

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – Season after Pentecost, Proper 27
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: Mark 12:38-44

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 season of Ordinary Time continues for two more Sundays. The Gospel brings us back to noticing what we are being called to do. Clearly it is not to put on a big show or call attention to ourselves. Beware of those whose actions are not compatible with their talk! And perhaps it's not about the size of the contribution, but the depth of the gratitude.

Theme: Gratitude and Giving

Before Class: You will need copies of the bible and copies of the final sheet of this lesson for each person.

Beginning: We have the opportunity to reflect, privately, on what our financial contribution to our church means to us.

Opening Prayer: Thank you for the nudges you give us to notice our blessings. Help us to be mindful of what we have and what you have given us to share with others. Amen.

The Scripture: Mark 12:38-44 Read this passage in two sections. Ask for two volunteers – one to read verses 38-40 and after you discuss this section, have another read verses 41-44.

Read verses 38-40. Ask the group to sit for a moment and picture this setting. As they reflect silently they may reread the passage if they choose.

Reflection Questions: Mark 12:38-40

- I wonder why Jesus thinks that the fancy clothes, the places of honor and the long prayers that are the problem. (The self-importance and lack of care for those among them who are in need.)
- Do you think Jesus is saying we should not have fancy clothes? Why? Why not?
- I wonder why Jesus is condemning long prayers? Why? Why not?

Read verses 41-44. Ask the group to sit for a moment and picture this setting. As they reflect silently they may reread the passage if they choose.

Reflection Questions: Mark 12:41-44

- I wonder what image came to you as we read this passage?
- Do you think Jesus is saying that rich people should not make significant contributions? Why? Why not?
- Do you think Jesus is calling poor widows to donate their life savings to the church treasury? Why? Why not?

For private reflection

The following questions are printed on the sheet below that also has the reading. Hand these out and allow people to do some personal reflection on these questions. If there is time, you might bring them back together or gather them in small groups to allow them to share their reflections.

- If I do not believe Jesus expects me to give my entire paycheck to the church, do I have a strategy to make decision about the amount I give?
- Is the strategy based on a percentage or on an amount – or something else?
- To what extent am I comfortable with our strategy?
- And, if I am not comfortable, what could I reasonable give up in order to do more?
- And, if I am OK with where I am in giving to the church, give thanks for this place.

Getting Closure: If anyone wants to offer something they noticed, provide the opportunity for them to do so. Assure the group that no one is obligated to speak to anyone other than God about what they discovered.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for your Word and for how it works in our hearts. Be with us as we go into the world and help us to see all that we can give to you and one another. Amen.

Published by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

© 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

Class Reflection Sheet

Mark 12:38-44

38 As he taught, he said, 'Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places,³⁹ and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets!⁴⁰ They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.'

41 He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums.⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.⁴³ Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.⁴⁴ For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

Personal Reflections

If I do not believe Jesus expects me to give my entire paycheck to the church, do I have a strategy to make decision about the amount I give?

Is the strategy based on a percentage or on an amount – or something else?

To what extent am I comfortable with our strategy?

And, if I am not comfortable, what could I reasonable give up in order to do more?

And, if I am OK with where I am in giving to the church, give thanks for this place.