



# The JOY of the GOSPEL

*Five Lessons for February and the First Sunday of March 2019*

**February 3, 2019** – Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**February 10, 2019** – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**February 17, 2019** – Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**February 24, 2019** – Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

**March 3, 2019** – Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## The Rejection at Nazareth (Upper and Middle Elementary)



**February 3, 2019 – Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

### Overview

In this week's Gospel passage, Jesus brings His message home to Nazareth, near the beginning of His public ministry. He is not well-received and the people chase Him from town and mean to kill Him. In this lesson, students will reflect upon a fundamental condition of being a follower of Jesus: persecution for the sake of the Gospel, and meditate upon Jesus' own persecution and suffering for the Gospel.

### Directions

- A. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
- B. Have students work individually to complete the **Persecution of a Disciple of Jesus** activity. When complete, ask for student volunteers to share and discuss their responses.
- C. Pray a decade of a Scriptural Rosary together using the **Scriptural Rosary: The Second Sorrowful Mystery** handout to reflect upon Jesus' own persecution and suffering.

### Answer Key

#### Focus Questions

1. This week's Gospel begins exactly where last week's ended, with Jesus proclaiming that the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in Him.
2. They were amazed and spoke highly of Him.
3. Jesus said to them that no prophet is accepted in his own native place.
4. Jesus' examples illustrate two examples of Old Testament prophets who did not bring their message to the Hebrew people, but instead went to the Gentiles (non-Jews). At this time in Jewish culture it was not acceptable to associate with Gentiles.

5. They were angry and chased Jesus out of town and were going to kill Him by throwing Him off a hill.

# Sunday Reading

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## A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 4:21-30: The Rejection at Nazareth

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying: “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?” He said to them, “Surely you will quote me this proverb, ‘Physician, cure yourself,’ and say, ‘Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.’” And he said, “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah

when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.

### Focus Questions

1. How is the beginning of this Gospel passage similar to last week’s Gospel?
2. How did the people react to Jesus’ proclamation?
3. How did Jesus respond to the people’s question about him?
4. What do you think the point of Jesus’ examples are?
5. How did the people react to the examples from Scripture that Jesus told them?

# Persecution of a Disciple of Jesus

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**Directions:** Read the brief reflection and then answer the question.

This week's Gospel paints a stunning picture of the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus returns home to Nazareth after His baptism and after being tempted in the desert by the devil for forty days. At first He is welcomed, but the tide quickly turns against Him, and His message is rejected by those closest to Him. They even try to kill him!

Later, in John 15, Jesus says this:

“If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first...If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you, ‘No slave is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. And they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me.”

Persecution is a fundamental condition of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself was persecuted for His message. How much more so will we be persecuted for sharing the Good News? If Jesus was persecuted, so also will we be persecuted.

Jesus promises to be with us, however, and to send the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us and to teach us what to say. He does not leave us alone; He helps us to endure our persecution in His name.

While we can be sure of persecution for being a follower of Jesus, we can be equally sure of the joy that awaits us in Heaven.

**Reflection Question:**

*What are three ways in which being a follower of Christ is controversial and/or can cause us to be persecuted by the world around us? Why do you think so? What should a follower of Christ do in the face of such persecution?*

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# Scriptural Rosary: The Second Sorrowful Mystery

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*Excerpted from [USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/rosaries/scriptural-rosary-the-sorrowful-mysteries.cfm](http://USCCB.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/rosaries/scriptural-rosary-the-sorrowful-mysteries.cfm)*

## **Introduction**

We turn to the Lord, who knows our suffering and longs to give us his comfort and peace. Yet it was our infirmities that he bore,  
our sufferings that he endured.

Isaiah 53:4a

## *Apostles' Creed*

While we thought of him as stricken,  
as one smitten by God and afflicted.

Isaiah 53:4b

## *Our Father...*

Because God did not make death,  
nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living.

Wisdom 1:13

## *Hail Mary ...*

For he fashioned all things that they might have being;  
and the creatures of the world are wholesome,

Wisdom 1:14a

## *Hail Mary ...*

And there is not a destructive drug among them  
nor any domain of the nether world on earth,

Wisdom 1:14b

## *Hail Mary ...*

For justice is undying.

Wisdom 1:15

## *Glory Be.*

## **Second Sorrowful Mystery: The Scourging at the Pillar**

Pilate addressed them a third time, "What evil has this man done? I found him guilty of no capital crime."  
Luke 23:22a

*Our Father...*

"Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him."  
Luke 23:22b

*Hail Mary ...*

With loud shouts, however, they persisted in calling for his crucifixion, and their voices prevailed.  
Luke 23:23

*Hail Mary ...*

The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted.  
Luke 23:24

*Hail Mary ...*

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged.  
John 19:1

*Hail Mary ...*

So he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked, and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished.  
Luke 23:25

*Hail Mary ...*

How lonely she is now,  
the once crowded city!  
Lamentations 1:1a

*Hail Mary ...*

Widowed is she  
who was mistress over nations.  
Lamentations 1:1b

*Hail Mary ...*

The princess among the provinces  
has been made a toiling slave.  
Lamentations 1:1c

*Hail Mary ...*

Bitterly she weeps at night,  
tears upon her cheeks.  
Lamentations 1:2a

*Hail Mary ...*

With not one to console her  
of all her dear ones.  
Lamentations 1:2b

*Hail Mary ...*

Her friends have all betrayed her  
and become her enemies.  
Lamentations 1:2c

*Glory Be...*

"Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."  
John 12:24-25

*Hail, Holy Queen*

# **The Call of Simon the Fisherman (Upper and Middle Elementary)**



**February 10, 2019 – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

## **Overview**

In this week's Gospel passage, Jesus meets the Apostles Simon, James, and John and invites them to come follow Him. Jesus tells them to "not be afraid" of following Him. In this lesson, students will contemplate the challenge of following Christ and consider His invitation to be free from fear.

## **Directions**

- A. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
- B. Have students read the excerpt from the Homily of His Holiness Pope Saint John Paul II for the Inauguration of His Pontificate, St. Peter's Square, Sunday, 22 October 1978, and complete the focus and reflection questions.
- C. Review and discuss the answers when finished.

## **Answer Key**

1. He was preaching the Word of God and the crowd was pressing in on Him while listening.
2. "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."
3. He had already been fishing all night and had caught nothing.
4. Simon and the other fishermen caught a great number of fish so that their nets were tearing. They filled two boats with fish to the point that the boats were in danger of sinking.
5. Simon doubted Jesus was who He said He was. But, the miraculous draw of fish convinced him of the truth about Jesus.

6. “Do not be afraid.”
7. They would be catching men.
8. They left everything and followed Him.

### **“Do Not Be Afraid” Focus Questions**

1. Welcoming Christ and accepting His power.
2. The pope asks for help for himself and for all those who wish to serve Christ in serving the human person and the whole of human kind.
3. To invite Christ into every aspect of our lives.
4. States, economic and political systems, culture, civilization, and development.
5. He alone knows what is “in” man.
6. Modern man does not know what is within the depths of his mind and heart and he is uncertain of the meaning of life.
7. To allow Christ to speak to man because His words are eternal life.

# Sunday Reading

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## A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 5:1-11: The Call of Simon the Fisherman

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” When they had done this, they

caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

### Focus Questions

1. Why did Jesus get into the fisherman Simon’s boat on the shore of Gennesaret?
2. After teaching the crowds from the boat, what did Jesus tell Simon to do?
3. Why was Simon skeptical of Jesus’ command?
4. What was the end result of casting the fishing nets into deep water at Jesus’ command?
5. Why did Simon say to Jesus, “depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man”?
6. What did Jesus say to calm the amazement of Simon and all those who had seen the miraculous draw of fish?
7. What did Jesus tell Simon, James, and John that they would be doing from now on?
8. How did Simon and his partners respond to Jesus’ invitation?

**Reflection Question:**

*If Jesus appeared to you today and invited you to follow Him, how would you respond? Would it be difficult to leave everything behind and accept His invitation? Why or why not?*

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# “Do Not Be Afraid.”

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**Directions:** Read the reflection and the excerpt from the Pope St. John Paul II’s homily and answer the focus and reflection questions.

The phrase “do not be afraid”—or words with a similar meaning—is one of the most frequent commands to appear in the Bible. Jesus Himself spoke these words numerous times to those who would hear Him. “Do not be afraid” is an invitation to be free of fear. Often, when we consider how following Christ might affect our lives, we become afraid. Jesus knows this and tells us not to be afraid. No matter what challenges lie ahead on our journey with the Lord, with Jesus all things are possible. What then should we fear?

At the very beginning of his pontificate, Pope St. John Paul II echoed the words of Christ in this Sunday’s Gospel, “Do not be afraid.” These were the new pope’s words to his flock, and in them he sought, like Christ, to invite the world to be free of fear.

## **An Excerpt from the Homily of His Holiness John Paul II for the Inauguration of His Pontificate, St. Peter’s Square, Sunday, 22 October 1978**

Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power. Help the Pope and all those who wish to serve Christ and with Christ’s power to serve the human person and the whole of mankind. Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of States, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development. Do not be afraid. Christ knows “what is in man.” He alone knows it.

So often today man does not know what is within him, in the depths of his mind and heart. So often he is uncertain about the meaning of his life on this earth. He is assailed by doubt, a doubt which turns into despair. We ask you therefore, we beg you with humility and trust, let Christ speak to man. He alone has words of life, yes, of eternal life. (no. 5)

**Focus Questions:**

1. What does Pope St. John Paul II ask us not to fear?
2. For what does the pope ask help?
3. What do you think the pope meant by the phrase “Open wide the doors for Christ.”?
4. We are often taught that there should be a complete separation of Church and state. What areas of human existence does the pope suggest we invite Christ to be a part of?
5. What does Christ know of man?
6. What does the pope suggest modern man does not truly know?
7. What does the pope beg of the world and why?

**Reflection Question:**

*What are some reasons that someone might fear welcoming Jesus into his or her life? Do you think it is important to invite Jesus into all aspects of human life: culture, politics, economy, family life, and so forth? Why or why not?*

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*The Joy of the Gospel*  
**Sermon on the Plain**  
**(Upper and Middle Elementary)**



**February 17, 2019 – Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

## **Overview**

In this week's Gospel passage, Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Plain in which He teaches a variation of the Beatitudes. He continues His message that being His disciple will require suffering and persecution in His name, but that our reward in Heaven will be great. In this lesson, students will reflect on the meaning of the Beatitudes and what it means to be truly happy.

## **Directions**

- A. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
- B. Have students read the reflection and Scripture passage from **Treasure in Heaven** and answer the questions.
- C. Review and discuss the answers as a class when finished.

## **Answer Key**

1. A great number of His disciples from all over the region.
2. Those who are poor, those who are hungry, those who are now weeping, those whom the people hate, exclude, insult, and have their names denounced on account of Jesus (the Son of Man).
3. Answers will vary but should demonstrate an understanding that the blessings are the answer to what the people are suffering. They will receive as a blessing or reward that which they forgo or suffer through when done in the name of Jesus.
4. Those who are rich, those who are filled now, those who laugh now, and those who are spoken well of.
5. Accept reasoned answers that show an understanding of the fact that, while we are assured of persecution and suffering as a disciple of Christ, our reward, or blessing, in

Heaven will be greater than any reward or benefit we might gain here on earth. Jesus promises us that He will be with us through the suffering and persecution and will bless us abundantly in Heaven.

### **Treasure in Heaven**

1. Material things.
2. Because they are temporary: even the nicest and most valuable things will eventually decay, fade, break, and so forth.
3. In Heaven.
4. Prayers, sacrifices, good works, virtues, anything that helps us grow closer to Christ and leads us to beatitude.
5. Our heart will be wherever our treasure is. If we care most about worldly things, our heart will be in the world. If we care most about God and being with Him in Heaven, our heart will be with God.
6. Accept reasoned answers.

# Sunday Reading

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## A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 6:17, 20-26: Sermon on the Plain

Jesus came down with the twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for the kingdom of God is yours.

Blessed are you who are now hungry,  
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who are now weeping,  
for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you,  
and when they exclude and insult you,

and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep.

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.”

### Focus Questions

1. Whom was Jesus teaching in this sermon?
2. Whom does Jesus describe as “blessed”?
3. The various blessings these people will receive are the opposite of how Jesus’ describes them. In other words, those who are hungry will be satisfied, those who weep will laugh, and so forth. Why do you think Jesus promises these blessings (or rewards) in this way?
4. Whom does Jesus say “woe” to?
5. Remember the Gospel readings from the past two weeks. In the first, Jesus warns us that it will not be easy to follow Him and that we will be persecuted for being His disciples. In the second, Jesus tells us to “not be afraid” for He will be with us when we encounter persecution. How does this week’s Gospel fit with the message Jesus gives us in the previous two? What is Jesus promising us when we suffer for His sake?

# Treasure in Heaven

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**Directions:** Read the reflection and Scripture passage and then answer the questions.

Every human being on earth desires to be happy. But there is a great difference between what the world thinks happiness is and what happiness really is. In the Gospel reading from this Sunday Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Plain, which is very similar to Matthew 5:3-12, in which Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount. In both sermons, Jesus teaches us variations on the Beatitudes. It is thought that these two teachings were two separate events in which Jesus delivered a very similar message to two separate crowds of people. That fact tells us today that the Beatitudes are an essential part of Jesus' teaching of how to follow Him, how to be holy, and ultimately, how to be truly happy. And, in the teaching of the Beatitudes, Jesus makes it clear that true happiness is not the same thing as the temporary happiness our world offers. True happiness involves suffering, serving others, and enduring persecution in order to do what is right and holy. True happiness leads to fulfillment, not necessarily here on earth, but ultimately and eternally, one day in Heaven with God.

The Beatitudes are not the only time Jesus speaks of the difference between worldly happiness and the ultimate happiness of Heaven.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

Matthew 6:19-21

1. When Jesus refers to "treasures on earth," what types of things does He mean?

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2. Why is it vain, or fruitless, to store up "treasures" on earth?

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3. Where does Jesus tell us we should store up treasures?

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4. What kind of treasures do we store up in Heaven? How are these things different from earthly treasures?

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5. What reason does Jesus give for this teaching?

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6. Think honestly about your own life. Where is your treasure? If most of your “treasure” is earthly, how can you begin to “store up treasure” in Heaven? If you have stored your treasure in Heaven, how can you continue to do so?

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*The Joy of the Gospel*  
**Love of Enemies**  
**(Upper and Middle Elementary)**



**February 24, 2019 – Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

## **Overview**

In this week's Gospel passage, Jesus continues to teach about the challenges of being His disciple. Here, He teaches us to love our enemies and gives us the Golden Rule, "Do to others what you would have them do to you." In this lesson, students will reflect on ways they can live according to the Golden Rule.

## **Directions**

- A. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
- B. Have students read the reflection and scenarios from **The Golden Rule** and reflect on how they could follow the Golden Rule in each situation.
- C. Review and discuss the answers as a class when finished.

## **Answer Key**

1. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, do good to them, and to pray for them, even when they mistreat us.
2. He says, "Do to others as you would have them do to you."
3. Jesus tells us that it is easy to love those who love us, and to treat well those who treat us well. Even sinners love those who love them and so forth. When we treat even our enemies well and love them, though it may be hard to do, our reward will be great in Heaven with God.
4. The measure with which we judge and condemn others will be the measure with which we are judged.

# Sunday Reading

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## A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 6:27-38: Love of Enemies

Jesus said to his disciples: “To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend

to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

“Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

### Focus Questions

1. Summarize the way Jesus teaches us to treat our “enemies” in the first part of this Gospel.
2. How does Jesus tell us we should treat others?
3. Why does Jesus tell us to treat others in this way?
4. Why should we not judge or condemn others?

# The Golden Rule

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**Directions:** Read the reflection and each scenario. Then reflect on how you could follow the Golden Rule in that situation.

We have all heard the teaching of Jesus “Do to others as you have them do to you.” This saying is often called the Golden Rule and, even for those who are not Christian, it is held as the standard by which one should live one’s life. It is easy to forget, however, the context in which Jesus gives us this teaching. Jesus makes it clear that we are not only meant to treat well those who treat us well, but even those who have harmed us in some way, or have taken advantage of us. This fact makes living the Golden Rule much more challenging. It is easy to treat our best friend the way we would want to be treated, but much harder to treat the school bully in the same way.

1. You lent \$5 to another student over a month ago so they could buy lunch. They never paid you back even though they promised to do so.

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2. A student in your class has been spreading rumors and gossiping about you.

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3. A student in your class regularly threatens you physically and has pushed you on the playground once before. You have told your teacher about this student, but the teacher hasn’t done anything about it.

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4. You witness a student at your school make fun of another student during lunch.

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5. You notice a student who sits next to you copying your paper during a math test.

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*The Joy of the Gospel*

# A Tree Known by its Fruit (Upper and Middle Elementary)



**March 3, 2019 – Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

## Overview

In this week's Gospel passage, we find the conclusion to Jesus' teachings about being His disciple before we enter the season of Lent. Jesus teaches us what is perhaps the entire point of the past few weeks' Gospels: to be His disciple is to be like Him. In this lesson, students will contemplate the most important characteristics of Christ that we must follow in order to be His disciples.

## Directions

- A. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
- B. Have students read the reflection and Scripture passages from **Imitation of Christ** and then answer the reflection question.
- C. Review and discuss the answers as a class when finished. Create a brainstorm list on the board of all the characteristics of Christ your class can think of that we should imitate to be His disciple.

## Answer Key

1. No disciple is superior to their teacher. But, when they have been fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher.
2. We should first take care of our own sins and failures and whatever else is harming our relationship with God before we judge the sinfulness of others. Note: Jesus does not say that we shouldn't be concerned at all with the sinfulness of others, but rather that we should first attend to ourselves. He is not calling us to leave others completely alone in their sinfulness.

3. Good trees do not bear rotten fruit, nor do we find good fruit in bad plants. For us, this means that the results of our actions and choices say something about who we are and our relationship with God. If we are striving to live good and holy lives, then the results of our actions and choices will be evidence of the goodness in our lives.

# Sunday Reading

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## A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 6:39-45: A Tree Known by its Fruit

Jesus told his disciples a parable,  
“Can a blind person guide a blind person?  
Will not both fall into a pit? No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden

beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye.

“A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles. A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.”

### Focus Questions

1. What does Jesus say about a disciple, or student, in relation to their teacher?
2. In last week's Gospel, Jesus spoke about being careful of judging others because the measure by which we judge others will be the same measure by which we are judged. Jesus continues this teaching in this week's Gospel. What do you think Jesus means when He says, “Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye”?
3. Summarize Jesus' analogy of a tree and its fruit. What do you think this teaching means for us?

# Imitation of Christ

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**Directions:** Read the reflection and Scripture passage about imitating Christ. Then, answer the reflection question.

Each of the Gospel readings for the past month have focused on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus makes it clear that following Him will be difficult, that we will endure suffering, that we will be persecuted, that we will need to live differently than the way the world around us tells us to live, but that we do not need to be afraid because He will be with us. In this week's Gospel, Jesus returns to this theme and adds a new layer. He says,

*“No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher.”*

In this saying we find what is perhaps the point of the teachings from these past weeks: to be a disciple of Jesus is to be *like* Him. How do we become like Jesus? Certainly, the Gospels from the past weeks begin to answer this question. And this week, Jesus reveals that to be like Him requires a certain kind of training. Jesus' whole life and teachings are the source of our training. To be like Him means to follow in His footsteps, not by picking and choosing what we like and don't like from His teachings, but instead by “fully” living as He taught us to live.

Let's look at what else Jesus said about being like Him.

*“If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet.”* – John 13:14

*“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”* – John 13:34

*“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”* – Luke 9:23

*“So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect”* – Matthew 5:48

*“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” – John 14:15*

*“Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful.” – Luke 6:36*

*“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” – John 15:13*

Based on these teachings of Jesus, and what you already know about Him, what do you think are the five most important characteristics of Jesus that we should imitate in order to be His disciples?

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