

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

Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

Background: During the last weeks of Ordinary Time in Lectionary Cycle B, the Gospel of Mark, our primary guide, continues. The kingdom of God is open for all people. We hear this message in the readings about the rich man, the disciples jockeying for position, the blind man, the saints, the poor widow, and even Pilate as he queries Jesus about being a king. We don't have to pass an entrance exam; we are already in the kingdom. Through all the changes that occur in our lives, what will not change is God's love for each of us. The kingdom that Jesus is proclaiming is already here and yet is also still to come – the undercurrent of Advent, which is coming near.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The question from the scribes this week is not meant to be one to challenge or trip Jesus up. Rather, it is common in Jewish tradition to ask if there is a way to summarize commandments. Jesus, in turn, gives a rather traditional answer, citing Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (*Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might*) and Leviticus 19:18 (*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord*). Jesus uses these two passages as a foundation for becoming a whole person of God. For Jesus, these are the core texts of faith and belief.

Theme: Love God, Neighbor, and Self

Before Class: You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture passage for today. You will need easel paper, markers, paper, and pens.

Beginning: As people are gathering, have two sheets of easel paper up in the room. On one sheet write, "How do we love God?" and on the other, "How do we love our neighbors as ourselves?" As people arrive, invite them to write their first thoughts on each piece of paper, or, alternatively, you could do this later as you are processing the passage.

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for giving us your commandments to follow and for sending Jesus to help us more fully see what living into your law looks like. Be with us today as we study your word. Amen

The Scripture: Mark 12:28-34 Invite someone to read the passage, or you can have the participants go around the room, each reading one line of the passage.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what struck you about this passage?
- I wonder what surprised you?
- Why do you think the scribes even asked the question?

- These seem like pretty simple answers, but once we start to really look at the commandments, what is Jesus telling us in these two commandments?

(Pointing to the two sheets of paper that are up with the questions on them, ask...)

- How do we love God with our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?
(write, or have someone else write, their answers on the sheet of paper OR you could give them some quiet time with paper to reflect and then write their own responses on the sheet)
- How do we love our neighbor as ourselves?
(write, or have someone else write, their answers on the sheet of paper OR you could give them some quiet time with paper to reflect and then write their own responses on the sheet)
- What do you think are some of the obstacles that get in the way?

Getting Closure: Invite the group to reflect...

What do you think are some of the obstacles that get in the way of us loving God, loving our neighbors, and loving ourselves?

Closing Prayer: Loving God, thank you for opening your word to us today. Be with us as we strive to love you, our neighbors, and ourselves. Amen.

Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first is, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’ Then the scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that “he is one, and besides him there is no other”; and “to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength”, and “to love one’s neighbor as oneself”,—this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.’ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ After that no one dared to ask him any question.

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