

An rfour.org Children's Time Message

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Written for October 29, 2023

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

Lectionary Year A

Scripture: [Matthew 22:34-46](#) [**Summary:** *Practicing The Greatest Commandment*]

Supplies Needed:

- You'll need your cell phone with you.
- You'll need someone from the congregation to call you on your cell phone during the children's message.
- You'll also need a child volunteer (who is a usual participant of Children's time). It'll be best if you talk to them ahead of time about what to expect (something along the lines of: *Will you do a staring contest with me during the Children's Time message? I'll talk a little bit about how good I am at staring contests at first – just nod your head, maybe roll your eyes a little bit at that point. Once we do the staring contest my cell phone is going to ring. Don't look away at that point because I'm going to answer it and lose the staring contest*).

ASK (a.k.a *The On-Ramp*)

- Good morning!
- Raise your hand if you have ever had a staring contest before.
- What rules do you play by? Do you play "no blinking?" Or that you can't turn your eyes away? Do you sometimes do the "no smiling game" where you keep staring at each other AND you can't smile/laugh, but you can try to get the other person to smile/laugh by telling jokes and making funny sounds?
- Just so you know, I'm really good at every single staring game. I'm so good at staring games that there's a state law in [name a state that you don't live in] that says it's illegal for me to play others in staring games because it hurts other people's eyes. Ok, that's not quite true, but IT SHOULD BE!
- So, who here thinks they could out-stare me? I mean, you can't really, but who would like to TRY? First one to look away loses. Who wants to play? Any takers? C'mon just once? Someone? PLEASE!?!?!?
- [Pick volunteer who you spoke to earlier]
- Ok, this is very important. Whoever loses this staring contest has to finish today's children's time message, ok? Are you prepared to do that? You're not? Well, you better not lose then! For today's contest, you can blink, but you cannot close your eyes and keep them shut. First one to look away loses. Any questions? No? Good! On your mark, get set, GO!

- [ABOUT THE STARING CONTEST: Make sure you have your cell phone on you and the ringer turned on as well. Have someone in the congregation who is ready to call you. They should be instructed to call you within 5 seconds of the start of the staring contest. While those 5 seconds are happening, feel free to keep talking about how good you are at staring contests and how you're going to win. Then, when your phone rings, pull it out of your pocket and answer it. Look out into the middle distance and say something like, "Talk to me!" and then "No-no, you're not interrupting anyth...oh no! I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF A STARING CONTEST THAT I JUST LOST. I'll call you back" Then hang up.]
- [Note: If you or the other person do not have a good cell signal in the church building, it might be better to have someone in the congregation set their cell phone's timer to go off about five seconds after you begin the staring contest. If you go that route, once the alarm goes off, look out into the congregation and say, "Is that for me? I'm expecting an important call" and then realize that you just lost the contest. Be sure to tell your child volunteer ahead of time to expect the noise and not look away when it goes off.]
- So tell me, why did I lose? (because you looked at your cell phone)
- You're right, that IS why I lost – I thought my cell phone call was more important and it distracted me from the staring contest. Keep that idea of distraction in mind as we talk about today's scripture story.

TELL (a.k.a. *The Freeway*)

- In today's scripture story, Jesus tells the people around him what the Greatest and Most Important commandment is.
- Jesus says the most important commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind."
- I think it can be difficult to understand that part where it says to love with "all of your mind" – so let's talk about one way we can love with all of our mind.
- One way to love God with all of our mind is to pay attention to God and then KEEP paying attention to God.
- That's not always so easy because we have all these other things in life, like cell phones for example, that try to grab and pull our attention away when trying to have staring contests and when trying to pay attention to God (and everything else, for that matter).
- Which is why we have to *practice* paying attention to God.

SHARE the Good News (a.k.a. *The Destination*)

- One of the ways to practice paying attention to God is to do so when there are less distractions around.

- This is one of the reasons why we worship together and learn about God in Sunday school together - by doing these things, we are helping each other pay attention to God while there are less distractions happening – usually.
- It is also good to practice paying attention to God when we're together because then we can encourage and support each other to keep practicing at paying attention if one of us gets distracted.
- The more we practice paying attention to God when there are less distractions, the better we'll be at paying attention to God and loving God with all of our mind when there *are* lots of distractions around us.
- That's the good news for today. Let's pray. This is a repeat-after-me prayer.

CLOSING Prayer

Dear God,

Dear God,

Thank you for Jesus...

Thank you for Jesus...

...and for each other...

...and for each other...

...who remind and encourage us...

...who remind and encourage us...

...to practice paying attention to you.

...to practice paying attention to you.

Thank you and Amen