

Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Matthew 22:34-46

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Today's lesson is found near the end of Matthew as conflict between Jesus and the people around him reaches its height. Those that oppose his ministry are still trying to get him to trip up – to go against the religious or secular laws and Jesus will not fall into that trap. Today's question from them is no different. The Pharisees ask which commandment is the greatest and Jesus responds with Judaism's most fundamental passage known as the Shema: "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Deuteronomy 6:5) However he does not leave it at that. He adds that another Scripture is "like it," "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18) "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." In putting these two commandments together, Jesus is able to condense the 613 Hebrew Laws and the Ten Commandments into two laws. These two laws encapsulate his ministry on earth and tell all those around him what is important. Those who love God, must love what God has created – ourselves and others. The 613 Hebrew Laws (although that number and which exact laws are included in that is up for dispute) all look at relationship to God, each other, and ourselves. They

describe how we honor and worship God, how we rest on the Sabbath, how we deal with disputes and laws, and how we treat people. All of these laws, in the most broad terms, are encapsulated in The Great Commandments that Jesus outlines in today's lesson.

The question Jesus asks them about whose son the Messiah is a way of engaging them in further conversation about God and God's expansiveness. Jesus wants them to think bigger, wants them to understand that God is more than they can imagine, that the Messiah surpasses the lineage as they know it.

Theme: The Greatest Commandments

Before: You will need copies of the Scripture for each person.

Beginning: Welcome people as they arrive. Ask them what rules they have to live by at home, work, or in other things that they do. Why do we have rules?

Opening Prayer: *Loving God, be with us today as we hear your word. Let your love be engraved in our hearts that we may always love you and love others as you have taught*

us to do. Help us to experience and feel your love, help us to give and share your love in the world. Amen.

The Story: Matthew 22:34-46

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God's plan is for each of us too.

Invite three people to read the Narrator, Jesus, and the Pharisee. (see script below)

Reflection Questions:

- Is there a word or phrase that sticks out for you after hearing this lesson?

- The Pharisees asked Jesus what is the greatest commandment. What would you say a commandment is?
- How did Jesus simplify the commandments?
- I wonder why Jesus said that those were the greatest?
- Do you think Jesus would have given different commandments today? Why or why not?
- If these commandments are still valid today, then what do these mean to us today?
- I wonder how we can live out these commandments?

Getting Closure: If you have time divide the group into smaller groups and invite them to barnstorm the final questions: How can we live out these commandments. When time is almost up, invite them to come back together and share.

Closing Prayer: *Gracious God, We thank you for our time together today. Thank you for our time together today. As we leave this place, help us to love you with our heart, soul, and mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.*

Matthew 22:34-46

Narrator: When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

Pharisee: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

Jesus: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Narrator: Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question:

Jesus: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?"

Pharisee: "The son of David."

Jesus: "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?"

Narrator: No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

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