

Today's Readings

Sirach 35:12b-14, 16-17
 Psalm 34:1-2, 17-18
 2 Timothy 4:6-8
 Luke 18:9-14

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a green cloth, place:

- ☐ a Lectionary
- ☐ a battery-operated candle
- ☐ a festive houseplant or bouquet of fresh flowers

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

"Like Jesus"
 (Seeds CD-1, Track #6)
 or **"Yes, Lord, I Believe"**
 (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #26)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

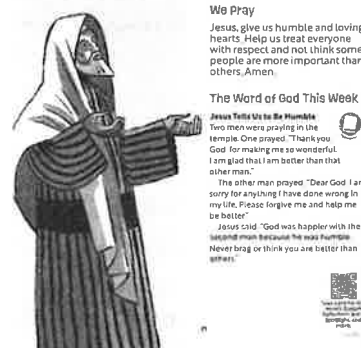


Jesus Tell Us to Be Humble

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.



PREPARE WITH PRAYER

"When his people pray for help, he listens and rescues them from their troubles. The Lord is there to rescue all who are discouraged and have given up hope." (PSALM 34:17-18)

Scripture Background

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector at prayer. It is part of a larger section of Luke in which Jesus describes the attitudes and behaviors he expects from his disciples.

The parable conveys a number of related messages: (1) all are sinners, and all stand in continual need of God's mercy; (2) prayer without an occasional expression of contrition is incomplete; (3) God's favor cannot be earned through good works but is a gift given to those humble enough to receive it; and (4) good works are to be done for the right reason—for God's glory and not our own.

Additional insight into today's parable can be gained from examining the righteous deeds that the Pharisee names in his prayer. He says that he has not cheated other people, told lies, or betrayed his wife "like other people" (18:11), while he has fasted two days a week and given one-tenth of his income to the temple. Yet, as far as Luke's Gospel is concerned, important things are missing from this list.

Has the Pharisee maintained the humility of a servant who knows he has simply done his duty (17:10)? Has he noticed the poor at his front door and shared his wealth with them (16:19-31)? Like the forgiving father of the prodigal son, has he been generous in his attitude toward sinners (15:11-32)? While perhaps innocent of coarse and obvious sins, he is not entirely free of sinful thoughts and deeds.

THE PHARISEES were laymen who exerted considerable influence on Jewish thought in the centuries just before and after 70 A.D., when Rome permanently destroyed the Temple. The Pharisees made it their life's work to study the Law and live it as perfectly as possible, to the point sometimes of overestimating the importance of minutiae and neglecting larger matters of faith and justice.

The Pharisees as a group were a frequent target of Jesus' rhetoric, not because their ideals were wrong but because they thought their ideals made them superior to others. Besides, just like other groups with lofty goals, they sometimes failed to live up to their ideals.

From the beginning of Jesus' public life, he encountered strong opposition from a number of Pharisees, even though he actually agreed with many of their teachings. Unlike the Sadducees (Judaism's ruling priestly class), both believed in resurrection from the dead and final judgment. Both believed in the existence of spirits and angels. Finally and perhaps most importantly, Jesus and the Pharisees both believed in the validity of oral traditions kept by an unbroken chain of Jewish elders dating back to the time of Moses. The Sadducees, on the other hand, recognized only the authority of the written Torah.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

The suggestion for today's gathering activity is that you tell the children a story by incorporating their input as you go along. Later, in the homily, you will draw a connection between the story you create and the one that Jesus tells in today's Gospel.

Bobbi Conner, parent and author of the book *Unplugged Play* (2007), offers three simple rules for creating stories that children will love (pp. 131–33):

- Focus on one main character, whether an animal that intrigues the children or a person in a profession they admire, such as a firefighter.
- Begin with an ordinary occurrence in the character's everyday life, then let something extraordinary develop from it.
- End with a discovery the character makes or a worthwhile deed he accomplishes.

The story you create will begin with an animal family that lives inside a giant mushroom. As the story unfolds, the focus is on an active, mischievous younger brother, although a conceited older sister will help to move the plot forward. He misbehaves one day but by bedtime regrets what he has done. Then while kneeling by his bed and telling God he is sorry, something extraordinary happens. With a gentle whisper in his ear, God speaks to him directly. He excitedly runs to his sister's room but learns she hasn't heard anything unusual. Then he realizes he has received a special gift from God—because God hears and answers the humble, but ignores the proud.

Besides teaching a lesson, your story will help stimulate each child's imagination. Dr. Jane M. Healey laments that today's plugged-in kids often are unable, on their own, to "think up new scenarios, new stories, new ideas, and new concepts" (qtd. by Conner, p. 92). Perhaps your storytelling efforts will inspire a few children to go home and create some of their own stories about their favorite animals, toys, or people.

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps children learn about how to be humble, through a prayer, a summary of the Gospel, and a creative activity.

If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

He tells his friend Saint Timothy why he feels ready to meet the Lord.

Read 2 Timothy 4:6–8.

LEADER: The word of the Lord.

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Gospel Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about a Pharisee and a tax collector. Pharisees were people who tried so hard to be good that sometimes they forgot they weren't perfect. Tax collectors had the reputation of being terrible sinners. Listen to what happens one day when a Pharisee and a tax collector both go to the Temple to pray.

The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: *A reading from the Gospel of Luke.*

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: *Read Luke 18:9–14. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."*

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Ask the children these questions:

- How was the tax collector like the brother in the story we made up?
- Why was God pleased with the tax collector's prayer?
- What was wrong with the Pharisee's prayer?
- Thanking God for the day's blessings is a good way to pray at bedtime. What is another good way to pray at bedtime?

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith and respond to each question with, "Yes, I do believe." Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, who forgives sinners and raises up the lowly?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who taught us to be truthful about our sins and humble about our achievements?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who helps us live and pray in the way Jesus taught us?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: As members of the Church founded by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, let us make our needs known to our loving Father. Our response to each petition will be, "Hear us, O Lord."

That our Holy Father and all Church leaders will be faithful teachers and models of humility, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That all sinners will turn from their sin and find new life in Christ, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: That we ourselves will humbly seek God's forgiveness all the days of our lives, we pray.

CHILDREN: Hear us, O Lord.

LEADER: *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Heavenly Father, today your Son, Jesus, told us a story to remind us that nobody is perfect and everybody sometimes needs your forgiveness. Help us to remember this lesson, especially whenever we are tempted to think we are better than others. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.