

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 20
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Luke 16:1-13

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

We simply have to choose. Will we do as God desires us to do, or will we cheat God (and ourselves) by ignoring what God expects of us? Will we give to God what is rightly God's? What are we doing to work toward serving God more fully?

Theme: Choosing Whom We Will Serve

Before Class: Today's Scripture is broken up into different "voices" for the reading (found below), so make enough copies for everyone in your group.

Beginning: Ask the class what they think of this statement: "The person who dies with the most toys wins." Our consumer culture blurs the distinction between need and want. Today's Scripture helps us notice what goes into choices.

Opening Prayer: Help us, God, to balance the needs we have and our desire to serve you. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 16:1-13 Invite individuals to read the passage for today.

Questions:

- What has the rich man discovered about his manager? (The manager is squandering the man's property.)
- What is the manager's response at being found out? (Panic. Unemployment insurance is not an option. He must find ways to ingratiate himself in his community so he does not have to dig ditches.)
- What is the scheme he has come up with? (Cutting each bill owed his boss in half or a portion thereof, thus gaining the gratitude of the various debtors.)
- Why do you think the rich man "commended" his manager? (He admires clever dealings — it is better to have collected some of what was owed rather than nothing at all.)
- In verse 9 Jesus is saying we could take a lesson from the dishonest manager. I wonder what lessons do you think he means for us to take? (To be as tenacious about our faith journey as the manager was about getting what he thought he needed.)
- I wonder whom else might Jesus have been addressing with this story? (Verse 14 indicates that the Pharisees were listening to this story.) Jesus says we will not be able to serve two masters. "You cannot serve God and wealth." Discuss how you have found this to be true. Discuss how it might be possible to be wealthy and still serve God.

- I wonder how this story would be the same or different if Jesus told it today?

Getting Closure: Discuss what being tenacious about our faith looks like. What part do the outward signs play (praying for others, commitment of time and talent, showing up regularly for church, pledging a portion of our means, etc.)? What part do the inward signs play (staying in communication with God, noticing behavior modifications needed, etc.)?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for your help as we set priorities in our lives. Be with us as we continually try to do what you call us to do in this world. Amen.

Luke 16:1-13

Narrator: Then Jesus said to the disciples,

Jesus: ‘There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him,

Rich Man: “What is this that I hear about you? Give me an account of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.”

Jesus: ³Then the manager said to himself,

Manager: “What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.”

Jesus: ⁵So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first,

Manager: “How much do you owe my master?”

Debtor 1: ⁶“A hundred jugs of olive oil.”

Manager: “Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.”

Jesus: ⁷Then he asked another,

Manager: “And how much do you owe?”

Debtor 2: “A hundred containers of wheat.”

Manager: “Take your bill and make it eighty.”

Jesus: ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. ¹⁰ ‘Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.’

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