

Sacred Space: A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Year B

Focus: Ordinary Time

Scripture: Mark 9:30–37 NRSV

Gathering

Welcome

Prayer for Peace

*Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.
Light the peace candle.*

Eternal God, present in all of life that is significant and holy, hear us now as we lift our voices in thanksgiving and praise, in confession, and in supplication.

We give thanks for your word of encouragement that enables us to face each new day. We also thank you for your word of faithfulness that gives us hope for the future. And we give thanks for your word of guidance that directs us as we seek to better understand your ways.

Gracious God, deliver us from the shallowness of our commitments, from the thousand ways our strivings separate us from each other. And most of all, deliver us from our fears that alienate us from you.

O God of faith, hear our prayer as we light our flame of peace and love at this hour and in this sacred place. May the flame here kindled grow within each heart, that all may sense more fully your Spirit in the warmth of our concern for one another. Refresh us when we grow weary of opposing injustice and oppression, terrorism and war, and send us forth from this experience of dialogue and worship strengthened to bind up the wounds that afflict our world.

Grant us peace, O God—not the peace of slumber, but of quiet confidence in the triumph of your word. For the sake of all your creation, we pray. Amen.

—Wallace B. Smith, adapted

Spiritual Practice

Jesus Prayer

The traditional form of the Jesus Prayer comes from the petition of the beggar on the road to Jericho, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” However, a shorter phrase that focuses on the name of Jesus and the desire for God’s mercy can be used as a meditative prayer. Today we will use “Lord Jesus, have mercy on me.”

Sit in a comfortable position. Let your breathing become relaxed and easy.

Let the words “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” form in your mind.

Gradually fit the words to the natural rhythm of your breath. For example, internally say “Lord Jesus Christ” as you inhale and “have mercy on me” as you exhale.

Remember, the prayer is not intended for rational analysis of content and words. Allow your mind simply to rest in the words as you breathe.

We silently will continue praying the Jesus Prayer together for three to five minutes.

Draw the prayer time to a close by saying “Amen.”

Invite the group to briefly share about the experience with this silent-prayer practice.

Sharing Around the Table

Mark 9:30–37 NRSV

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

Often Jesus needed to tell his closest followers something he already had told them because they didn’t get it the first time. Such was the disciples’ lack of understanding. Jesus tells the disciples again that he will be killed, and after three days he will rise again. But they still do not understand. The disciples’ lack of understanding is a common theme in Mark.

Jesus then teaches his disciples an important lesson. As they journey, the disciples argue among themselves about who is greatest. Clearly they do not understand what Jesus taught about humility and serving others. Jesus asks the disciples what they are talking about. They decline to reply, presumably from embarrassment. So Jesus sits down—a sign he is about to teach—calls the disciples to him, and repeats what he told them earlier: “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.”

Jesus tells his disciples that welcoming a child is the same as welcoming him. Today, we might think such an action is cute or interesting. However, in Jesus’ time, this was most unusual. Children seldom were seen or heard. They spent their time with women and not men. There would have been no place for a child in important conversations between a rabbi and his

followers. But Jesus made a place for the child as an example of basic discipleship. The child, least important among the people, was given a place of honor as Jesus talked about humility and what is required of a true servant minister.

We follow the One who showed God's grace and mercy to all people, especially to those considered the least important or of little worth. We follow the teachings of Jesus as we respond to God's call by acting with humility, treating others with kindness, and serving all people.

Questions

1. When have you not fully understood a part of Jesus' message, ministry, or mission?
2. Have you ever been treated as unworthy or unimportant? Whom do you tend to dismiss as less important?
3. Where do you sense God calling you to reach in kindness to another?

Sending

Generosity Statement

“Sharing for the common good is the spirit of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2f).

We receive God's grace and generosity. The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

This offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple's Generous Response:

Generous God, Be with each of us as we manage our time, treasure, talent, and witness. May we use all our resources in ways that express our desire to bring blessings of healing and peace into the world. May we focus our giving on your purposes, and may our hearts be aligned with your heart. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 597, “Make Me a Servant”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group

- Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
- Thoughts for Children

Prayer for Peace

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Communion Statement

We come together to share in the Lord's Supper "as a visible witness of loving Christian fellowship and shared remembrance of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection" (Doctrine and Covenants 164:4a).

All committed followers of Christ are invited to partake, but no one should feel pressured to receive the emblems.

We share in Communion as an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community.

In preparation let's sing from *Community of Christ Sings* (select one):

515, "In These Moments We Remember"

516, "Coming Together for Wine and for Bread"

521, "Let Us Break Bread Together"

525, "Small Is the Table"

528, "Eat This Bread"

Thoughts for Children

Materials: picture of the world or a diverse community, small stickers of a crown or trophy

Ask: Who likes to be the best? What do you like to be the best at? (Allow for sharing.)

Ask: In a car race, how do we know which car is the best? How do we know who is the best at coloring? When there are many kites flying on a windy day, how do we know which one is the best? (Allow for discussion.)

Show a picture of the world or a diverse community.

Say: In our communities we often treat some people as if they are “best,” and we treat other people as if they are the least.

Who might get treated as “the best?” (Allow for sharing.)

Who might get treated as “the least?”(Allow for sharing.)

When Jesus hears his disciples arguing over which of them is the greatest, he says to be “best” they will need to become like servants. They will need to become the “least”!

Then he places a child among them and says that welcoming a child is the same as welcoming Jesus! This sometimes is called the “upside-down kingdom,” (turn the picture upside-down).

In Jesus’ upside-down kingdom those who often get treated as the “least” go first, and they actually are the greatest.

And those who think they are the “best” are called to go last and to serve others.

When we follow Jesus we know we do not have to seek to treat others as if we are better than they are. We treat all people with kindness and welcome them as Jesus welcomed the children.

Hand out stickers and have children put them on upside-down.

We will wear our crowns (or trophies) upside-down to remind us that we want to live in Jesus’ upside-down kingdom!

Thank the children for participating.