

# Read

Wisdom 11:22–12:2

Psalm 145:1–2, 8–9,  
10–11, 13, 142

Thessalonians 1:11–2:2

Luke 19:1–10

## LIVING THE WORD

### Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 3, 2019



#### REFLECTION

Today we are called to understand and imitate the mercy of the Lord. Once there was a teenager who disobeyed her mother and was sent to her room. She was completely unwilling to apologize. Her father came in to discipline her (so she thought), but to her great surprise he instead took a deck of cards out of his pocket and asked, “So you want to play and talk about things?” The girl was so moved by her father’s gentle mercy that she immediately decided to apologize to her mother and restore peace in the house. As we see in the readings, mercy like this is exactly the kind God shows to us. If you have an image in your head of an angry bearded man waiting to drop a lightning bolt on you, that just isn’t so! Rather, God loves us more than we will ever deserve. He would move mountains to be close to us.

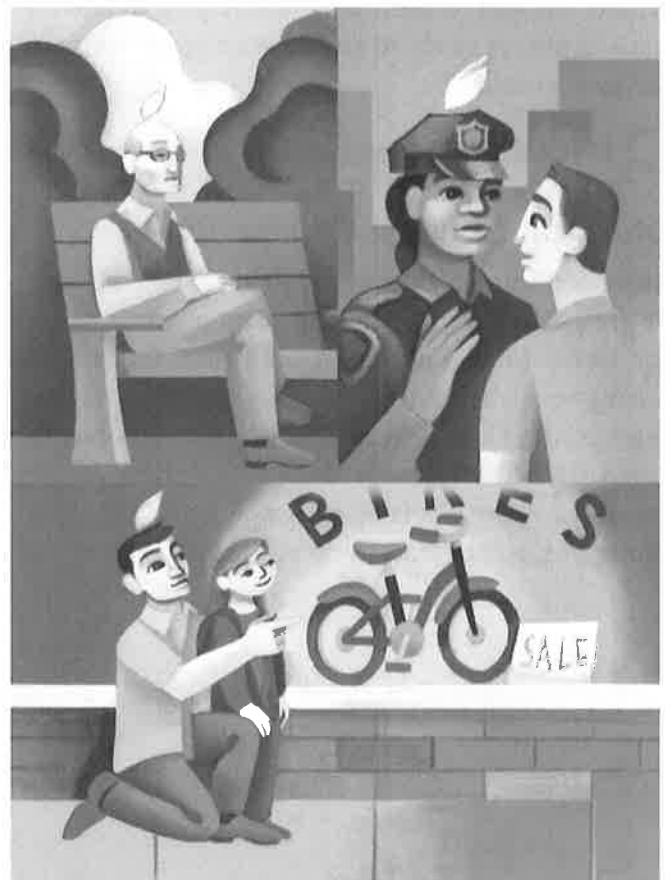
#### ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Which spiritual work of mercy stands out as the most difficult for you? Why?
- ❖ Is there someone or some people in your life who need lots of mercy like the girl in the story? What can you do about it?



#### ACTION

We often hear of the corporal works of mercy, but have you ever heard of the spiritual works of mercy? They are counseling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, comforting the sorrowful, forgiving injuries, bearing wrongs patiently, and praying for the living and the dead. We can show others the mercy that God shows us. Challenge yourself by picking the one that stands out to you as the hardest, and brainstorm ways you can practice that work of mercy this week. Make sticky notes and put them on your wall so you don’t forget.





November 3, 2019

## THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### LECTIONARY #153C

Wisdom 11:22–12:2

Psalm 145:1–2, 8–9, 10–11, 13, 14

2 Thessalonians 1:11–2:2

Luke 19:1–10

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

The story of Zacchaeus is an especially vivid account of a man who sought out Jesus. So much so that he had to climb a tree in order to see him! Jesus seeks and saves what was lost. Today's Gospel leads us to explore our call to continuing conversion in Christ. Jesus is always ready to embrace us when we turn our lives toward him.

**Q FOCUS:** *To hide and seek.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

As we continue to journey through Ordinary Time, we are aware that the days and years of our lives are connected to all who have gone before us in faith throughout the centuries. This Saturday is the Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome, the official church of the Holy Father. As the pope's cathedral, it is as a sign of our unity as a Church under the leadership of the Holy Father.

### Church Teaching Connection

We are never finished disciples. Following Jesus Christ is a process of continuing conversion, through which we open our minds and hearts to God and commit our lives to doing God's will. We are free to accept or reject God's love. "Indeed, Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them" (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 160).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

Luke 19:1–10

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

At that time, Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus

stood there and said to the Lord, “Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.”

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Picture yourself in the crowd that was walking with Jesus in today's Gospel. He probably told parables or taught the people as they walked along. He might have stopped occasionally to greet a child or someone at the side of the path. It is in such a scene that we hear that Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector and a wealthy man, climbed a tree in order to see Jesus. He is short in stature, so cannot see Jesus among the crowd.

► **As someone in the crowd that day, what would you initially think as you saw Zacchaeus climb the tree?**

► **Have you ever been so determined to do something that you went to extreme measures to make it happen?**

Jesus looked up at Zacchaeus and said, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house” (Luke 19:5). Keep in mind the people's feelings about tax collectors. And this man is the chief tax collector, which means he was responsible for overseeing the work of the tax collectors in the area. Being a chief tax collector would have been thought of by many as being a chief sinner of the town. And yet, Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus' house! The crowd reacts, grumbling, at Jesus' decision.

► **What was the crowd grumbling about?**

► **What might have been going through Zacchaeus' mind at that moment?**

Zacchaeus stands in his spot and tells Jesus he will give half of his possessions to the poor, and if he has extorted anything from anyone, he will repay it four times over. Zacchaeus just declared that his relationship with Jesus is causing a change of life. He does not say that he has extorted people in the past, but he is saying that in the future he will give generously to the poor and make restitution for anything he has taken from people in the past.

► **How does what Zacchaeus plans to do line up with what Jesus calls his followers to do?**

Notice that Jesus was anxious to be with Zacchaeus, even before Zacchaeus declared his intent to change. Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house. We might say that he showed Zacchaeus hospitality, and Zacchaeus returned the hospitality.

► **How do you experience Christ, who is always ready for you with open arms?**

Our journey with Jesus is a lifetime process of conversion. We are never finished disciples! The life of discipleship is always about opening our hearts and minds to Christ in the present moment, discerning how we are to act in the circumstances of our lives, and relying on the grace of God as we live and grow in faith. There may be times in which we are lost, when we turn away from God. There might be moments in which we hide from ourselves or attempt to hide from God. We may feel at times that we are playing hide and seek with God—we hide and hope that Christ will seek us out. In those moments, it is good for us to remember the words of Jesus today, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10).

## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 62.

In what ways are you sometimes lost?

What do you hide from yourself or God?

What helps you to continue to walk with Jesus, even when it is hard to do so?

## Act on the Word

### Hide and Seek

Prepare in advance slips of paper or note cards with scenarios that depict the ways in which people “hide” from themselves or God, or in which they can be “lost.” Conceal the papers throughout your room for an exercise of hide and seek.

Divide the group into teams. Explain that you have hidden slips of paper with scenarios that depict the ways in which we may “hide” from ourselves or God, or in which we can be “lost.”

Play a game of hide and seek, in which the teams must (1) find the slip of paper; (2) discuss the scenario; (3) determine a way for the person in the scenario to return to the Lord; and (4) note their resolution on the slip of paper.

Determine in advance how many scenarios each group is to find and resolve, or give the teams a time limit.

When time is up, draw the group together, debrief, and ask: Which scenarios were the most difficult to resolve? Do other situations come to mind in which the teens may be lost for a time or in which they hide from themselves or from God?

### Raising the Bar

Prepare newsprint in advance and place it around your room. Label each piece of newsprint with the headings listed below. Give the teens markers, note cards, and pens.

Place newsprint throughout your room in a manner that will provide room for the teens to mingle and make notes. Head the newsprint with labels such as:

- ✧ Personal (spiritual, emotional)
- ✧ Interpersonal (family, friends)

- ✧ Academic
- ✧ Clubs, athletics
- ✧ Service
- ✧ Parish

Tell the teens that conversion is an ongoing process of growing and living in faith, so that our relationship with Christ directs and shapes the way we live. Ask them to go to each sheet of newsprint and to write ways in which someone could grow in living as a disciple. How can they “raise the bar,” so that their faith directs their lives more closely at this point in their lives?

Once the teens have written their ideas on the newsprint, invite them to a time of quiet reflection. On the note cards, ask them to note the ways in which each feels called to “raise the bar” in their own lives.

Following the quiet reflection time, invite them to share in pairs or small groups. Ask them to discern together—how can they encourage one another to be realistic and also challenge each other when appropriate? Ask them to discern a way they will hold one another accountable.

### Closing Prayer

*God of love,  
help us to allow your love to reign in our hearts,  
as we strive to imitate your Son in sharing  
that love.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

### For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.