



Community of Christ



COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

ADULT

3 JUNE 2018 — 2 SEPTEMBER 2018

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 B: New Testament* (with focus on the gospel according to Mark).

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 4)

LESSON 27
3 June 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Mark 2:23—3:6

Lesson Focus: Shall we keep the Sabbath?

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand the purpose of this scripture in Mark's narrative.
- understand what Jesus is saying about the Sabbath.
- confront the irony of the Pharisees' use of the Sabbath versus Jesus' usage.

Supplies

- Bibles (NRSV)
- Copies of Response Sheet
- Pens, pencils, and paper
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Mark 2:23—3:6 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, p. 84. Read the appropriate Mission Initiatives, Enduring Principles, and Basic Beliefs reflected in this lesson. These are all found in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition. Both resources are available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Sing together or take turns reading "Gather Your Children" CCS 77, paying close attention to the words.

Meditate on the meaning of the Sabbath as portrayed in this hymn. How does this compare with your understanding of the Sabbath?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Read Mark 2:23–3:6.

Mark presents the teachings of Christ by theme, not chronological order. Our text for today comes at the end of a group of five conspiracy scriptures, conspiracy by the

leaders of the Jews to trap Jesus. These come after a series of stories proclaiming adulation for Jesus Christ from the public and together they emphasize the difference between how Jesus was received by the common people and by their leaders.

Our first story shows Jesus' disciples walking through a field, pulling grain off the stalks, and rubbing them between their hands to free the kernels for eating. The judgment for this story is rendered by the Pharisees, an ancient Jewish sect who taught the Jews strict observance of written law and tradition. To them, what the disciples were doing was "harvesting" grain. Not so bad in and of itself, but it was the Sabbath. Harvesting was considered work according to the law, and no work was to be done on the Sabbath.

Close your eyes and visualize someone you know or have heard about on the news claiming a biblical law is behind their reasons for judging someone.

- What are they saying? How do they sound? How do they stand?
- How do they look at people around them?
- How do they look while they are judging?

- Are they right? Are they wrong? Neither?
- Discuss with the class or in small groups the pros and cons of their literal take on the laws and how it compares to Jesus' presentation of the law.

Jesus defended his disciples by reminding the Pharisees of the story of David who raided the granaries of the priests to feed his armies when he was running from King Saul. David was a hero among the Jews and highly respected, and Jesus' defense would have had a favorable response from the people. Jesus ended this story by saying the Sabbath was made for people; people were not made for the Sabbath. Jesus was saying it was all right to do good things on the Sabbath, such as feeding the hungry. Then Jesus says a curious thing: "The Son of Man is also lord even of the Sabbath."

The phrase "Son of Man" would have meant many things to his Jewish audience and especially the Pharisees. Jesus used it frequently to refer to himself. For the Pharisees, this phrase referred to the Messiah.

What were the Pharisees trying to do when they judged Jesus for violating the Sabbath? Why is this important to them?

If we look at the history of the Jews, we find a repetitive cycle of losing and winning their land in battle with foreign powers. Each time they lost their country, a prophet would appear, holding them responsible for the loss of God's favor because they did not obey the law.

- How does this information affect your understanding of the Pharisees' actions? Of Jesus' actions?

The second story raises another question of what it means to obey Sabbath rest. The Pharisees were once again judging, but they were judging in silence. They seemed to be waiting for Jesus to do something wrong. A group referred to as the Herodians is also mentioned. The Herodians were a political group, supporting the policies of King Herod who was made king by the Romans.

Jesus goes into the synagogue on the Sabbath. In the synagogue is a man with a withered hand and the Pharisees who were waiting to catch Jesus in another violation of the law. The scene is set. Jesus knows the Pharisees are waiting to judge him. He attempts to avoid their judgment by asking a question: "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:4). The law makes provision for caring for animals and other acts of charity on the Sabbath. When the Pharisees do not answer, Jesus becomes angry. He heals the man's hand. The Pharisees leave, meeting with the Herodians about how to kill Jesus.

- Read Mark 3:4–6. Reflect on Jesus' question compared with the actions of the Pharisees that follow the healing. Discuss the implications of Jesus' question when compared with the Pharisees' action. What is the point Mark is trying to make here?

3 RESPOND

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

What are the lessons Jesus was attempting to teach the Pharisees?

One of these lessons can be found in the Enduring Principle Worth of All Persons. For Jesus, the most important laws are to love God and love your neighbor as you love yourself. Jesus saw the needs of the people around him as a primary concern. He challenged the law by putting the welfare of the people above that of the law of the Sabbath. This Enduring Principle was born from the church's basic belief in humanity. All people are valuable in God's sight simply because they are human.

Jesus was also trying to get the Pharisees to see the suffering of the people around them. The Mission Initiative Abolish Poverty, End Suffering reflects that concern. Jesus wants to get us out of our tunnel vision which, like the Pharisees, only sees the law and those breaking it. He wanted to expand their vision to include loving their neighbor. One should obey the Sabbath law of rest if it didn't mean your neighbor continued to suffer and remain in poverty. But the love had to come first. Jesus was requiring the Pharisees to make Responsible Choices (another Enduring Principle) as they considered the application of the law.

- How would the Pharisees' judgments have changed if they had really heard what Jesus was teaching them?
- How diligent are we in applying Jesus' teaching on the Sabbath today, both the Pharisees' law and Jesus' love?

In the process of our scripture study today, Jesus heals a withered hand. Mark nearly passes by the miracle in his relentless pursuit of the story line. Yet for Jesus, the healing is of such importance he risks the anger of the Pharisees to heal the man's hand.

Laying on of hands for the sick is a sacrament of the church. Our Basic Beliefs define a sacrament as a "special ministry given to the church to convey the grace of Jesus Christ to his followers and all those he yearns to touch with his compassion." This tells us what Jesus was feeling as he reached out to the suffering man. So many things play into healing: the faith of the man and his friends and family, Jesus' love for the man and that of his family and friends, the worshipful setting, even things we do not recognize as needing healing before his body could manifest that healing.

- The church has established steps for preparation to receive many of our sacraments: baptism, confirmation, marriage, ordination, blessing of children, and evangelist blessing. Discuss what some of these steps

are. Think about what steps you would take to prepare to receive the laying on of hands for the sick.

- When you request laying on of hands for the sick, what are you asking for?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

(10% of total lesson time)

- How do you honor the Sabbath in your life?
- How would a day of rest change your life? Would this be difficult to do?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of total lesson time)

Gather in a circle and have someone read “Gather Your Children,” CCS 77. Allow your mind to dwell on any word or phrase that attracts your attention. Rest quietly for a moment, and reflect on that word or phrase. End by sharing that word or phrase as part of a shared prayer with the class.

LESSON 27 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 4)

3 June 2018

Mark 2:23—3:6

²³One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. ²⁴The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" ²⁵And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? ²⁶He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." ²⁷Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; ²⁸so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

¹Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ²They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." ⁴Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Close your eyes and visualize someone you know or have heard about on the news claiming a biblical law is behind their reasons for judging someone.

- What are they saying? How do they sound? How do they stand?

- Are they right? Are they wrong? Neither?

- Discuss with the class the pros and cons of a literal interpretation of the laws and how it compares to Jesus' presentation of the law.

- What were the Pharisees trying to do when they judged Jesus for violating the Sabbath? Why is this important to them?

If we look at the history of the Jews, we find a repetitive cycle of losing and winning their land in battle with foreign powers. Each time they lost their country, a prophet would appear, holding them responsible for the loss of God's favor because they did not obey the law.

- How does this information affect your understanding of the Pharisees' actions? Of Jesus' actions?

Read Mark 3:4–6. Reflect on Jesus' question compared with the actions of the Pharisees that follow the healing. Discuss the implications of Jesus' question when compared with the Pharisees' action. What is the point Mark is trying to make here?

- How would the Pharisees' judgments have changed if they had really heard what Jesus was teaching them?

- How diligent are we in applying Jesus' teaching on the Sabbath today, both the Pharisees' law and Jesus' love?

- When you request laying on of hands for the sick, what are you asking for?

The church has established steps for preparation to receive many of our sacraments: baptism, confirmation, marriage, ordination, blessing of children, and evangelist blessing. Discuss what some of these steps are. Think about what steps you would take to prepare to receive the laying on of hands for the sick.

- How do you honor the Sabbath in your life? How would a day of rest change your life? Would this be difficult to do?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 5)

LESSON 28
10 June 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Mark 3:20–35

Lesson Focus: Who is my mother? Who is my brother?

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand why Jesus' family thought he was not sane.
- explore the scribes' position on Jesus' teachings.
- understand Jesus' teachings compared to the scribes' understanding.

Supplies

- Bibles (NRSV)
- Copies of Response Sheet
- Pens or pencils

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Mark 3:20–35 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 85–86. Read the appropriate Mission Initiatives, Enduring Principles, and Basic Beliefs reflected in this lesson. These are all in *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition. Both resources are available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Have class members stand at various places in the room. Divide the class by household. How many households are there in the class? Are some of these households also families? People living alone?

Now divide the class by biological families. Are there any large groups? Couples? Are there people still standing alone?

Return to your seats. Ask people to share with the class one person (present or not) who is not a biological relative, but someone they consider to be family.

2 ENGAGE

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

In our scripture lesson for today, Mark presents two stories, one nested inside the other. Mark uses this device frequently to heighten the impact of the story.

Read Mark 3:20-35.

Mark begins with a story about Jesus' family. They have been hearing rumors about what he has been doing and are concerned he has gone insane. They have decided they need to bring him home to talk some sense into him and to help him get his priorities straight. A good Jew is educated in the synagogue, studies a trade, gets married,

has a family, and settles down to support that family. If he is an eldest brother, he is also the leader of the family, and supports that household after his father dies. Jesus is not doing this.

- In what ways do the actions of Jesus' family seem appropriate or inappropriate?
- How would Jesus choices and actions be viewed in our current cultural context?

The embedded story is a judgment by scribes. Scribes were transcribers of scripture and teachers knowledgeable in the law. The New Testament associated them with the Pharisees. In Mark's nested story, they do not consider Jesus insane. They consider him to be possessed because he can cast out demons. They say he casts out demons through the power of Beelzebub (Beelzebub, translated as Lord of the Flies, is used in the New Testament for Satan).

Jesus defends himself by stating if Satan was fighting against himself, he was already defeated. Jesus says, "...if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand." The only way anyone can take over the house of a strong man is to first tie up that man.

Jesus has defended himself from charges of demon possession, but he is not done. He issues a warning, "'Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin—for they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:28–30). Essentially, Jesus is saying calling the good bad and the bad good will be an unforgivable sin.

- What are the scribes trying to do here?
- What is Jesus trying to say?
- How does this work with the original story?

Now Mark presents us with the rest of the first story. Jesus is told by some of his disciples that his mother, brothers, and sisters are waiting for him outside. Jesus does not go out to meet them. Instead, he asks questions: "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Then he answers his own questions, "Those that do the will of God."

- What does Mark see as a common theme of these two stories?
- Why does Mark present the stories together?

3 RESPOND

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

We have something very important going on in these stories. They are trying to ascertain exactly who Jesus

is by telling us who he is not. Jesus lifts up Blessings of Community, one of our Enduring Principles, as an important value in his mission. Those who do the will of God are his family now.

- In what communities do you find yourself?
- How did the community of Jesus' day bless him?
- How do your many communities bless you today?

As we look at these stories, we get a sense of mission. Jesus has a mission to fulfill and will honor that mission, even if people in the greater community or his own family do not understand it. The Mission Initiative Experience Congregations in Mission looks at Jesus' life and calls us to serve Christ just as Christ served God— without concern for how the world sees us.

When Jesus looks around him and names the crowd as his family, he is not picking out one or two people. He is calling them all. All Are Called is an Enduring Principle of the church.

The story of Community of Christ is one of living in community, whether lived out in actual physical communities or having a sense of connectedness with other disciples throughout the world.

- What is your congregation doing to reflect this call to mission?
- What "opportunities abound" (Doctrine and Covenants 165:1c) in your congregation and community for greater response to calling and connection to worldwide mission?

4 SEND

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

Begin a list of the names of all the people you consider part of your family, whether they are related biologically or not. Continue this exercise during your prayer times throughout the coming week. Get together with one or two of them if you haven't seen them in a while.

5 BLESS

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

Join hands in a circle. Have a volunteer pray for the family of Christ.

LESSON 28 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 5)

10 June 2018

Mark 3:20–35

²⁰and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." ²²And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." ²³And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. ²⁷But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

²⁸"Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— ³⁰for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

³¹Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." ³³And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

- In what ways do the actions of Jesus' family seem appropriate or inappropriate?
- How would Jesus choices and actions be viewed in our current cultural context?

- What is Jesus trying to say? How does this work with the original story?
- What does Mark see as a common theme of these two stories? Why does Mark present the stories together?
- In what communities do you find yourself? How do your many communities bless you today?

Begin a list of the names of all the people you consider part of your family, whether they are related biologically or not. Continue this exercise during your prayer times throughout the coming week. Get together with one or two of them if you haven't seen them in a while.

- What is your congregation doing to reflect this call to mission?
- What "opportunities abound" (Doctrine and Covenants 165:1c) in your congregation and community for greater response to calling and connection to worldwide mission?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 6)

LESSON 29
17 June 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Mark 4:26–34

Lesson Focus: Grow in the kingdom of God.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore Mark's use of parables.
- understand Mark's images of God's kingdom in the Parables of the Growing Seed and the Mustard Seed.

Supplies

- Bibles (NRSV)
- Copies of Response Sheet
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs, 3rd Edition*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Mark 4:26–34 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 87–88. Read the appropriate Mission Initiatives, Enduring Principles, and Basic Beliefs reflected in this lesson. These are all in *Sharing in Community of Christ*. Both resources are available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Share together "Bring Forth the Kingdom" CCS 387 as a prayer, either sung or read. Then read stanza three, "You are a seed of the Word, O people." Pray silently for understanding and response to this image of God's kingdom.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Mark presents parables by theme instead of as part of a story. Each grouping of parables examines a lesson in Jesus' teachings. Each parable is related to the previous one and the one that follows. Each contributes meaning to the next parable.

- How does Mark's way of presenting parables help us understand Jesus' lessons?

All the parables in chapter four have common elements: seeds and how they grow. The Parable of the Sower (not part of today's study), the Parable of the Growing Seed, and the Parable of the Mustard Seed are all illustrations of the kingdom of God. They are all telling us something important about how the kingdom of God is brought into being.

Even though it is not part of our focus scripture for today, it would be good to remind ourselves of the Parable of the Sower at this time in order to make today's lesson easier to understand.

- Read the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1–9) and its interpretation (Mark 4:10–20). Discuss briefly.

The Parable of the Sower is more about the soil than the seed. The seed is good. It is the soil that determines the growth of the seed. This parable is also not about the sower. He or she seems careless almost with his or her sowing, but Jesus does not find fault with him or her. Jesus is only concerned about the nature of the soil.

- What does the seed symbolize in this parable?
- What does the soil symbolize?
- Who is the sower?

Read Mark 4:26-29.

The Parable of the Growing Seed is about a seed planted in good soil. The farmer has planted the seed, but beyond that does nothing to make the seed grow. The seed is good. The soil is good. And the seed grows all on its own. The farmer has nothing to do with the growing process except to sow the seed and reap the harvest. How this works is a mystery to the sower.

- What does the seed symbolize in this parable?
- What does the soil symbolize?
- Who is the sower?
- How does this parable affect your understanding of the Parable of the Sower?

Read Mark 4:30-34.

To understand the Parable of the Mustard Seed, we need to know the mustard seed grows into a very large and unruly bush. Wherever it is, it takes over and spreads. The only way to control it is to pull it up when you find the first shoots sticking out of the ground. Otherwise it will take over the garden. It is also not cultivated, but grows on its own. Once it has taken root, it is difficult to get rid of it.

- What is Jesus trying to tell us about God's kingdom with this parable?
- What is Mark trying to tell us about the kingdom of God when all of these parables are considered together as he presented them?

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

These parables are reflected in three of the Basic Beliefs of the church: Reign of God, End Times, and Ministry.

The soil is a mystery. The seed is good. We are to minister where we are, sowing the seed without concern for its reception or cultivation. What will happen will happen, and we will be as surprised as anyone when it happens. We are called to minister where we are. Our faith will be in the outcome. The Reign of God will happen. The End Times will be a time of peace that will come. Have faith in God.

- Have someone read these three Basic Beliefs statements of the church (found on pp. 14–16 in *Sharing in Community of Christ*).
- How are these reflected in the three parables discussed above?

The Mission Initiatives are built on the Basic Beliefs of the church. Two of these, Invite People to Christ and Experience Congregations in Mission, grow out of the Basic Beliefs listed above. As we go out in the world and share our witness of Christ's love for us, we are planting the seed. The congregations in which we worship become soil to grow the seed.

- In what way is your congregation good or bad soil for the seed of the good news?
- What needs to change? What needs to stay the same?

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

Spend a few moments meditating on how you would share Christ's love. Jot down your thoughts to share with someone later.

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

Join hands and share together the last stanza of "Bring Forth the Kingdom" CCS 387. Offer a silent prayer for the manifestation of these words in your life and the life of your congregation. The leader will signal the end of the prayer with "Amen."

LESSON 29 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 6)

17 June 2018

Mark 4:26–34

²⁶He also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

³⁰He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

- How does Mark’s way of presenting parables help us understand Jesus’ lessons?

Read the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1–9) and its interpretation (Mark 4:10–20). Discuss briefly.

Mark 4:1–9 The Parable of the Sower

¹Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ²He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³“Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding

thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” ⁹And he said, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

Mark 4:10–20 The Purpose of the Parables

¹⁰When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; ¹²in order that they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.”

¹³And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁵These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, ¹⁹but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²⁰And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”

The Parable of the Sower is more about the soil than the seed.

- What does the seed symbolize in this parable? What does the soil symbolize? Who is the sower?

The Parable of the Growing Seed is about a seed planted in good soil.

- What does the seed symbolize in this parable? What does the soil symbolize? Who is the sower?

- How does this parable affect your understanding of the Parable of the Sower?

Exploring the Parable of the Mustard Seed

- What is Jesus trying to tell us about God's kingdom with this parable?
- What is Mark trying to tell us about the kingdom of God when all of these parables are considered together as he presented them?

These parables are reflected in three of the Basic Beliefs of the church: The Reign of God, End Time, and Ministry.

- Have someone read these three Basic Beliefs statements of the church (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 14–16).
- How are these reflected in the three parables discussed above?

The Reign of God

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

End Time

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."

Ministry

Ministry is humble service offered according to the model of Jesus, who calls every disciple to share in ministry for the world. Some disciples are called by God and ordained to priesthood offices to serve the mission of the church in specialized ways. The Holy Spirit gives complementary gifts and abilities to all disciples to equip the body of Christ for its witness in the world.

- In what way is your congregation good or bad soil for the seed of the good news? What needs to change? What needs to stay the same?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 7)

LESSON 30
24 June 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Mark 4:35–41

Lesson Focus: Peace be still.

Objectives

The learners will...

- examine the scripture story.
- explore the presence of faith in the story.
- understand how faith contributes to peace.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)
- Copies of Response Sheet
- Doctrine and Covenants
- Pens and pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Mark 4:35–41 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 89–90. Read the appropriate Mission Initiatives, Enduring Principles, and Basic Beliefs reflected in this lesson. These are all in *Sharing in Community of Christ*. Both resources are available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Think of a time in your childhood when you were afraid. What brought you peace? Share your experience with a neighbor.

2 ENGAGE

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

The position of this miracle story (following the kingdom parables) is interesting. The kingdom parables touch on the role of the faith of the sower to trust the process of planting, growing, and reaping. This miracle story examines the role faith, or trusting in God, plays in our peace.

The story of Jesus stilling the storm seems a simple story of faith on the surface, but Jesus’ audience would have understood this story to be an exorcism due to the structure and language used. The story follows a basic exorcism format: rebuke and command to silence. Jesus uses this same format for controlling demons elsewhere, as in Mark 1:25. The sea is seen as hostile to God, and Mark portrays Jesus as the powerful force controlling it. This is a theme in Mark, Jesus’ power over all forces of the earth: demons, disease, sin, and even death.

- Read through the story in Mark 4:35–41, taking note of the language Jesus uses to rebuke the storm.
- Compare it to Mark 1:21–27. Note any correlations and discuss.
- How does this change the story for you?

This is one of the few stories in which Jesus’ power is displayed only for his disciples. Jesus was sleeping, at peace even while the storm raged. The boat is being swamped, yet he remains asleep. When he awakens, his

anger is more at the disciples than at the storm. Jesus quiets the storm. Then he criticizes their lack of faith. "He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?'" (Mark 4:40).

- Discuss Jesus' response to the storm and to the disciples in this scenario.
- What was Jesus expecting from his disciples?

3 RESPOND

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

One of the Basic Beliefs of the church is Peace, a peace grounded on faith in God's love for creation; Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who came to tell us about it; and the Holy Spirit who leads us to spread peace and justice across the world.

- Think of the last time you were afraid. How did you find peace?

The need to spread justice and peace across the world is reflected in the Mission Initiative Pursue Peace on Earth. If we are called to be Jesus' hands in the world, then we are called to serve the Prince of Peace by spreading peace.

- What can you do in your community to spread justice and peace?
- Do you see any needs not being addressed?

Another Basic Belief of the church is the Reign of God. Another word for Reign of God is Zion. We are told in Doctrine and Covenants 140:5c, "The work of preparation and the perfection of my Saints go forward slowly, and Zion conditions are no further away nor any closer than

the spiritual condition of my people justify."

- Jesus was preparing the disciples for ministering after he was gone. What might Jesus have been trying to teach his disciples in this story? Discuss.

4 SEND

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

Sit quietly and listen as the instructor reads Doctrine and Covenants 140:5c three times, pausing between each reading.

The work of preparation and the perfection of my Saints go forward slowly, and Zion conditions are no further away nor any closer than the spiritual condition of my people justify.

— Doctrine and Covenants 140:5c

- As the scripture is read, focus on one word or phrase that grabs your attention.
- Make a note of the word or phrase.
- Ask yourself, "Why does this get my attention?"
- Pray silently about the answer.

5 BLESS

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

Sing together "Amazing Grace" CCS 19 as a closing prayer. In silence meditate for a few moments on the words.

LESSON 30 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 7)

24 June 2018

Mark 4:35–41

³⁵On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

- Think of a time in your childhood when you were afraid. What brought you peace? Share your experience with a neighbor.
- Read through the story in Mark 4:35–41, taking note of the language Jesus uses to rebuke the storm. Compare it to Mark 1:21–27. Note any correlations and discuss.

Mark 1:21–27

²¹They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." ²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶And the unclean

spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

- How does this change the story for you?
- Discuss Jesus' response to the storm and to the disciples in this scenario. What was Jesus expecting from his disciples?
- Think of the last time you were afraid. How did you find peace?
- What can you do in your community to spread justice and peace? Do you see any needs not being addressed?
- Jesus was preparing the disciples for ministering after he was gone. What might Jesus have been trying to teach his disciples in this story? Discuss.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 8)

LESSON 31
1 July 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Mark 5:21–43

Lesson Focus: Trust in Jesus

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the two stories.
- understand the point of each story.
- understand what the stories say together.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)
- Copies of Response Sheet
- Pens, pencils, and notecards
- Basket

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Mark 5:21–43 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 91–92. Read the appropriate Mission Initiatives, Enduring Principles, and Basic Beliefs reflected in this lesson. These are all in *Sharing in Community of Christ*. Both resources are available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Sit quietly for a couple of minutes, remembering a time when you trusted Jesus. Share your experience with a neighbor.

2 ENGAGE

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

Our stories today are miracle stories about healing. They come at the end of a collection of healing stories. The previous stories occurred on the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. Now Jesus and his disciples have returned to the Jewish side.

Read Mark 5:21-43.

As we have seen before, these are more of Mark’s nested stories. Some scholars wonder if he has done this to

increase suspense for his listeners. Others believe it was to enhance their meaning. While these stories can stand alone, to understand them together causes subtle changes in their meaning, just as placing them after the Gentile miracle stories affects their meaning.

We are given a lot of detail in these stories. First Jairus’ daughter was very ill, maybe even dying. Jairus was a leader in the synagogue. Generally, synagogue leaders were wealthy, well educated, and respected. This was a person who would not be found consulting an itinerant preacher, but he was desperate. He was there to beg Jesus to come and heal his daughter, and it took courage for him to do this. Jesus followed him to his house accompanied by a large crowd.

- What do you think Jairus was feeling as he approached Jesus and then led him to his house?

Suddenly, the action was interrupted by a question from Jesus, “Who touched my clothes?” Even the disciples thought it was a ridiculous question, but something had happened that drew Jesus’ attention. A woman came forward, knelt at his feet, and confessed to touching him and being healed.

Jairus, as leader of the synagogue, would have known this woman was unclean due to an issue of blood. Most likely,

many others in the crowd would have known it, too, if they were locals. Merely touching something she had touched would have made someone unclean. She would have been banned from the synagogue for the entire 12 years she suffered. It took courage to approach Jesus and touch him.

- How do you think Jairus is feeling now?

In that time, magical thinking was often the answer to ailments and sicknesses. People went to the temple to be healed by doctors who worked there and provided magical medicines or actions for healing. Jesus stops and takes the time to tell the woman what really healed her.

Now we read the bad news: Jairus's daughter has died.

- How do you think Jairus is feeling now?

Jesus dismisses the reaction and continues to Jairus' house. He puts out the mourners and takes only Jairus, his wife, and the three disciples (Peter, James, and John) into the room with him. He raises the child, gives her back to her parents, and orders them to feed her. Mark tells us she is 12 years old.

- What do these stories and the preceding Gentile miracle stories have in common?
- Where do the people in these stories come from? How are they alike? How are they different?
- What do these stories tell us about Jesus' response to people?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing

(35% of total lesson time)

The church has a Mission Initiative Abolish Poverty, End Suffering. Paired with the Enduring Principle Worth of All Persons, we can see how Jesus' ministry in these two stories is born out of his love for all people, no matter their nationality or social standing. Jesus loves everyone the same.

- How does the way Mark presents these stories teach us about Jesus' love for all people?

The sacraments are a Basic Belief of the church and bring us both closer to God and to each other. In this scripture, we are met with two healing stories that are used to bring two people, very different from each other, together.

- How does Mark do this?
- What is the true purpose of these stories?
- Is there more than one purpose?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

(10% of total lesson time)

Think about the multiple layers of messages conveyed in this scripture passage.

- How does it apply to our world today?
- How does it relate to the call for the church? For its members? For you?
- Write your observations on notecards.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of total lesson time)

Form a circle, placing the notecards in a basket at the center. Go around the circle and have each person offer a one-word or sentence prayer for the courage and power to fulfill these actions.

LESSON 31 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 8)

1 July 2018

Mark 5:21–43

²¹When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²²Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." ²⁴So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³²He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

³⁵While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴²And immediately

the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

- **Jairus was a person who would not be found consulting an itinerant preacher, but he was desperate. What do you think Jairus was feeling as he approached Jesus and then led him to his house?**
- **A woman came forward, knelt at Jesus' feet, and confessed to touching him and being healed. How do you think Jairus is feeling now?**
- **Jesus stops and takes the time to tell the woman what really healed her. Now we read the bad news: Jairus' daughter has died. How do you think Jairus is feeling now?**
- **What do these stories and the preceding Gentile miracle stories have in common? Where do the people in these stories come from? How are they alike? How are they different?**

- How does the way Mark presents these stories teach us about Jesus' love for all people?

Think about the multiple layers of messages conveyed in this scripture passage.

- How does it apply to our world today?

- The sacraments are a Basic Belief of the church and bring us both closer to God and to each other. In this scripture, we are met with two healing stories that are used to bring two people, very different from each other, together. How does Mark do this? What is the true purpose of these stories?

- How does it relate to the call for the church? For its members? For you? Write your observations on notecards.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 9)

LESSON 32
8 July 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Mark 6:1–13

Lesson Focus: Proclaim repentance.

Objectives

The learners will...

- examine the two scripture stories.
- explore Mark's treatment of the twelve.
- discover Mark's point in these stories.

Supplies

- Bibles (NRSV)
- Copies of Response Sheet
- Pens, pencils, and paper or notecards

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Mark 6:1–13 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 93–94. Read the appropriate Mission Initiatives, Enduring Principles, and Basic Beliefs reflected in this lesson. These are all in *Sharing in Community of Christ*. Both resources are available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

- Who is the apostle over your jurisdiction?
- Discuss the duties of an apostle.

2 ENGAGE

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

In our text for today, we have two stories, back to back, with opposite outcomes.

Read Mark 6:1-13.

The first story describes a trip Jesus made to his home in Nazareth. The problems arose when Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach. The people of Nazareth thought they knew him. After all, he grew up there. They knew he was the son of the town carpenter and trained in that trade. They knew his family

wasn't rich enough to give him much of an education. They were offended by his teachings.

- Was there a time when the people in your life did not seem to respect your giftedness? How did you feel?

Because of this reaction, Jesus is not able to perform many miracles among them, only a few healings. The scriptures say Jesus was amazed by this situation.

- Do a short visualization of this scripture. Read it through several times until you know the action; then close your eyes and visualize the scene, letting yourself participate in the action.
- What part did you play in the scene? How did that affect your understanding of the situation in which Jesus found himself?

The second story concerns the 12 disciples. In almost all of Mark's stories, the disciples don't understand any of Jesus' teachings. They ask foolish questions. They lack even the basics of faith. Mark only calls them apostles once. In Mark, all the disciples abandon Jesus when he is arrested.

Now we have a story of these would-be disciples as they are sent out in pairs to share the good news. Sending out these teams comes right after Jesus' difficult reception

in Nazareth. Instead of wallowing in disappointment, however, Jesus moves on to his next step of training his disciples. They are given instructions of what to do when they get into town, how to handle themselves once they are there, and what to do if they are rejected.

- How would you react if your family and friends rejected your success to the point you could not even share it with them?
- What are Jesus' actions when confronted with this situation?

The disciples get along well. They are well received. They perform exorcisms. They perform healings. They seem to have picked up a few things from Jesus after all.

- What does this say about our reception from Jesus when our best does not seem to be good enough?
- What does Jesus' example suggest to you about moving on?

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

Discipleship is a Basic Belief of the church. A disciple is a person who is ready to help Jesus in any way to move forward the kingdom of God. Disciples make their life available to the Lord, ready to move forward, even in their insecurities, to do their best for God.

This Basic Belief is echoed in the Enduring Principle All Are Called. Each person has a calling to fulfill, called to make a difference. Some are called to specific roles in ministry. Some are called in the midst of their daily lives, and the calling is not so obvious. The important thing is to do one's best.

- Have God bring to your mind all the ways in which you are called to serve in the midst of life.

- What is important about these callings?
- Did you think of some you had not seen as callings before? What makes them a calling?

The Mission Initiative Develop Disciples to Serve is a centerpiece of this text. Jesus has been training the disciples for months and now is testing their faith and understanding. He knows they are ready, but he doesn't know if they know it yet.

- Have you ever taken on a job you did not think you were ready for, only to discover you were ready? Or, perhaps you thought you were ready, but realized too late you were not?
- What did you learn from these situations?

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

Discuss as a group and list essential characteristics and of disciples.

- Is there a young person in your congregation who is struggling to develop skills that would fulfill a calling they are answering or a role like the one you are fulfilling?
- Investigate the possibility of mentoring him or her.

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

Pray silently for someone who is struggling with their discipleship.

LESSON 32 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 9)

8 July 2018

Mark 6:1–13

¹He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ²On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." ⁵And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

- Was there a time when the people in your life did not seem to respect your giftedness? How did you feel?

- Do a short visualization of this scripture. Read it through several times until you know the action; then close your eyes and visualize the scene, letting yourself participate in the action. What part did you play in the scene? How did that affect your understanding of the situation in which Jesus found himself?

How would you react if your family and friends rejected your success to the point you could not even share it with them? What are Jesus' actions when confronted with this situation? What does Jesus' example suggest to you about moving on?

- Have God bring to your mind all the ways in which you are called to serve in the midst of life. What is important about these callings?
- Have you ever taken on a job you did not think you were ready for, only to discover you were ready? Or, perhaps you thought you were ready, but realized too late you were not? What did you learn from these situations?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 10)

LESSON 33
15 July 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Mark 6:14–29

Lesson Focus: Choose righteously.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discover the location of the text.
- understand this is the only story in Mark not focused on Jesus or disciples.
- explore the longest story of John the Baptist's death in the New Testament.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)
- Copies of Response Sheet
- Pens or pencils
- *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd Edition
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Mark 6:14–29 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 95–96. Read the appropriate Mission Initiatives, Enduring Principles, and Basic Beliefs reflected in this lesson. These are all in *Sharing in Community of Christ*. Both resources are available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Read Mark 1:1–11 as a reminder of how Mark presents John the Baptist.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

This story is nested in the middle of the story of Jesus sending out the disciples and their successful return. It is difficult to see this because they are not presented as a unit. However, Mark creates these nested stories to help us understand them in a different way. As you read about the death of John the Baptist, keep in mind Jesus has just sent out the disciples on their first traveling ministry without him. Following this is the story of their return and

the reports of a successful ministry, our scripture passage for today.

Two other things to keep in mind about this scripture:

1. It is the only story in Mark that does not focus on Jesus or the disciples.
 2. It is the longest story in the New Testament about John the Baptist's death.
- What would these facts indicate about the importance of this story to Mark?

Read Mark 6:14–29.

As we look at this story, we discover some interesting things about it. It begins with a discussion about who John is. John is alone because he previously sent his disciples to follow Jesus. We have a long discussion of Herod's hesitancy to kill John because of who he is. Then we have a discussion of what pushed Herod into finally ordering John's death, and it is a reason that has nothing to do with who John really is. Poor decisions and Herod's need to save his reputation are central to this narrative.

This isn't the only place we have come across this narrative. When we look at the death of Jesus, we find the same pattern.

- Discuss the parallels between the death of Jesus and the death of John the Baptist.
- Why is it important that this story is nestled between the disciples being sent out and coming back successful?

3 RESPOND

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

A Basic Belief represented in this section is Sin and how it compounds in our lives when we give in to it. It is John's judgment of Herod, Herodias' incestuous relationship, and Herod's lust for Herodias' daughter that led them to sin.

- How are the beliefs concerning sin reflected in this passage?
- Have someone read the Basic Belief on Sin (see Response Sheet or *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 15).

The Enduring Principle Responsible Choices is important to this text as well. If only Herod hadn't fallen for his sister-in-law, Herodias. If only Herod hadn't asked his stepdaughter to dance for his banquet, something not considered proper in those days. If only Herod hadn't offered the girl anything she asked. If only... Sin can lead to irresponsible choices, as it did Herod and Herodias.

We all know about "if-only" events and have experienced many ourselves.

- Remember an "if-only" event in your life.
- What happened?
- What were the consequences?
- What would you have done differently, knowing what you know now?

4 SEND

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

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great person is the one who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," adapted

- Bring to mind times in your life when God's grace healed brokenness in your life as a result of personal choices. Respond in writing, or share with another how your found healing and renewal, and how you have shared this gift with others.

5 BLESS

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

Have someone offer a prayer or read or sing "Searcher of Hearts" CCS 178 to bless our courage to make Responsible Choices.

LESSON 33 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 10)

15 July 2018

Mark 6:14–29

¹⁴King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him."
¹⁵But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old."
¹⁶But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

¹⁷For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her.
¹⁸For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."
¹⁹And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not,
²⁰for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him.
²¹But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee.
²²When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it."
²³And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom."
²⁴She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer."
²⁵Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."
²⁶The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her.
²⁷Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison,
²⁸brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother.
²⁹When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Mark 1:1–11

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.
⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.
⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.
⁸I have baptized you with [f] water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.
¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.
¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Two things to keep in mind about this scripture:

1. It is the only story in Mark that does not focus on Jesus or the disciples.
 2. It is the longest story in the New Testament about John the Baptist's death.
- What would these facts indicate about the importance of this story to Mark?

- Discuss the parallels between the death of Jesus and the death of John the Baptist. Why is it important that this story is nestled between the disciples being sent out and coming back successful?
- How are the beliefs concerning sin reflected in this passage?

Community of Christ Basic Belief on Sin

God created us to be agents of love and goodness. Yet we misuse our agency individually and collectively. We take the gifts of creation and of self and turn them against God's purposes with tragic results. Sin is the universal condition of separation and alienation from God and one another. We are in need of divine grace that alone reconciles us with God and one another.

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

- Remember an "if-only event" in your life. What happened? What were the consequences? What would you have done differently, knowing what you know now?
- Bring to mind times in your life when God's grace healed brokenness in your life as a result of personal choices. Respond in writing, or share with another how you found healing and renewal, and how you have shared this gift with others.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 11)

LESSON 34
22 July 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Mark 6:30–34, 53–56

Lesson Focus: Compassionate disciples “shepherd” and bring renewal and service.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discuss “shepherding” in both the traditional and Christian aspects.
- study about Jesus’ balance between ministry and retreat.
- explore how loving the “Gentiles” in our lives defines our discipleship.

Supplies

- Bibles
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Copies of Response Sheet

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 97–98, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Open with a prayer requesting God's presence and spiritual guidance.

As we continue through Ordinary Time in the Christian calendar, we explore in Mark's Gospel the concepts of shepherding. We have concepts in mind already about what it means to be a shepherd and what it means to be sheep. We also have a basic construct of the dangers of this occupation with predators all around.

Shepherding is an ancient occupation. Each sheep in the flock has value for its milk, meat, or its replenishing resource of wool. Sheep have value and yet depend on the watchful care of the shepherd who leads them from pasture to pasture. The term “shepherd” used in Mark is one of the earliest referring specifically to Jesus, and today, one of the most familiar.

- Share some of the classic representations of Jesus as shepherd. What images come to mind?
- What are some phrases that connect to Jesus as shepherd?
- How do we shepherd others as followers of Jesus?

2 ENGAGE

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

Read Mark 6:30–34 and ask the group to remember key words and phrases from the passage. Read the passage again.

- Ask the group what words stand out to them and why.
- What was Jesus’ intent in the first part of this scripture, and how might that have changed in the last part? What does this mean? How did Jesus respond to this change of plans?

- What does Jesus mean about these people being “sheep without a shepherd”?

Now, read Mark 6:53–56 and ask the group to remember key words and phrases from the passage. Read the passage again.

- Ask the group again what words stand out to them and why.
- What might have been Jesus’ and the disciples’ response when seeing the group who greeted them in Gennesaret?

Jesus’ trip across the Sea of Galilee is both physical and philosophical. They cross over from the more Jewish population on the eastern shore to the more Gentile population of Gennesaret. Since Mark writes to a mostly Gentile audience, the writer tries to inform the readers of Jesus’ popularity among many different people.

In both of these verses, Jesus and his disciples attempt to retreat from the crowds and are once again found. The crowds discover where they are heading and rush ahead to meet them. Instead of expressing frustration at this interruption, Jesus “had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd” (v. 34). Many of us can relate to this in some way. We often look for appropriate times to retreat and replenish our souls. We know this kind of spiritual practice strengthens our ministry.

In a group (or groups) share together:

- a time when retreating from work or ministry has been healing or renewing.
- a time when your plans were interrupted—and that interruption was, in fact, a blessing.

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

Instead of treating the crowds as an interruption in his need for finding renewal and retreat, Jesus feeds and heals. He feeds a hungry group of mostly Jewish followers,

and after crossing the sea, he ministers among the sick and poor of the largely Gentile crowd.

- What do Jesus’ actions tell us about our ministry priorities?
- What is most important to Jesus? How can this inform our personal discipleship?

The writer of Mark contrasted Jesus’ ministry focus with his community to this different, or Gentile, community. He treats all of their needs above his own and provides ministry to those in need.

- What differentiates “our community” from the “different communities” that exist outside our own areas of comfort?
- How might we bridge into these communities?

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

Jesus, as shepherd, identified the need to retreat, feed, and heal in this scripture passage. How can we put these principles in action in our daily walk as disciples of Christ?

- What actions can your congregation take to retreat for rest or reflection?
- In your home congregation, what feeding needs to take place?
- In your community outside the church, what healing needs to take place?

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

Psalm 23 is probably the most familiar scripture text of the imagery of God as shepherd. Sing “The Lord’s My Shepherd” CCS 259, listening for how we, as shepherds, should imitate God’s loving response.

LESSON 34 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 11)

22 July 2018

Mark 6:30–34

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Mark 6:53–56

⁵³When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. ⁵⁴When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, ⁵⁵and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

- Share some of the classic representations of Jesus as shepherd. What images come to mind?
- What are some phrases that connect to Jesus as shepherd?
- How are some ways we shepherd others as followers of Jesus?

Read Mark 6:30–34.

- What words stand out and why?
- What was Jesus’ intent in the first part of this scripture, and how might that have changed in the last part? What does this mean? How did Jesus respond to this change of plans? What does Jesus mean about these people being “sheep without a shepherd”?

Read Mark 6:53–56.

- What words stand out and why?
- What might have been Jesus’ and the disciples’ response when seeing the group who greeted them in Gennesaret?

In a group (or groups) share together:

- a time when retreating from work or ministry has been healing or renewing.
- a time when your plans were interrupted—and that interruption was, in fact, a blessing.

- What do Jesus' actions tell us about our ministry priorities?
- What differentiates "our community" from the "different communities" that exist outside our own areas of comfort? How might we bridge into these communities?
- What is most important to Jesus? How can this inform our personal discipleship?
- What actions can your congregation take to retreat for rest or reflection? What feeding needs to take place? What healing needs to take place?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 12)

LESSON 35
29 July 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: John 6:1–21

Lesson Focus: God's grace and generosity call us to respond and seek Christ's presence in our lives.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore some of the deeper meanings found in John's story of the feeding of the five thousand.
- understand how Jesus' ministry upholds the principle of Grace and Generosity.
- discover Jesus' unexpected presence in the midst of upheaval and turmoil.

Supplies

- Bibles
- Copies of Response Sheet

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 6:1–21 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, p. 99, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Enter this gathering time considering what possessions they have with them today—in their cars, their purses, their wallets, their pockets. If you feel it would help illustrate, have those willing to empty the contents of their pockets to do so on the table in front of them, or just go around the room listing what the group has with them right now.

- Ask the group to compare and contrast what a similar group of people might have in a nation with limited resources.
- If freed to reflect God's generosity, what could be accomplished by those items found in our pockets or here with us right now?

Share in a prayer asking for God's Spirit to open our eyes to how we can reflect God's generosity.

2 ENGAGE

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

Share together in the reading of the first part of today's scripture passage—John 6:1–14.

Have the class focus their attention on one of the characters below in this story and have them reread the scripture. Have each person or group share what that character might have been thinking during this story.

- The followers who had traveled to see and hear Jesus
- Phillip
- The boy who had food
- Jesus

This story is one of the few shared in all four Gospels, which signifies its importance to the early church. It explores some of the logistic problems with Jesus'

growing popularity. We still know some of these problems exist in the church today—when we have a full day of church activities, we usually plan a way to feed those who participate. This means some will have to purchase the food, bring it to the venue, prepare it, and serve it. Imagine the difficulty managing a group of over 5,000 people!

Jesus asks Phillip where they were going to purchase enough food to feed this multitude. The answer eventually lies with a young boy and his meager meal. We don't know the name of the boy whose food was the catalyst for this miracle. We don't know how his groceries caught the attention of Andrew, Jesus' disciple. All we know is that his small meal was all there was, and it was woefully inadequate to take care of the needs of the great crowd.

We find symbolism in many of Jesus' miracles. First, this event takes place on a significant day, the Passover. Indeed, these people gathered in the wilderness remind us of the children of Israel who had to use what was at their disposal and make unleavened bread for the journey ahead. The thought of "manna in the wilderness" would have been in the minds of those present at this feeding. In many ways this event foreshadows another Passover Jesus will spend with his disciples in the future (the Last Supper).

Following this amazing miracle, the crowd becomes convinced that Jesus is someone amazing. They begin to recognize he is more than a rabbi or teacher, and desire to move him into a political arena; they want to make Jesus king. This would be significant to those political forces wanting someone from the house of David to overthrow King Herod. He could be the political powerhouse who could drive out the foreign forces from Rome. The people want Jesus as king.

Jesus responds in the second part of today's scripture. Read John 6:15–21.

Jesus does not start campaigning. He doesn't plan the next rally. He doesn't organize his disciples into a political action committee. In fact, he does the opposite—he retreats alone.

His abandonment of the crowds after one of his most awe-inspiring events gives us a glimpse into Jesus' personality. It leads us to some questions:

- Why did Jesus feed the 5,000 in the first place?
- Why did Jesus choose to leave the crowds so abruptly?
- Why didn't Jesus want to be king?
- Why did Jesus retreat alone (not even taking the disciples)?

This encounter between Jesus and his disciples, who had been separated for what could have been a few days,

again foreshadows what is to come. The disciples are by themselves on a boat, whipped by winds and in peril. Jesus appears unexpectedly and not only enters the boat, but completes the journey with them. The disciples would experience the same feelings during the time between Christ's death and resurrection.

3 RESPOND

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

Grace and Generosity is one of our Enduring Principles of Community of Christ. This principle includes these points:

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

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 12

This scripture story provides us many examples of how this principle plays out in Jesus' time.

- One of the main characters of this story is a child. How does having a "childlike faith" provide examples of Grace and Generosity both in this story and our personal experiences?
- What might be the significance in the 12 baskets of leftovers that the 12 disciples gathered after all were fed? How does that connect to God's Grace and Generosity?
- When the crowds were fed, they wanted to force Jesus to become king, and Jesus retreats from them. What does that say about power and fame? How might this be connected to the principle of Grace and Generosity?

Consider how this story relates to the Passover and the Lord's Supper.

The Passover

- The children of Israel were led from bondage to freedom.
- In a time of desperation, God sent manna from heaven.

- Once in the wilderness, they still needed consistent guidance from God.
- What connections do you see among the Passover, this scripture lesson from John, and the Last Supper?
- How could we incorporate the message of the feeding of the 5,000 with a celebration of the Lord's Supper in our congregation?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

(10% of total lesson time)

Our scripture passage today ends with Jesus leaving the disciples and unexpectedly rejoining them when they were in a boat in peril. Discuss the following questions in small groups, as a larger group, or respond on your Response Sheet.

- A time when God joined you "in your boat" after a time of "rough seas"
- What does it mean to you to have Jesus "in your boat"?
- We expect there may be "rough seas" ahead in both ours and others' lives. What advice might you give to help others keep Jesus "in our boat" and help "calm the seas" in our daily lives? What spiritual practices have helped you?

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of total lesson time)

When storms come into our lives, we want to remember Jesus is nearby, awaiting invitation into our boats.

End with this benediction from Ephesians 3:14–21:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

LESSON 35 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 12)

29 July 2018

John 6:1–21

¹After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ²A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. ⁵When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." ¹³So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

¹⁵When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. ²⁰But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." ²¹Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

Focus your attention on one of the characters below in this story and reread the scripture. Share what that character might have been thinking during this story:

- The followers who had traveled to see and hear Jesus
- Phillip
- The boy who had food
- Jesus
- Why did Jesus feed the 5,000 in the first place? Why did Jesus choose to leave the crowds so abruptly?
- Why didn't Jesus want to be king? Why did Jesus retreat alone (not even taking the disciples)?

Grace and Generosity is one of our Enduring Principles of Community of Christ. This principle includes these points:

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

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 12

This scripture story provides us many examples of how this principle plays out in Jesus' time.

- One of the main characters of this story is a child. How does having a "childlike faith" give us examples of Grace and Generosity both in this story and our personal experiences?

- What might be the significance in the 12 baskets of leftovers that the 12 disciples gathered after all were fed? How does that connect to God's Grace and Generosity?

- When the crowds were fed, they wanted to force Jesus to become king, and Jesus retreats from them. What does that say about power and fame? How might this be connected to the principle of Grace and Generosity?

Consider how this story relates to the Passover and the Lord's Supper.

The Passover

- The children of Israel were led from bondage to freedom.
- In a time of desperation, God sent brought manna from heaven.
- Once in the wilderness, they still needed consistent guidance from God.
- What connections do you see among the Passover, this scripture lesson from John, and the Last Supper? How could we incorporate the message of the feeding of the 5,000 with a celebration of the Lord's Supper in our congregation?

Our scripture passage today ends with Jesus leaving the disciples and unexpectedly rejoining them when they were in a boat in peril. Discuss the following questions in small groups, as a larger group, or respond on your Response Sheet.

- A time when God joined you "in your boat" after a time of "rough seas"

- What does it mean to you to have Jesus "in your boat"?

- We expect there may be "rough seas" ahead in both ours and others' lives. What advice might you give to help others keep Jesus "in our boat" and help "calm the seas" in our daily lives? What spiritual practices have helped you?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 13)

LESSON 36
5 August 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: John 6:24–35

Lesson Focus: Jesus explains and offers the bread of life.

Objectives

The learners will...

- review the context of Jesus' "bread of life" discourse found in John's Gospel.
- consider Jesus' desire to move his disciples from "spectacle" to "spiritual."
- discover ways to offer God's bread of life in our own community.

Supplies

- Bibles
- Copies of Response Sheet
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Various types of bread (sandwich bread, roll, rice cake, tortilla, gluten-free)
- Internet connection or downloaded video— and means to display this video *Sharing Food, Sharing Love* found at www.CofChrist.org/resources#/1470/mission-story---sharing-food,-sharing-love

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 6:24–35 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, p. 100, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

In today's scripture focus, the disciples find more excitement in Jesus' recent feeding of the 5,000 miracle than the actual reason Jesus had come. Many times, we also focus on the spectacle rather than the meaning behind it.

- Go around the room and ask those willing to name their favorite restaurant and what they usually order there.
- After all have shared, have the participants share who goes with them to that restaurant. We may recognize the excellent food and maybe the beautiful décor, but was the positive experience more a result of the relationships around the table? Encourage those willing share their thoughts to do so.

2 ENGAGE

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

Together, read John 6:24–35.

In this passage, we find the crowds from the earlier feeding of the 5,000 searching for the miracle worker, Jesus. Once found, a dialogue between the people and Jesus takes place. Jesus recognizes their reason for seeking him might be more about the spectacle than the message. In some ways, we do the same thing today.

Follow the dialogue between Jesus and the people:

People: Rabbi, when did you come here?

- Where have you discovered God's presence in a place you were not expecting?

Jesus: Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you (v. 27).

- Why might Jesus respond this way?
- What might the people have been looking for?
- Discuss what you think “food that endures for eternal life” might be.

People: What must we do to perform the works of God?

- What does this group think the works of God might be?
- What do we think the works of God are in our congregation? Neighborhoods?

Jesus: The work of God is believing in the one God sent (v. 29).

- What does it mean to believe?
- How do we witness we are followers of Jesus?

People: What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness!

- What do you think the people here are asking Jesus? What do you think they hope Jesus gives as an answer?
- How do we sometimes look for “signs” above “message” today?

Jesus: ...it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (vv. 32–33).

- The people were focused on Jesus’ miracles; where did Jesus redirect their attention?
- What do you believe the bread of God might be?
- How do we provide our neighborhoods with the bread of God?

People: Sir, give us this bread always!

- Do you think the people understand Jesus now, or might they still be asking for manna to fall from the heavens?

Jesus: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

- Jesus moves the listeners from present needs to eternal needs. What might “belief” and “bread of life” have to do with each other?

3 RESPOND

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

Assemble some examples of bread on a table. These could include a slice of wheat bread, a dinner roll, a tortilla, a rice cake, or other grain-based foods (you may wish to include items that are gluten-free).

While sharing in this snack, watch the video *Sharing Food, Sharing Love* found at: www.CofChrist.org/resources#/1470/mission-story---sharing-food,-sharing-love. This video may be downloaded or streamed.

Afterward discuss how the bread of life crosses both physical and spiritual lines in the life of the church.

4 SEND

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

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” We, as Jesus’ disciples today, answer the call to turn people from the momentary spectacles and toward the true bread of life.

Discuss:

- What does Jesus as the bread of life mean to us in the church today?
- What is our responsibility as disciples to provide the bread of life in our neighborhood today?
- How do we become ministers of the bread of life in our workplace? In our homes?

5 BLESS

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

Share in a hymn together about the bread of life: “Eat This Bread” CCS 528 or “Eat This Bread and Never Hunger” CCS 530.

End with a short prayer of blessing that we help share the bread of life among people in our lives.

LESSON 36 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 13)

5 August 2018

John 6:24–35

²⁴So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”

²⁶Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” ²⁸Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” ²⁹Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” ³⁰So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” ³²Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

³⁵Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Together, read John 6:24–35. Follow the dialogue between Jesus and the people:

People: Rabbi, when did you come here?

- Where have you discovered God’s presence in a place you were not expecting?

Jesus: Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you (v. 27).

- Why might Jesus respond this way?

- What might the people have been looking for?

- Discuss what you think “food that endures for eternal life” might be.

People: What must we do to perform the works of God?

- What does this group think the works of God might be?

- What do we think the works of God are in our congregation? Neighborhoods?

Jesus: The work of God is believing in the one God sent (v. 29).

- What does it mean to believe?

- How do we witness we are followers of Jesus?

People: What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness!

- What do you think the people here are asking Jesus?
What do you think they hope Jesus gives as an answer?

People: Sir, give us this bread always!

- Do you think the people understand Jesus now, or might they still be asking for manna to fall from the heavens?

- How do we sometimes look for “signs” above “message” today?

Jesus: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Jesus: ...it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (vv. 32–33).

- Jesus moves the listeners from present needs to eternal needs. What might “belief” and “bread of life” have to do with each other?

- The people were focused on Jesus’ miracles; where did Jesus redirect their attention?

After watching the video *Sharing Food, Sharing Love*, discuss how the bread of life crosses both physical and spiritual lines in the life of the church.

- What do you believe the bread of God might be?

- What does Jesus as the bread of life mean to us in the church today? What is our responsibility as disciples to provide the bread of life in our neighborhood today?

- How do we provide our neighborhoods with the bread of God?

- How do we become ministers of the bread of life in our workplace? In our homes?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 14)

LESSON 37
12 August 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: John 6:35, 41–51

Lesson Focus: “I am” the bread of life.

Objectives

The learners will...

- study scripture passages that connect “manna in the wilderness” and “the bread of life.”
- consider Moses’ and Jesus’ encounters with the great “I am.”
- reflect how God’s existence in their lives can be shared in the greater community.

Supplies

- Bible (multiple copies if available)
- Copies of Response Sheet
- Paper and pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 6:35, 41–51 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 101–102, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

Dwelling in the Word

Sit comfortably and breathe deeply for a few moments; centering yourself in God’s peace.

Read the scripture below aloud. Instruct the class to let the words wash over them and fill their minds and imaginations.

Exodus 3:13–15

But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you’, and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God

of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations.”

Spend a few moments in silent reflection.

Read the passage a second time; respond to the following questions on your 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 nature of God?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

The Gospel of John, written after the Christian church had developed a separate identity from their traditional Jewish roots, makes connections between the children of Israel and Jesus’ followers. In today’s scripture passage, we find

an interesting interplay between the believers of the past and the believers in Jesus' time.

Compare and contrast the children of Israel in the wilderness found in Exodus and the followers of Jesus:

Read Exodus 16:11–15:

The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat."

Read John 6:35, 41–51:

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

...Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

- List the similarities in these two passages. List the differences.
- How does the story of manna connect to the feeding of the 5,000 (which happens just before the passage in John)?
- What emotions and reactions do the children of Israel and the followers of Jesus display?

It's interesting to note the use of the term "I am" is used in the Exodus 3:13–15 passage we read in the Gather section and in John's passage ("I am the bread...I am the bread of life...I am the living bread") above. When Moses asks for God's name, the reply suggests God is the source for God's own existence—God lives. Discuss how Jesus does the same thing in the passage from John.

3 RESPOND

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

Today, we answer the call to respond and witness to the "I am" of God and Jesus in our lives. Below are biblical scripture verses using the term "I am." Assign different readers to read aloud the scripture passages below. Discuss these various descriptions of God and Christ. What do these verses reveal about the great "I am"?

- Exodus 3:6: "He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'"
- Exodus 6:6–7: "Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God.'"
- Isaiah 28:16: "therefore thus says the Lord God, See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: 'One who trusts will not panic.'"
- Isaiah 41:10: "do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God..."
- Matthew 16:13: "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'"

- John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”
- John 18:4–6: Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus replied, “I am he.” ...When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they stepped back and fell to the ground.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

(10% of total lesson time)

We encounter many people each day with differing views on the existence of God. We recognize that the only way to know God is to *encounter* God—and that God might be

best explained by the revelation “I am.” Share as a class (those willing to share) how God has been a consistent presence of “I am” in your life over the last year.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of total lesson time)

Sing together “Bring Many Names” CCS 5.

End in a popcorn-style prayer:

Start by saying, “Lord, we praise you for the many names we know you by. We call you the great “I am. We also call you...” (allow participants to say other words or phrases that help express their understanding of God). End the prayer with Amen.

LESSON 37 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 14)

12 August 2018

Exodus 3:13–15

But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you', and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations."

- What words or phrases capture your attention in this passage? Why?
- What does this passage say to you about the nature of God?

Read Exodus 16:11–15 and John 6:35, 41–51.

Exodus 16:11–15

The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat."

John 6:35, 41–51

³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

⁴¹Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" ⁴³Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

- List the similarities in these two passages. List the differences.

- How does the story of manna connect to the feeding of the 5,000 (which happens just before our passage in John)?

- What emotions and reactions do the children of Israel and the followers of Jesus display?

Discuss these various descriptions of God and Christ. What do these verses reveal about the great "I am"?

- Exodus 3:6: "He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'"
- Exodus 6:6-7: "Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God.'"
- Isaiah 28:16: "therefore thus says the Lord God, See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: 'One who trusts will not panic.'

- Isaiah 41:10: "do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God..."
- Matthew 16:13: "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'"
- John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"
- John 18:4-6: Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." ...When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground.

Share as a class (those willing to share) how God has been a consistent presence of "I am" in your life over the last year.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 15)

LESSON 38
19 August 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: John 6:51–58

Lesson Focus: Jesus' seemingly strange instructions regarding his flesh and blood connect to our need for table fellowship.

Objectives

The learners will...

- remember events in Jesus' life regarding table fellowship.
- connect the process of taking in life-giving energy and God's Spirit within us.
- consider the eternal life experienced with table fellowship.

Supplies

- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Bibles
- Copies of Response Sheet
- Pens or pencils
- A small snack (grapes, orange slices, or bread with water or juice), enough for everyone

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 6:51–58 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 103–104, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Gather the class around a table. If possible, bring something for the group to eat and drink during class. Share that from the beginning to the end of Jesus' ministry, there were tables and community. Remind them of the wedding Jesus attended and where he performed his first miracle. Remind them of Jesus eating dinner at Zacchaeus' house. Remind them of the Last Supper.

Sing together "For Everyone Born" CCS 285.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Explain the difficulty with today's scripture passage since we come with an understanding of the symbolism of the Lord's Supper. Read John 6:51–58.

This text can be shocking, just as it was to those who first heard it. "Eating flesh" and "drinking blood" are repulsive. Yet the imagery is Jesus' attempt to connect the disciples to him and each other. Obviously, he didn't intend his disciples to become cannibals, but implied a spiritual indwelling, recognized and allowed to flourish when the community comes together for the common meal we call the Lord's Supper. In a time of doubt and difficulty, we find comfort knowing Christ's life is in us. We live in him through the community found in the sacraments.

Discuss this process of our own body's energy using the snack provided on the table:

- Our sun provides energy though nearly 93 million miles away.
- Plants receive this energy from the sun and the conditions on the Earth allow them to grow.
- We harvest the plants and eat them, or make them into a favorite dish.
- We eat the plants and receive the energy they gained from the sun and Earth.
- In our digestion, the energy from the food becomes part of us.

Discuss what connections there might be in Jesus' admonition:

"Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them."

- What might Jesus have meant by "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you"?
- Discuss the classic thought of "eternal life." Discuss how the word "eternal" means "all time," which refers to the past, present, and future. What might Christ have meant by, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life"?
- What might Jesus have meant by, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them"?

3 RESPOND

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

The Lord's Supper also includes a table. How might this "table fellowship" connect to Jesus' idea of "eternal life"?

Consider the table upon which the Lord's Supper sits in the congregation.

- Discuss how many have "dined" at that table. Talk about those no longer with us and remember them present at that table. How does this eternal life connect us with those no longer physically present?

- Discuss those yet to be with us at this table— young people not yet old enough to fully commit to discipleship, but whom we hope will. Consider those not yet a part of our fellowship, but whom we hope to invite to share the table.

4 SEND

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

Discuss how your congregation can extend the "table" in your community.

- What needs exist in your community that could be addressed through the table fellowship Jesus demonstrated?
- As today's disciples, how might the energy we've experienced spiritually through the Holy Spirit transfer through us to others?
- How can we make our tradition of the Lord's Supper a more meaningful expression of Jesus' desire to "abide in me, and I in them"?

5 BLESS

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

Share in a prayer of hope for abiding in Christ and extending the table of fellowship into our communities and neighborhoods.

LESSON 38 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 15)

19 August 2018

John 6:51–58

⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

⁵²The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

⁵³So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; ⁵⁵for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

Discuss this process of our own body's energy using the snack provided on the table:

- Our sun provides energy though nearly 93 million miles away.
- Plants receive this energy from the sun and the conditions on the Earth allow them to grow.
- We harvest the plants and eat them, or make them into a favorite dish.
- We eat the plants and receive the energy they gained from the sun and Earth.
- In our digestion, the energy from the food becomes part of us.

What connections might there be to Jesus' admonition in vv. 53–56?

- What might Jesus have meant by "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you"?

- Discuss the classic thought of "eternal life." Discuss how the word "eternal" means "all time," which refers to the past, present, and future. What might Christ have meant by, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life"?

- What might Jesus have meant by, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them"?

Consider the table upon which the Lord's Supper sits in the congregation.

- Discuss how many have "dined" at that table. Talk about those no longer with us and remember them present at that table. How does this eternal life connect us with those no longer physically present?

- Discuss those yet to be with us at this table— young people not yet old enough to fully commit to discipleship, but whom we hope will. Consider those not yet a part of our fellowship, but whom we hope to invite to share the table.

Discuss how your congregation can extend the “table” in your community.

- What needs exist in your community that could be addressed through the table fellowship Jesus demonstrated?

- As today’s disciples, how might the energy we’ve experienced spiritually through the Holy Spirit transfer through us to others?

- How can we make our tradition of the Lord’s Supper a more meaningful expression of Jesus’ desire to “abide in me, and I in them”?

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 16)

LESSON 39
26 August 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: John 6:56–69

Lesson Focus: Jesus calls disciples to have faith in difficult times.

Objectives

The learners will...

- encounter Jesus' rise and decline in popularity among his followers.
- explore their encounters with difficult paths in their faith journey.
- revisit their testimonies of why they remain disciples of Jesus.

Supplies

- Bibles
- Copies of Response Sheet
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- (Optional) chime

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 6:56–69 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, pp. 105–106, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Spiritual Practice: Prayer of the Heart

Find a comfortable position for prayer and be mindful of your breathing. Find a rhythm in your breath and gradually allow it to slow and deepen. Close your eyes.

Let the words "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" take form in your mind. Gradually fit these words into a prayer through the natural rhythm of your breath. You might say the words "Lord, to whom can we go?" as you inhale and "You have the words of eternal life" as you exhale. Alternatively, you might breathe in with silence, and then mentally utter the prayer phrase with each breath out.

Continue silently praying this prayer together for a few moments. The group facilitator will draw the prayer time to a close by sounding a chime or verbally praying a statement of thanks.

Invite people to gradually refocus attention on the group as they end their prayers and open their eyes. Engage in a brief time of sharing about the experience of the prayer. What happened? What was helpful and meaningful? What was difficult or frustrating? What benefits might Prayer of the Heart offer people seeking deeper discipleship?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Jesus has just revealed himself as the bread of life, and in doing so shared his place above the manna in the wilderness that saved their ancestors. Jesus has revealed himself once again as God's messenger—and as usual, those around him chose not to accept it. We see just a glimpse of Jesus' vulnerability. We have all experienced this to a degree.

- Think of a time you chose to make yourself vulnerable to others' scrutiny. Share how it made you feel—what emotions it put you through.

- Think about a time you shared a new idea or attempted to develop something in a new way. Share how your idea or new development was first received.
- Why do we sometimes respond harshly to new ideas?

In John's narrative, Jesus loses most of his followers over a teaching commonly shared in Christian churches today. Afterward, only a handful of people remain. It's a disaster! It's a critical juncture in the ministry of Jesus. In this story we meet with three groups of people:

- The grumblers—"This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?"
- The tumblers—"...many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him."
- The devotees—"We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Share with the group what must have been going through the minds of each of these groups. Share a time when you might have been a "grumbler" or "tumbler" at church, work, school, or home. You don't have to mention the reason, but what were your feelings when confronted with difficult teachings or the want to drop out?

Now consider why the devotees or disciples stayed with Jesus.

- Peter's proclamation is different from Matthew 16:16: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." What is different about Peter's response in John 6:68?
- Have you ever felt you'd like to leave, but found the message or personal connection stronger than the issue?
- What do you think Peter meant by saying, "You have the words of eternal life"?

3 RESPOND

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

Over the last few weeks of reading chapter 6 in John's Gospel, we have witnessed

- feeding of thousands from a small amount of bread and fish,
- throngs of people attempting to follow Jesus as he seeks seclusion,
- Jesus walking on the water to the disciples,
- Jesus identifying himself as the bread of life and its connection to eternal life, and
- the rejection of Jesus by the crowds.

Jesus remarkably experiences a rise and fall in this chapter. Pretend you are one of Jesus' followers. What would have

been your response following:

...the rise in Jesus' popularity?

- What emotions would you feel?
- What reactions would accompany such fervor?
- How would this affect the future outlook of the movement?

...a "difficult teaching"?

- What emotions would you feel?
- What reactions would accompany such fervor?
- How would this affect the future outlook of the movement?

...a huge decrease in popularity?

- What emotions would you feel?
- What reactions would accompany such fervor?
- How would this affect the future outlook of the movement?

Discuss how each participant might have experienced similar feelings in their faith journey.

4 SEND

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

"Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

—John 6:68–69

Today's followers of Jesus Christ are those who remain when others have left. For the next few moments, encourage the class to share why they've stayed part of Christ's church. What "words of eternal life" are still worth staying for? Share together why you stay, and how you might encourage others to do the same.

5 BLESS

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

For a moment, repeat the breath prayer we shared together at the beginning of class:

First, center your thoughts and breathing.

- Breathe in, "Lord, to whom can we go?"
- Breathe out, "You have the words of eternal life."

Sing "With a Steadfast Faith" CCS 649.

LESSON 39 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 16)

26 August 2018

John 6:56–69

⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” ⁶¹But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”

⁶⁶Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

- Think of a time you chose to make yourself vulnerable to others’ scrutiny. Share how it made you feel—what emotions it put you through.
- Think about a time you shared a new idea or attempted to develop something in a new way. Share how your idea or new development was first received.

- Why do we sometimes respond harshly to new ideas?

In John’s narrative, Jesus loses most of his followers over a teaching commonly shared in Christian churches today. Afterward, only a handful of people remain. In this story we meet with three groups of people:

- The grumblers—“This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?”
- The tumblers—“...many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.”
- The devotees—“We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Share with a partner or in a small group what must have been going through the minds of each of these groups. Share a time when you might have been a “grumbler” or “tumbler” at church, work, school, or home. You don’t have to mention the reason, but what were your feelings when confronted with difficult teachings or wanting to drop out?

Consider why the devotees or disciples stayed with Jesus.

- Peter’s proclamation is different from Matthew 16:16: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” What is different about Peter’s response in John 6:68?
- Have you ever felt you’d like to leave, but found the message or personal connection stronger than the issue?
- What do you think Peter meant by saying, “You have the words of eternal life”?

Jesus remarkably experiences a rise and fall in this chapter. Pretend you are one of Jesus' followers. What would have been your response following:

...the rise in Jesus' popularity?

- What emotions would you feel?
- What reactions would accompany such fervor?
- How would this affect the future outlook of the movement?

...a "difficult teaching"?

- What emotions would you feel?
- What reactions would accompany such fervor?
- How would this affect the future outlook of the movement?

...a huge decrease in popularity?

- What emotions would you feel?
- What reactions would accompany such fervor?
- How would this affect the future outlook of the movement?

Reread John 6:68–69. Today's followers of Jesus Christ are those who remain when others have left. For the next few moments, encourage the class to share why they've stayed part of Christ's church. What "words of eternal life" are still worth staying for? Share together why you stay, and how you might encourage others to do the same.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 17)

LESSON 40
2 September 2018

Focus Scripture Passage: Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23

Lesson Focus: Jesus calls disciples to both inward attention and outward action.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider how our traditions, rituals, and actions have the potential to both help and harm our message as disciples.
- recognize Jesus' concern with what is at the center of our being.
- learn ways to allow our actions to be driven by our mission.

Supplies

- Bibles
- Copies of Response Sheet
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- A marker board or chart paper
- Markers

Note to instructor: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year B: New Testament*, p. 107, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Discuss some traditions, rituals, or actions you commonly practice that may or may not have any purpose. Some examples might include:

- You lock the car door and then pull on the handle to ensure it's locked.
- You have one Christmas decoration you simply must display because it's "just not Christmas without it."
- You wash your hands before eating (and then open a door or touch something unwashed).
- List other traditions, rituals, or actions you may do daily.

Discuss these actions and what purpose they serve. In most cases, the center of these traditions, rituals, or actions has purpose and meaning. Share together what that meaning and purpose might be.

Finally, discuss how sometimes these traditions, rituals, or actions might cloud or completely lose the center of their purpose and meaning.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

In today's scripture text, Jesus is once again under the scrutiny of local religious leaders. Read aloud Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23.

The writer of Mark is a Gentile, and, in either a misinformed or negligent way, has grouped all the Jews into the practices of the Pharisees, who believed that people should practice the temple ritual of hand-washing before eating. It was more than an issue of cleanliness; it was a spiritual symbol that had taken on "community loyalty" principles. In other words, the attempt to exclude others overtook the spiritual ritual. By doing so, the practice became the opposite of its intent.

Discuss what's happening in this scripture passage regarding the "outside" (physical aspects) and "inside" (spiritual aspects):

Verses 1–8

- Put yourself in the place of the Pharisees and Scribes. Why would you ask the questions they ask? What do you hope to accomplish by asking these questions?
- From what does Jesus choose his reply? What is Jesus saying to the Pharisees and Scribes?

Verses 14–15

- Jesus now addresses the crowds. What are the "outside" issues the Pharisees and Scribes address?
- What might be the "inside" issues Jesus is addressing?

Verses 21–23

- Jesus makes a list of a number of repulsive and evil actions, or "outside" responses. Discuss how these actions might emerge from "inside" issues.
- Discuss how our actions can sometimes result from fear, resentment, or abuse. How does healing play a part in both our "inside" emotions and "outside" reactions?

Take time to boil down to what you believe was the center of Jesus' "inside" ministry. You may choose to use some scripture references such as Luke 4:18–19, Matthew 25:35–36, and Matthew 22:36–40. How might these basic teachings of Jesus lead us to center our "inside" and thereby affect our "outside" actions?

3 RESPOND

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

Jesus said, "There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile" (v. 15).

- As a class or in small groups, list things today that we often consider offensive or bad that would fall into the category of "outside" in the above scripture.
- List those things today we might consider "inside" that would be offensive or wrong.
- Jesus' admonition is for us to be introspective of what lies at the center of our being. What are those center things that drive our motivations and actions?

- Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f reads: "The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead." How does this guide us on what should be "inside" us as disciples?
- How is God focusing our faith movement (Community of Christ) today to center our discipleship? What might be "outside" issues we have overemphasized? What are some new understandings we are called to develop "inside" each of us as disciples of Jesus Christ?

Today is World Hunger Emphasis Day when our faith movement joins with others to address the human condition of poverty and hunger. Discuss how this should be both an "inward" and "outward" part of our discipleship.

4 SEND

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

Many times we find ourselves in the shoes of the Pharisees and Scribes—attempting to live our traditions and religious piety because we believe they bring us community and spiritual significance. But as Jesus shows his disciples time and time again, when our traditions and piety turn into means of lowering human worth, we've missed the central point of the gospel. We must admit we all have "defiled hands."

- Share some ways you've witnessed "religious people" using their beliefs to oppress others.
- How can we discover the center or what matters most as a disciple of Jesus Christ today?
- How does that understanding affect both our "inside" being and "outside" actions?
- Discuss how our congregation can help emphasize the center of our discipleship both as "inside" growth and "outside" responses.

5 BLESS

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

Sing together "Brothers and Sisters of Mine" CCS 616.

Share in prayer that we would engage our spirits with our actions. May Christ's mission be our mission!

LESSON 40 RESPONSE SHEET

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 17)

2 September 2018

Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23

¹Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, ²they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. ³(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) ⁵So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” ⁶He said to them, “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

‘This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
⁷in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.’
⁸You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”

¹⁴Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.”

²¹For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, ²²adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. ²³All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Discuss what’s happening in this scripture passage regarding the “outside” (physical aspects) and “inside” (spiritual aspects):

Verses 1–8

- Put yourself in the place of the Pharisees and Scribes. Why would you ask the questions they ask? What do you hope to accomplish by asking these questions?

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Luke 4:18–19

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

Matthew 25:35–36

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.'

Matthew 22:36–40

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."

- As a class or in small groups, list things today that we often consider offensive or bad that would fall into the category of "outside" in the above scripture.

- List those things today we might consider "inside" that would be offensive or wrong.

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