

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

Year 3: Session 5 – Jesus and the Pharisees

Class 15: Mark 12:13-17 – The Pharisees try to trick Jesus

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Review who the Pharisees are
- Explain the trap that the Pharisees are trying to catch Jesus in in this passage
- Explore the concept of “image” and connect it to the Genesis 1 (main focus)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Some way to play and show movie clip on rfour.org site for this lesson (from *Catch Me If You Can*)
- Logos to print out or show on a TV/monitor (see end of lesson)

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For 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 asking the question 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: *Have you ever played a trick on someone or had a trick played on you (maybe on April Fool’s Day)?*

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- In today’s scripture story, the Pharisees try to pull a dangerous trick on Jesus with a question.
- But Jesus is not fooled and his response is pretty amazing.
- To help us better understand Jesus’ response to the Pharisees’ trick question, we’re going to start with an activity about logos.
- Many companies have logos.
- A logo is a symbol or design created/used by an organization (usually a company) to identify its products, uniform, vehicles, etc.
- Often, how it works, is that a logo is stamped onto the product to show ownership.

- For instance, if you look at your shoes, it most likely has a symbol on it to show anyone who looks at your shoes what company made those shoes.
- So, if you see someone's shoes and like them and want to get them yourself, you know what brand to look for because of their logo.
- The logo makes a brand and its products more recognizable.
- That is a logo's entire whole purpose.

EXPLAIN Activity

- To help us better understand how logos work, we're going to see how many companies we can correctly connect to their logos.
- I'll show you the logo, and as a class, we'll try to connect the company with its logo.
- There will be 25 logos [see last page of lesson] – how many do you think we'll get right? (take guesses. Maybe even write them down)

DO LOGO ACTIVITY

ASK

- Are you surprised that we knew as many logos as we did?
- Were there any logos that just one or two of us knew?
- Were there any logos that all of us knew?

TRANSITION TO SCRIPTURE

- This is our last story in our session of stories about Jesus and the Pharisees.
- The Pharisees are one of the three groups that surround Jesus.
- Do you remember all three groups that surround Jesus? (the crowd, the Pharisees and the disciples)
- Each of these three groups have certain characteristics and ways with how they interact with Jesus.
- What we've been learning about the Pharisees is that they are very focused on following the rules.
- They think that by perfectly following the religious rules found in the first five books of the Old Testament (known as the Torah, or the Law) that they and the people of Israel will find/receive God's favor.
- Conversely, they think that if bad things happen to you, that must be because you didn't follow the rules.
- Jesus has a very different approach than the Pharisees – he pays attention to what God is saying to do in prayer, and not from the rules. He also offers a lot of forgiveness, which the Pharisee-way doesn't really allow for.
- This lack of adherence to the religious rules drives the Pharisees crazy. And, this is one of the main reasons why the Pharisees oppose Jesus.
- In today's scripture story, we will see the Pharisees try to trick Jesus with a question as a way to discredit him.
- And it is a very dangerous trick, one that could get Jesus killed if he answers incorrectly.
- Let's see what happens.

READ Mark 12:13-17 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

13 Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. 14 And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with

partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? 15 Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it." 16 And they brought one. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." 17 Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

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*]
- Verse 14 – how do the Pharisees start their trick question? (By painting Jesus as a truth-teller)
- Verse 14 cont. – Any thoughts about why they would want to establish Jesus as a truth-teller? (so that Jesus couldn't retract his answer later by saying, "I was just kidding" or "I didn't tell the truth because I was scared.")
- Verse 14 & 15 – What is the actual question that is asked of Jesus? (Is it lawful to pay taxes to the Emperor or not? Should we pay them or not?)
- So...what two answers seem available to give? (yes or no)
- Verse 15 – Does Jesus answer with a "yes" or "no"? (Nope)
- A "denarius" is a Roman coin. In verse 16, whose image or "logo" do we learn is on the coin? (The emperor's)
- Verse 17 – Since the Emperor's image/logo is on the coin, who does the coin belong to? (The emperor's)
- Verse 17 – Any guesses, then, as to who or what bears God's logo? (one to mull over; don't give them the answer if they can't figure it out. The best answer is in Gen. 1:26-27 and will be discussed in the following **TELL** section)

TELL

- Let's start by discussing why this is a trick question.
- First, in theory, there are only two answers to the question, "Yes" or "No."
- And, second, either answer (Yes or No) can be used by the Pharisees to kill, arrest, or at the very least severely hamper Jesus' credibility.
- If Jesus says "Yes, pay taxes" then the Pharisees can point out to the crowds of people who follow Jesus: "He supports the Romans, the people who conquered us and oppress us. And he thinks you should support the Romans by paying them your money."
- Such a message is not going to go over well with the crowd. And what have we already established about crowds? That's right! They can get pretty upset rather quickly. To the point of trying to throw Jesus off a cliff – Which the Pharisees would LOVE to see happen here.
- If Jesus says "No, don't pay taxes," then the Pharisees can march right on over to some Roman soldiers and say, "See that guy with all the people around him? He's telling all those people to not pay their taxes to you guys." And then the soldiers would go arrest Jesus for trying to start a rebellion (which was punishable by death).
- So, a win-win for the Pharisees, right?
- Except Jesus is not tricked by their trickery.
- Not only is he not tricked, he even does some teaching in the moment, as well.
- Earlier, we had asked you who or what bears God's logo.
- Jesus' answer is referring to scripture – something the Pharisees would have been very familiar with.
- The passage Jesus is referring to is Genesis 1:26-27. Here, I'll read it to you and you tell me who/what bears God's logo:

READ Genesis 1:26-27

26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." 27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

ASK/TELL cont

- So who bears God's image? That's right...we do! Humankind does!
- So Jesus is telling the Pharisees and everyone listening to go ahead and give coins with the Emperor's logo to Rome.
- And, Jesus is telling the Pharisees (and everyone else) to give yourself, the fullness of who you are, to God.
- Pretty impressive answer don't you think?
- The Pharisees thought so too, which is why they and the crowd were utterly amazed at the end of the story.

TRANSITION TO MOVIE CLIP

- So to help us think about and talk about what it means to live as the image we've been made from, let's watch this clip from the movie, "Catch me if you can."
- In this clip, a young man is a substitute teacher in a high school. Let's see how well he does.
- NOTE to teachers: The young man is NOT actually a substitute teacher, but we don't want to give that away to the students.

WATCH MOVIE CLIP

ASK

- Do you think Mr. Abagnale was actually a substitute teacher? (No, he wasn't, he was actually a student acting like a substitute teacher)
- What does he do that made the class (and possibly you) think that he was a substitute teacher? (the way that he talked, the name that he used, the way that he dressed, the way that he acted like he was in charge)
- So, in other words, there's this certain image by Mr. Abagnale that is projected to the class that makes the class think, "Oh, this person (Mr. Abagnale) is a teacher." And then they treat him like a teacher.

TELL

- This is what Jesus is talking about when he gives his answer to the Pharisees.
- He's saying that there are certain images that we can live into.
- For instance, we can live into the image of being a substitute teacher.
- In the same way, we can live into the image of Caesar – for instance, we can act like a good citizen of the country we live in.
- Or, we can live into the image of God – the image that we were created to live into.
- The person we see who most represents what this image looks like is Jesus.
- As we saw in the Nicodemus/Jesus story, learning how to live into this image of God is not automatic.
- We have to learn how to live into the image of God.

- Which is why Jesus invites the disciples (and us) to follow him to learn how to better live into that image of God.
- In our next session of stories, we'll talk about the third group of people who surround Jesus – the disciples – and we'll look at some of the ways that he taught them to live into the image of God.

CLOSING PRAYER

GUESS THE COMPANY by ITS LOGO



Answers

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|------------|-------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| Target | Adidas | T-Mobile | Girl Scouts | Quaker Oats |
| Starbucks | Expedia | United Way | Red Bull | Wikipedia |
| Chevrolet | Travelers | McDonalds | Taco Bell | Pepsi |
| John Deere | Fruit of the Loom | LG | Walmart | DreamWorks SKG |
| Apple | Allstate | Facebook | Nike | Atari |