

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 21
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Luke 16:19-31

Choices: What situation do we find ourselves, right here and now, in which we have a choice? What is preventing us from making it? Are possessions, in fact, possessing us? For some of us the choice might be to rearrange our priorities, even make a career change, or maybe it is to faithfully deal with what is on our plate. For all of us, Jesus invites us to follow him.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

What do we choose to notice as we race through our daily tasks? Who are the invisible ones in our midst? Who is holding out a hand to us?

Theme: Noticing Who We See

Before Class: You will need copies of the script, which is found below.

Beginning: Tell the group that the passage we have today was addressed to an audience that was pretty sure they had their religion down pat and didn't need anything to cause them to think a bit deeper. Jesus may have been telling this story ostensibly to his disciples, but keenly aware that Pharisees were listening, too.

Opening Prayer: Help us, God, to notice the invisible people who are often calling out to us. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 16:19-31 Invite three individuals to read the various voice parts from the passage for today.

Question:

- If the rich man's wealth is not the cause of his downfall, what is? (Not noticing the needs of the poor man.)
- Why do you think this is often not a primary concern of very prosperous people? (They are racing to stay ahead, acquire more things.)
- Most of us are not extremely rich, so why is this often not a primary concern for us? (We may be one paycheck away from serious financial trouble, our jobs are not secure, our expenses exceed our incomes, etc.)
- Why do you think Jesus placed Father Abraham in his story? (As a key Patriarch, the audience would have expected him to be in heaven.)
- Since the point of this story is probably not describing conditions in Hades, what does the group think this story says to us today? (A plea to notice and then minister to those who are "invisible" in our communities.)

Getting Closure: Invite the group to close their eyes and listen to a guided meditation, which you would read.

We are late again. As usual. We whip out of our driveway and pause to look both ways before proceeding. A person is standing at the edge of our driveway. She is carrying one of those cardboard signs that says: "Homeless, have young children. Anything will help." You make sure you have not made eye-contact with her and go on your way, stifling the sick feeling in your gut. Then you start to imagine that this person is just using the situation and would have used any money you gave her to buy drugs. You feel better.

Now, replay the tape. You are whipping out of your driveway — late again when you see her standing there. You reach for the little bag you keep in the front seat of your car. Your children and you have put these bags together. In the bag is a fresh apple, 2 or 3 gift certificates for food at the local restaurant within walking distance of your house, and a pair of white cotton socks. If there is a homeless shelter in your town, you have also stuck in a card with directions to the shelter. You roll down the window, look the woman in the eye, hand her the bag, and tell her you hope her situation improves. Then you drive on.

Now, how do you feel?

Invite any feedback or reflections.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you put before us opportunities to notice those in our midst. Help us to keep our eyes and hearts open to those whom you would have us serve. Amen.

Luke 16:19-31

Narrator: 19 ‘There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴He called out,

Rich Man: “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.”

Narrator: ²⁵But Abraham said,

Abraham: “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.”

Narrator: ²⁷The Rich Man said,

Rich Man: “Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house— ²⁸for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.”

Narrator: ²⁹Abraham replied,

Abraham: “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.”

Rich Man: “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.”

Narrator: ³¹But Abraham said to him,

Abraham: “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” ’

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