¹Then Jesus told them a parable about the need to pray always and not to lose heart. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. ³In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' ⁴For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" ⁶And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? ⁸I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a–c

4 a. God, the Eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God's will. Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare.

b. The earth, lovingly created as an environment for life to flourish, shudders in distress because creation's natural and living systems are becoming exhausted from carrying the burden of human greed and conflict. Humankind must awaken from its illusion of independence and unrestrained consumption without lasting consequences.

c. Let the educational and community development endeavors of the church equip people of all ages to carry the ethics of Christ's peace into all arenas of life. Prepare new generations of disciples to bring fresh vision to bear on the perplexing problems of poverty, disease, war, and environmental deterioration. Their contributions will be multiplied if their hearts are focused on God's will for creation.

Justice and Peace Issues found at www.CofChrist.org/justice-and-peace-issues

1. Earth Stewardship
 2. Human Rights
 3. World Peace
 4. Hunger
- What can you learn from the information provided about this issue?
 - What organizations, programs, or ministries would be helpful in addressing unjust circumstances in your community?
 - Select one action item or piece of information that would help your congregation make a positive difference in your community.
 - Imagine what could be possible if your congregation took persistent action toward an unjust circumstance in your community. Dream big!

Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a–c.

What is the invitation to my life as a disciple in this passage?

What is the invitation to my congregation in this passage?

What action will I take this week to address an unjust circumstance in my community?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 25)

LESSON 48
27 October 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 18:9–14

Lesson Focus: Humility is the foundation of righteousness.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider definitions of righteousness.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- explore Community of Christ understanding of the role of grace in salvation.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 18:9–14 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 117.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Ask members of the group to write their own definition of righteousness. Share with the larger group. Make a list of key words and themes from each definition.

- What is common to all definitions?
- What words or themes on the list appear as opposites?

Today’s focus passage is a continuation of last week’s passage. In the previous lesson, the scripture passage focused on persistent prayer and God’s desire to bless all people. Today’s passage continues with instruction about prayer, humility, and righteousness.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 18:9–14 and discuss the following questions.

- What impression do you get of the Pharisee and the tax collector by reading the first two verses?
- Make a list of the positive and negative qualities of the Pharisee found in the full passage. Do the same for the tax collector. Why does the Pharisee feel justified in his piety?
- With whom do you most closely connect? Explain. Note: You may choose to have people respond in writing, in small groups of two or three, or as a large group.
- First-century hearers of this passage would most likely favor the Pharisee in this passage. Whom do you favor? Why?
- Who in your life or community represents the Pharisee? The tax collector?
- What does this passage reveal about the nature of God?

Arrange the class in small groups or pairs. Ask each group or pair to rewrite the passage using present-day characters, setting, and actions. Invite each small group or pair to share their passage with the larger group and explain why they chose the characters and setting they did.

- How does the choice of characters and setting change or affirm your understanding of the passage?
- What does this passage teach us about right relationships to God and others?
- What is the invitation to your congregation in this passage?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The final verse of today's passage indicates the humbled tax collector is the one who is justified. "Justified" or "justification" is one way we explain how, through Divine grace, humanity is brought into right relationship to God. The result of grace, or justification, is salvation. Understanding how grace is salvific has challenged Christian thought from its beginning. Community of Christ Seminary professor Anthony J. Chvala-Smith writes:

The church is called to "grow into salvation" (1 Peter 2:2). Growing into salvation is a mystery: it is fully a work of grace, and yet does not occur without our participation. Community of Christ theology takes seriously the call to grow

into salvation. That is why we have stressed that faith must become visible in works. Faith without deeds of justice is a lifeless form (James 2:14-26). Holiness without compassion is empty piety. Grace without obedience is "cheap grace," as the great 20th century theologian and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught. In baptism the whole person is immersed into the costly love of God, and so Community of Christ theology insists that discipleship concerns every part of life. God's grace has claimed us entirely. Universal, and not just personal, transformation is what we seek: to let the kingdom come to our relationships, work, leisure, economics, the neighborhood, and the world—in short, to every dimension of life.

—*Understanding the Way: Exploring Our Christian Faith*, pp. 56-58

- How does the Pharisee's attitude and behavior reflect an understanding of being justified through works?
- How does the tax collector's humility reflect an understanding of grace?
- How does Community of Christ theology connect salvation with relationships?
- How would you describe "cheap grace"? How do you see "cheap grace" promoted?
- How do you understand our (human) participation in grace? How has your understanding changed over the years?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Consider yourself as either the Pharisee or the tax collector. What would your prayer be? Write your prayer of praise, confession, or commitment. Keep it with you throughout the week and pay attention to how the Holy Spirit is guiding you to "grow into salvation." What relationships do you need to reconcile or nurture?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "If by Your Grace I Choose to Be" CCS 587 or "Touch Me, Lord, with Thy Spirit Eternal" CCS 574 as a closing prayer.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 26)

LESSON 49
3 November 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 19:1–10

Lesson Focus: Encounter with Christ frees our capacity for generosity.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share assumptions about the story of Zacchaeus.
- explore the invitation to Christ's mission through the focus scripture passage.
- discuss dimensions of salvation, wholeness, and generosity.

Supplies

- Flipchart or large erasable writing surface and marker
- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 19:1–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 118–119.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today's focus scripture passage is Luke's account of Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus. Before looking at the passage, make a list of "assumptions" about the story of Zacchaeus. What do you remember about the story? What does the story teach us about living as disciples?

Note to instructor: Accept and record all responses. Do not be concerned if people already "get the point" or have never heard of Zacchaeus. It is a good practice to assess the group's background knowledge before engaging in the lesson.

Read or sing verse one of "The Summons" CCS 586. Allow a few moments of silent reflection or offer a prayer for openness and new awareness through sacred text and sharing.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 19:1–10 and pay attention to what new awareness you have. Share new insights with the larger group.

- What would you add to or change about the list of “assumptions” after this reading?

Tax collectors worked for the Romans in a system open to corruption and abuse. Zacchaeus was separated from the community because of his position as a chief tax collector. The unjust system exploited the disadvantaged and promoted continuous cycles of poverty.

- What are examples of unjust systems in your community which promote cycles of poverty?

There is an interesting connection between this passage and preceding passages in Luke (not covered in previous lessons). In this passage, Zacchaeus climbs a tree because he cannot see. Directly preceding this is the story of Jesus restoring the sight of the blind man (18:35–43).

- How is Zacchaeus granted “new sight” through his encounter with Jesus?

Zacchaeus is rich, but following his encounter with Jesus he responds by returning four times what was unjustly taken from taxpayers. His generosity becomes an important expression of his life made new and whole through Christ. In turn, he can restore wholeness to those whom he had exploited. In an earlier passage, Jesus tells his disciples, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” (18:25).

- What is the difference between Zacchaeus’ response and the response of the rich ruler in 18:18–25?
- How has your encounter with Christ freed you to respond generously to the needs of others?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

“[The story of Zacchaeus] is about God’s grace and acceptance, which make it possible for all people to

discover their fullest potential in Christ. And when all people discover who they are in Christ, then salvation in all of its dimensions—present and future, social and spiritual—has the potential to become real” (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 118).

- How are the Mission Initiatives as a whole represented in these statements?
- What Enduring Principles are represented in these statements?

Make a list of personal and social barriers which keep people in your community from discovering their fullest potential in Christ (for example: addictions, personal choices, poverty, unjust systems which diminish the worth of persons). Form small sharing groups or pairs and assign an example from the list to each group or pair. Have them discuss the following and share insights with the larger group.

- In what ways does this condition keep people from discovering their fullest potential in Christ?
- What dimension of salvation (personal, social, spiritual) would free people from this condition?
- What is the invitation to your congregation to minister to people bound by this condition?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Prayerfully consider your response to the following questions.

- How am I being challenged to “see in new ways” like Zacchaeus?
- What choice or condition is keeping me from discovering my fullest potential in Christ?
- What practice, choice, or spiritual companion could help me make a change in this condition?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing verses 2–4 of “The Summons” CCS 586 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 49 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 26)

3 November 2019

Luke 19:1–10 NRSV

¹He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." ⁹Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

"[The story of Zacchaeus] is about God's grace and acceptance, which make it possible for all people to discover their fullest potential in Christ...And when all people discover who they are in Christ, then salvation in all of its dimensions—present and future, social and spiritual—has the potential to become real" (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 118).

- How are the Mission Initiatives as a whole represented in these statements?
- What Enduring Principles are represented in the above statements?

Make a list of personal and social barriers which keep people in your community from discovering their fullest potential in Christ (for example: addictions, personal choices, poverty, unjust systems which diminish the worth of persons). Form small sharing groups or pairs and assign an example from the list to each group or pair. Have them discuss the following and share insights with the larger group.

- In what ways does the condition keep people from discovering their fullest potential in Christ?
- What dimension of salvation (personal, social, spiritual) would free people from this condition?
- What is the invitation to your congregation to minister to people bound by this condition?

Prayerfully consider your response to the following questions.

How am I being challenged to "see in new ways" like Zacchaeus?

What choice or condition is keeping me from discovering my fullest potential in Christ?

What practice, choice, or spiritual companion could help me make a change in this condition?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 27)

LESSON 50
10 November 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 20:27–38

Lesson Focus: God is a God of the living.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share reflections and experiences from the previous week.
- explore the focus scripture passage.
- examine Community of Christ understanding of resurrection and eternal life.
- put in words personal belief about eternal life.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 20:27–38 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 120.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Share reflections from the previous lesson and practices throughout the week.

- How were you able to see a particular person or condition in new ways?
- What change was made, or practice added, to help you see in new ways?

Offer a prayer for open minds and hearts as you share together in dialogue and learning.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read Luke 20:27–38 two times. Record questions or thoughts (on response sheets or note paper) which come to mind after the first reading. In small groups of two or three, share your questions or thoughts.

Provide the following descriptions of features from the passage.

Sadducees

- Wealthy, conservative, religious “elite” associated with temple leadership
- Probably only accepted the Pentateuch (Genesis–Deuteronomy) as scripture, unlike the Pharisees who upheld the prophetic writings
- Did not believe in life after death or in angels
- Though religiously conservative, they were politically liberal in cooperating with the Romans regarding Jewish political and religious affairs.
- Challenged belief in the law as well as Jesus’ authority

Levirate Marriage

- Law for preservation of a man’s lineage through his brothers
- Provided security for widows and kept property in the immediate family
- Deuteronomy 25:5–10 explains the strict penalty for a brother-in-law who does not take the widow as his wife.

Resurrection

- Belief that God gives new life in the transcendent world to those who have died (Boring and Craddock, *The People’s New Testament Commentary*, p. 262)
- Immortality is a theory about the nature of human beings; resurrection is a conviction about the act of God (Boring and Craddock, p. 262).
- Jesus responds to the Sadducees by stating life after resurrection is different from life in the present age; therefore, the details of the law are irrelevant.
- Reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through Moses connects the past with the present.

Read the passage a second time. In the same small groups, share any other questions or insights and respond to the following questions:

- How would you retell the passage in your own words?
- What is the most important part of the passage, and what is the least important part of the passage? Explain.
- What is your “take away” from the passage?

Share insights with the larger group.

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Jesus’ response to the Sadducees challenges readers today to consider what it means to proclaim a Living God whose mercy is for all. The following paragraphs help describe a Community of Christ understanding of resurrection hope and eternal life. Read the paragraphs and discuss the questions which follow as a large group (if time allows) or in small groups of two or three.

Resurrection and Eternal Life

Christ is risen! Thus we believe that God is God of life, not of death. By faith we share in eternal life even now. In Christ, God’s love finally will overcome all that demeans and degrades the creation, even death itself. Easter also gives us hope that the tragic suffering and death of victims, throughout history, is not the last word. We believe the Holy Spirit will transform all creation to share in the glory of God (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16).

To be in relationship with Christ does not simply give us eternal life; it is eternal life. Eternal life is life that participates in God’s own eternity...Fellowship with Christ in the community that calls him Lord is to taste already the very life of God. Discipleship is misunderstood if it is seen as a way to get what lies beyond death (Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, *Understanding the Way*, pp. 64–65).

- What is the difference between salvation in the afterlife and resurrection hope in the present life?
- What specific point from the above paragraphs reflects your understanding of resurrection hope and eternal life?
- How is salvation after death misrepresented in religious trends?
- How does your congregation provide “resurrection hope” to people in your community who are marginalized or oppressed?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Spend a few moments in prayerful reflection as you consider your response to the following questions. If there is not time to do this in a group setting, make it part of your personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

- What does it mean for me to proclaim a Living God?
- What does eternal life mean to me?
- How does resurrection hope shape my life as a disciple?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "Praise to the Living God" CCS 8 as a closing prayer of commitment.

LESSON 50 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 27)

10 November 2019

Luke 20:27–38 NRSV

²⁷Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him ²⁸and asked him a question, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. ²⁹Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; ³⁰then the second ³¹and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. ³²Finally the woman also died. ³³In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.”

³⁴Jesus said to them, “Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; ³⁵but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. ³⁶Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. ³⁷And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. ³⁸Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.”

Resurrection and Eternal Life

Christ is risen! Thus we believe that God is God of life, not of death. By faith we share in eternal life even now. In Christ, God’s love finally will overcome all that demeans and degrades the creation, even death itself. Easter also gives us hope that the tragic suffering and death of victims, throughout history, is not the last word. We believe the Holy Spirit will transform all creation to share in the glory of God (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16).

To be in relationship with Christ does not simply give us eternal life; it is eternal life. Eternal life is life that participates in God’s own eternity...Fellowship with Christ in the community that calls him Lord is to taste already the very life of God. Discipleship is misunderstood if it is seen as a way to get what lies beyond death (Anthony J. Chvala-Smith, *Understanding the Way*, pp. 64–65).

Personal Reflection

Spend a few moments in prayerful reflection as you consider your response to the following questions. Make these questions part of your personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

What does it mean for me to proclaim a Living God?

What does eternal life mean to me?

How does resurrection hope shape my life as a disciple?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 28)

LESSON 51
17 November 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 21:5–19/21:5–18 IV

Lesson Focus: God is present in all things.

Objectives

The learners will...

- share personal experiences of God's presence.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and its challenge to disciples today.
- explore connections with Community of Christ scripture passages.
- prepare a personal testimony as a disciple of Jesus Christ affirming God's love and presence.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 21:5–19 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 121.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite all who are willing to respond to one or more of the following questions:

- How have you experienced God's presence in the past week?

- How have you experienced God's presence during a difficult time in your life?

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for God's enduring presence in all facets of life

OR

read or sing verse one of "How Can We Name a Love" CCS 2 as a prayer.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus passage is part of Jesus' teaching in the temple in Jerusalem and is the beginning of a larger passage referred to as the Eschatological (events dealing with the end times) Discourse.

Read Luke 21:5–19.

It is important to look at this passage from the perspective of Jesus' audience, Luke's audience, and today's audience.

Jesus' audience: The temple was a significant focus of Jewish religious life, and its destruction did not seem possible. Destruction of the temple was viewed as a sign of the end times. Jesus responds to admirers of the temple in Jerusalem by predicting its destruction (v. 6), warning against false prophets who proclaim the end of the world (vv. 7–8), and offering assurance to those who follow him, even amid great difficulties (vv. 15, 18).

Luke's audience: The temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, and Luke's audience knew this. They also knew the world did not end with the temple's destruction. The events in vv. 12–18 are also found in the events of the early church recorded in Acts. This passage is not to be heard as a sign of the end times, but as a sign of the church's mission. Luke's Jesus calls for persistence and courage in the work of Christian mission.

As a large group, or in small groups of two or three, respond to the following questions from the perspective of today's audience.

- The temple in Jerusalem was significant to religious life in first-century Palestine. How would you compare it to the significance of the temples in Kirtland, Ohio, USA, and Independence, Missouri, USA, in Community of Christ?
- What do you consider the message of "false prophets" in your community?
- What event or circumstance provides the greatest challenge to disciples in your congregation or community?
- The final verse of today's passage affirms that a disciple's life is "saved" as it is given in Christ's mission. In what ways is this challenging to you? In what ways have you found this to be true?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from
hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

The call to engage in Christ's mission is a whole-life response. The path of a disciple requires great personal sacrifice and difficult choices. We are not to view war, poverty, oppression, violence, and environmental degradation as signs the world will end. Rather, we are to look at such realities through the lens of Christ's mission in a broken world with the assurance that God is present with us in that mission.

Form two groups and assign each group one of the following passages from Doctrine and Covenants. Discuss the following questions and share responses with the larger group.

- What connections can be found between this passage and the passage from Luke?
- What is the challenge to disciples in this passage?
- What encouragement do you find in this passage?

Doctrine and Covenants 161:2a

Become a people of the Temple—those who see violence but proclaim peace, who feel conflict yet extend the hand of reconciliation, who encounter broken spirits and find pathways for healing.

Doctrine and Covenants 162:3a–b

Do not be discouraged. You have not been promised an easy path, but you have been assured that the Spirit that calls you will also accompany you. That Spirit is even now touching alive the souls of those who feel the passion of discipleship burning deeply within. Many others will respond if you are persistent in your witness and diligent in your mission to the world.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

The challenge in vv. 12–18 of Luke's passage is as significant for disciples today as it was for Jesus' audience and Luke's audience—When circumstances

in our lives and in the world seem overwhelming, how will we respond?

Take a few moments and consider what circumstance or condition most challenges you as a disciple. How are you being called to respond to this circumstance or condition by engaging in Christ's mission?

5 BLESS
Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

As a closing prayer of commitment, invite each person to complete each portion of the following prayer (aloud or silently) as it is read aloud.

Gracious God,

In response to _____

give me the courage and strength to _____

_____.

Amen.

LESSON 51 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 28)

17 November 2019

Luke 21:5–19 NRSV

⁵When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, ⁶“As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

⁷They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” ⁸And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.

⁹“When you hear of wars and insurrections do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.”

¹⁰Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

¹²“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; ¹⁵for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your souls.

Doctrine and Covenants 161:2a

Become a people of the Temple—those who see violence but proclaim peace, who feel conflict yet extend the hand of reconciliation, who encounter broken spirits and find pathways for healing.

Doctrine and Covenants 162:3a–b

Do not be discouraged. You have not been promised an easy path, but you have been assured that the Spirit that calls you will also accompany you. That Spirit is even now touching alive the souls of those who feel the passion of discipleship burning deeply within. Many others will respond if you are persistent in your witness and diligent in your mission to the world.

Personal Challenge

Prayerfully consider what circumstance or condition most challenges you as a disciple. How are you being called to respond to this circumstance or condition by engaging in Christ’s mission?

Incorporate your response in the following prayer:

Gracious God,

In response to _____

give me the courage and strength to _____

_____.

Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 29) REIGN OF CHRIST

LESSON 52
24 November 2019

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 23:33–43/23:34–44 IV

Lesson Focus: Forgiveness is central to God’s reconciling love for humankind.

Objectives

The learners will...

- practice *Examen* to reflect on the liturgical year.
- explore the focus passage from a personal perspective.
- discuss overall themes from Luke’s Gospel found in the focus passage.
- respond to the question “What does the cross mean to me?”

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 23:33–43 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 122–123.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Today is the last Sunday of the Year C liturgical calendar. It is known as Reign of Christ or Christ the King Sunday. Before entering a new liturgical year, today is an opportunity to practice *Examen*. We look back on the past liturgical year (Advent through Ordinary Time) and see how our lives have been shaped by the rhythm of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Note to instructor: Adapt the following practice of *Examen* according to the needs of your group and the time available. Provide copies of the response sheet or blank paper and encourage people to record any thoughts or insights throughout the practice.

Liturgical Year Examen

- Find a comfortable position, breathe deeply, and gently enter a time of prayerful reflection.
- Affirm God’s presence with openness and gratitude.

- Look back at the year and pause at each point along the liturgical cycle. Pay attention to feelings and insights as you consider what you learned about being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Think about where you struggled in your journey as a disciple, when you were aware of God's presence, and how you engaged in Christ's mission.

Advent...

Epiphany...

Lent...

Easter...

Pentecost...

Ordinary Time...

- Close your practice with a prayer of thanksgiving for God's presence and guidance in all seasons of life.

With the larger group or in small groups of two or three, share any thoughts or insights about the practice or about a significant experience during the liturgical year.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Today's scripture passage is Luke's description of Jesus' crucifixion. Luke is the only Gospel that records the exchange between Jesus and the two co-crucified. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' final words are a cry of abandonment, but in Luke, Jesus' final words offer forgiveness and release.

Read Luke 23:33–43 two times. After the first reading, pause and allow the words and images to fill your mind. As the passage is read a second time, consider where you find yourself in the story. Allow a few moments for reflection, and then share in small groups of two or three your responses to the following questions.

- Are you a mournful follower of Jesus, a mocking observer, an indifferent soldier, one seeking forgiveness, one offering forgiveness, or other? Explain.
- How does it feel to find yourself in this story?
- How does your perspective change or heighten the meaning of the story?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of lesson time)

Today's passage and reflection over the past liturgical year provide opportunity to reflect also on overall themes from Luke's Gospel. Form small groups of two or three and assign each group one of the following themes from Luke. Ask each group to discuss how their theme is present in the focus passage and what the passage reveals about the theme. How does a deeper understanding of this theme shape your understanding of God? Share responses and insights with the larger group.

1. Jesus is the Messiah.
2. Jesus is The Way.
3. The kingdom of God is present in Jesus.
4. Christ's compassionate mission is for all.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived out
(10% of lesson time)

Reflecting on the Crucifixion calls each disciple to prayerful and intentional consideration of this question:

What does the cross mean to me?

If time allows, invite persons to record their responses on the response sheet or blank paper. Encourage each person to share their response with another person in the coming week and prayerfully consider how their response shapes who they are as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of lesson time)

Read or sing "Spirit of Christ, Remember Me" CCS 221 as a closing prayer.

LESSON 52 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 29)

REIGN OF CHRIST

24 November 2019

Liturgical Year Examen

- Find a comfortable position, breathe deeply, and gently enter a time of prayerful reflection.
- Affirm God's presence with openness and gratitude.
- Look back at the year and pause at each point along the liturgical cycle. Pay attention to feelings and insights as you consider what you learned about being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Think about where you struggled in your journey as a disciple, when you were aware of God's presence, and how you engaged in Christ's mission.

Advent...

Epiphany...

Lent...

Easter...

Pentecost...

Ordinary Time...

- Close your practice with a prayer of thanksgiving for God's presence in all seasons of life.

Luke 23:33–43 NRSV

³³When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

³⁴Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵And the people

stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Reflecting on the Crucifixion invites each disciple to prayerfully and intentionally consider their response to this question: *What does the cross mean to me?*