

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Eighth Sunday after Epiphany
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Matthew 6:24-34

Because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Book of Common Prayer, page 378)

Accept the light we have received and shine it forth! It is not about shining the light in other's faces, blinding them, but holding the light in open hands.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Each decision we make, however trivial, is a choice. Our choices produce a pattern. We simply cannot serve two different bosses.

Theme: Do Not Worry about Tomorrow

Before: You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for the group.

Beginning: Ask the group to be listen for choices we make that Jesus teaches about in this passage.

Opening Prayer: Gracious and Loving God, we thank you for all you have given us and all the things you bless us with each day. Help us not to worry over things in the future, but keep our minds on this day. Amen.

The Scripture: Matthew 6: 24 – 34 Invite one person to read the passage and ask the group to make note of things that stand out for them.

Questions:

- I wonder what stood out for you in this passage.
- In verse 24, I wonder what Jesus is saying to us about “hating” or “loving” money. What if we thought about it in terms of priorities? (Unless God is our highest priority, something else will be.)
- What is the difference between “worrying about your life” and being good stewards of our lives? (Worry tends to paralyze us. Good stewards care for themselves, those in their care, and those in the community.)
- I wonder what Jesus means in verse 26? Jesus is not telling people to quit planting crops because the birds don't, what do we think he means? (Birds put in extraordinarily long days scrounging for food – but they do not take on unsuitable responsibilities.)
- An old cliché goes: “Bloom where you are planted.” Had Jesus heard this slogan, do you think he might have added it to verse 28? Why? Why not?
- Notice how many times in this short passage Jesus says, in one way or another: “do not worry.” I wonder what that might say to us today?

- Is it a source of comfort to realize that worry was also common 2000 years ago? Why? Why not?
- What would we say is the meaning of “righteousness” in verse 33? (Being in a right relationship with God rather than “worrying” about the mistakes we could make.)

Option: A look back at the Epiphany season

(Next week will be the last Sunday after Epiphany and will have a different focus that what we have been looking at since the beginning of this season.) Ask people to open Bibles and browse through Chapter 5 and that portion of 6 that we looked at for words that would help us define the Kingdom of God. (The Beatitudes, 5: 3-11, salt, light, the law expanded, trust, etc.)

What signs of hope do we see in our world that some of these aspects are a part of our lives? (Some examples could be the improved lot of women, the increasing value of children, the concept of hospitals, expectation that some taxes go to serve those who have the least, etc.)

What signs of work, still to be done, do we notice? (Our own priorities, the continuing difference between those who have and those who have not, our own church’s need for us to help it stay on focus, etc.)

Getting Closure: The Kingdom of God

Ask the group to sit in a circle, eyes closed as each person thinks of how they see The Kingdom of God. Invite those who wish, say: “I think the Kingdom of God is _____.”

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, that you have placed the Kingdom of God right here in our midst. Be with us as we go forth from this place that we might know you and see you more fully. Amen.

Matthew 6:24-34

24 ‘No one 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.

25 ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” ³²For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 ‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

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