

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

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

- Some way to play and show movie clip on rfour.org site for this lesson (from *Finding Nemo*)
- Fake money (need fives and ones – monopoly money works well, here; otherwise, the dollar store often has fake money)

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 it 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.
- In the session we’re starting today, we’re going to read and discuss stories that highlight both 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 also 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* want 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, I want us to be aware of a timing thing: 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*)

- Is there anything you find interesting or weird about this story? [*to teachers: You don't necessarily need to answer what they notice or have questions about – sometimes just agree with a, "yep, that's interesting" or a, "Yeah, I find that to be weird, too" works*]
- 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 – this tidbit of info doesn't pertain to the story; instead it just helps us know a little bit more about Peter)
- 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? (Generally, we're supposed to stay away, which Jesus doesn't do. In Jesus' day, though, fevers were more feared than they are today -

- so Jesus getting close to Simon's mother-in-law would've seemed, by itself, pretty brave and amazing to the people hearing the story during Jesus' time).

- V39 -- What does Jesus "do" to the mother-in-law's fever (he rebukes it. This is a word we might not hear too often. It 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 up 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. . In other words, not only does the woman feel better, she is also feeling well enough to give back.)
- V40 – Any thoughts as to why 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 limits on how far you can travel. This 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).
- Verse 40 still: What does Jesus do with crowd? (he touches them – again, he is not afraid of their illnesses and we see Jesus being up close and personal. Jesus also heals them and casts out and rebukes "demons")
- Verse 42 -- 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)
- Verse 42 still – Who follows and finds Jesus? (the crowd)
- If you were Jesus, what would your response to the crowd have been at this point?
- End of v. 42 -- What does the crowd try to do when it is time for Jesus to leave? (they try to stop him from leaving)
- Does Jesus stay? (No, he leaves)
- What reason does he give?
- Do you think that was an easy decision for him to make, to leave people who were wanting help, who were still sick, who were begging him to stay? (probably not)

TELL

- V42 – So it's been a long day for Jesus; a really long day. But instead of sleeping in, he goes to pray. It's maybe even possible that he doesn't sleep at all that night. This tells us that prayer is very important to Jesus. More important than a good night's sleep. This is also a repeating pattern of behavior of Jesus' in the stories about him -- he consistently makes time and space to pray.
- Still V42 – Due to prayer being essential to Jesus, he does something that might surprise us – he leaves the crowd so that he can pray. When Jesus leaves the crowd (the first time), the crowd goes looking for him, which tells us they wanted more from him.
- 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 next.
- V43 – It appears that Jesus hears in prayer that he is to continue on in other towns.
- In verse 43 Jesus says outloud what he is to do. Then in verse 44, we see that he actually does it.
- Jesus' actions, here, might be surprising to us because most likely there are still people in the crowd wanting/needed Jesus' healing attention.
- But instead of staying there, he *leaves* them.
- The reason for this is probably because the crowd will never be satisfied.
- We saw that in the video clip, right? We deduced that the seagulls would never stop saying, "Mine mine mine mine mine mine"
- It looks like the same is true of the crowd, that it continues to grab for the thing it thinks it wants/needs.

- I think it is very important to note that Jesus does not give into these demands from the crowd.
- He responds to the crowd, but he 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 what the people in Jesus' time referred to as "demons" and "unclean spirits" are conditions we would now (mostly) identify as psychological and neurological conditions. It is how the people in Jesus' time explain mental illness and mental impairment.
 - But it IS interesting that these individuals are the ones who make mention of Jesus' true identity.
 - It's also interesting that Jesus rebukes the unclean spirits just like he rebukes Peter's mother-in-law's fever.
- 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 and makes them just want to see if you are the Messiah or not; labels can get in the way.

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- At first, Jesus prayer time 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 am passing out an undisclosed amount of fake money to each of you in an envelope.
- Everyone has \$1 bills – each \$1 bill is worth 1 point in this activity.
- Once you receive your envelope, you'll want to count how much you have – HOWEVER, do NOT show other people how much you have. You want to keep your amount secret.
- Not everyone will have the same amount (give each student between 23 and 25 fake dollars in singles)
- In my hand, I have a \$5 fake bill.
- And we're going to pretend like this \$5 bill represents Jesus. You'll see why once we're done with the activity.
- So, about this \$5 bill. I will sell it to the highest bidder – you will pay me with the money I gave you.
- But, you can't buy the \$5 bill using *more* money than you have.
- For anyone who gets the \$5 bill, that will count as 20 points
- The goal of the activity is end up with the most points. Each \$1 bill counts as one point and the \$5 bill counts as 20 points.
- Bidding for the \$5 will start at \$1.
- Any questions?
- [Note: *It's interesting how risk-averse students can be, so this activity is designed to apply the pressure of losing as a way to make sure the class doesn't let one student get a good deal. It doesn't always work, but once you get one bid from one student, then you can use that bid to get other students to bid. Once one student bids, say to the rest of the*

class, “Joey is going to get 20 points by giving up just 1 point, are you going to let that happen? You can get 20 points for just 2 points if you bid now.”]

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? One dollar? Do I hear one dollar for this crisp, brand new \$5 bill? One dollar, folks, only one dollar. You can spare a one dollar to buy \$5 can’t you?
- Oh ho ho! Someone *can* spend a dollar 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 two dollars. Cmon, \$2 for a \$5 bill. What else can you get for 2 fake dollars? Going once.....going twice....
- A new bidder! For \$2! The current bid on this fresh 5 dollar bill is \$2. Are you really going to let your classmate get away with this? \$5, folks, do I hear five SINGLE dollars for this \$5 bill?
- *[After getting \$5 bid, push the bidding up at \$2 or \$3 every time, until the bidding stops. Your goal is get someone to pay more than the five dollars is worth. It’ll be even better if you can get someone to pay more points than the 20 points the \$5 is worth in the activity, but that will be difficult to do]*
- **[NOTE:** A variation on the activity is to have a fake \$5 bill that they have to buy with their fake money. You then add a rule, though, that the top TWO bidders must pay the auctioner their bid and the goal is to end with the \$5 bill *and* the most singles.]

ASK

- At the start of the activity, did any of you think that the bidding would end OVER \$5?
- Why do you think you were will to spend more money than the \$5 was worth? (because the \$5 was actually worth 20 points)
- Good point – the \$5 wasn’t really worth 5 dollars right?
- But if we pretend that all the money we were just using was REAL money, then even though you may have won an activity, the person who bought the \$5 bill would’ve lost money, right?
- So now that we’ve seen the activity in action – how could we “beat” the activity? [one person bids the amount everyone has.]

TELL

- This activity is designed to make the bidding for \$5 go over \$5.
- Or, in other words, too much would’ve been expected of that five dollar bill.
- And that is a similar situation we see Jesus dealing with in today’s story.
- Too much is being asked of Jesus by the crowd.
- We might consider how it was, say, mean of Jesus to leave the crowd even though they had more ways to ask him for help.
- But consider this: If Jesus had stayed with the crowd the entire time, giving the crowd everything he had and more, it would have completely consumed him/used him up.
- They would’ve spent him beyond what he had to give.
- But, Jesus understands this dynamic.
- So instead of getting swallowed up and lost in that pressure from the crowd, Jesus instead turned to God.

- Instead of being consumed by the crowd's attention, Jesus chose 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
- In other words, it is because of Jesus' choice to pray and place himself in God's attention that then keeps him from getting consumed by the crowd's attention.
- This is something that I think prayer helps all of us with. If we take the time to pray, and choose to put ourselves in the middle of God's attention, then the other demands that try to consume us lose some of their grip on us.
- I know that might sound kind of "woo-woo," ("hold us in their grip") but I don't mean it that way.
- What I mean is that prayer reminds us that what God wants for us isn't just to do things for God, but to also receive things from God, like God's love and ideas.
- Prayer helps us understand how to deal with those stressful situations that tend to consume us.
- By seeking God in prayer, then, we are not *consumed* by those other demands, while still being able to *respond* to those demands, just like Jesus was able to respond to the crowd in today's story, but was then also able to move on.
- And that's good news!

CLOSING PRAYER