Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults
Proper 23 (B)
New Testament: Mark 10:17-31

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 READING
What does it take to get in? That's the question that Jesus is asked. Jesus answers the question that is not asked and offers a very different way of being. The commandments of old are valid but insufficient. The way we've always done it is not working. What in the world would be an entrance requirement for a way of life you have already begun? What if it is not about getting in but about noticing that you are already in?

THEME
What Does it Take to Get Into the Kingdom?

BEFORE CLASS
You will need copies of the Bible.

BEGINNING
Invite the group to think about a time when they have wanted to join a group or community but had to give up something in order to do it.

OPENING PRAYER
Help us, God, to hear these words in our souls: 'For God, all things are possible.' Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 10:17-31
Invite three members of your group to read the three different sections. If time permits, you may choose to discuss this passage in thirds: verses 17-22; verses 23-27; verses 28-31.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Verses 17-22

- Notice who is concerned with entrance requirements. I wonder what might be behind the man's questions? (Perhaps he is looking for a good way to be really "in" with Jesus.)
- Why do you think Jesus took the approach he did? (Perhaps he detects a bit of "one upsmanship" in the man.)
- How do you reconcile the response that was so devastating to the man with the statement that Jesus loved the man? (Jesus realizes that the man is paralyzed by his possessions.)
- In what ways do our possessions weigh us down?

Verses 23-27

- What was so shocking to Jesus' hearers in verse 23? (It was assumed that rich people had an easier time with the various religious duties imposed on them.)
- What is Jesus noticing that makes it so hard for rich people to get "in"? (The distractions rich people can afford make it harder for them.)
- Do we think Jesus means that rich people cannot get "in"? Who makes the final decision? (God.)
- Do we think we are "rich" people? Why? Why not?

Verses 28-31

- Peter points out that he and the others have given up everything to follow Jesus. How does Jesus reassure him? (See verse 29.)
- Do we notice that people who give up everything to follow Jesus always "receive a hundredfold"? Why or why not?
- What does verse 31 mean?

GETTING CLOSURE

Reflect on your own church community. Who has a hard time getting "in" to our churches? What unintentional barriers do we put up? How could we make our church more accessible without diluting what we believe? What would happen in our lives together if we spent less energy on worrying about "getting in" and more on building relationships – with Jesus, with one another, and with those who are not part of our community?

CLOSING PRAYER

Help us, God, as we grow into your call to us. Guide us as we seek to live into the life you have given us. Help us to remember that with you, all things are possible. Amen.

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MARK 10:17-31

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him,
'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 18 Jesus said to him, 'Why do you
call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: "You
shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear
false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother." ' 20 He said to him,
'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and
said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and
you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' 22 When he heard this, he was
shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who
have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these
words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of
God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is
rich to enter the kingdom of God.' 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one
another, 'Then who can be saved?' 27 Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is
impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.'

28 Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' 29 Jesus
said, 'Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother
or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news,* 30 who
will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers
and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But
many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.'

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