



a Kendall Hunt Company

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Junior High

Submitted by lectionaryadmin on Mon, 07/08/2013 - 20:00

Junior High Session

Wisdom 11:22-12:2

Luke 19:1-10

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

All Powerful God,

you hold all of creation in your loving embrace.

Help us to live in cooperation with your grace.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

Opening Life Reflection

The topic for today is justification. To begin, invite the youngsters to imagine God embracing all of creation. Provide pencils and markers or watercolor paint and brushes, and blank sheets of white paper. Invite the young people to draw a picture to illustrate their image of God. Explain that their picture can be as abstract or detailed as they would like it to be. Discuss:

- How does your drawing represent your image of God?
- What does it mean to be in right relationship with God and others?
- How do we cooperate with God's grace?

Allow time for discussion. Justification is God's saving action that heals and renews us. Those who are justified cooperate with God's grace and are put in right relationship with God.

Listening to the Word of God

In the Old Testament reading today listen to how God is all-powerful and forgiving.

Read Wisdom 11:22-12:2.

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- How is God portrayed in this reading?
- How is God all-powerful?
- How does God respond to those who sin?

In the Gospel listen to find out how Jesus notices a man named Zacchaeus.

Read Luke 19:1-10.

Allow for silence.

- Why does Zacchaeus climb a tree?
- Why do the people dislike Zacchaeus?
- What does Jesus say to Zacchaeus?
- How does Zacchaeus respond to Jesus?
- How do the religious leaders and the crowd react?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings.

In the first reading from the book of Wisdom, God is shown to be all-powerful and all-merciful. The whole world is embraced by the love of God. Even the sinner is held in God's mercy. The call is to turn away from sin and trust in the Lord. Today's uplifting passage reveals the truth about the absolute love of God.

In today's Gospel we find the story of Zacchaeus, a rich tax collector. Because of his profession, Zacchaeus is not well liked by the people. Tax collectors were suspected of taking money from people so that they could enrich themselves. In the passage today, Zacchaeus is so determined to see Jesus that he climbs a tree in order to see him over the crowd. But, the important part of the story is that Jesus sees him. "Come on down," Jesus calls out, "I am coming to your home." The religious leaders and the crowd react with disapproval.

Today's Gospel passage shows how people can prejudge others. The people despise Zacchaeus, but Jesus sees the truth. Jesus sees and draws out the hidden goodness in Zacchaeus.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- What helps you turn away from sin?
- Do you ever prejudge others?

- Do you try to see goodness in others?
- When do you see the goodness in yourself?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

Justification

The Catholic Church teaches that justification is God's saving action in Jesus by the Holy Spirit which frees us from sin and renews us. Those who are justified are cleansed from sin and put in a right relationship with God. For us believers this happens in the gift of Baptism (CCC 1987). In the saving waters of Baptism sins are cleansed and we are made new. God alone saves and justifies us. God's saving action is celebrated in the sacraments.

As Catholics we believe that we can cooperate with God's grace and be renewed. It is possible to grow in holiness as we practice good works. In the story of Zacchaeus we find someone who cooperates with God's grace and grows in holiness. Jesus sees that Zacchaeus is on the path of goodness.

Zacchaeus is an example of one who is justified. Justification heals us and frees us from sin. It puts us right with God.

- How do we celebrate God's saving action in the sacraments?
- How can practicing good works help you grow in holiness?
- What helps put you right with God?

The Gospel in Life

How can you make a special effort to cooperate with God's grace this week?

Connecting to Faith First® Legacy Edition

At Home Family Guide, theme 1
Junior High, Mystery of God, chapter 1

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