

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 26
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

In the final 6 weeks of this Lectionary Year C, a firm and hopeful tone soars in Jesus' teachings in a rich symphony of themes. The background music of the Hebrew Scriptures holds the notes of the new covenant — a law written in our hearts rather than codified in legal structures — The Spirit poured out, a vision for the appointed time, God with us, a new heaven and a new earth, and a branch from the tree of David — the remnant gathered. We can believe that Jesus heard this cosmic music as he distilled his huge message to the disciples.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

"I must stay at your house tonight." Would we climb down out of our safe trees if we heard Jesus call up to us, "Hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house tonight?"

Theme: Jesus Seeks to Find and Save the Lost

Beginning: Tell the group that we have a story that is probably quite familiar: Zacchaeus, the little man who climbed a tree and ended up with a special guest for dinner. Suggest that they listen, in the story, for the stages in Zacchaeus' faith development.

Opening Prayer: Loving God, be with us as we study scripture today and help us see where this story impacts our lives and behavior. Help us to remember we are never truly lost. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 19:1-10 Invite someone to read the passage for today. After reading the passage, sit in a few moments of quiet before starting the discussion.

Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you or struck you about today's reading?
- What would you say is the first stage of Zacchaeus in this story? (A man quite satisfied with himself: he has a great job, incredible benefits — all he can steal.)
- What comes next for Zacchaeus? (Curiosity. Who is this Jesus?)
- How does he show his resourcefulness? (Too short to see, so he climbs a tree where he can see without being seen; he thinks.)
- What is the Tipping Point, the place Zacchaeus begins to change? (Jesus not only sees him but tells him he is coming to his house.)
- What is the Turning Point for Zacchaeus? (He comes out of his safe hiding place and welcomes Jesus.)
- What is the Restitution? (Zacchaeus is not only going to give half of his riches to help the poor, he will make good and more than pay back those he may have cheated.)
- What may be the Resolution? (The lost is found. This is the first day of the rest of Zacchaeus' life.)
- What is the response of those who see all this? (Grousing and judging: How come Jesus will go to the house of a sinner instead of staying with all of us wonderful ones?)

Option: Guided meditation. Invite the group to consider a time they have been "Zacchaeus" and have been confronted and then been accepted by Jesus. Tell them we will not share the offense that comes to us, but will later offer reflections, if we choose, on how it felt. Tell the group you will be entering into this activity also, taking each step along with the group.

With eyes closed, let's each of us think of something we have done that we need to accept and then give back to Jesus. It could be the time we did not spend with a child who wanted our time, maybe it was a cutting remark to someone who works for us, perhaps it was a decision that skirted a bit too close to the unethical. [Pause.] Now let's find a place we think we can hide all this from Jesus. Maybe it is working late at the office, maybe it is scrubbing the kitchen floor. We will know when we find our "hiding place." [Pause.] Now, let's see Jesus coming from a distance, directly to our hideout. Imagine Jesus clearly aware of what we have done, clearly not judging us, clearly waiting for us to give him what we have been hiding. [Pause.] Now, let's imagine the relief, the clear sense that we have been forgiven, the opportunity to sit at supper in our own home with Jesus as our special guest. Let's hear Jesus telling us: You were lost, but you are not anymore. You are mine and I love you.

Getting Closure: Invite observations, if anyone wants to share. You might want to ask open questions such as: I wonder what it is like to hide away when we have done wrong? I wonder what it is like to be found and accepted? I wonder what it is like to be loved after hiding?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God for seeking us whenever we are lost, for finding us, and for restoring us. Guide us out of our hiding places so we may better walk with you. Amen.

Luke 19:1-10

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' ⁹Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

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