



Community of Christ

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

YOUTH

5 MARCH 2017 — 16 APRIL 2017

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS



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

We invite you to use these lessons for your class, group, or congregation.

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

Quick, easy: The lessons are designed for approximately 45-minute class sessions with two to three pages of ideas, discussion starters, and activities. Additional preparation help may be found in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament* (with focus on the gospel according to Matthew).

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

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

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

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

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

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 15
5 March 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 4:1–11

Lesson Focus: We prepare daily to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- define aspects of human growth.
- examine what it means to prepare.
- evaluate choices.
- explore the role of trust and faith as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Note to teacher: 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.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Pictures of people at different stages of growth (Note: If possible, ask group members to bring pictures of themselves at different ages for this activity.)
- Chart paper
- Paper
- Pens, pencils, or markers

1 GATHER

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

We Grow

Display pictures of people at different stages of growth, child to adult.

- What do you observe about each person? What is different? What is the same?
- Can you observe anything about their intellectual and spiritual growth?
- In what other ways does a person grow?
- How do you measure how a person grows physically? Intellectually? Spiritually?

2 ENGAGE

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

The Christian Season of Lent

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. For the next five Sundays we will explore our spiritual growth as we discover what it

means to grow closer to God and how to live as disciples of Jesus. It is a time of spiritual self-examination and recommitment. The forty-day period signifies the forty days of temptation of Jesus as described in Matthew 4:1–11. This is the time between his baptism and the beginning of his ministry. The number forty is significant throughout the Bible as a time of transformation.

The word Lent comes from the Middle English word *lente* or springtime, a season of reawakening, and was first used in the 13th century. These forty days before Easter (not counting the Sundays) are recognized by many Christian churches as a time of spiritual renewal.

Ready, Set, Go!

Before the team hits the basketball court, the soloist performs the recital, the actor goes on stage, and the student takes an exam, they prepare for the challenge ahead of them. They prepare to do their best by training with a coach, a mentor, a teacher, or someone who can show them the way and give them guidance with their skills and techniques.

- Tell about a time when you prepared for an event with someone who coached or mentored you.
- Describe what happened at your last practice just before the competition, recital, or other event.

- How did you know you were ready to perform or compete?
- How important was the involvement of your coach, mentor, or advocate?

Today's scripture is a conversation describing Jesus' last experience before he began his ministry. It tells how he was tested, and what his responses revealed about his nature and mission. Read the passage taking turns.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 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.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." 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.

—Matthew 4:1–11 NRSV

- How had Jesus prepared to withstand the temptations placed before him?
- How are the roles in this passage like a mentor testing the readiness of an individual for a task?
- How does this scripture connect to your spiritual growth?

3 RESPOND

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

Choices

In the scripture passage, Jesus had choices to make. He made those choices based on his relationship and commitment to God. With whom do you communicate

when you have choices to make? Write the titles such as teacher, coach, parent, or God on slips of paper, fold in half, and place in a container. Use several slips of paper, if needed. After all papers have been placed in container, unfold, categorize, and display them for all to see.

- Who are the most common individuals consulted?
- Why do persons go to them?
- How does this relationship impact choices?

Responsible Choices

Read the section below from the Enduring Principle Responsible Choices from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 13.

- God gave humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve. Some people experience conditions that diminish their ability to make choices.
- Human choices contribute to good or evil in our lives and in the world.
- Many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible and sinful human choices.
- We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.

Discuss the following questions.

- What keeps us from responding to God's call?
- What changes do we need to make in our lives to follow the ways of Jesus better?
- How can we respond more faithfully to Jesus Christ's invitation, "Follow me"?

4 SEND

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

Whom Do You Serve?

Jesus began his ministry to "worship the Lord [his] God, and serve only him" (v. 10). As Christians, we declare our promise to be Jesus' disciples, to learn and follow what he taught and practiced.

- How do you prepare to be a faithful disciple of Jesus?
- How can the five Mission Initiatives of Community of Christ (Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; Pursue Peace on Earth; Develop Disciples to Serve; and Experience Congregations in Mission) provide opportunities to grow as a disciple?

Make a chart titled "Invite People to Christ." As a class, list people you can invite to your church activities in the next few weeks.

- Consider what you need to do as an individual and a class to be invitational.
- Ask yourself, "Do I represent Jesus in a way that others would want to come with me?"
- How do you live daily to represent Jesus?

Consider these questions prayerfully this week and invite someone to come with you to a church activity.

5 BLESS

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

Close by singing or by each group member taking a different verse or phrase to read from "Jesus, Tempted in the Desert" CCS 449, or sing "Breathe on Me, Breath of God" CCS 190 verses 1–3 as a closing prayer.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 16
12 March 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: John 3:1–17

Lesson Focus: Being open to new ideas helps disciples grow in the likeness of Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore how searching is part of the journey to understanding.
- discover how our fears hold us back.
- recognize God’s love outshines our fear.
- identify various ways of becoming a disciple.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Index cards
- Small mirrors
- Chart paper

Note to teacher: 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)

Ask: Have you ever wanted to know the answer to a question or how something works, but were afraid to ask? Describe the situation and how you felt. Did someone help you find the answer? Explain.

After sharing, ask a volunteer to read John 3:1–17.

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He 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.” ³Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴Nicodemus 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?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸The 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.” ⁹Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹“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. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶“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.

¹⁷“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.”

—John 3:1–17 NRSV

Nicodemus was a prominent leader in Jewish community, a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling religious council). His education taught him that the only way to enter heaven was to be obedient to Jewish laws—there were “only” 613! He wanted to protect his reputation

with his peers, yet he recognized in Jesus the presence of God. He was intrigued with Jesus' teaching of "being reborn" as the way to enter heaven. At night, under the cover of darkness, he made a secret visit to find answers to the questions that were bothering him.

- What respect did Nicodemus show Jesus? (Rabbi was a term used to address a respected teacher.)
- What was Nicodemus' question?
- What was Nicodemus' understanding of the phrase "born again"?
- How did Jesus respond?

2 ENGAGE

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

Guided by Questions

Jesus used questions to guide Nicodemus in the discovery of the answers he was seeking.

- What do you think Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand when he asked, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?" (v. 10)
- And this question, "If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?" (v. 12)
- Was this a challenge to Nicodemus' reputation, or encouraging him to think in new directions?

Jesus provided the answers for Nicodemus and for us. Jesus explained why he came to live among the people of Earth. Reread John 3:16–17. In the original Greek, *agape* was the word used for the highest form of love described in this scripture. Jesus was God's presence in human life—God's plan for salvation.

Going Deeper:

Nicodemus may have found some of the answers he was looking for that night, but we don't know exactly. His name appears later in the book of John. Read John 7:50–51 and 19:39–40 NRSV to find more about this seeker who may have become a disciple.

3 RESPOND

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

Being Nicodemus, Being Jesus

Nicodemus sought Jesus during the night. Whom was he avoiding? Even Nicodemus dealt with peer pressure. At all ages, whoever the peers are, there is pressure to conform to the group, to be like everyone else. Even Jesus had to deal with peer pressure from the people around him and the religious leaders. Jesus continued to share his knowledge of God with people whose hearts were open to hear his message. He drew people who followed him as disciples and then shared their understandings of what Jesus taught with others.

- How did Jesus respond to the pressure of religious leaders?
- With whom did Jesus share?

Discipleship

Read the section below on the Basic Belief "Discipleship" from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 16.

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 in 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.

- How does a disciple respond?
- The Mission Initiative Develop Disciples to Serve says we should equip ourselves for Christ's mission. What does that mean, and what does it challenge you to do?
- How can you share your beliefs with those who have open hearts and minds, waiting to hear of God's love for them?

Darkness to Light

Nicodemus traveled at night to see Jesus. He was looking for answers that would enlighten him. Many biblical scholars

identify the theme of darkness and light found in this scripture passage. Other scriptures describe Jesus Christ as the Light; a life-giving energy; a light of truth that defies darkness; and the true, living light for the world. We can choose to respond to the Light and reflect its brightness.

Consider the reflection of a face in the mirror. Without light, there is no reflection. With dim light, the image in the mirror is not clear. With the full light of the room or the sun, the image in the mirror reveals all there is to see on the surface and hints about the potential behind the image. Give each group member a small mirror. Darken the room; then slowly increase the light.

- What can be seen in the dark?
- How does the image in the mirror change when more light becomes available?
- What potential might be found in the image in the mirror with even greater light?
- How is Jesus like the light?
- How is the Light of Jesus reflected in the mirror?

Sing "Siyahamb' Ekukhanyen' Kwenkhos' (We Are Marching in the Light of God)" CCS 95.

4 SEND

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

Nicodemus sought out Jesus for answers to his questions. On an index card ask each group member to list several peers or others they know who may be asking questions like Nicodemus did. Beside each name identify an opportunity or event to meet that person and share God's message that Jesus shared. Challenge group members to meet with one of those persons in the coming week.

5 BLESS

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

Read John 3:16 NRSV as a group from Bibles or written on chart paper. Challenge the group to commit the verse to memory. Provide a sheet of paper for each group member. Title the paper "John 3:16" and have group members write words or draw pictures to express their thoughts about the verse. Share what they recorded on their papers. Together recite John 3:16 again.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 17
19 March 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: John 4:5–42

Lesson Focus: Being open to new ideas helps disciples grow in the likeness of Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify situations in which people consider others as unworthy.
- understand what the Worth of All Persons means.
- identify innovative ways to Invite People to Jesus Christ.

Note to teacher: 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.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Cardboard tube (4 in/10 cm long)
- Large, empty can or container
- Small gravel
- Sand
- Water

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson

(15% of total lesson time)

Jacob’s Well

Jacob’s Well in Samaria is the setting for the scripture passage today. It was a deep well and supplied water for many people. Samaritans and Jews shared a history of the well, but little else. They disagreed on many things. Jews looked down on Samaritans as a people, considering them inferior—even to the point of avoiding contact with them.

Make a simple well by placing the cardboard tube vertically in the center of the can. This is the well. Hold the tube in place and add a layer of gravel two inches (5.08 cm) deep around the outside of the cardboard tube. Keep the inside of the tube clean. Next, add 1.5 inches (3.8 cm) of sand. Adjust the depth of each layer so that only a half inch of the cardboard tube is visible above the layers of gravel and sand.

To fill the well, pour water into the sand and gravel outside the tube. Add until the water level reaches the top of the sand. Observe what happens inside the tube. (Water should rise inside the tube just as it would in a real well.)

- Discuss what is observed.
- What is the importance of water to humankind?
- Many Jews would go out of their way to travel around Samaria’s borders. If the Jews and Samaritans were enemies, why did Jesus and his disciples travel through the country?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Act It Out!

This scripture text identifies several issues that reflect the culture of that day. Read the story told in John 4:5–42 NRSV and make a list of the issues the group can identify. (Examples might include gender issues between women and men, cultural issues between Samaritans and Jews, religious differences between Samaritans and Jews, the Samaritan woman’s past, the disciples’ attitudes, and the discussion between the woman and Jesus about water.)

After reading and identifying the different issues, ask group members to select one or two from their list to act out.

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 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.) 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." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 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." 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." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 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." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

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?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to

him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. 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. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. 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."

3 RESPOND

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

Living Water

Review the story by reading "Leaving Her Water Jar Behind" CCS 626 or referring to the scripture, John 4:5–42 NRSV. Jesus speaking of Living Water revealed himself as the Messiah. Both Samaritans and Jews were looking for a messiah to come to them. What they had in mind for a savior was not what they found in Jesus.

- What is the Living Water? Where do you get it?
- Because of the woman's testimony of her experience, others came to believe. Do you have an experience—with a friend, your family, in your community—that you could develop into a testimony of Jesus in your life and share with others? Provide paper for group members to write down ideas to develop. The group may want to share and work together.

Worth of All Persons

Read the section below on the Enduring Principle Worth of All Persons from *Sharing in the Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 13.

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

This scripture passage teaches that Jesus offers his gift of Living Water to people not of Jewish heritage. Later in the scriptures, Peter and Paul have disagreements about to whom the gospel should be taken—Jews only or Jews and Gentiles. Jesus included all people—taking his message beyond the Jewish community and eventually, through his disciples, to the world.

- Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman changed her from a woman who considered herself unworthy to a disciple sharing her testimony with all who would listen. She left her water jar at the well because she was so anxious to share her new joy. Who do you know that would benefit from hearing about the Living Water Jesus has given you?
- There are many barriers that separate people in this scripture. What barriers in your community separate people? What can we do to eliminate a barrier and replace it with the love of Christ?

4 SEND

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

We Proclaim!

Community of Christ's mission statement is *We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.*

- What are you already doing to live the church's mission statement?
- What is something new you can do?
- Who in your community needs Living Water of joy, hope, love, and peace?
- How can you respond to this need in your community?

5 BLESS

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

Setting Down Our Vessels

Sing "Come Now, You Hungry" CCS 227. Ask a group member to offer a prayer praising Jesus for the Living Water he gives so we will never thirst again.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 18
26 March 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: John 9:1–41

Lesson Focus: Being open to new ideas helps disciples grow in the likeness of Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- identify ways we can be blind.
- explore how to develop as disciples of Jesus.
- experience how a disability can generate new perspectives.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Small to medium size bag—paper or other opaque material
- Items to touch, hear, and smell
- Cloth to cover eyes (optional)

Note to teacher: 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)

Blind from Birth

A person learns about the physical world through senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight. A person born without sight learns about his or her world through touch, taste, smell, sound, and sometimes limited vision.

Fill a bag with items group members could identify by sight but might have difficulty using only their other senses. One at a time, ask each member to reach into the bag, select an item, and identify it by touching, shaking, or smelling it. (Have several scented items such as various spices wrapped identically. Allow these to be removed from the bag to smell. Omit this activity if someone has allergies.)

- How did this activity make you feel?
- If you could see the items, would you have felt more comfortable?

2 ENGAGE

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

Jesus Heals the Man Blind from Birth

Assign roles for the reading of John 9:1–41. You will need disciples, Jesus, the blind man, his parents, and two groups of Pharisees. The group leader will act as narrator; actors may speak parts or mime as the narrator reads. Read the scripture.

As he [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶When he had said this, he spat on the ground and

made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸The 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?" ⁹Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹He 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." ¹²They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵Then 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." ¹⁶Some 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. ¹⁷So 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."

¹⁸The 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 ¹⁹and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but 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." ²²His 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. ²³Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴So 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." ²⁵He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷He 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?" ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰The man answered,

"Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." ³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." ³⁸He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him. ³⁹Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" ⁴¹Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

- What was the question about sin in this story? (First-century belief was that a physical disability was the result of someone's sin.) What is known about the causes of disability today?
- John uses the symbol of light throughout the Gospel. How is the theme of "light" and "dark" used in this scripture?
- How did each of the characters respond in the story?
- This story takes place over several hours with characters moving in and out of the story. How does this affect the story?
- Who is blind in the story? Are there different kinds of blindness?
- What did you think when the man asked the Pharisees in verse 27 if they wanted to become Jesus' disciples? What meaning would their answer of "yes" or "no" imply?
- What does the conversation between Jesus and the man born blind in verses 35–38 mean to you?
- How would you summarize this scripture?

3 RESPOND

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

The man born blind received the use of his eyes to see the world for the first time. He also gained spiritual insight. He saw who Jesus was.

Blessing of Sacraments

Jesus blesses those in need. He offers healing and new life.

Sacraments are special ministries given to the church to convey the grace of Jesus Christ to his followers and all those he yearns to touch with his compassion. Sacraments are baptism, confirmation, the Lord's Supper, marriage, blessing of children, laying on of hands for the sick, ordination to the priesthood, and the evangelist blessing. In these ministries, God sanctifies common elements of creation to bless human life and to renew and form the church to seek the peaceful kingdom of God.

The church throughout the world celebrates sacraments. These special ministries use common symbols and familiar procedures to draw us into relationship with God, who seeks to establish covenant with us. The sacraments embody God's grace and peace and lead to transformation of our lives and communities. The sacraments shape our identity and community life as followers of Jesus Christ. As we experience the blessings available through sacraments, we are empowered to share the peace of Jesus Christ and to fulfill our mission in the world.

—*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 15, 17 (Photographs of each sacrament appear on pp. 17–18 or at www.CofChrist.org/sacraments.)

If there is time, act out each sacrament and have group members decide which one is being performed.

- What sacraments have you observed?
- In which sacraments have you participated?

Form small groups or pairs, and assign each group or pair one of the eight sacraments of Community of Christ. Discuss how each sacrament helps people grow as disciples. Describe how you, or someone you know, have grown as a disciple through participation or observance of the sacraments. Share insights with the larger group.

Going Deeper

For the last several decades, research has been generated in the area of the Theology of Disability by professionals—some of whom are also disabled—in medical, sociological, and theological groups. Their studies provide interesting perspectives and new ways of thinking about disability. Studies challenge the concept that the man was born blind because of a sin his parents committed. They raise theological questions about the worth of all persons, what contributions the disabled have for society and theology, and how disabled theology impacts the image of God we have in our heads. Some names

in this field of research are Deborah Creamer, Ph.D.; Nancy Eiesland; Jennie Weiss Block; and Kathy Black among others.

- If possible, read about one of the people listed and share what their research reveals about disabilities.

Jesus said all are welcome and have a place at the table. Read or sing "For Everyone Born" CCS 285.

4 SEND

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

Blind Spots

Sometimes a person looks, but cannot see. A blind spot can mean a physical inability to see, but also can mean a person's view is obstructed mentally or emotionally.

- When have you felt blind?
- Was there a character in today's story with whom you identified? Explain.
- When have you experienced new insight, a new chance to be the person you are called to be?

5 BLESS

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

I Believe!

At the end of the story, the healed man exclaims, "Lord, I believe!" An eighteenth-century man named John Newton experienced a conversion that led him to believe in God's grace. Once a slave trader, he realized the deplorable acts to humanity that the slave trade brought. Newton eventually became a minister and was inspired to write the hymn "Amazing Grace" CCS 19. Read or sing this hymn together.

Invite students to complete the following prayer statement. Close by leading the prayer and inviting individuals to share what they have written during the prayer together.

God of abundant grace,
Forgive me when I am blind to...

Help me to see...

in others.
Give me the courage to change...

In Christ's name and peace, Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

LESSON 19
2 April 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: John 11:1–45

Lesson Focus: Jesus calls us to leave our “cave” and follow him.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore the story of Lazarus, raised from the dead.
- compare three stories revealing who Jesus is.
- discover how Jesus is calling each one of us.

Note to teacher: 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.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Copy of questions without the scripture references (see Engage section)
- Paper
- Pens or pencils

1 GATHER

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

That’s What Friends Are For

On a piece of chart paper, make a list of things friends do for each other. Have group members call out ideas and one person record them.

Introduce today’s scripture lesson as a story about friends of Jesus (Mary and Martha) who call him to come pray for their brother who is seriously ill. Jesus, however, does not immediately respond to their request as we might expect a good friend to do.

2 ENGAGE

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

Death and Life

Today’s scripture passage is about a man who died and was buried according to Jewish tradition. Look and listen for things that sound familiar with what is known about

Jesus and similar to scriptures discussed in the last several weeks. Read John 11:1–45, allowing each student to read several verses.

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴But 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.” ⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹Jesus 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. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” ¹¹After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” ¹²The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” ¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus

told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." ²⁸When 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." ²⁹And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹The 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. ³²When 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."

³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Jesus began to weep. ³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" ³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus 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." ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I 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."

⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The 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."

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

In this passage, Jesus reveals he is the Son of God, the Messiah that was prophesied. This sign is a prelude to Jesus' own death and resurrection that will soon follow in the timeline of Christianity's sacred story. This passage is not a story about death, but about living. It is about new life for both Lazarus and all persons through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Make a copy of the questions without the scripture references from John 11 (unless otherwise noted), and divide them among group members. Working together, have them find the answers using Bibles or a copy of the focus scripture passage.

- What was the relationship between Jesus and Lazarus' family? (v. 5)
- Why did the disciples question Jesus when he wanted to go back to Judea? (vv. 8, 16)
- List differences and similarities between Martha and Mary when they greeted Jesus. (vv. 20, 21, 29, 32, 33)
- What was Martha's description of Jesus? (v. 27)
- What was Jesus' reaction when he arrived at Lazarus' tomb? (v. 35)
- What do you think was Jesus' reason for praying out loud at the tomb? (v. 42)
- What did Jesus say to Lazarus? (v. 43)
- What was the reaction of the crowd when Lazarus came out of the tomb? (v. 45)
- Find verses that compare death and sleep. (vv. 11–14)
- Find verses that describe walking in day or night. (vv. 9–10)
- Why did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead? (v. 40)
- What verses show that Jesus is the Christ? (vv. 41–42)
- Who does Jesus say that he is? (vv. 25–26)
- How did this event later impact Jesus' life? (v. 54)
- Do we ever hear from Lazarus again after this story? (John 12:1, 2, 9–11)

Martha and Mary both cried out in despair over the loss of their brother Lazarus. It was four days before Jesus could go to Mary and Martha. Jews believed the spirit of the dead hovered over the body for three days, and after that the body would be so decomposed that the spirit would no longer recognize the body and would leave. Coming

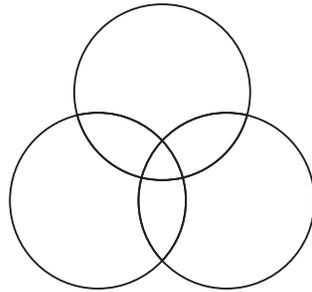
back to life would be impossible. Judaism did not have a universal belief in life after death. Pharisees believed, but Sadducees did not. In the eyes of the people, Lazarus was truly dead, and Jesus gave him new life.

3 RESPOND

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

The Sacred Story Continues

Draw three overlapping circles that intersect equally on chart paper. Label each circle: Lazarus, Man Born Blind, and Samaritan Woman. Place the chart where all can see and write. With the group, review the stories of Lazarus, the man born blind, and the Samaritan woman from the last three Sundays in Lent. Compare the stories using the diagram. Where the circles overlap, have group members write what the stories share in common. Where the stories differ, write comments in the non-overlapping parts of each circle. Ask group members to respond to these questions.



- What does John's author want readers to understand when reading these stories?
- Which story do you identify with the most? Explain.
- Each individual story tells a part of the sacred story about who Jesus is, what Jesus offers, and what he calls his followers to do. What do the stories call you to do? What will be your part of the sacred story? Take a few minutes to write a paragraph, create an illustration or cartoon strip, or write lyrics to a song or a rap which express your part in the sacred story at this point in your life.

Blessings of Community

Do not fail to listen attentively to the telling of the sacred story, for the story of scripture and faith empowers and illuminates.

—Doctrine and Covenants 161:3

The stories of the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, and Lazarus tell about the people who witness or hear of the event. The stories impact the community and all who hear.

One of Community of Christ's Enduring Principles is Blessings of Community. Read from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 13.

Blessings of Community

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed best in community life where people become vulnerable to God's grace and each other.
- True community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized and oppressed.
- True community upholds the worth of persons while providing a healthy alternative to self-centeredness, isolation, and conformity.
- Sacred community provides nurture and growth opportunities for all people, especially those who cannot fully care for themselves.
- We value our connections and share a strong sense of trust in and belonging with one another—even if we never have met.
- Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
- We are called to create communities of Christ's peace in our families and congregations and across villages, tribes, nations, and throughout creation.

When your willingness to live in sacred community as Christ's new creation exceeds your natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation, you will become who you are called to be...If you truly would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:c, d

- How is each statement of Blessings in Community represented in the stories from John's Gospel?
- How have you experienced Blessings of Community?
- How are you challenged to "live in sacred community as Christ's new creation"?

4 SEND

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

Unbind Him, and Let Him Go

Lazarus was alive and well! He was freed of the wrappings that bound him. He heard Jesus shout for him to “come out” from the cave where he’d been buried. He believed in Jesus as the Son of God!

- In what ways do you relate to the story of Lazarus?
- What binds you?

- What frees you?
- How does Jesus call to you? Invite students to shout what Jesus would call out to them.

5 BLESS

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

In closing, sing “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” CCS 499.

PALM SUNDAY

LESSON 20
9 April 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 21:1–11

Lesson Focus: We celebrate Jesus' entrance into our lives.

Objectives

The learners will...

- create an atmosphere of celebration.
- discuss the significance of Palm Sunday in the sacred story.
- identify the Jewish celebration of Passover as a setting of this story.
- explore how the story might happen today.
- understand that humility and peace have enduring strength.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Items to decorate the room for a celebration
- Chart paper or white board
- Markers
- Various props to create a movie scene for this scripture

Note to teacher: 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)

Celebrate!

Imagine an Olympic gold medal winner, a famous movie star, or a respected political figure was coming to your location today. How would you celebrate? Would you have a parade, a reception, or a party? Take a few minutes to decorate the room, or share ideas of how you would celebrate.

2 ENGAGE

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

Who Is This Jesus?

Today we read about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem marking the beginning of what Christians call Holy Week. Jesus

comes from his ministry of preaching and healing. Most recently, he raised Lazarus, a close friend, from the dead. He taught Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary, about his mission. Jesus healed the man born blind and visited with the Samaritan woman at the well. In all of these events, Jesus revealed who he was to those around him, and they shared that knowledge with others. Now we see him returning to Jerusalem, a place where he was threatened with death both now and at the time of his birth. (See Matthew 2.)

News of Jesus' coming spread rapidly among the crowds along the road. They knew his reputation and the stories of his ministry, and saw Jesus as the Promised One who was coming to save them. It was a celebration honoring an important person. They wanted to see him and shout their "Hosannas" meaning "Save us. Rescue us."

Read Matthew 21:1–11.

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethpage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying 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. ³If anyone says anything to you,

just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵"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." ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The 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!" ¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

The city was crowded, overflowing. History suggests there may have been three to five million people present. The setting included a mixture of political and religious thought, feelings of anger, and feelings of uncertainty. Passover was the celebration of the Israelites' liberation from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Every Jewish person was expected to visit Jerusalem during this holy week. (Passover is still celebrated in synagogues and homes around the world as the Jewish liberation from Egypt is remembered and retold.) But many inside the city did not know about Jesus.

Jerusalem was part of an international trade route. The markets were filled with Romans (the occupying governing power) and many merchants and buyers from other countries. So Jerusalem was filled to overflowing with local people, religious pilgrims, Roman soldiers, and merchants. They did not know Jesus, and they asked, "Who is this?"

- Describe how you think the disciples thought and felt.
- How did Jesus enter Jerusalem? Why a donkey? Compare a donkey to a warhorse. What are their practical uses? What is the symbolism implied?
- If you owned the donkey and colt, how would you respond if you were asked to give them up?
- What did Jesus' manner of entering Jerusalem say about who he was?
- What would be today's version of spreading clothing and branches on the ground?
- What was Jesus' purpose in returning to Jerusalem?

3 RESPOND

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

What Was Jesus Doing?

What kind of king was Jesus of Nazareth? On a large paper or erasable surface, make a list of words that describe Jesus as king. Make another list of words that describe the kingdom of God on earth.

How do the lists compare with world leaders and powerful countries of the world today?

Jesus rules through suffering love and humility. This king is God's grace and power arriving in town on the back of a donkey.

- Who would you be in the crowd? Explain.
- Would you be shouting "Hosanna" or asking "Who is this?"

Write and act out a movie scene telling this story as though it were happening in your community today.

We Share the Peace of Jesus

The crowd heard about the miracles Jesus performed. Many wanted to see a miracle before they would believe, but Jesus did not stop to perform miracles. He rode quietly, peacefully, and humbly through the crowd on the young colt. Others were tired of their political bondage under the Romans. Yet Jesus did not enter as the conquering hero on a great stallion. Jesus rode an animal of peace, not war, into Jerusalem. What kind of king was Jesus?

Explore these scriptures before reading the scripture below: Isaiah 54:10 NRSV; John 14:27 NRSV; Ephesians 2:14, 17 NRSV.

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.

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

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:2

Read "We Share the Peace of Jesus Christ" from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, p. 7.

- How would you describe the peace of Jesus Christ?
- What are some ways you can share the peace of Jesus Christ with others?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

(10% of total lesson time)

We Follow Jesus

Invite students to respond to the following through silent reflection, writing or drawing, or sharing in small groups or pairs. Allow time for students to respond after you read each question.

- How has your journey through Lent prepared you for this Holy Week?
- How has Jesus entered your life?
- What is God's invitation to you during Holy Week?

Offer an opportunity for sharing.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of total lesson time)

We sing for joy and celebrate Jesus in our lives just as the crowd shouted and sang "Hosanna!" Read or sing "My Life Flows On in Endless Song" CCS 263 or "Celebrate Jesus" CCS 474.

EASTER SUNDAY

LESSON 21
16 April 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: John 20:1–18

Lesson Focus: Celebrate, Christ has risen!

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore what group members know about Easter.
- consider the meaning of resurrection, new life, God's love for us, and Christ's peace.
- think about the actions of Mary Magdalene and how her response applies to disciples today.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- *Community of Christ Sings*

- Large sheet of paper
- Markers
- Paper
- Pencils, pens
- Roll of brown paper for making tree
- Scissors
- Tape or pins
- Journal

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for John 20:1–18 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 60–61, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

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

It Is about Jesus!

Make a chart from a large piece of paper in the shape of an egg, or draw a large egg shape that fills the paper. Give each group member a marker and ask them to fill the egg with everything they know about Easter. Give them several minutes to write their thoughts. When time ends, have them share and discuss what they wrote. Mention that the egg is a universal symbol for new life or new beginnings.

2 ENGAGE

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

The Meaning of Easter

On Palm Sunday, Jesus humbly rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey to cheering crowds shouting and singing

"Hosanna!" That is quite a contrast to the week that followed. Divide these scriptures among group members to read and summarize for the group.

- John 13:21–30 NRSV
- John 18:1–11 NRSV
- John 18:28–40 NRSV
- John 19:17–22 NRSV
- John 19:23–27 NRSV
- John 19:28–30 NRSV
- John 19:38–42 NRSV

Read John 20:1–18.

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. ²So 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." ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached

the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and 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. ¹³They 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." ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus 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." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus 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.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

- What is the setting when John's story begins?
- Where has the theme of dark and light appeared in an earlier lesson?
- Who is the first character seen in this story?
- What is the action in verses 1–10?
- Who are other characters in the story?
- How did the characters respond to one another and to what occurred?
- What is the action in verses 11–18?
- What new response does each character have?

The Easter story of the resurrection of Jesus appears in all four Gospels. Jesus was crucified and was resurrected. The details vary in each Gospel, just as each one witnesses events in different ways. What is important is how we respond to what we see and hear.

Resurrection and Eternal Life

Remember the story of Lazarus from a previous lesson. Jesus raised Lazarus from death after four days, and the story clearly indicated his body was beginning to decompose. Lazarus' body was restored or resuscitated to his original body. He would live to old age to die again, but Jesus' body was transformed. There are stories of other people raised from the dead in the New Testament. Lazarus (John 11:41–44 NRSV), Jarius' daughter (Luke 8:52–55 NRSV), and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14–15 NRSV) were raised from the dead by Jesus. Later, Peter raised Tabitha (Acts 9:40–41 NRSV), and Paul brings Eutychus back from the dead (Acts 20:9–11 NRSV).

Read the selections below from *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition.

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 is our peace, breaking down the dividing walls of hostility between us. He promises us the redemption and healing of our relationships with God, one another, and all of creation (p. 23).

Christ is risen! Thus we believe that God is God of life, not of death. By faith we share in eternal life even now. In Christ, God's love finally will overcome all that demeans and degrades the creation, even death itself. Easter also gives us hope that the tragic suffering and death of victims, throughout history, is not the last word. We believe the Holy Spirit will transform all creation to share in the glory of God (p. 16).

- What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you?
- How would you tell the story of God's love and Christ's peace? With whom can you share your story?

3 RESPOND

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

Lights, Camera, Action!

Write a play about this event set in your lifetime. Think about setting, scenery, actor selection, actor interpretation, stage directions, costuming, and props. Consider what is meaningful to a modern-day audience and what you want them to know at the end.

4 SEND

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

I Have Seen the Lord

Lives were changed around the world when followers of Jesus Christ shared their story. It was a new way of believing. A new religion was born. Jesus' death was not the end his crucifiers thought it would be. For those who believed in Jesus, it was a new beginning. Mary Magdalene believed when she heard Jesus call her name. She recognized his voice and knew what he said would happen was true. Mary Magdalene had seen the Lord. She believed and went to tell the others (John 20:18).

Many people become believers because others "call their name," create relationships, mentor, and nurture them in their new life in Christ. Lives are changed around the world by followers of Jesus Christ sharing their story of Jesus' love for them today!

- How did you first learn the story of Jesus' love?

Doctrine and Covenants 165:1c, 4c reads,

Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them...And, always remember, the way of suffering love that leads to the cross also leads to resurrection and everlasting life in Christ's eternal community of oneness and peace. Trust in this promise.

- Describe how you were invited to "experience the good news of new life in community with Christ."
- How have you invited another to "experience the good news of new life in community with Christ"?

Optional Activity: Using a roll of brown paper, cut out a tree and tape it to the wall. With the group, identify and write the names of spiritual mentors from Christian history, Community of Christ history, and congregational and family history. On branches or leaves add more people who are sharing the sacred story including group members. Leave room for additional names. Display the tree where all the congregation can see and invite them to continue to add names. Create a meditation center nearby with a place to sit. Provide an open journal for people to write and reflect on their part in the sacred story and how Jesus Christ's resurrection prompted a new beginning in their lives. Ask group members to be the first to write or draw in the journal.

5 BLESS

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

Your Name in the Sacred Story

Read or sing "I Have Called You by Your Name" CCS 636. Offer a prayer of gratitude for the love of Jesus Christ in our lives and the new life he brings.