

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by



Year 3: Session 4 – Jesus and the Crowd

Class 10: Luke 4:38-44 – Jesus escapes the crowd to pray

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Introduction to the “crowd” as a character in the Jesus stories
- Notice Jesus’ care and compassion for the crowd
- Notice that Jesus does not *answer* to the crowd, but instead seeks God’s direction and power.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Movie clip (on rfour.org site)
- TV and equipment needed to play movie clip
- A \$5 bill and your best auctioneer impersonation (note: be ready to part with that \$5 bill if your auctioneer impersonation is not so good...)

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- Here’s the opening question for today’s class. One of the teachers will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, the teacher will answer first.
- Once the teacher answers the question, we’ll go around the circle.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- Here’s this week’s question: *What is something you would like to buy/own, but is too expensive for you?*

INTRO and TRANSITION to Video Clip

- Throughout Jesus’ ministry, there are three groups of people who surround him: The Pharisees, the Crowd and his disciples.
- Each of these groups has certain characteristics.
- Starting with today’s class and for the next two lessons, we’re going to learn some about the characteristics of the crowd as well as how Jesus and the crowd interacted with each other
- In today’s story, we’ll see how the crowd asks a lot of Jesus and we’ll see how Jesus responds.

- But before we read the story, we're going to watch a movie clip from "Finding Nemo" where Nemo's dad and Dora (who are fish, by the way) find themselves in a bit of a quandary involving seagulls.

WATCH VIDEO CLIP

ASK

- What did the seagulls keep saying? (Mine, mine, mine)
- And what did they think was theirs to have? (Nemo's dad and Dora)
- Let's say the seagulls had actually caught Nemo's dad and Dora. Would Nemo's dad and Dora been "enough" to fulfill what the seagulls wanted? (No)
- What kept Nemo's dad and Dora from being consumed by the sea gulls? (they were kindly "consumed" by a larger bird / pelican who did not actually wish to consume them)

TRANSITION TO SCRIPTURE

- So keep that video clip in mind because we'll be talking some about how the seagulls and the crowd have some similar behaviors....
- Before we read the scripture story for today, one timing thing for us to be aware of: This story happens before Jesus has called his disciples. This means that Simon, who Jesus will later rename as Peter, is not yet Jesus' disciple in this particular story.
- So, let's see what happens

READ Luke 4:38-44 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

38 Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. **39** So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. **40** When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. **41** Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ. **42** At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. **43** But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." **44** And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

ASK (*answers are in parenthesis*)

- V38 -- Notice that Simon has a mother-in-law. What does that mean? (That he's married. Simon who eventually becomes Peter the disciple is married!)
- V39 -- How close does Jesus get to Simon's sick mother-in-law (the verse says "he bent over" which gives an impression of up-close-and-personal.)
- When people are sick with a cold or the flu, do you get close to them or stay away from them? (We're supposed to stay away! In Jesus' day, fevers were more feared than today, so Jesus getting close to Simon's mother-in-law is in and of itself, pretty amazing).
- V39 -- What does Jesus "do" to the mother-in-law's fever (he rebukes it. This is an out-of-use word that means to "say no" to something. An interesting thing to do to sickness, don't you think? To say no to it....)

- What is Simon’s mother-in-law’s response to Jesus saying no to her fever? (she gets and “waits” on them. This is not meant to be understood as a sign of traditional gender roles, but a reminder that when we receive what God offers us, then we have plenty to share with those around us.)
- V40 – Why do you think all the people show up after the sun sets? (In verse 38 it says that Jesus is leaving the synagogue, which means it’s Sabbath. Sabbath goes from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Once Sabbath ends, so do the Sabbath rules, which includes type and distance of travel. Which is why all the people are coming to Jesus once the sun sets – because they don’t have to worry about breaking any Sabbath laws).
- What does Jesus do with crowd? (he heals them; touches them – is not afraid of their illnesses; again, we see Jesus being up close and personal.)
- Where does Jesus go at daybreak? (a solitary place – this is Biblical code for “prayer” / listening to God. Remember “sheer silence” from the Elijah story (1 Kings 19) – this is the same thing.
- End of v. 42 -- What does the crowd want from Jesus (for him to stay)
- Does Jesus stay? (No, he leaves)

TELL

- V42 – So it’s been a long day for Jesus; a really long day. But instead of sleeping in, he goes to pray. Its maybe even possible that he doesn’t sleep at all that night. What this let’s us know is that this is a core/essential component of Jesus’ ministry and internal faith life: He consistently makes time and space to pray.
- Still V42 – And, because prayer is essential to Jesus, he does something that might surprise us – he leaves the crowd so that he can pray. The crowd is still looking for Jesus. But Jesus knows that he’ll be no good to anyone if he lets the crowd determine what he does.
- Instead, Jesus goes to God in prayer to let God determine what Jesus will do.
- V43 – It appears that Jesus hears in prayer that he is to continue on.
- V44 – In verse 43 Jesus says what he is to do. In verse 44, we see that he actually does it. This might be surprising to us, too. There are most likely still people in the crowd wanting/needed Jesus’ healing attention. And he *leaves* them.
- So what we see in both the scripture story and the video clip is how the crowd has an insatiable need.
- The crowd continues to grab for the thing it thinks it wants/needs.
- And what is important to note is that Jesus does not give into these demands from the crowd.
- He responds to the crowd, but does not let the crowd dictate what he’s going to do.
- Jesus turns to God to know what he is supposed to do.

The following are NOT Teaching Points for this particular lesson, but are notes meant to help answer questions the students may have:

- V41 – we’re not going to go into talking about demons today, but the shortest explanation is that the conditions they referred to as “demons” and “unclean spirits” in first century Israel, we would now (mostly) identify as psychological and neurological conditions. But it IS interesting that these individuals are the ones who know Jesus’ true identity.
- Jesus would probably want people to stay quiet about who he was because getting a label placed on you, like Messiah, keeps people from hearing what you actually have to say and teach – labels get in the way.

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- At first, Jesus praying may not seem like such a big deal.

- But one very important effect of prayer is that it allows an individual a chance to gain perspective and insight in the midst of craziness.
- So, for an example of how the pressure of the crowd might feel to Jesus or someone in a similar position to him, we're going to do the following activity

EXPLAIN the \$5 AUCTION ACTIVITY

- I have here a \$5 bill.
- And we're going to pretend like it represents Jesus. You'll see why after we're done with the activity.
- So, about this \$5 bill. I will sell it to the highest bidder.
- Since you'll most likely be making a profit, we're going to assume that you will be able to get the money from your parents to pay me a small amount for this \$5 – and then you can pay back your parents and keep the rest for yourself.
- Pretty good deal, huh?
- **The only rule is that the top TWO bidders must pay me their bid.**
- [Note: *at this point, you gotta sell it before they think about ways to game the system – if someone says, "I'm going to buy it for \$2 and give the rest of you a quarter to not bid," well, then, you're going to lose your \$5. But if you get them bidding right away, they are eventually going to realize that they have to keep going so that they don't spend a decent amount of money for nothing. So, that's why you want to just jump into the spiel.]*

DO ACTIVITY

Here's an example of what your auctioner-spiel might sound like (*you'll want to practice this ahead of time so that it feels smooth instead of forced*):

- Who wants to put the first bid in? Five cents? Do I hear five cents for this crisp, brand new \$5 bill? 5 cents, folks, only five cents. A *nickel*. You can spare a *nickel* to buy \$5 can't you?
- Oh ho ho! Someone *can* spend a nickel to get \$5 dollars, but cmon folks! Are you going to let this \$5 bill get away from you? All you gotta do is outbid your classmate here by bidding a dime. Cmon, 10 cents for a \$5 bill. What else can you get for 10 cents? Going once.....going twice....
- A new bidder! For 10 cents! The current bid on this fresh 5 dollar bill is 10 cents. Are you really going to let your classmate get away with this? A quarter, folks, do I hear ONE QUARTER for a 5 dollar bill?
- [After a quarter, push the bidding up at 25 cents or 50 cents every time. Once you get to 1 or 2 dollars, focus on your last two bidders. Say something like...]
- So I have a \$1 bid for this beautiful and expensive \$5 bill. Right now you are about to get a \$5 bill for 80% off. Can you believe it? This is pretty exciting, isn't it?
- But remember the rule: Remember that the last TWO bidders have to pay me their bid. So you, [say name of second bidder], are going to be out 75 cents and will have nothing to show for it. So what do you say? Change your bid to \$2 and then you'll still come out \$3 ahead! Going once....going twice....once last chance to not lose your money...?
- [if you get the two bidders to bite, then there's really no way out of it for them. One of the bidders is going to lose money. But since they realized it too late, they'll keep spiraling upwards. Of course this is exactly what you want. They might even go over a \$5 bid, which would mean they would OVERPAY for the money just so they wouldn't "waste" their money as the second bidder. **At some point, you will have to cancel the bidding and forgive everyone their debts, but don't tell them that you will do this.** However, plan to give the \$5 bill away to the highest bidder.]
- [NOTE: I discovered that this activity didn't work too well in class because of risk aversion. The students were too concerned about losing money to make a bid. So the risk has to be reduced. One way to do this might be to give

everyone ten one-dollar bills in *monopoly* money and tell them to bid for the \$5 bill (starting at \$1) – then you’ll probably get the effect that the activity is meant to convey]

ASK

- At the start of the activity, did any of you think that the bidding would end OVER \$5?
- For those of you who were “locked” into the bidding, did you feel any kind of pressure?
- Did it feel like you had, in some ways, lost your ability to walk away?
- So now that we’ve seen the activity in action – how could we “beat” the activity? [one person tells the rest of the group that s/he will pay everyone a quarter not to bid against him/her. Then that one person bids a penny.]

TELL

- This activity is perfectly designed to pit your self-interest of not losing money against the self-interest of another person’s concern about not losing money. There’s a lot of internal stress you can start to feel as you start to feel like you’re losing your money and that there’s no way out of it...
- And if the bidding did go over \$5, then more was being asked of the \$5 bill than the \$5 bill could deliver.
- The same thing is true with Jesus -- if Jesus stayed with the crowd the entire time, always responding to it, it would have completely consumed him/used him up.
- So instead of getting swallowed up and lost in that pressure and self-interest that radiates from the crowd, Jesus instead turned to God.
- Instead of being consumed by the crowd’s attention, Jesus chooses to be consumed by God’s attention.
- This is similar to what we saw in the movie clip: Nemo’s dad avoided consumption from the “mine mine mine” seagulls...by being consumed by the pelican.
- And just like the pelican put water in its mouth to help out Nemo’s Dad and Dora, so does God’s attention replenish and support Jesus
- Because Jesus prays, he doesn’t get trapped by the crowd’s demands, but instead knows where he is to go and do next.

CLOSING PRAYER