



Community of Christ



COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

ADULT

29 MAY—20 NOVEMBER 2016

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS



Discipleship is grounded in spiritual formation and includes scripture study, worship, mission, peacemaking, and lifelong learning—for all ages. We invite you to use these lessons for your class, group, or congregation.

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.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 4)

LESSON 27
29 May 2016

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 7:1–10

Lesson Focus: There are no boundaries in God’s vision for creation. All are worthy.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss likenesses and differences displayed by disciples of Jesus Christ and the centurion in the focus scripture passage.
- consider the focus scripture passage from the perspective of different audiences.
- explore connections between the focus scripture passage and Community of Christ understanding of discipleship.

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 7:1–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, pp. 87–88.

1 GATHER

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

Plain (compare with Matthew 5–7, Sermon on the Mount) where he taught of ethics, character, and right relationships.

Read Luke 7:1–10.

The focus scripture passage from Luke’s Gospel takes place in Capernaum following Jesus’ Sermon on the

Arrange the class in two smaller groups. Assign one group “Disciple” and have them make a list of personal

traits displayed by a disciple of Jesus Christ. Assign the second group “Centurion” and have them make a list of personal traits displayed by the centurion in the focus scripture passage. On a large paper or writing surface make two columns titled “Disciple” and “Centurion.” Invite each group to share their lists of traits.

- What likenesses and differences do you find between the two lists?
- What is surprising about the likenesses or differences?
- Does the centurion act as a disciple? Explain.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

To understand a scripture passage, it is important to consider its significance to various audiences. The setting for each audience provides a lens through which the story is understood. Arrange the group in three small groups, pairs, or individuals and assign one of the following audiences to each group or individual. With the information provided about each audience, explore the passage through the lens of the given audience and discuss the questions which follow. Share responses with the larger group.

Note: the purpose of this learning activity is to consider different perspectives when interpreting scripture. There is no “correct” answer.

- What is significant about the centurion’s belief and response to Jesus?
- How does the setting for each audience affect the way they understand the story?
- How would each audience respond to Jesus healing from a distance?
- What is the most important facet of the story for the named audience?
- What further information about the audience is needed to better understand their perspective?

Audience 1: Those who witnessed or first heard of the incident

- Capernaum is a lakeside town in rural, Roman-occupied Judea.
- A centurion is a Roman military officer of 80–100 troops.
- The centurion in this passage is most likely a Gentile.

- The centurion is friendly toward the Jewish people and intercedes for his slave to be healed by Jesus.

Audience 2: Luke’s audience at the time the passage was written

- Luke’s Gospel was written in the latter part of the first century.
- The audience includes first-century followers of the resurrected Jesus.
- The first-century church of Palestine includes both Jews and Gentiles.
- The story contrasts a Gentile’s belief in Jesus with the Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus.

Audience 3: The church today

- Describe the setting of your congregation or community.
- Consider who in your community is represented by the centurion, the slave, and the followers.
- Tell the story as if it takes place in the setting of your congregation or community.

3 RESPOND

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

There are no religious, national, gender, economic, or other boundaries in God’s vision for creation. All are worthy. The capacity for generosity through the ministry of all disciples is unlimited. Read the description of discipleship and discuss the questions 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).

- The centurion in the focus scripture passage is not a Christian but demonstrates faith in Jesus to heal his slave. In what ways does the centurion display the qualities of a disciple described above?
- Describe a time when you witnessed a “non-believer” display qualities of discipleship described above. What does this reveal about faith and God’s vision for creation?

- What barriers keep you or your congregation from receiving the ministry of “others” in your community?
- In what ways do you or your congregation welcome all?
- For whom are you or your congregation called to intercede?

God who loves and blesses all,
 Thank you for the compassionate acts of _____

 displayed through the generosity of _____
 _____.
 Help me respond in faith by _____

 to bring blessing and healing _____
 _____.

4 SEND

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

Prayerfully consider how you would complete the following prayer of commitment. Make this part of your daily spiritual practice and response throughout the coming week.

5 BLESS

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

Invite someone to read their prayer of commitment to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 27 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 4)

29 May 2016

Luke 7:1–10 NRSV

¹After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy of having you do this for him, ⁵for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us." ⁶And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." ⁹When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." ¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

To understand a scripture passage, it is important to consider its significance to various audiences. The setting for each audience provides a lens through which the story is understood. With the information provided about each audience, explore the passage through the lens of the given audience and discuss the questions which follow.

- What is significant about the centurion's belief and response to Jesus?

- How does the setting for each audience impact the understanding of the story?

- How would each audience respond to Jesus healing from a distance?

- What is the most important aspect of the story for the designated audience?

- What further information about the audience is needed to better understand their perspective?

Audience 1: Those who witnessed or first heard of the incident

- Capernaum is a lakeside town in rural, Roman-occupied Judea.
- A centurion is a Roman military officer of 80–100 troops.
- The centurion in this passage is most likely a Gentile.
- The centurion is friendly toward the Jewish people and intercedes for his slave to be healed by Jesus.

Audience 2: Luke's audience at the time the passage was written

- Luke's Gospel was written in the latter part of the first century.
- The audience includes first-century followers of the resurrected Jesus.
- The first-century church of Palestine includes both Jews and Gentiles.
- The story contrasts a Gentile's belief in Jesus with the Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus.

Audience 3: The church today

- Describe the setting of your congregation or community.
- Consider who in your community is represented by the centurion, the slave, and the followers.
- Tell the story as if it takes place in the setting of your congregation or community.

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).

Prayerfully consider how you would complete the following prayer of commitment. Make this part of your daily spiritual practice and response throughout the coming week.

God who loves and blesses all,

Thank you for the compassionate acts of _____

displayed through the generosity of _____

_____.

Help me respond in faith by _____

to bring blessing and healing _____

_____.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 5)

LESSON 28

5 June 2016

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 7:11–17

Lesson Focus: When we minister out of compassion, we are living what Jesus modeled and taught.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss likenesses and differences between Luke 7:11–17 and 1 Kings 17:10, 17–24.
- explore significant themes in the focus scripture passage.
- examine the call to compassionate ministry now and throughout the church's history.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Luke 7:11–17 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 89.

1 GATHER

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

The story in today's focus scripture passage is only found in Luke's Gospel. Luke's author connects this passage to the story of Elijah raising the widow of Zarephath's son in 1 Kings 17:10, 17–24, which is another of today's lectionary texts.

Read Luke 7:11–17 and 1 Kings 17:10, 17–24. In small groups of two or three, make lists of the likenesses and differences between the two stories. Share responses with the larger group.

- What is significant about the likenesses in the two accounts?
- What is significant about the differences in the two accounts?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Discuss the following themes found in the focus scripture passage in groups of two or three, or as a larger group.

What to Make of Miracles?

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 (Affirmation Two, "Scripture in Community of Christ," *Sharing in Community of Christ, 3rd Edition*, p. 25). Scripture is vital and essential to the church, but not because it is inerrant (in the sense that every detail is historically or scientifically correct). Scripture makes no such claim for itself. Rather, generations of Christians have found scripture simply to be trustworthy in keeping them anchored in revelation, in promoting faith in Christ, and in nurturing the life of discipleship (Affirmation Five, p. 25). The meaning and validity of scripture does not depend on one's belief in its strict factuality.

- How do such affirmations of scripture in Community of Christ help us gain an understanding of miracle stories found in the Bible?
- How does the passage from Luke "witness of the saving, transforming message that God has entrusted to the church"?
- How does the "miracle story" in this passage point to an understanding of who Jesus is and the nature of his ministry?

Resurrection vs. Resuscitation

Resuscitation is restoring a dead person to the life of this world. Resurrection is raising the dead to everlasting life. The former is a return to life, while the latter is a transformation to new life. While the widow's son in this passage was not "resurrected," Luke's audience would have understood the passage from a post-resurrection (of Jesus) viewpoint.

- How does a post-resurrection viewpoint affect your understanding of today's focus scripture passage?

Defying Boundaries

Jesus defies boundaries of culture and religion to bring healing and new life. Jesus broke Jewish purification laws and risked touching a corpse when he touched the bier (open basket holding the deceased). After the loss of her only son, the widow would have become completely dependent on the charity of the community had it not been for Jesus' compassionate acts.

- When have you witnessed acts of compassion that defied boundaries of culture or religion?
- What boundaries or traditions separate you or your congregation from people who are marginalized?
- What would help you, or your congregation, defy boundaries to engage in compassionate ministry with those who are marginalized?

3 RESPOND

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

Community of Christ has responded to the call to compassionate ministry throughout its history. Arrange the class in small groups, pairs, or individuals and have them choose one of the following symbols, statements, or ministries. Note: Refer to *Sharing in Community of Christ, 3rd Edition*, or www.CofChrist.org for descriptions. How does each connect with the ministry Jesus modeled in today's focus passage? Share responses with the larger group.

1. The church seal
2. Community of Christ mission statement
3. Community of Christ Enduring Principles
4. Historical practices and ministries
5. Current ministries such as Open Table

4 SEND

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

"Compassion, reconciling broken relationships, accepting all people society 'throws away' is our mission as disciples of Jesus Christ" ("Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 7:11–17 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 89).

Assign a verse of "Leftover People in Leftover Places" CCS 275 or "For Everyone Born" CCS 285 to each of the small groups, pairs, or individuals. Have each share a portion of the verse assigned which reflects their discussion above. Share with the larger group as time allows.

5 BLESS

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

Read or sing "Leftover People in Leftover Places" CCS 275 to close this time of learning and sharing.

LESSON 28 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 5)

5 June 2016

Luke 7:11–17 NRSV

¹¹Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹²As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. ¹³When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!" ¹⁷This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

1 Kings 17:10, 17–24 NRSV

¹⁰So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink."

¹⁷After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸She then said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!" ¹⁹But he said to her, "Give me your son." He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging,

and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰He cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" ²¹Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again." ²²The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." ²⁴So the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."

Community of Christ has responded to the call to compassionate ministry throughout its history. Arrange the class in small groups, pairs, or individuals and have them choose one of the following symbols, statements, or ministries. Note: Refer to *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, or www.CofChrist.org for descriptions. How does each connect with the ministry Jesus modeled in today's focus passage?

1. The church seal
2. Community of Christ mission statement
3. Community of Christ Enduring Principles
4. Historical practices and ministries
5. Current ministries such as Open Table

"Compassion, reconciling broken relationships, accepting all people society 'throws away' is our mission as disciples of Jesus Christ" ("Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 7:11–17 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 89).

Read the verses of "Leftover People in Leftover Places" CCS 275 or "For Everyone Born" CCS 285. How does each verse reflect Jesus' life and ministry?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 6)

LESSON 29

12 June 2016

Focus Scripture Passage: Luke 7:36—8:3

Lesson Focus: God's grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider the scripture passage through a particular perspective.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- explore how individuals and congregations can display generosity that mirrors God's generosity.

Supplies

- Copies of response sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Slips of paper (one for each member of the group) with one of the following written on each: Woman, Jesus, Simon
- *Community of Christ Sings*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 7:36—8:3 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year C: New Testament*, p. 90–91.

1 GATHER

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

Place strips of paper (prepared in advance as indicated above) in a container and have each member of the

group draw one slip of paper. Read Luke 7:36—8:3, inviting members to place themselves in the story as the persons on their slips of paper. After reading Luke 7:36—8:3 a second time, have members write down on the back of their paper one word that expresses what their person may have felt in this story. Share responses with the larger group.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction
(35% of lesson time)

Read and discuss the following as a large group or in small groups of two or three.

There are three versions of this story found in the Gospels (see Mark 14:3–9; Matthew 26:6–13; John 12:1–8). The woman is not named in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), but in John 12 she is identified as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Later traditions blended the accounts into one and identified the woman as Mary Magdalene, a harlot, although the New Testament accounts did not identify her. While the details of each passage help the reader understand the setting, the importance is finding the universal meaning of each biblical text. The anonymity of the woman and her sin allows her to represent the universal repentant sinner.

This passage is one of many settings in Luke where Jesus engages in table ministry. It follows a scene where Jesus is criticized by the Pharisees for eating with sinners. The woman in this passage creates a scandalous scene at Simon's banquet. (Note: Tradition suggests Jesus and the others would have been reclining outward from a low table rather than sitting at a table in chairs. While no less shocking, in this setting it is easier to imagine the woman washing Jesus' feet while he is at the table.) She has violated social custom by washing Jesus' feet and letting down her hair. Simon feels dishonored and responds with pious judgment toward the woman and toward Jesus as a prophet. Jesus responds with a parable that affirms the woman's forgiveness and upholds the generosity of her response.

- How does Jesus' parable connect to the woman's circumstance and response? How does the parable connect with Simon's circumstance and response?
- When have you witnessed a repentant sinner (you or someone else) respond generously to God's generous and unconditional grace?
- When have you witnessed Christians responding to the circumstances of others with pious judgment the way Simon responded to the woman?
- In what ways are you or your congregation challenged by radically inclusive hospitality?
- What barriers keep you or your congregation from extending radical hospitality to all?

3 RESPOND

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

Luke 8:1–3 highlights followers of Jesus, especially women, who generously respond to the mission of Jesus Christ. Disciples in Community of Christ have been challenged to "Free the full capacity of Christ's mission through generosity that imitates God's generosity."

Make a list of three to five examples in your congregation or community where there is need for the compassionate ministry of Jesus Christ. Arrange the group in smaller groups or pairs. Assign one example from the list to each group or pair. Discuss the following and share responses with the larger group.

- What prevents you or your congregation from reaching out to this person or group?
- What specific ministry could provide hope and healing to the needs of this person or group?
- What is needed to free the "full capacity of Christ's mission" for this person or group?

Action challenge: Choose one area of focus from the list and develop a plan of ministry based on the gifts and passions represented in the group. Share ideas with your pastor or leadership team.

4 SEND

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

Prayerfully consider the following and respond in writing, by sharing in groups of two or three, or sharing with the larger group. Make these questions part of your daily spiritual practice throughout the coming week.

- In what ways do you see the woman from today's passage in yourself?
- In what ways do you see Simon in yourself?
- Who represents the woman or Simon in your life? How can you respond to them with Christ-like compassion and generosity?

5

BLESS

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

Read verse two of “God Who Cares for All Creation”
CCS 14 as a closing prayer for this time of learning and
sharing.

LESSON 29 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 6)

12 June 2016

Luke 7:36—8:3 NRSV

⁷³⁶One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. ³⁷And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. ³⁸She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." ⁴¹"A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now, which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." ⁴⁸Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, "Your faith saved you; go in peace."

⁸Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, ²as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary,

called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

Prayerfully consider your response to the following questions.

- In what ways do you see the woman from today's passage in yourself?

- In what ways do you see Simon in yourself?

- Who represents the woman or Simon in your life? How can you respond to them with Christ-like compassion and generosity?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 7)

LESSON 30

19 June 2016

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)

19 June 2016

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

26 June 2016

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" <http://missionalleaders.org/video-resources/retreat-four-videos/> (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" <http://missionalleaders.org/video-resources/retreat-four-videos/> 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)

26 June 2016

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 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...

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...

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 9)

LESSON 32
3 July 2016

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” <http://missionalleaders.org/video-resources/retreat-one-videos/>
- *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" <http://missionalleaders.org/video-resources/retreat-one-videos/> 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 the courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen.

LESSON 32 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 9)

3 July 2016

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:

*Additional lectionary texts: Isaiah 66:10–14, Psalm 66:1–9, Galatians 6:1–16

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 10)

LESSON 33
10 July 2016

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)

10 July 2016

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

17 July 2016

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)

17 July 2016

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

24 July 2016

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)

24 July 2016

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.

⁹"So 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
31 July 2016

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)

31 July 2016

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 to God's generous gifts to us.
- Tithing is given from our income before we save or spend.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 14)

LESSON 37
7 August 2016

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)

7 August 2016

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
14 August 2016

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)

14 August 2016

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
21 August 2016

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)

21 August 2016

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
28 August 2016

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)

28 August 2016

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
4 September 2016

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)

4 September 2016

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
11 September 2016

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)

11 September 2016

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
18 September 2016

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)

18 September 2016

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
25 September 2016

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)

25 September 2016

Luke 16:19–31 NRSV

¹⁹“There 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
2 October 2016

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)

2 October 2016

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
9 October 2016

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)

9 October 2016

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
16 October 2016

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)

16 October 2016

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
23 October 2016

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
30 October 2016

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)

30 October 2016

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?

*Additional lectionary texts: Isaiah 1:10–18; Psalm 32:1–7; 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4, 11–12

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 27)

LESSON 50
6 November 2016

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)

06 November 2016

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
13 November 2016

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)

13 November 2016

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
20 November 2016

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

20 November 2016

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?*