



Community of Christ

# COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

ADULT

5 MARCH 2017–16 APRIL 2017

# COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS



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

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

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

Lessons are available for these age groups:

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

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

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

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

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 15

5 March 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 4:1–11

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus is the Son of God. Who will we choose to be in God?

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- engage in the spiritual practice Dwelling in the Word.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- make connections between the focus scripture passage and Community of Christ basic belief statements.
- consider the significance of Lent in preparing disciples for Christ's mission of justice and peace.

## Supplies

- Copies of Response Sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

**Note to instructor:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 4:1–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 45–46, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. We fast for 40 days remembering Christ's own fast in the wilderness. Our journey through Lent gives us a chance to reorder priorities and to make space in our lives for being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality. As we practice self-examination and conversion through prayer, fasting, self-denial, and

generosity, we open ourselves to God's creative purposes in our lives and in our world.

Each lesson during the season of Lent will begin with the practice of Dwelling in the Word using Isaiah 58:6–12. Read the passage (see Response Sheet) adapted from the NRSV and The Message. Spend a few moments in silent reflection with the following questions, record your thoughts on the Response Sheet, or share in groups of two or three.

Where are you in your journey as a disciple? What is the invitation through this text as you enter the season of Lent?

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

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction  
(35% of lesson time)

Read Matthew 4:1–11 and discuss the following.

Matthew's account of Jesus' time in the wilderness following his baptism parallels that of Luke (see Luke 4:1–13). Matthew and Luke draw from the sources of Mark (see Mark 1:12) and Q (from the word *quelle*, meaning source; written collection of Jesus' sayings). Jesus' time in the wilderness is not by accident. It represents his submission to God's will and understanding of who he is as the Son of God in preparation for his ministry. In this passage, Matthew's depiction of Jesus as Messiah does not defy the limits of Jesus' humanity. Instead of an abundance of food, miraculous feats, and political power attributed to worldly kingdoms (such as the Roman empire of first-century Palestine), Jesus presents an alternative vision of the kingdom of God. This vision is grounded in covenant relationship to God that does not test God or ask for miraculous exceptions to an authentic human life.

Consider these key phrases and statements from the scripture passage. You may discuss as a large group or assign each one to a group of two or three; then share insights with the larger group. How does this phrase or statement relate to the children of Israel in the Old Testament? How does each phrase or statement relate to your understanding of discipleship today, particularly during the season of Lent?

- "...led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted..."
- "He fasted forty days and forty nights..."
- "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (see Deuteronomy 8:3)
- "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (see Deut. 6:16)
- "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." (see Deut. 6:13)

## 3 RESPOND

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

Read the following statements from "We Share Basic Beliefs," *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 14–16 (see Response Sheet).

God  
Jesus Christ  
The Holy Spirit  
Humanity  
Discipleship

You may discuss the following as a large group, or form small groups of two or three and assign each group one (or more) of the basic belief statements to discuss. Share insights with the larger group.

- How is the basic belief statement revealed in the focus scripture passage?
- What new understanding do you have about discipleship and mission as you consider each basic belief statement and the focus scripture passage?

## 4 SEND

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

Jesus' wilderness experience demonstrated his radical obedience to God's purposes. In our Lenten journey, we are invited to prayerfully consider who we will be in God, and how we will live Christ's mission. What is God's invitation to you this season of Lent? What will be your invitation to another?

For further study, select one of the additional lectionary texts to read each day in the coming week. Write in a journal what the passage reveals about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Humanity, or Discipleship.

## 5 BLESS

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

Read or sing "When We Are Tested" CCS 453 as a closing prayer of commitment.

# LESSON 15 RESPONSE SHEET

## FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

5 March 2017

Dwelling in the Word: Isaiah 58:6–12 (adapted from NRSV and The Message)

Reader 1: Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Reader 2: Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families?

Reader 1: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly;

Reader 2: Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage.

Reader 1: Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say Here I am.

Reader 2: If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins,

If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,

Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.

Reader 1: The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in the emptiest of places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Reader 2: You will use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past.

You will be known as those who can repair, restore, rebuild, and renovate, and make communities thrive.

Where are you in your journey as a disciple? What is the invitation through this text as you enter the season of Lent?

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### Matthew 4:1–11 (NRSV)

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.<sup>2</sup>He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.<sup>3</sup>The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."<sup>4</sup>But he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,'

and 'On their hands they will bear you up,

so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; <sup>9</sup>and he said to

him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.'"

"Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

**"We Share Basic Beliefs"**

**God:** We believe in one living God who meets us in the testimony of Israel, is revealed in Jesus Christ, and moves through all creation as the Holy Spirit. We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons. All things that exist owe their being to God: mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination. This God alone is worthy of our worship.

**Jesus Christ:** We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Word made flesh, the Savior of the world, fully human and fully divine. Through Jesus' life and ministry, death and resurrection, God reconciles the world and breaks down the walls that divide. Christ is our peace.

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

**Humanity:** Every human being is created in the image of God. In Jesus Christ, God took on the limits of human flesh and culture, and is known through them. We therefore affirm without exception the worth of every human being. We also affirm that God has blessed humankind with the gift of agency: the ability to choose whom or what we will serve within the circumstances of our lives.

**Discipleship:** Being a Christian is more than holding a list of right ideas; it is about radical obedience to Jesus in every part of life. God's boundless love sets us free for

lives of responsible stewardship in which we generously offer our lives in service to God's reign. Discipleship is both an inward and outward journey. Jesus calls us to follow him and to invite others to experience the transforming power of his grace.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*,  
3rd Edition, pp. 14–15

- How is the basic belief statement revealed in the focus scripture passage?
- What new understanding do you have about discipleship and mission as you consider each basic belief statement and the focus scripture passage?

Jesus' wilderness experience demonstrated his radical obedience to God's purposes. In our Lenten journey, we are invited to prayerfully consider who we will be in God, and how we will live Christ's mission. What is God's invitation to you this season of Lent? What will be your invitation to another?

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For further study, select one of the additional lectionary texts to read each day in the coming week. Write in a journal what the passage reveals about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Humanity, or Discipleship.

\*Additional lectionary texts: Genesis 2:15–17, 3:1–7/2:18–22, 3:6–12 IV; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12–19

# SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 16

12 March 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** John 3:1–17

**Lesson Focus:** God calls disciples out of darkness into new light and life in Christ.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- continue the Lenten journey with Dwelling in the Word.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- explore the importance of various lenses in understanding God's will.

## Supplies

- Copies of Response Sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

**Note to instructor:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 3:1–17 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 47, available through Herald House

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Today is the second Sunday in Lent. We fast for 40 days remembering Christ's own fast in the wilderness. Our journey through Lent gives us a chance to reorder priorities and to make space in our lives for being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality. As we practice self-examination and conversion through prayer, fasting, self-denial, and generosity, we open ourselves to God's creative purposes in our lives and in our world.

Each lesson during the season of Lent will begin with the practice of Dwelling in the Word using Isaiah 58:6–12. Read the passage (see Response Sheet) adapted from the NRSV and The Message. Spend a few moments

in silent reflection with the following questions, record your thoughts on the Response Sheet, or share in groups of two or three.

What is the fast you choose? What new awareness is emerging about your discipleship as you consider this text?

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

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

*(35% of lesson time)*

Today's focus passage from John's Gospel contains one of the most familiar verses of scripture, John 3:16. The

Enduring Principle Continuing Revelation challenges us to hear the familiar words with new understanding.

Read John 3:1–17 and discuss the following.

Nicodemus is a respected Jewish religious leader whose faith is based on the Law. He “believes” in Jesus because of what he has seen. The symbolism of darkness represents his hesitancy, as well as his longing for greater truth and light. The exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus represents Nicodemus’ limited and literal understanding of what Jesus teaches about new life in God. John’s audience, and disciples today, hear these words from a post-Easter perspective. In this passage, John’s author switches from a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus to Jesus speaking as “we” (3:11) representing the Christian community. The message in this passage is not directed to one person or to a particular group of believers. It is directed to all.

- In what ways do you relate to Nicodemus in this passage?
- How do you hear the familiar verses of 3:16–17 in a new way as you consider the whole passage?
- How would you describe being “born from above” to a seeker or new disciple?
- How have you experienced new life in Christ?

### **3 RESPOND**

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

Just as Nicodemus comes to Jesus seeking greater understanding, disciples today are challenged to continually seek greater understanding of God’s will. A holistic approach to discovering God’s will includes six lenses: scripture study, tradition, continuing revelation, knowledge and reason, personal and community experience, and common consent. (Find more information at [www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Ways-of-Discovering-Gods-Will-Listening-Guide.pdf](http://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Ways-of-Discovering-Gods-Will-Listening-Guide.pdf).)

- Share in groups of two or three, or as a larger group, how you have experienced a greater understanding of God’s will through one or more of the six lenses.
- How are these lenses experienced in your congregation as you develop disciples to serve?

Continuing Revelation is described as follows:

- Scripture is an inspired and indispensable witness of human response to God’s revelation of divine nature.

- God graciously reveals divine will today as in the past.
- The Holy Spirit inspires and provides witness to divine truth.
- In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God’s will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

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

- How would you describe continuing revelation to a seeker or new disciple?
- The imagery of moving from darkness to new life in John’s passage relates to life as a disciple and life in community. What movement from darkness to new life is needed in your congregation?
- What movement from darkness to new life have you experienced in community?

### **4 SEND**

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

Continuing Revelation means more than having an open canon of scripture. Living this Enduring Principle requires awareness of how God is being revealed through disciples and through Christ-like communities. Use the following questions as a practice of Examen (learn more about this practice at [www.CofChrist.org/spiritual-formation](http://www.CofChrist.org/spiritual-formation)) in the coming week(s).

- How did my life reveal God’s will today?
- How am I being called from darkness to new life in Christ?
- Who is waiting in darkness for an invitation to the peace of Jesus Christ? How will I respond?

### **5 BLESS**

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

Read the refrain of “Come and Bring Light” CCS 287 as a prayer of blessing.

Come and bring light to a people in darkness.  
Come, set us free from the chains we have made.

We are your people, the flock that you tend.  
Lord, open our eyes once again.

—“Come and Bring Light” by Kevin Keil, ©1998  
Lorenz Publishing Company

# LESSON 16 RESPONSE SHEET

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

12 March 2017

Dwelling in the Word: Isaiah 58:6–12 (adapted from NRSV and The Message)

Reader 1: Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Reader 2: Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families?

Reader 1: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly;

Reader 2: Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage.

Reader 1: Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say Here I am.

Reader 2: If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins,

If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,

Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.

Reader 1: The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in the emptiest of places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Reader 2: You will use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past.

You will be known as those who can repair, restore, rebuild and renovate, and make communities thrive.

What is the fast you choose? What new awareness is emerging about your discipleship as you consider this text?

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## John 3:1–17 (NRSV)

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup>What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." <sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

<sup>11</sup>"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup>"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Continuing Revelation means more than having an open canon of scripture. Living this Enduring Principle requires awareness of how God is being revealed through disciples and through Christ-like communities. Use the following questions as a practice of Examen. (Learn more about this practice at [www.CofChrist.org/spiritual-formation](http://www.CofChrist.org/spiritual-formation) in the coming week[s].)

- How did my life reveal God's will today?
- How am I being called from darkness to new life in Christ?
- Who is waiting in darkness for an invitation to the peace of Jesus Christ? How will I respond?

# THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 17

19 March 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** John 4:5–42/4:7–44 IV

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus invites all to come, drink living water.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- practice Dwelling in the Word as part of the Lenten journey.
- discuss themes, lessons, and applications for disciples from the focus scripture passage.
- compare John 4:5–42 with Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a–b.
- explore opportunities for invitation, witness, and hospitality as a way of life.

## Supplies

- Copies of Response Sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

**Note to instructor:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 4:5–42 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 48–49, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Today is the third Sunday in Lent. We fast for 40 days remembering Christ’s own fast in the wilderness. Our journey through Lent gives us a chance to reorder priorities and to make space in our lives for being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality. As we practice self-examination and conversion through prayer, fasting, self-denial, and

generosity, we open ourselves to God’s creative purposes in our lives and in our world.

Each lesson during the season of Lent will begin with the practice of Dwelling in the Word using Isaiah 58:6–12. Read the passage (see Response Sheet) adapted from the NRSV and *The Message*. Spend a few moments in silent reflection with the following question, record your thoughts on the Response Sheet, or share in groups of two or three.

How are you called to give, give up, or forgive?

Read or sing “Lead Me, Lord” CCS 450.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction  
(35% of lesson time)

Today's focus scripture passage is a familiar story filled with theological and practical application lessons for disciples and seekers.

Read John 4:5–42. Form small discussion groups or pairs and assign one of the following themes from the passage. Discuss each theme with the questions that follow, and share insights with the larger group.

1. Jesus ministered beyond the limits of culture and religion. Christ's mission is for all persons and all nations (4:5–9).
  2. Jesus invites all to come, drink living water. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ (4:10–15).
  3. Jesus looks beyond outward appearance and circumstances; he looks at one's heart. God's grace is not about who we are or where we worship, but who God is (4:16–21).
  4. In contrast to the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Jesus reveals his identity throughout John's Gospel as the Messiah, the one who reveals and restores God's purposes (4:22–30).
  5. The fields are ripe for harvest; the time to witness of the Christ is now (4:31–38). Note: In predominant Jewish theology, the salvation of Israel would happen at the end of time. In Jesus (which translates to the church), the time of salvation is now.
  6. Salvation goes beyond first-hand experience of individual souls. Christ is the Savior of the world; all persons are saved (restored) with the world, not from it (4:39–42).
- As you consider this theme, what new understanding do you have of this story?
  - What is the theological lesson about the nature of God in this theme?
  - How does this theme shape your understanding of discipleship and mission?

## 3 RESPOND

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

### Invitation, Witness, and Hospitality

Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a–b and compare its counsel with the themes above.

- What are important similarities and differences?
- What does each passage teach about invitation, witness, and hospitality?
- How can you or your congregation make invitation, witness, and hospitality a way of life?

## 4 SEND

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

### Share Your Story!

The Samaritan woman responded to God's gift in Jesus by generously sharing her testimony with others. What is the testimony you have to share about Christ's peace? With whom can you share the invitation of Christ's peace? Take the time—now or in the coming week(s)—to write your story...and share it!

## 5 BLESS

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

Offer a prayer of blessing for those who generously share invitation, witness, and hospitality, and for those who will receive.

# LESSON 17 RESPONSE SHEET

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

19 March 2017

Dwelling in the Word: Isaiah 58:6–12 (adapted from NRSV and The Message)

Reader 1: Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Reader 2: Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families?

Reader 1: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly;

Reader 2: Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage.

Reader 1: Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say Here I am.

Reader 2: If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins,

If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,

Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.

Reader 1: The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in the emptiest of places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Reader 2: You will use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past.

You will be known as those who can repair, restore, rebuild and renovate, and make communities thrive.

How are you called to give, give up, or forgive?

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## John 4:5–42 (NRSV)

<sup>5</sup>So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" <sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." <sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

<sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." <sup>17</sup>The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup>for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" <sup>19</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." <sup>25</sup>The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." <sup>26</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

<sup>27</sup>Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why

are you speaking with her?" <sup>28</sup>Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup>"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" <sup>30</sup>They left the city and were on their way to him.

<sup>31</sup>Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." <sup>32</sup>But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup>So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. <sup>35</sup>Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. <sup>36</sup>The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup>For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

<sup>39</sup>Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup>And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of

what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

### **Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a–b**

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

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

### **Share Your Story!**

The Samaritan woman responded to God's gift in Jesus by generously sharing her testimony with others. What is the testimony you have to share about Christ's peace? With whom can you share the invitation of Christ's peace? Take the time, now or in the coming week(s), to write your story...and share it!

# FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 18

26 March 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** John 9:1–41

**Lesson Focus:** The light of Christ can open our eyes to see God’s works revealed in us.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- practice Dwelling in the Word as part of the Lenten journey.
- experience the story of John 9:1–41 through the perspective of a character in the story.
- apply John 9:1–41 and Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c to circumstances in the community.

## Supplies

- Copies of Response Sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

**Note to instructor:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 9:1–41 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 50, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

Today is the fourth Sunday in Lent. We fast for 40 days remembering Christ’s own fast in the wilderness. Our journey through Lent gives us a chance to reorder priorities and to make space in our lives for being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality. As we practice self-examination and conversion through prayer, fasting, self-denial, and

generosity, we open ourselves to God’s creative purposes in our lives and in our world.

Each lesson during the season of Lent will begin with the practice of Dwelling in the Word using Isaiah 58:6–12. Read the passage (see Response Sheet) adapted from the NRSV and *The Message*. Spend a few moments in silent reflection with the following questions, record your thoughts on the Response Sheet, or share in groups of two or three.

What is being restored in you? What are you called to restore?

Read or sing “Lead Me, Lord” CCS 450.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction  
(35% of lesson time)

The following points are helpful background information for today's focus scripture passage.

1. Today we understand the physical causes of visual problems, but in the ancient world many assumed that such conditions were the result of personal or generational sin. Jesus rejects this explanation (v. 3).
2. When John refers to "the Jews," he is referring to the religious leaders of his time, not an entire people. Note that every character in this story is Jewish (including Jesus!).

—*Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament, p. 50*

Assign one of the following characters to individuals, pairs, or small groups. Read John 9:1–41 and invite each person to hear the story from the perspective of that character. Discuss the questions (from the perspective of your character) which follow, and share insights with the larger group.

1. Man born blind
  2. Religious leaders
  3. Parents
  4. Disciples
- In what ways are you physically or spiritually blind?
  - What keeps you from proclaiming Jesus as Christ?
  - In what ways are you excluded from the community?
  - How is God's light revealed in you OR what keeps you from revealing God's light?

## 3 RESPOND

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

Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c.

How would you rewrite John's story for your community today?

- Who represents the one(s) in need of physical or spiritual healing? What are their needs?
- What cultural, political, and religious trends are contrary to meeting the needs mentioned?
- What fears inhibit those capable of responding to these needs?
- What specific congregation ministries can address both the needs and the fears?

## 4 SEND

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

Select a phrase or verse from John 9:1–41 or Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c to use in personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week(s). How does it help you reveal God's light? To whom will you share the light of Christ?

## 5 BLESS

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

Read Psalm 23 or Ephesians 5:8–9 as a closing prayer of blessing.

# LESSON 18 RESPONSE SHEET

John 9:1–41 (NRSV)

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

26 March 2017

Dwelling in the Word: Isaiah 58:6–12 (adapted from NRSV and The Message)

Reader 1: Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Reader 2: Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families?

Reader 1: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly;

Reader 2: Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage.

Reader 1: Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say Here I am.

Reader 2: If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins,

If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,

Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.

Reader 1: The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in the emptiest of places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Reader 2: You will use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past.

You will be known as those who can repair, restore, rebuild and renovate, and make communities thrive.

What is being restored in you? What are you called to restore?

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As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup>We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup>When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, <sup>7</sup>saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. <sup>8</sup>The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup>Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." <sup>10</sup>But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup>He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." <sup>12</sup>They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

<sup>13</sup>They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup>Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." <sup>16</sup>Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. <sup>17</sup>So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

<sup>18</sup>The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight <sup>19</sup>and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" <sup>20</sup>His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; <sup>21</sup>but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup>His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup>Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

<sup>24</sup>So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner."  
<sup>25</sup>He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."  
<sup>26</sup>They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"  
<sup>27</sup>He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"  
<sup>28</sup>Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.  
<sup>29</sup>We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."  
<sup>30</sup>The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.  
<sup>31</sup>We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will.  
<sup>32</sup>Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.  
<sup>33</sup>If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."  
<sup>34</sup>They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

<sup>35</sup>Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"  
<sup>36</sup>He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."  
<sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."  
<sup>38</sup>He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.  
<sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."  
<sup>40</sup>Some of the Pharisees

near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?"  
<sup>41</sup>Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

### **Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c**

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

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

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

Select a phrase or verse from John 9:1–41 or Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a–c to use in personal spiritual practice throughout the coming week(s). How does it help you reveal God's light? To whom will you share the light of Christ?

# FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 19  
2 April 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** John 11:1–45

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus brings the good news of God who cares, loves, and is compassionate.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- practice Dwelling in the Word as part of the Lenten journey.
- discuss the focus scripture passage.
- consider conditions for which God weeps and how disciples are called to respond.

## Supplies

- Copies of Response Sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

**Note to instructor:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for John 11:1–45 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 51–52, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

Today is the fifth Sunday in Lent. We fast for 40 days remembering Christ’s own fast in the wilderness. Our journey through Lent gives us a chance to reorder priorities and to make space in our lives for being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality. As we practice self-examination and conversion through prayer, fasting, self-denial, and generosity, we open ourselves to God’s creative purposes in our lives and in our world.

Each lesson during the season of Lent will begin with the practice of Dwelling in the Word using Isaiah 58:6–12. Read the passage (see Response Sheet) adapted

from the NRSV and The Message. Spend a few moments in silent reflection with the following questions, record your thoughts on the Response Sheet, or share in groups of two or three.

What binds you? What is bringing forth new life in you?

Read or sing “Lead Me, Lord” CCS 450.

## 2 ENGAGE

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

Read John 11:1–45.

The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is the climatic final sign of Jesus’ identity in this section of

John's Gospel. In the signs, beginning with turning water into wine, Jesus is portrayed as the fountain of living water, the light of the world, the good shepherd, and now the resurrection and the life. As with the man born blind in last week's passage, each sign is less about Jesus' physical act or miracle, and more about how it reveals Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Today's passage portrays Jesus' greatest sign of raising Lazarus from the dead. It also leads to the decision of the Sanhedrin that Jesus must die, which leads to the glory of Easter. While Lazarus being raised from the dead is a miracle, he emerges from the tomb still wearing his burial clothes. This symbolizes he will die again. On Easter, Jesus emerges from the tomb, and his burial clothes remain in the tomb. This symbolizes the eternal life found in Christ. Lazarus experiences resuscitation to his former life; Jesus' resurrection is into a new and eternal life.

Form the group into small groups of two or three. Assign each group one of the following sections from today's passage. Discuss the questions that follow and share insights with the larger group.

1. John 11:1–6
2. John 11:7–16
3. John 11:17–27
4. John 11:28–37
5. John 11:38–45

- What is happening in this section, and how is that important to the pre-Easter story?
- What is the deeper meaning Jesus is teaching in this section?
- What is important for disciples today to learn from this passage?

### 3 RESPOND

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

John's passage records Jesus' compassionate response to his friend's death. His human emotion reflects the nature of a God who is compassionate and cares for creation. Recent counsel to the church in Doctrine and Covenants 163 upholds conditions for which God weeps. Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a–b. Make a list of conditions in your community (local, world, or creation) for which God weeps.

- How does the welfare of those bound by the conditions listed affect your welfare?

- What seems impossible about addressing the conditions listed? What is possible?

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.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*,  
3rd Edition, p. 16

- How would you describe the Reign of God to a seeker or a new disciple?
- What is the message of hope Community of Christ uniquely offers those suffering in conditions listed previously?
- What is one thing (or more!) this Christ-centered community can do to alleviate a condition of suffering listed? What will it take to make that happen? How will you respond?

### 4 SEND

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

Prayerfully consider one change you can make in the coming week(s) that will alleviate a condition of suffering. Make a commitment to that change. Ask a friend or spiritual companion to journey with you in this change. Remember that transformation begins with even the smallest act of compassion.

### 5 BLESS

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

Complete the following statement adapted from "God Weeps" CCS 212. Read all statements together as a closing commitment.

God weeps for \_\_\_\_\_,  
and till we change the way we \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, God weeps.

# LESSON 19 RESPONSE SHEET

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

2 April 2017

Dwelling in the Word: Isaiah 58:6–12 (adapted from NRSV and The Message)

Reader 1: Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Reader 2: Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families?

Reader 1: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly;

Reader 2: Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage.

Reader 1: Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say Here I am.

Reader 2: If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins,

If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,

Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.

Reader 1: The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in the emptiest of places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Reader 2: You will use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past.

You will be known as those who can repair, restore, rebuild and renovate, and make communities thrive.

What binds you? What is bringing forth new life in you?

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## John 11:1–45 (NRSV)

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup>But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup>Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup>after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup>The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." <sup>11</sup>After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." <sup>12</sup>The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." <sup>13</sup>Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup>Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup>For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup>Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup>When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup>and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup>Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup>and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup>She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

<sup>28</sup>When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately,

"The Teacher is here and is calling for you."  
<sup>29</sup>And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup>The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup>When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup>He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup>Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup>So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

<sup>38</sup>Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." <sup>40</sup>Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup>So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup>I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup>When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup>The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

<sup>45</sup>Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

**Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a–b**

4a. God, the Eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God’s will. Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare.

b. The earth, lovingly created as an environment for life to flourish, shudders in distress because creation’s natural and living systems are becoming exhausted from carrying the burden of human greed and conflict. Humankind must awaken from its illusion of independence and unrestrained consumption without lasting consequences.

Prayerfully consider one change you can make in the coming week(s) that will alleviate a condition of suffering. Make a commitment to that change. Ask a friend or spiritual companion to journey with you in this change. Remember that transformation begins with even the smallest act of compassion.

Complete the following statement or commitment adapted from "God Weeps" CCS 212.

God weeps for \_\_\_\_\_,  
 and till we change the way we \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, God weeps.

# PALM/PASSION SUNDAY

LESSON 20

9 April 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 21:1–11

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus enters Jerusalem as an expression of humility and peace.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- share experiences from their Lenten journey.
- discuss the focus scripture passage and the events of Passion Week.
- consider the call to embody Christ's mission of peace.

## Supplies

- Copies of Response Sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

**Note to instructor:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 21:1–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 53–54, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

Today is the final Sunday in Lent. We fast for 40 days remembering Christ's own fast in the wilderness. Our journey through Lent gives us a chance to reorder priorities and to make space in our lives for being in the presence of God with greater awareness and intentionality. As we practice self-examination and conversion through prayer, fasting, self-denial, and generosity, we open ourselves to God's creative purposes in our lives and in our world.

Share experiences from your Lenten journey in groups of two or three, or as a larger group. What has been most

meaningful? Where have you been resistant? What have you learned about yourself as a disciple?

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

## 2 ENGAGE

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

Read Matthew 21:1–11. Discuss the following themes from the passage and compare to circumstances today. You may choose to form three groups and assign each group one of the following themes to discuss; then share insights with the larger group.

1. Humble entry—Matthew’s quotation of Zechariah 9:9 fulfills the prophecy of the humble king riding on a donkey. This reflects Matthew’s rabbinic background and emphasis on interpretation of scripture.

- Where do you see examples today of humble, servant leadership?
- How does this kind of leadership promote peace?

2. Son of David—Matthew’s crowd shouts hosannas (save us) to the Son of David, which indicates the kind of warrior-king (like King David) the crowd wanted in order to gain military and political power over the Romans.

- Where do you see examples today of leadership through political or military power?
- How does this kind of leadership promote peace?

3. A city in turmoil—The closing verse indicates the city of Jerusalem is in turmoil over Jesus’ arrival.

- What causes Jerusalem to be in turmoil over Jesus’ arrival?
- Where do you see examples today of communities in turmoil?
- What is needed to promote peace in these circumstances of turmoil?

## **3 RESPOND**

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

Read Doctrine and Covenants 161:2a and 163:3b.

- What connections do you find between these verses and Matthew’s account of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem?
- How do these verses speak to the circumstances discussed above?
- In what ways did Jesus challenge cultural, political, and religious trends?
- What does it mean for Community of Christ to be a peace church in the world today?

## **4 SEND**

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

Throughout Holy Week, make the story of Christ’s passion part of your daily spiritual practice. Spend time with Matthew’s narrative of the events leading to Christ’s crucifixion, death, and resurrection, and practice silence (see Response Sheet) as you prepare to experience new life in Christ.

## **5 BLESS**

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

Close this time of learning and sharing by reading together Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29.

# LESSON 20 RESPONSE SHEET

## PALM SUNDAY

9 April 2017

### Matthew 21:1–11 (NRSV)

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.” <sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

<sup>5</sup>“Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

<sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; <sup>7</sup>they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup>A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

<sup>10</sup>When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” <sup>11</sup>The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

### Doctrine and Covenants 161:2a

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

### Doctrine and Covenants 163:3b

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

### Practicing Silence

Throughout Holy Week, make the story of Christ’s passion part of your daily spiritual practice. Spend time with Matthew’s narrative of the events leading to Christ’s crucifixion, death, and resurrection, and practice silence as you prepare to experience new life in Christ.

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

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

Day 1: Read Matthew 26:1–5.

Find a quiet space and allow yourself at least five minutes alone in silence.

Day 2: Read Matthew 26:6–13.

Before you begin your day of work or activity, silently offer this prayer:

*Be still and know that I am God*

*Be still and know that I am.*

*Be still and know.*

*Be still.*

*Be.*

Day 3: Read Matthew 26:14–19.

Repeat this prayer phrase as you enter into the practice of silence:

*Holy Mystery, I am speechless in your presence.*

Day 4: Read Matthew 26:20–75.

Incorporate times of silence into your daily routine.

Day 5: Read Matthew 27:1–54.

As you practice silence, allow yourself to be filled with awe before the mystery of God.

Day 6: Read Matthew 27:55–66.

Preparing to experience new life in Christ, what is it that leaves you speechless?

# EASTER SUNDAY

LESSON 21  
16 April 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** John 20:1–18; Matthew 28:1–10/28:1–9 IV

**Lesson Focus:** Encountering the Risen Christ is a transforming experience that leads us into Christ's mission.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- reflect on the meaning of the Resurrection.
- compare accounts of the Resurrection from John and Matthew.
- discuss points of Community of Christ Christology and invitation to Christ's mission

## Supplies

- Copies of Response Sheet (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- *Community of Christ Sings*

**Note to instructor:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 20:1–18 and Matthew 28:1–10 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 60–63, available through Herald House.

## 1 GATHER

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

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

- What does the Resurrection mean to you?
- How have you experienced new life in Christ?
- What experience(s) during Lent or Holy Week has made Easter Sunday more meaningful to you? Explain.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction  
(35% of lesson time)

The resurrection of Jesus is at the core of Christian faith. The actual Resurrection is not described in any of the Gospel accounts, but left as divine mystery. The empty tomb alone does not produce faith; it is personal experience of resurrection through the Living Christ that transforms lives. While Matthew and Luke draw from Mark's account as source material, the Gospels differ according to the following: 1) who went to the tomb and when; 2) the nature of the resurrected body of Jesus; 3) location and chronology of Jesus'

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

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

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

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

### John

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

### Matthew

- Matthew adapts Mark's account of the women coming to the tomb. They are met by an angel, whose appearance is similar to the young man described in Mark.
- "He is not here...He has been raised from the dead..." Jesus did not die, but was killed; Jesus did not rise (resuscitate), but was raised (by God).
- Matthew's additions to Mark's account portray the women running with joy to tell the disciples. They do not keep silent.
- Galilee is important to Matthew's Gospel. As a Jewish writer to a Jewish audience, the message to "Go to Galilee" is a call to take the message of Christ to the Gentiles...to all the nations.
- The two Marys are the first witnesses of the Risen Christ. He greets them and accompanies them to Galilee. The significance is the assurance of Christ's presence as disciples engage in mission.

### Questions for Discussion

- Which of these points resonates with your understanding of the Resurrection? Which one challenges your understanding of the Resurrection?
- With which account do you most closely relate? Explain.
- What new awareness do you have after comparing the two accounts?

## 3 RESPOND

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

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

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

Discuss the following questions based on previous discussion of the passages from John and Matthew and from the above statements taken from Community of Christ Christology. (For full statements, see *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd edition, pp. 22–23.)

- Which of the above statements best describes your understanding of who Jesus Christ is? Explain.

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

## 4 SEND

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

“Resurrection is not a one-time event that came and went. It is a daily event as people receive God’s grace, love, and new life through Jesus Christ” (*Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 60–61). We are called to live the resurrection hope by experiencing and creating a new present.

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

*I will live resurrection hope and create a new present by...*

## 5 BLESS

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

Read verse four of “The Risen Christ” CCS 477 as a closing commitment.

May we, Christ’s body, walk and serve and stand with those oppressed in this and every land,

Till all are blessed and can a blessing be, restored in Christ to true humanity.

—“The Risen Christ” by Nigel Weaver,  
©1993 Nigel Weaver

# LESSON 21 RESPONSE SHEET

## EASTER SUNDAY

16 April 2017

### John 20:1–18 (NRSV)

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

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

### Matthew 28:1–10 (NRSV)

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” <sup>8</sup>So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

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—excerpted and paraphrased from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd edition, pp. 22–23

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