



Community of Christ

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

YOUTH

22 OCTOBER 2017 —26 NOVEMBER 2017

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS



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

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 A: New Testament* (with focus on the gospel according to Matthew).

Lessons are available for three age groups. Recognizing each age group represents multiple stages of development, the instructor is encouraged to adapt lessons to best meet the needs of the class or group. When possible, optional activities are provided to help adapt lessons for diverse settings.

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, 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 24)

LESSON 48
22 October 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 22:15–22

Lesson Focus: We belong to God.

Objectives

The learners will...

- recognize God as creator of all things.
- know we belong to God.
- recognize God's generosity in our lives.

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 22:15–22 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 110, available through Herald House.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- A variety of coins or pictures of coins
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Video camera or phone
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition

1 GATHER

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

Show Me the Money

Display a variety of coins or pictures of coins. Ask the group to identify what is on each one. If coins have the image of a person, identify that person and why they appear on the coin.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of total lesson time)

Argue like Jesus

The scripture passage for today's lesson takes us into Jerusalem where Jesus is approached by a group of Herodians (Jewish people who were supporters of King Herod; a Jew put in a place of power by Rome to rule the Jewish population) and Pharisees (religious leaders of the Jewish people who enforced religious law found in the Torah. The Torah is the first five books contained in the Bible used by Christians today.) They quiz Jesus about the appropriate action to take considering the paying of taxes.

Read the scripture passage. (This same event is told in Mark 12:13–17 and Luke 20:20–26. You might want to read these passages, also, to compare how they are alike or different.)

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" ²¹They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." ²²When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

—Matthew 22:15–22 NRSV

It is interesting to know the Herodians and Pharisees were enemies, but found a common interest in trapping Jesus. If Jesus would please the Herodians, he would tell them to pay the tax. This tax was required by the Romans to pay the soldiers who enforced Roman rule over the

Jews. Essentially, Jews had to pay for their own captivity. If Jesus agreed with the Pharisees, he would tell them not to pay because it would be breaking the Jewish laws of the Torah about having no engraved images. The image on this particular coin, the denarius, was of Caesar, the Roman emperor who considered himself divine. This coin was required for the payment of this particular tax.

Another law broken was that Jewish people only honored one God, the God of Abraham. To possess and use this coin with the image of Caesar would put one in bad standing with religious authorities. So what did Jesus do? He took the question and turned it back on them. What did he say?

- What did the Herodians want from this encounter with Jesus? Did they get it?
- What did the Pharisees want? Did they get it?
- What did Jesus want them to understand when he said, “[Give] to God the things that are God’s”? Do we understand this concept today?
- What are the “things” that belong to God?
- What does the scripture help us understand about priorities? On a piece of paper number from 1 to 10. List the top 10 priorities in your life today. Share with one another.

3 RESPOND

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

There are so many activities and priorities that compete for our time. Social media dominates many waking hours. Think about Facebook, Twitter, internet, television, advertisements, billboards, buses, trucks, and building advertisements which bombard us daily. What messages are prioritized in many of these ads? What do these messages uphold as valuable and important?

Think about the music to which we listen. What messages and values are proclaimed? How do music and media influence your priorities? Are they God’s priorities? What are God’s priorities? Discuss.

Create a short drama or video based on the question, “Your priorities: Where is God in your life?” You may choose a format such as a talk show, an interview, a documentary, or a public service announcement.

4 SEND

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

What Belongs to God? **We Belong to God.**

Think about the list of top 10 priorities created earlier. In several short sentences, write a personal priority plan for placing God first. Take it home and put it where it can be seen daily.



Going Deeper: Gratitude

Sharing in Community of Christ, 3rd Edition, explains, “Disciples love God. We share with others in gratitude” (p. 32). How is gratitude defined? One definition is readiness to show appreciation and return the kindness for whatever is given. Community of Christ scripture tells us,

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

“We Share: A Disciple’s Generous Response” is a statement of six guiding principles (*Sharing in the Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 32–35). Consider the first two principles.

- 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.

Design a series of questions based on the scripture passages found in the lesson whose answers create a deeper understanding of a disciple’s generous response to God.

5 BLESS

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

Give All to God

Read Psalm 96:1–8.

¹O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. ²Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. ³Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. ⁴For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods. ⁵For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. ⁶Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ⁸Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

—Psalm 96:1–8

Sing together “Can We Calculate Our Giving” CCS 617 or “God Forgave My Sin in Jesus’ Name” CCS 627.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 25)

LESSON 49
29 October 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 22:34–46/Matthew 22:33–34 IV

Lesson Focus: God's love knows no boundaries.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify the characteristics of a Christian.
- analyze what it means to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.
- speculate how mission is a response to God's love.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Paper or sticky notes
- Markers
- Chart paper
- Doctrine and Covenants

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 22:34–46/Matthew 22:33–34 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 111, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

What Do You Love?

Provide each learner with several sticky notes and markers. Ask them to think of the things they love and write one on each note. When all are finished, have them stick the notes on the wall. Ask the learners to look over all of the notes carefully, then classify them in the following groups: Love God, Love Your Neighbor, Love Yourself. (You may want to make labels on larger sheets of paper to place on the wall for greater impact.)

Ask: What does the class love most? Is it balanced?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of total lesson time)

Love God, Love Your Neighbor, Love Yourself

In Matthew 22, Jesus tells us that the first and greatest

commandment is to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind. He also says to love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. How important is it to love others even when it is not easy? Jesus puts loving others second only to loving God. It was not easy for Jesus to endure all that he did and still love the people around him.

Ask someone to read Matthew 22:34–46/Matthew 22:33–44 IV in which Jesus was again being tested by the religious authorities, and he turned it into a positive, teaching moment for those present.

³⁴When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" ³⁷He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

⁴¹Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴²"What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." ⁴³He said to them, "How

is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, ⁴⁴"The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet""? ⁴⁵If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" ⁴⁶No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

—Matthew 22:34–46 NRSV

Jesus never asks us to do anything that he did not demonstrate himself while he was living on earth. He knows our potential. Matthew 5:44 says to love your enemies and bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you and pray for those that spitefully use you. This is not an easy task that we are assigned; however, it is possible with Christ. "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Take a few minutes and have students role-play the scripture story found in Matthew. Transfer the concept learned to an experience in the twenty-first century. Demonstrate both a situation where love was forgotten and participants expressed anger toward one another and a situation where love and patience were shown even when it was not deserved.

Commanded to Love

Jesus was well acquainted with the Hebrew scriptures of his day (the first five books of our Old Testament or Hebrew Bible). Confronted by others who were trying to discredit him, he drew on this knowledge not only to divert their attack, but to provide wisdom that would benefit all those who sought to follow him. There are many commandments within the scriptures, and it is difficult to memorize them all. Jesus shared with us two commandments on which all others are based. Read Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

- Why would Jesus have chosen these scriptures out of all the others in the Jewish law to answer the Pharisees?
- What if Jesus had selected any of the other 613 Jewish laws? What effect would this have had?
- Would the Pharisees have questioned Jesus why he chose one above another?
- By responding as he did, what was Jesus saying about love and living our lives?

3 RESPOND

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

How Do We Show Our Love for God?

Make three columns on chart paper with the headings: Heart, Soul, and Mind, one word for each column. Read verses 37–44/33–44 IV again. Mission, going to the world with the message of love Jesus Christ taught, is a response to God's love for us, and mission is how we show love for our neighbors. Discuss ways "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and fill in the chart with suggestions.



Going Deeper

Love Knows No Boundaries

Emigration and immigration are words heard often in today's world. Emigrate is to leave one's country to settle in another country. Immigrate is to move into another country to live permanently. What have you heard about these topics recently? Discuss.

The Shema is a Jewish prayer found in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. It is the most important prayer in Judaism and is recited morning and evening in Jewish households and services. Jesus would have said this prayer at home. Read the prayer. Jesus says to love your neighbors as yourself. How does this concept fit with all you hear about emigration, immigration, and Christianity?

Read these selections from the Doctrine and Covenants and answer the questions above again with the perspective from the Doctrine and Covenants passages.

Doctrine and Covenants 161: 2a; 3a–d; 6b

Doctrine and Covenants 162: 2c; 3b 4a–b; 6a–c; 7a; 8c

Doctrine and Covenants 163: 3b–c; 4a

Doctrine and Covenants 164:6a, c; 9

Doctrine and Covenants 165:1, 3e

- What have you heard about immigration from Christians and other faiths in your community?
- How does the concept found in the Shema fit with what you hear?
- What discoveries were made by reading the passages from the Doctrine and Covenants?
- How does this information redefine "mission" for you?

4 SEND

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

Creating Your Own Hallmark

A hallmark, by one definition, is a mark of quality or excellence. What hallmark or standard does Jesus set in the scripture passage today?

A popular way to show you care or you are thinking of someone is with a greeting card or e-card. If you want to share your best knowledge and love of God with someone in any situation, how would you express it? Design a greeting card or e-card to send to someone this week or create greeting cards to deliver to the congregation during today's worship that convey the essence of the message found in Matthew 22:34–46/Matthew 22:33–44 IV.

5 BLESS

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

Love Is the Reason

Our kindness to others is a reflection of the love of God in our lives. By Jesus' example, we can truly know what it is like to love all. Close class by reciting together 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.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 26)

LESSON 50
5 November 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 23:1–12/Matthew 23:1–9 IV

Lesson Focus: Humble servants practice what they preach.

Objectives

The learners will...

- recognize Jesus Christ as the ultimate humble servant.
- distinguish between following rules and giving your heart over to God.
- identify ways to be humble servants for God.

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 23:1–12/Matthew 23:1–9 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 114–115, available through Herald House.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Doctrine and Covenants
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- Magazines and newspapers
- Scissors, glue, markers, tape
- Two sheets of chart paper
- Paper
- Pens/pencils

1 GATHER

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

Who Is a Servant?

Ask the group to give examples of people who serve them. Set a time limit of three minutes to encourage quick thinking. If the group is large enough, divide into teams to compete. Record examples on a chart. (Examples might include firefighters, police, teachers, doctors, ministers, mail carriers, nurses, government officials.) Then by each example put a name of a local person who fills that capacity in the community. Discuss what type of service each position provides and who benefits from the service. Ask the group if anyone has a story to share about benefiting from a service on the list.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of total lesson time)

Rabbi, Teacher, Servant

After the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE, the rabbis preserved the Jewish religion and culture. Today rabbis are similar to ministers, leading religious services and guiding Jewish worshipers in synagogues. Calling Jesus a rabbi showed the respect Jesus’ disciples held for him as an educated man, one who could interpret the law and the significance of the laws for everyday life. He held the attention of large crowds as well as a small group of followers. The disciples didn’t want to be mere listeners; they wanted to study with Jesus to discover the meaning of life and how to know God. Jesus asked questions and

listened carefully to the disciples' answers. He encouraged them to speak freely, which helped him form lessons to get this message across to the disciples. Jesus was unlike any rabbi or priest they had met. Jesus' mission was to point to himself, not as a mere man living in the world, but as an example of how to live a life guided by God's word.

In the following scripture passage, Jesus discusses what a rabbi or teacher should and should not be. He pointed out the importance of noticing all the characteristics of the rabbis that disciples should follow and try to imitate. He warned them to be observant, to watch what the scribes and Pharisees said and did. He praised the scribes and Pharisees for teaching great principles of Moses' law such as respect for other people. But strict adherence to laws does not bring a person to God. Religion should not be a burden to bear. It should be a joyous experience to come into God's presence in worship. Read Matthew 23:1–12/ Matthew 23:1–9 IV.

¹Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples,
²"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat;
³therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. ⁶They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. ⁸But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. ⁹And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

—Matthew 23:1–12 NRSV

- To whom was Jesus speaking?
- About whom was Jesus speaking?
- What are Pharisees, scribes, and rabbis? (*In Jesus' day, a rabbi was a man well educated in Jewish laws and traditions. A priest at that time was a descendent of Aaron with special authority to perform sacred rites within the temple. A rabbi was not a priest [having no temple authority], but a priest could be a rabbi if he had sufficient training in Jewish law. Scribes were rabbis who studied law and could become judges or occupy governmental positions. Pharisees, also very*

well-educated rabbis, emphasized strict interpretation and observance of the Mosaic law in both its oral and written form.)

- What is the connection to Moses' seat? (*Moses' seat is a metaphor for the religious authority held by leaders of the synagogues.*)
- Whom might Jesus challenge today? Give examples.
- What was Jesus saying in vv. 3–9?
- What are some examples of this type of behavior?
- Why is it important to some people?
- What are phylacteries and fringes? (*Phylacteries are small boxes containing passages from the Torah. They are attached by leather straps to the arm and forehead of Jewish men during morning prayers. Borders of their garments or "fringes long" refer to tassels attached to the corners of prayer shawls as a way to remember God. See Deuteronomy 22:12.*)
- Who will be your servant and what does that mean?
- What is the paradox (a phrase that appears contradictory but isn't) in v. 12? What is its meaning?
- What is humility? Have two or three group members act out scenes of humility, and have the others guess what activity is taking place.
- How did Jesus practice what he preached? Give examples.

3 RESPOND

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

Being a Servant

There are many stories in the scriptures of people who chose to become servants for others. Divide the scriptures below among the group. Search the scriptures to find who and how these individuals became servants of God.

Exodus 3:1–4	Isaiah 6:1–8	1 Corinthians 9:19–23
Acts 9:36–42	2 Kings 4:8–11	Luke 1:5–17, 26–32
1 Samuel 3:1–10	Esther 4:15–16	

- What characteristics do these servants share?
- Did they practice what they preached?
- What does God expect of a servant?
- What makes a person choose to become a servant for God, for your community, and for your family?
- Can you be a servant as Jesus was?

4 SEND

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

Make Me A Servant

Jesus calls (Doctrine and Covenants 161:6b) and challenges all of us to live in the world as humble servants (Matthew 23:11–12). Paul modeled (23:8–9) the role of servant by living among those he served (Romans 1:12). The call is part of Community of Christ heritage and future (Doctrine and Covenants 4 and 161). Make a choice, prepare to be a servant (Doctrine and Covenants 5:21e), and witness of God's love for all people. Know the joy that comes from serving God (Doctrine and Covenants 156:11b and 165:6). Clip words from magazines and newspapers to glue on chart paper making a word collage titled "Be a Servant."

5 BLESS

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

Imitate the Original

We see Jesus as our example. People in their journey toward Christ can lead us only so far. Remember to make Jesus Christ, the original example of a servant practicing what he preached, your guide. Sing together "Make Me a Servant" CCS 597.



Going Deeper

Practicing Servants: Let's Do It

What people do you know who have fun in their faith, who worship with a thankful and joyous spirit? Who is humble? Whose example do you want to follow? What actions of theirs are like the actions of Jesus?

Doctrine and Covenants 165:1 offers Mission Initiatives to guide the way to become a practicing servant. *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 8–9, provides more information. As a group set servant goals for the next month for each of the Mission Initiatives. Follow up to plan, carry out, and evaluate your goals.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 27)

LESSON 51
12 November 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 25:1–13

Lesson Focus: We prepare to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- respond to the call to prepare for Christ's coming.
- understand the importance of being ready.
- discover qualities of a disciple.
- design a message that communicates what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 25:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 116–117, available through Herald House.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended and other versions to compare)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- Chart paper (2 pieces), tape
- Markers
- Paper and pens
- Supplies for "Mission Possible"

1 GATHER

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

Oops! I'm Not Ready!

Ask group members to share stories about when they've been late for an event or unprepared for an assignment or test.

When we get ready for a party, a game, or a test, we usually do certain things to prepare ourselves for what is about to happen. What do we do to prepare?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of total lesson time)

Ready or Not, Here I Come!

Read Matthew 25:1–13 from several Bible versions.

¹Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and

five were wise. ³When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. ¹¹Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹²But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' ¹³Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

—Matthew 25:1–13

This passage is a parable, one of the stories told by Jesus to illustrate and teach a spiritual lesson. Consider these questions:

- What was the situation in this scripture?
- What was the job of the bridesmaids?

- Why did some bridesmaids go with the bridegroom and the bride to the banquet and others did not?
- What if the five bridesmaids who had enough oil shared their oil? What were the possibilities?
- Does this mean we shouldn't share?
- What new understanding do you think each group of bridesmaids gained?
- To whom do you think Jesus was telling this story? (*Jesus' audience was Jewish. The disciples would be very familiar with the images and traditions in this story.*)
- What was Jesus describing? Look to Matthew 24 to see why this parable was told.
- This parable is very symbolic. Whom does the bridegroom represent? (*Jesus*)
- Whom do the bridesmaids represent? (*the church*)
- What does the bridegroom's coming represent? (*the Second Coming of Christ*)
- What does the oil symbolize? (*deeds of love and mercy*) (See Matthew 25:31–46. Jewish tradition used oil as a symbol of good deeds.)
- What do you think was Jesus' lesson?

3 RESPOND

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

Time to Prepare

In the scripture story of the ten bridesmaids and the oil lamps, all of the bridesmaids anticipated the bridegroom's arrival and all brought their lamps. However, some anticipated the need to be more prepared. They were wise and brought extra oil with them. If they ran out of oil in the lamp, they at least had some to spare. Others were distracted by the excitement and did not consider what would happen if the bridegroom was late in arriving. But because they had to go buy more oil, they missed the wedding feast. They could not understand why they were not allowed to enter because, after all, they had done what

was expected of them. Their lack of preparation caused them to fall short of their goal. The lesson here is—good intentions don't always get good results.

If we learn anything from the bridesmaids, it should be that even though we have a purpose or goal, we must take responsibility for our actions and be ready for anything that may come our way. We need to be wise with the use of our talents, time, and money. We need to prepare, learn, and study as much as possible so we can deal with any situation that may arise—even those we cannot foresee.

Brainstorm ideas and activities that we, as God's people, need to do to be wise and be ready. Write the ideas down on a chart. Have each group member select one item from the chart and create a plan they think would prepare a person for Christ's mission. Share plans.

4 SEND

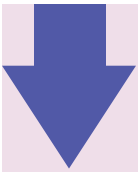
Explores how the lesson might be lived
(10% of total lesson time)

Mission Possible

Select one or two of the plans created above and choose a method to communicate the need to prepare for Christ's mission from the list below.

- Facebook, YouTube, Twitter or another form of social media
- Television, radio, or newspaper advertisement
- Poster, pamphlet, or flyer
- Poem, short story, or lyric
- Motivational speaker, minister, or coach

Have paper, pens, markers, scriptures, art supplies, and additional items available for group members to use to create their message. Ask those who would like to share with the group to present their message. If group members would like to share their presentations with the congregation, check with the worship coordinator about using their products in future worship services.



Going Deeper

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

Matthew tells how one who is committed to serve must be prepared and live expectantly for each opportunity to serve. It is not a passive commitment, but an active one. Preparation consists of whatever it takes: study, prayer, fasting, and service. In the parable of the ten bridesmaids, the groom did not arrive at the expected time. Only those who prepared with extra oil were there to greet him.

- How would you persuade someone to become a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- Evaluate the significance of the parable of the ten bridesmaids and commitment of discipleship for today.

7a. There are many lives waiting to hear the redeeming words of the gospel, or to be lifted from hopelessness by the hands of loving servants. But they will be lost to you without the generous response of disciples who share from their own bounty that others may know the joys of the kingdom.

b. Many are fearful and believe their security is to be found in the accumulation of possessions. The answers you seek are not inherent in the things of this world but in a faith that places its trust in the promises given to all who would follow Jesus Christ.

c. You have been given the principles of generosity, rightly interpreted for a new time. These principles call every disciple to tithe faithfully in accordance with means and capacity. Those values, deeply rooted in the Restoration faith, affirm that stewardship and discipleship cannot be divided and are dependent upon each other.

d. The call to respond is urgent. Look to the needs of your own congregations, but look also beyond your walls to the far-flung places where the church must go. Each disciple needs a spiritual home. You are called to build that home and care for it, but also to share equally in the outreaching ministries of the church. In that way the gospel may be sent to other souls also yearning for a spiritual resting place.

Challenge group members to be wise, be ready, prepare their hearts and minds, and shape their lives as disciples of love and mercy. Sing "What Is the World Like" CCS 385 or "Jesu, Tawa Pano" CCS 71. Close with prayer.

5

BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of total lesson time)

Be Wise, Be Ready

Read Doctrine and Covenants 162:7.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 28)

LESSON 52
19 November 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 25:14–30/Matthew 25:14–31 IV

Lesson Focus: God invites us to use our gifts and talents for building God's vision of shalom.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify their God-given gifts and talents.
- explore ways to responsibly develop and use gifts and talents as generous disciples.
- explain how gifts and talents can integrate with Mission Initiatives.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition
- Chart paper (9 pieces)
- Markers
- Paper and pens

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 25:14–30/Matthew 25:14–31 IV in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 118–119, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Decisions

Ask group members what they would do with an infinite amount of money. Make a list of the things they imagined and discuss how they would make their ideas real.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of total lesson time)

Talents

In the parable of the talents found in Matthew 25:14–30, the man distributed talents to his servants. A talent in this scripture was a monetary unit valued at more than a worker's wages over a period of fifteen years. Read the parable.

¹⁴For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another

one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in

the ground. Here you have what is yours.’²⁶But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?’²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

—Matthew 25:14–30 NRSV

God asks us to be good caretakers over what we are given. That means we are expected to handle things with responsibility. Whether God has blessed our lives with money or a particular talent, it is important to use these things wisely. God calls us to use them for the needs of others. It says in 1 Corinthians 4:2 that it is required that we be found faithful. Too many times the gifts God entrusts to us are used for our own wants and priorities instead of God’s. Like the three servants in Matthew 24 that were given responsibility to use their talents, when we use our gifts wisely, when we take a risk with God, God will provide abundance. Those that squander their gifts find that they soon have little left. They use their gifts for their own agendas and soon find that God will place those responsibilities with someone who will use them well.

Prepare to act out this passage. If possible, perform it for a younger audience. Another option is to become movie directors. Decide which of today’s actors would fill each role. Tell what qualities made each actor the best for the role.

3 RESPOND

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

Multiply

What are some of the responsibilities that God places in our care? What are some of the ways that we can use what God has given us to help others? Ask each group member to make a list of the talents and skills they have. Ask group members to suggest gifts and talents they see in other group members like humor, charity, joy, or organization. Ask each to make a list on paper of the ways their talents can be used to help others.

Write Principles 3, 4, 5 and 6 of Disciple’s Generous Response on four different large sheets of paper. Ask group members how each of the gifts in the group, from

the lists they compiled, could work within these principles adding their thoughts to each appropriate page. The principles are:

Principle 3—Respond Financially. A disciple’s financial response, while unique to individual circumstances, expresses love of God, neighbor, creation, and oneself.

Principle 4—Share Generously. A disciple shares generously through tithing so others may experience God’s generosity.

Principle 5—Save Wisely. A disciple saves wisely to create a better tomorrow for self, family, the church’s mission, and the world.

Principle 6—Spend Responsibly. A disciple spends responsibly as a commitment to live in health and harmony with God and the world.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 34 (Additional information for discussion is available on this page.)

- How can my talents and skills be multiplied for God?
- How do we use these gifts to help change the world?
- How can we use them to convey God’s mission of shalom?



Going Deeper: Christ’s Mission Is Our Mission

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

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f

For each Mission Initiative identify group members’ gifts and talents that can be engaged in the mission of Jesus Christ. How can each member take a risk like Jesus did? Make a chart for each initiative and let group members record how they can use their gifts and talents for each one.

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

4 SEND

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

Servants

The servants praised by their master took their challenge seriously. They took a risk, wisely invested what they were given, and produced more than they could share. For their good work, they were rewarded with greater responsibility and joy in knowing they were serving their employer well. Reflect and share about the following questions.

- What risk are you willing to take as a generous disciple of Jesus Christ?
- In what ways are you using talents wisely?
- How can you develop gifts and talents?
- What can you do this week to use your gifts and talents for someone?
- Where can you risk yourself for Christ's mission?

5 BLESS

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

In the book, *The Prophet*, Kahlil Gibran wrote,

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself That you truly give....There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward... It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding; And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving.

—Kahlil Gibran, (New York: Knopf),
1972, pp. 20–22

Thought for the week: Consider this week how to develop your gifts and talents in ways to serve Christ's mission. That is what matters most. Close with prayer.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 29)

LESSON 53
26 November 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 25:31–46

Lesson Focus: Our choices matter in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- describe responsible choices.
- examine who are “the least.”
- demonstrate acts of mercy.
- analyze what it means to live as a disciple.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Pictures of faces (See “At First Glance.”)
- Chart paper
- Markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 25:31–46 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 120, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

At First Glance

Prepare pictures of a number of familiar faces, not extremely well known by today’s students, from magazines, copied from library books, or printed off the internet. Select a mix of ethnic groups, races, and cultures. Make enough black-and-white copies of the pictures so several will be left over and no one will be forced to take the last picture. On the back attach the reason the people are known and why they are valued by God. Spread the pictures out on the floor of the room. When group members arrive, ask them to select a picture of a person with whom they would be willing to eat a meal. Instruct them not to turn over the picture, and when they’ve made their selection, sit down.

Whom they have chosen is not so important as the thoughts and judgments they make in their selection process. Start the discussion by asking the whole group why the leftover pictures were not chosen. Then ask each person why they chose the picture they did. Include these questions in the discussion:

- What do you look for in another person when you first meet them?

- What impresses you most?
- Do you go through an elimination process? (ugly or fabulous; black, white, or brown; rich or homeless; dating material or freaky) Describe your process.
- Why do you make first impressions of others?
- Do your thoughts indicate how these people will be treated?

After the discussion, ask group members to turn their pictures over to reveal that person’s information. Was anyone surprised? Were any first impressions inaccurate? What message comes from this activity?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Sheep and Goats

If possible, divide the class into two groups. Designate the group on the right as the sheep, and the group on the left as the goats. Read the scripture passage to the class. Ask for reactions from each group. How did the sheep feel about the outcome of the story? What did the goats think? What questions does this story raise?

This parable, the parable of the ten bridesmaids, and the parable of the talents were told by Jesus to his disciples just days before his death. Jesus knew he was nearing the end of his public ministry and was leaving instructions for his closest circle of friends, the disciples, until he would return. The author of Matthew thought these stories were important enough to include them in his writing. Read Matthew 25:31–46 again, and search for answers to the questions following.

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

—Matthew 25:31–46

- What are the characteristics of the sheep described in the scripture?
- What are the characteristics of the goats?
- What was the criteria Jesus used for judgment?
- What does the phrase “the least of these” mean?

- How did the disciples respond to this parable and to human needs?
- Can you find examples in the Bible where the disciples chose to act as sheep or goats? Begin with these:

Mark 6:7–13 (Jesus gave the disciples authority to go out two by two to heal and preach and they did.)

Luke 9:54 (“Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”)

Make a chart of the information you find.

3 RESPOND

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

When Did We Meet You?

Act out the following scenarios for the others to identify the situation and describe how ministry might be provided in the situation. Begin with these, and then have the group create some of their own.

You have several pieces of clothing that you don’t wear any more. They are in good condition, but they are too small for you. A family living close to you recently had a lot of smoke damage in their home due to a fire.

A teenager from another congregation is visiting your church this morning and he might feel out of place. You do not know him personally. Your friends are sitting on the other side of the church.

A person at your school was severely hurt in a motorcycle accident. She has a broken leg and has to stay home for a while. You wonder if she would like to know what is going on at school, but you don’t know her very well.

4 SEND

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

Choices: Sheep or Goats

How do we become part of all Jesus promised his disciples? Where do we fit on the sheep-and-goats chart? Jesus created for the disciples a visual image they could easily understand as he taught them about moral choices and judgment at his final return. What images might Jesus use today to help us understand the same message? Discuss ideas.

Our positive response to Jesus’ instruction to reach out to “the least of these” is expressed in our acts of compassion and mercy. What have we failed to do even when we already knew the expectation? When have we met Jesus in the form of the homeless, the hungry, the thirsty, the

child, the stranger, the sick, or the prisoner? Jesus taught us to love our neighbor, to treat all we meet with respect. How will you reach out and touch others in the name of Jesus Christ this week?

5 BLESS

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

Be Jesus' Hands and Feet

Sing "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love" CCS 367 or
"Whatever You Do" CCS 355.

Read together:

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

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f