Teaching the Liturgical Year

LESSONS for September 2019
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Five Lessons for September 2019

September 1, 2019: Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 8, 2019: Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 15, 2019: Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 22, 2019: Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 29, 2019: Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Conduct of Invited Guests and Hosts
(Middle and Upper Elementary)

September 1, 2019 –Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage Jesus dines at a wealthy Pharisee’s house and sees other guests seeking to sit in places of honor. He tells a parable to illustrate why guests should act humbly, not entitled, and how their interactions with others should be motivated by humility and selflessness. He emphasizes that people should not be seeking earthly rewards or recompense, but rather the rewards of Heaven. For this beginning of the school year lesson, students will write a reflection essay about their summer, and how Jesus invited them to act selflessly toward others—or how others acted selflessly toward them.

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 your students read and complete the Summer Reflection activity.
C. Review and discuss their answers together when they have completed the activity.

Answer Key
Focus Questions
1. Jesus dined at the home of one of the leading Pharisees on the Sabbath.
2. They were choosing to sit in places of honor at the table.
3. Jesus says that when invited to a wedding banquet, one should not sit at the place of honor because the host may have invited a more distinguished guest.
4. Jesus says those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Accept reasoned answers.
5. The poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. Because they themselves cannot repay, and therefore it is selfless, not reward seeking. Yet God will reward such an act of love at the resurrection.
6. They will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.
Sunday Reading

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 14:1, 7-14: Conduct of Invited Guests and Hosts

On a sabbath he went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully...He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place. Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, ‘My friend, move up to a higher position.’ Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Then he said to the host who invited him, “When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Focus Questions

1. Where did Jesus go to dine and what day of the week was it?
2. What did Jesus observe about the guests?
3. In the parable, what does Jesus say one should do when invited to a wedding banquet? Why?
4. Whom does Jesus say will be humbled? Who will be exalted?
5. Whom does Jesus tell His hosts that they should invite to their banquets? Why?
6. What does Jesus promise will happen if they do what He says?
Summer Reflection

Directions: Jesus invites us all to love as He loved, which means fully giving of ourselves to others and seeking nothing in return. Now that we are back in the school year, look back and think about this past summer: how did Jesus invite you to love others selflessly? Write a short essay recounting three examples of how you were invited to show the love of Christ to others, or how others showed this love to you.

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Teaching the Liturgical Year

Sayings on Discipleship (Middle and Upper Elementary)

September 8, 2019 – Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage Jesus delivers a series of difficult teachings about being a disciple. Much like the parables of the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price, the cost of being a disciple, though it may be steep, is far outweighed by the value of eternal life. In this lesson, students will explore the cost and value of being a disciple of Jesus Christ and consider what stumbling blocks stand in the way of their own relationship with Jesus and what ways they can be better disciples of Jesus during this new school year.

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 your students read and complete the “How Much Would You Pay?” activity.
C. Review and discuss the answers together when they have completed the activity.

Answer Key

Focus Questions
1. One must hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life in order to be His disciple.
2. No. He means we must have our priorities in order, and be willing to lose others and even give up our own lives for the sake of our relationship with Jesus.
3. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Him cannot be His disciple.
4. They must sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for completion. If a person does not do this, and begins building but runs out of money, he will be laughed out because he did not plan accordingly.
5. First sit down and decide whether he can oppose the enemy’s troops with the number of troops he has.
6. Send a delegation and ask for peace.
“How Much Would You Pay” Focus and Reflection Questions:

1. He sells all that he has. The person does this (joyfully) because the treasure and the pearl are worth more than all of his possessions. Therefore, it makes sense for him to sell all he has for the greater value of the treasure and the pearl.

2. Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Help students understand that this is a perfectly valid question to ask Jesus, in fact, it is a very good question to ask. We should all ask the same question: “how to do I get to Heaven?”

3. Follow the commandments. He tells Jesus he has been following the commandments since he was a child.

4. Sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor...Then come, follow me. The official is sad because he was very rich.

5. In all three, Jesus makes the point that the value of the Kingdom of God, of being His disciple, is greater than all of a person’s possessions.

6. He says that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God.

7. By the power of God, with whom anything is possible.

8. An overabundant return in this age and eternal life in the age to come.
A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 14:25-33: Sayings on Discipleship

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, “If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’ Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

Focus Questions

1. What difficult teaching does Jesus first give the crowd about being His disciple?
2. Words can have layers of meaning. We most commonly use the term “hate” today to mean extreme dislike to the point of desiring harm to someone. Do you think Jesus means that discipleship means we must “hate” our family members in this way? Explain.
3. What does Jesus say about carrying one’s own cross?
4. What does Jesus teach that a person who wants to build a tower must do first? What does He say would happen to that person if he did not do this?
5. What does Jesus say a king marching into battle should do?
6. What does Jesus say a king would do if he determines he cannot defeat his enemy?
How Much Would You Pay?

**Directions:** First, read the reflection about this week’s Gospel. Then, read two of Jesus’ parables about the value of the Kingdom of God, and the Gospel story of the rich official. Then, answer the reflection questions.

**Reflection:**
In this week’s Gospel, Jesus returns to a frequent theme of His teachings: the cost and value of being His disciple and of the Kingdom of God. We know that the disciple of Jesus gains eternal salvation in the Kingdom of God. Jesus teaches us that the cost of following Him is “worth it.”

Whether we realize it or not, every single choice we make comes at a cost. The cost might be money, or time, or something else. These choices reveal what we value. One person might save all summer, giving up meals out or new clothes, to buy a new video game system that he will spend many hours enjoying. A student might choose not to play a time-consuming sport after school so she can focus on bringing her grades up, because she wants to get into a good college. A young adult might choose to give up certain things he wants right now, so that he can save for the future. There are many things in our lives that are costly to us, but the sacrifices are “worth it” because of the value we receive from them.

The costs of discipleship include money, time and much more. But Jesus regularly tells us the cost of being a disciple and of the Kingdom of God is great, but what we get in return is “worth it.” In fact, being a disciple and the Kingdom of God are more valuable than anything else this world can offer us. This is a difficult teaching, especially when Jesus tells us that being His disciple and the Kingdom of God are worth more than our relationships with our parents, our siblings, our extended family and friends, our reputation, and our most valuable possessions.

**Parables:**

The Treasure Hidden in the Field and the Merchant in Search of Fine Pearls  
(Matthew 13:44-46): “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.”

The Rich Official  
You know the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother.”’ And he replied, “All of these I have observed from my youth.” When Jesus heard this he said to him, “There is still one thing left for you: sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” But when he heard this he became quite sad, for he was very rich. Jesus looked at him [now sad] and said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard this said, “Then who can be saved?” And he said, “What is impossible for human beings is possible for God.” Then Peter said, “We have given up our possessions and followed you.” He said to them, “Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive [back] an overabundant return in this present age and eternal life in the age to come.”

Focus and Reflection Questions:

1. In the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price, what does the person do in order to gain the treasure and the pearl? Why do you think the person does this?
2. What question does the rich official ask Jesus? Do you think the official should be asking Jesus this question? Why or why not?
3. What does Jesus first tell the rich official to do? How does the official respond?
4. What is the second thing Jesus tells the rich official to do? How does the official respond?
5. How is Jesus’ second command to the rich official similar to the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price?
6. What does Jesus teach about a “rich person” entering the Kingdom of God?
7. How, then, is it possible for anyone to be saved?
8. What does Jesus say will be the reward for anyone who gives up or sacrifices their “house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God”?

Reflection:

Is Jesus really telling us to give up our relationships with our families and friends? Is He really telling us to give away all of our possessions? Maybe. Maybe not. The answer is likely different for each person. The real question we should ask ourselves is: “What in my life is a stumbling block in my relationship with Jesus? Is it my material possessions? Then I should find a way that my things do not hurt my relationship with Jesus. Is it my relationships with friends or family? Then I should find a way to make sure that my relationships do not hurt my relationship with Jesus. These are not easy questions and the answers can be challenging. But the value of eternal life in Heaven far outweighs the cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ here on earth.
Answer the following reflection questions:

1. How are you “rich”? In other words, what has God blessed you with? What possessions, talents, or relationships are the most valuable to you? Why?
2. What is one thing in your life that is a stumbling block in your relationship with God? Why? How can you “give this away”? 
3. What are two specific ways this school year that you can become more of a disciple of Jesus Christ and seek the Kingdom of God in your life?
The Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son
(Middle and Upper Elementary)

September 15, 2019 – Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage, Jesus tells three of His most well-known parables, each sharing the theme of searching for and finding something or someone that was lost. In this lesson, students will use sacred art to reflect upon the meaning of the Gospel and how each parable reflects a different aspect of Christ and His mercy.

Directions
1. Have your students read the Gospel passage for the week and complete the Focus Questions.
2. Review and discuss the answers when they have completed the Focus Questions.
3. Have your students work in groups for three or four to reflect upon and discuss the three sacred art images. (Note: you may choose to assign each group one of the paintings to reflect upon or have each group reflect upon all three.)
4. When complete, project the images of the paintings and call on groups to share and discuss their responses.

Answer Key
Focus Questions
1. They were complaining that Jesus associated with tax collectors and sinners and that He ate with them (a sign of covenant or family relationship). In response, Jesus told them a parable.
2. Leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go off to find the lost one.
3. He would set it on his shoulders and carry it home. Then, he would call his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him. There will be more joy in Heaven over one repentant sinner than in ninety-nine who have no need for repentance.
4. She would light a lamp and sweep the house until she finds the coin.
5. She would call her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her. There will be more joy among the angels of God in Heaven over one repentant sinner.
6. He demanded his share of his father's estate. The father divided his property between his sons. Normally, a share of one's father's estate would be received after the father's death as an inheritance.

7. He left his father's farm and travelled to a distant country where he spent everything on a life of “dissipation,” meaning sinful and excessive self-indulgence.

8. He had spent his inheritance and then a famine struck and he was in dire need. He realized that the pigs he tended ate better than he, and that the hired hands on his father's farm also led better lives than he. So, he decided to return home, confess his offense to his father, and ask to work as a hired hand on his father's farm.

9. He was filled with compassion, ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

10. To bring the finest robe and put it on his son, and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. He said, “this son of mine was dead, and has come back to life again; he was lost, and has been found.”

11. He was out in the field working. He became angry hearing that his younger brother had returned and a celebration was being had in his honor. He refused to enter the house. He did not think it was fair that he had remained with his father and served him all these years and had never had even a small celebration, but now that the younger son who had squandered his inheritance had returned, they were celebrating.

12. With tenderness. The father told his older son that he was here with him always and all he had was his. But the younger son was dead and had come back to life again, lost but now found.
A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 15:1-32: The Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So to them he addressed this parable. “What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. “Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbor and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.’ In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Then he said, “A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, ‘Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’ So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.”’ So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But his father ordered his servants, ‘Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.’ Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, ‘Your brother has returned and your
father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, ‘Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns, who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.’ He said to him, ‘My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.

Focus Questions

1. Why were the Pharisees and scribes complaining about Jesus? What did Jesus do in response to their complaints?
2. In the first parable Jesus tells in this Gospel, what does He suggest a person who had a hundred sheep would do if he lost one?
3. What would the person do once he had found the lost sheep? How is this similar to the response in Heaven to one repenting sinner?
4. In the second parable Jesus tells, what does He suggest a woman with ten coins would do if she lost one of them?
5. What would the woman do once she found her lost coin? How is this similar to the response among the angels of God in Heaven to one repenting sinner?
6. The third parable Jesus tells is one of the most well-known of Jesus’ parables: the Parable of Lost Son, or the Prodigal Son. At the beginning of this parable, what did the younger son demand from his father? How did the father respond to the younger son’s demand? When would someone ordinarily receive what the younger son is demanding?
7. What did the younger son do with his inheritance?
8. Why did the younger son hire himself out as a farm hand to tend the swine? What did he come to realize and then do while tending the swine?
9. When the father caught sight of his son, what did he do?
10. What did the father order his servants to do once the younger son had returned? Why?
11. Where had the older son been? How did he respond to the news that his younger brother had returned? Why?
12. How did the father respond to the older son’s anger?
What was Lost has been Found

**Directions:** The three parables Jesus tells in this week’s Gospel are three of the most well-known of His parables. While each tells a different story, they share a common theme: searching for and finding something or someone that was lost. Use the following paintings by James Tissot and the accompanying reflection questions to reflect more deeply on the message of this week’s Gospel.

**The Good Shepherd**
James Tissot, (C. between 1886 and 1894), Brooklyn Museum.

1. What stands out to you about this painting?
2. What moment from the Parable of the Lost Sheep has the artist chosen to paint? Why do you think he chose this moment? In what ways does the painting illustrate the story?
3. In John 10:11, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” The Good Shepherd is also the title of this painting. The man in the painting could be either the shepherd from the parable or Jesus Himself. Why do you think the artist painted the figure in his painting leaving both possibilities open to our interpretation?
4. How is Jesus like the shepherd in the parable? Why is the Good Shepherd an appropriate title for Jesus?
The Lost Drachma
James Tissot, (C. between 1886 and 1894), Brooklyn Museum.

1. What stands out to you about this painting?
2. What moment from the Parable of the Lost Coin has the artist chosen to paint? Why do you think he chose this moment? In what ways does the painting illustrate the story?
3. In John 8:12, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Consider the use of light in this painting. Where do you think the lost coin is in this painting? How does the light from the lamp or candle help the woman search for her coin? Why do you think the artist chose to paint the light in this painting the way he did?
4. When we sin, we are like the lost coin. We turn away from God and “walk in darkness.” How is Jesus the light of the world? Why is the light of the world an appropriate title for Jesus?
1. What stands out to you about this painting?

2. What moment from the Parable of the Lost Son has the artist chosen to paint? Why do you think he chose this moment? In what ways does the painting illustrate the story?

3. In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Often in life, we spend a lot of time and energy trying to do things our own way. Like the lost son of this parable we want to seek our own way, find our own “truth,” and live our own life without regard to others. When we do so, we turn away from the Father and waste the good things He has given us. How does this painting show the ways in which Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life that lead us to the Father?

4. Why are the Way, the Truth, and the Life appropriate titles for Jesus?
Reflection Question
After reflecting on the paintings answer the following reflection question and discuss the answer with your family:
At the start of this new school year, how can you be more like Jesus who is the “Good Shepherd,” the “Light of the World,” and the “Way, the Truth, and the Life?” In what ways can you be a friend to others who don't know Jesus? How can you share Jesus’ message of salvation and forgiveness with your family and friends, in your school, and in your community?

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The Parable of the Dishonest Steward
(Middle and Upper Elementary)

September 22, 2019 – Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage, Jesus gives a challenging parable about a dishonest steward that continues and deepens His teaching on the cost and value of discipleship and the Kingdom of God. In this lesson, students will examine the response of the dishonest steward to his master’s displeasure in him and then develop ways in which they can give of their own time, talent, and treasure to helping the various communities in their lives.

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 your students read and complete the “How Can You Be Generous with What God has Given You?” activity.
C. When complete, call on students to share their answers. Keep a master list on the board of ways that your students can help others in the various communities they belong to. Challenge your students to act upon these ideas throughout the school year.

Answer Key

Focus Questions
1. He squandered the rich man’s property. He demanded a full account of his stewardship.
2. The rich man is going to fire his steward after he gives an accounting of his expenses.
3. He is not strong enough to dig and he is ashamed to beg.
4. He calls on them to collect their debts, but forgives a portion of their debts.
5. He commends the steward for acting prudently.
6. The person who is trustworthy in small matters is also trustworthy in large matters, whereas the person who is dishonest is small matters is also dishonest in large matters.
7. Jesus says that no servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other.
Jesus said to his disciples, “A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property. He summoned him and said, ‘What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be my steward.’ The steward said to himself, ‘What shall I do, now that my master is taking the position of steward away from me? I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that, when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes.’ He called in his master’s debtors one by one. To the first he said, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ He replied, ‘One hundred measures of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.’ Then to another the steward said, ‘And you, how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘One hundred kors of wheat.’ The steward said to him, ‘Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.’ And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. “For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.”

Focus Questions

1. In this parable, why was the rich man’s steward reported to him? What did the rich man demand of his steward?
2. The steward in this parable served as the rich man’s accountant. Therefore, he was in charge of his master’s money and possessions. This parable implies that the steward “squandered” his master’s wealth by using it for himself. What is to be the steward’s punishment for the misuse of his master’s wealth?
3. Why is the steward worried about what will happen after his master no longer employs him?
4. What does the steward do so that the people may welcome him into their homes after he is no longer employed?
5. How does the master respond to the steward’s actions?
6. What does Jesus say about a trustworthy person and a dishonest person?
7. Why does Jesus say that no person can serve both God and mammon (which means wealth, money, or possessions)?
How Can You Be Generous with What God has Given You?

**Reflection:** This week's Gospel includes a challenging parable and teaching from Jesus about wealth, honesty, and the true value of the things of this world versus the Kingdom of God. One difficult thing to understand in the parable in this Gospel is why the rich master would commend his steward for forgiving debts. At first, this may seem to be yet another example of the steward's misuse of his master's wealth. Some scholars have suggested that the portion of the debt the steward was forgiving was not in fact his master's money, but his own commission or payment for collecting the debt. (In the ancient world, debt collectors would charge a fee on top of the debt that was owed.) Viewed in this way, the steward sacrificed his own fee in order to remain in his master's good favor as well as the favor of the people whose debts he was collecting. It was more valuable to be in the good favor of his master and the people than to have money or possessions.

The same can be said for our own spiritual life. It is more valuable to be in God's favor than it is to have all of the wealth and possessions of this world. Like the steward, sometimes we must sacrifice our own desires for money or possessions and generously give to others.

**Directions:** Think about what you have: money, possessions, talents, and so forth. Then, answer the following questions:

1. What are two ways I can use what God has given me to help my friends and family?

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2. What are two ways I can use what God has given me to help others in my school?

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3. What are two ways I can use what God has given me to help my Church or parish community?

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4. What are two ways I can use what God has given me to help my town/city?

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5. What are two ways I can use what God has given me to help the sick, the poor, or the outcast?

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The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Middle and Upper Elementary)

September 29, 2019 – Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview
In this week's Gospel passage, Jesus tells a parable of a rich man and a poor man. Upon death, the rich man finds himself in Hell because he refused to show mercy to the poor man. This parable provides a powerful lesson to us all about loving our neighbor. In this lesson, students will brainstorm ways they can show mercy and love to their neighbor and reflect upon the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

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. Use the teacher instructions below for the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy Activity to conduct a class discussion about the Works of Mercy.
C. Have your students choose three of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and in the space provided on the Works of Mercy handout, have them list at least two practical ways they can put them into action.
D. When students have finished, call on students to share their answers. Connect their responses to the original class discussion.

Answer Key
Focus Questions
1. The rich man dresses in the finest clothes and “dines sumptuously” each day. Lazarus is a poor man who lies at the rich man's door. He is covered in sores and has no food. Even the dogs come and lick his sores.
2. Lazarus dies and he goes “to the bosom of Abraham” (or Heaven).
3. The rich man dies and he goes to “the netherworld” (or Hell) where he is tormented.
4. To have pity and send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool his tongue.
5. He tells the rich man that he received what was good during his lifetime while Lazarus received what was bad. Therefore, Lazarus is now comforted while the rich man is now tormented.
6. To send Lazarus to his brothers to warn them so that they do not come to the “place of torment.” Abraham tells him that they already have Moses and the prophets to listen to.

7. He says, “...if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.” Abraham responds by telling the rich man that if his brothers have not listened to Moses and the prophets, then they will not be persuaded by someone rising from the dead.

**Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy Activity (Teacher Instructions)**

A. Explain to your students that after he died, the rich man went “the netherworld” or Hell because he did not show mercy to the poor man, Lazarus, who sat outside his door every day. The rich man had the ability to care for Lazarus, but chose not to. This parable is a lesson for all of us that we have a serious responsibility to care for and love our neighbor.

B. Have your students work with a partner to brainstorm at least 10 ways we can love our neighbor as Jesus taught us. Then call on students to share specific ways, and record their thoughts on the board. As students share, intentionally list items in two columns on the board, one for ways to care for a person's physical needs and the other for ways to care for a person's spiritual needs—do not label the columns or tell in advance why you are putting the items in two columns. If students do not immediately come up with examples of caring for a person's spiritual needs, suggest one and ask them if they agree it would be an example of loving. Add it to the board, and it will help students think of more examples.

C. After students have shared, ask them to see if they can see anything that the items in each column have in common. If needed, you may assist them in finding the theme of each. As they discover the theme of each list, you may label the columns “Corporal actions (works)” and “Spiritual actions (works).” Leave these lists on the board for the remainder of the lesson.

D. Explain to your students that the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy show us specific ways to love our neighbor. In loving our neighbor, we love as Jesus taught us. The word corporal means “body.” The Corporal Works of Mercy are ways to help meet someone's physical needs, just as we brainstormed before.

E. As you tell students the following, ask them to identify examples from the brainstorm list that fit each of the works of mercy. You may circle them on the board as you go through each one.

F. The Corporal Works of Mercy are:
   - to feed the hungry
   - to give drink to the thirsty
   - to clothe the naked
   - to shelter the homeless
   - to visit the sick
   - to ransom the captive
   - to bury the dead

G. Explain to your students that bodily needs are not the only type of needs that we have. We also have spiritual needs. The Spiritual Works of Mercy are specific ways to
help meet someone’s spiritual needs and help make the Kingdom of God present in their hearts. Circle the examples in the class brainstorm list as you announce each.

H. The Spiritual Works of Mercy are:
   • to instruct the ignorant
   • to counsel the doubtful
   • to admonish sinners
   • to bear wrongs patiently
   • to forgive offenses willingly
   • to comfort the afflicted
   • to pray for the living and the dead
Jesus said to the Pharisees: “There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.’ Abraham replied, ‘My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.’ He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.’ He said, ‘Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ Then Abraham said, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.’"

Focus Questions

1. In this parable, how are the rich man and Lazarus different?
2. What happens to Lazarus? Where does he go?
3. What happens to the rich man? Where does he go?
4. What does the rich man ask of Abraham?
5. How does Abraham respond?
6. Abraham clearly implies that the rich the man could have avoided his situation if he had only shared what he had with Lazarus. What does the rich man ask Abraham to do? How does Abraham respond to this request?
7. How does the rich man argue it would be better if Lazarus went to his brothers? How does Abraham respond?
Reflection Question

At the end of this Gospel story, Abraham tells the rich man that if his brothers had not believed what Moses and the prophets had taught, then neither would they believe if a man rose from the dead. This is ironic, of course, because Jesus, who is telling the story in the first place, will rise from the dead. In fact, John’s Gospel tells us that the Resurrection (among Jesus’ many other signs) are written in the Gospels so that “you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.” Jesus rose from the dead so that we might believe in Him and have eternal life.

Not everyone, however, believes that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died on the Cross and rose from the dead to save us from sin. What are some reasons that some people may not believe in Jesus and His Death and Resurrection? How can you help someone believe?
The Works of Mercy

Directions: Choose three of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and in the space below, list at least two practical ways that you can personally put each into action.

The Corporal Works of Mercy:
• to feed the hungry
• to give drink to the thirsty
• to clothe the naked
• to shelter the homeless
• to visit the sick
• to ransom the captive
• to bury the dead

The Spiritual Works of Mercy:
• to instruct the ignorant
• to counsel the doubtful
• to admonish sinners
• to bear wrongs patiently
• to forgive offenses willingly
• to comfort the afflicted
• to pray for the living and the dead