

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 26
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

Background: During the last weeks of Ordinary Time in Lectionary Cycle B, the Gospel of Mark, our primary guide, continues. The kingdom of God is open for all people. We hear this message in the readings about the rich man, the disciples jockeying for position, the blind man, the saints, the poor widow, and even Pilate as he queries Jesus about being a king. We don't have to pass an entrance exam; we are already in the kingdom. Through all the changes that occur in our lives, what will not change is God's love for each of us. The kingdom that Jesus is proclaiming is already here and yet is also still to come – the undercurrent of Advent, which is coming near.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The question from the scribes this week is not meant to be one to challenge or trip Jesus up. Rather, it is common in Jewish tradition to ask if there is a way to summarize commandments. Jesus, in turn, gives a rather traditional answer, citing Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (*Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might*) and Leviticus 19:18 (*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord*). Jesus uses these two passages as a foundation for becoming a whole person of God. For Jesus, these are the core texts of faith and belief.

Theme: Love God, Neighbor, and Self

Before Class: You will need enough copies of the Bible or enough copies of the passage for each child. You will also need enough copies (and a few extra in case any children want an extra or need to start over) of the “commandment cube” found below. *If you are doing the commandment cube, it might be a good idea to cut and fold and glue one yourself so you have an idea of how to help the children with this.*

Beginning: As the children gather, ask them how their week was. After most of them are there, ask them what laws or rules they have to follow each day. Ask them if they think it helps or not to have laws and rules for all of us to live by.

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for giving us your commandments to follow and for sending Jesus to help us more fully see what living into your law looks like. Be with us today as we study your word. Amen.

The Story: Mark 12:28-34 You can invite one or two children to simply read the passage, or you can have the children read it in parts. (see below for a script)

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you remember most about this passage?

- I wonder what might have surprised you?
- I wonder why the scribes even asked the question?
- I wonder what is Jesus saying to us in these two commandments?

Activity:

We are going to take a few minutes to think about what these commandments mean for us. (You can either do this by having the children brainstorm out loud and writing the answers up on the board or easel paper OR you can have them do this work by themselves.) Only spend a minute or two on each one so they have a chance to do the cube activity.

How do you love God with all your heart?
 How do you love God with all your soul?
 How do you love God with all your mind?
 How do you love God with all your strength?
 How do you love your neighbor?
 How do you love yourself?

Once they have had the chance to respond to each of these, hand out the pictures of the cube. In each square have the draw or write things that belong there (such as: we love God with all our Heart by praying, treating others well, not taking God's name in vane, etc.)

When they are done, have them cut around the edges of the cube, fold in the trapezoid pieces, fold on the lines and it should fold into a cube.

Getting Closure: Invite them to share their cubes. If you have time, you can have one of the children roll their cube and whatever side lands up, each child shares something they did for that category, or they can act out what is written there.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, thank you for opening your word to us today. Be with us as we strive to love you, our neighbors, and ourselves. Amen.

Mark 12:28-34

Narrator: One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him,

Scribe: ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’

Jesus: ‘The first is, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’

Narrator: Then the scribe said to him,

Scribe: ‘You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that “he is one, and besides him there is no other”; and “to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength”, and “to love one’s neighbor as oneself”,—this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.’

Narrator: When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him,

Jesus: ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’

Narrator: After that no one dared to ask him any question.

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