

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Fifth Sunday in Lent
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 12:20-33

Background

As in Advent, when we went inward to prepare to go outward with Christmas and Epiphany, in Lent we again go inward – in preparation. In the first two Sundays of Lent, Mark, brilliantly succinct, reveals the preparation Jesus experienced. During the next three Sundays John adds shimmering lights on Jesus' ministry before we plunge into the Crucifixion, where we watch, from wherever we are, what Jesus must go through in order to give us Easter. These six vignettes invite us to take a closer look at the choices we are making in our lives and what we might choose to jettison, correct, or add.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Jesus continues the preparation of his followers. The hour has almost arrived for "the Son of Man to be glorified." Whatever could he mean, his disciples wonder? So Jesus selects a concrete image, one they will all have experienced: a grain of wheat – apparently lifeless – yet falling into the earth and dying, bears much fruit. The paradox: those who love their life lose it. Whoever serves Jesus, must follow Jesus. And as Jesus accepts what is to come, the voice again is heard. The crowd thinks it is thunder, the disciples perhaps hear God assuring Jesus that God is being glorified by Jesus. And once again Jesus assures us that when he is lifted up from the earth he will draw all people to himself. The disciples shook their heads. We are still unpacking the power of this message.

Theme: Bearing much Fruit

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture or Bibles for each participant.

Beginning: After your group has settled in and caught up with each other, invite them to take a couple of minutes in silence to switch mental gears to hear today's Scripture.

After the brief interval of silence, say the Opening Prayer.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for your acceptance of God's call on your life and for the gift your sacrifice is for each of us. Help us hear the call you have on our lives to be faithful witnesses and to follow you. Amen.

The Scripture: Read John 12: 20-33. Tell the class that you will read this passage and then allow a moment or two of silence. Then invite another class member to read the passage again before you begin with the reflection questions.

Reflection Questions:

- What stood out for you in hearing this passage today?

- Jesus is concluding his public ministry; this is his last chance to teach. What does he mean "the Hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified?" (He knows what death is ahead of him, and that what appears to be the end is truly the beginning.)
- Consider the seed falling into the ground. What is Jesus teaching us here? (He is trying to help us with the sting of death.)
- Do we really think Jesus wants us to "hate" our lives?
- Could this be a perspective issue? What is most important to us?
- Notice what Jesus calls us to do in verse 26. (Interesting that Jesus does not say, "Worship me," but instead says, "Follow me." If we chose to "follow" Jesus, where would we go?)
- Notice the obvious conflict in Jesus' spirit in verse 27. (The struggle will continue until Jesus is in the garden at Gethsemane.)
- When else have the disciples heard the voice in verse 28? (At the baptism of Jesus, and at his Transfiguration.)
- What does the crowd think they are hearing? (Thunder or the voice of an angel.)
- Is there a power shift in verse 31? (Death will not mean defeat for Jesus. Instead of people being at odds with God, Jesus will draw all of them to himself.)
- "And I, when I am lifted up..." Does anyone remember this image from last week? (John 3: 14-21)

Getting Closure: Invite the class to discuss what this passage says to them about their lives today. In what ways do we need to die to be born and bear much fruit?

Closing Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the gift of Jesus. As we draw closer to the final days of Lent, help us to open spirits to you. Amen.

John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say-- 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

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