



Discipleship

Ideas for the Iowa District West

Introduction

The following “Discipleship Ideas” from the readings are not intended for any other purpose than to provide ideas of application from each reading that may be included in the taught and preached Word for this particular Sunday to help teach a life of discipleship. L.C.M.S. pastors are gifted at preaching Law and Gospel, but often lack in the matter of personal applications to the Word. This tool is for no other reason than to offer some seeds of thought to do that.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - SERIES C

AUGUST 7, 2016

From C.P.H. About the Cover: Our heavenly Father loves us and wants us to be happy, and He is pleased “to give you the kingdom.” The Father has given us all of the blessings of this life, including His only Son to save us from our sin. Every good thing in God’s creation is intended to make us happy, and God takes pleasure in giving them to us. His gift of Jesus is His most precious gift.

First Reading: Genesis 15:1–6

¹After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ²But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” ⁴And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” ⁵And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ⁶And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

1st Reading Discipleship Notes: Wouldn’t it be wonderful if God were to speak to us as He did to Abraham with promises of a wonderful blessing? Of course Abraham believed and it was counted to him as righteousness. Perhaps our response would be, “Oh yeah! Like that will really come true!” Yet, because of the Gospel of Christ Jesus, we have Abraham’s promise fulfilled and we are recipients of God’s eternal promise. Like Abraham we can confidently believe in God’s great promises provided for us in His Word.

Epistle Reading**Hebrews 11:1–16**

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

¹³These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: Dying in the faith without receiving the things promised has historically been the case of the Church here on earth. The saints on earth continue to die without receiving that which we can only see from afar in the joy of heaven. But like the saints of old, we are given God's grace to believe and look beyond this earthly life where we really are strangers and exiles on earth and we can see the glorious joy of heaven and the place where God has prepared us for an eternity. This great joy can be a glorious hope we recall daily and celebrate continuously.

Gospel Reading:**Luke 12:22–34**

²²And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶If then

you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ³²"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Gospel Discipleship Notes: Again Luke records the concern of the sinner throughout the ages which is to concern oneself solely with the things of this life. Yet the glorious promise of God is to care for all the needs of body and soul for the saints of God. As children born of the Living God, we have the certainty of His promise to provide and by His grace we can rejoice in His mercy and rely on His providence so that we can also go about the business of storing up the heavenly treasures of His Word and promise and we can furthermore grow more concerned about the matters of the kingdom of God rather than the matters of what we eat or drink or what we wear.

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

Read Genesis 15:1–6

¹After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ²But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." ⁴And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." ⁵And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

1. How is God a shield to Abraham and thus to us?
2. Who was Eliezer of Damascus?
3. What would have enabled Abraham to believe God's promise as he did?
4. What promises do we have from God that we believe and do not see like Abraham?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read Hebrews 11:1–16

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. ⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

¹³These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the

earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

6. How does the definition of faith clarify understanding about our own faith?
7. What does it mean that Abel's faith still speaks?
8. What does it mean that without faith we cannot please God?
9. All those mentioned acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on earth. How does that play into the matter of believing God's promises and even the promise to sustain us?
10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

Read: Luke 12:22–34

²²And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

³²"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

11. Jesus spoke of our providence in the Gospel reading for last Sunday and again this week also. That reading dealt primarily with coveting things, what does this reading deal with primarily?
12. Being anxious about things fails to add a single hour to the span of life, but how can it take away from the span of earthly life?
13. How do the nations of the world seek after the things of this world?

14. What does Jesus mean by selling your possessions and giving them to the needy?
15. How do we go about making certain that our treasure is the right treasure?
16. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline (Leader's Guide)

Read **Genesis 15:1-6**

¹After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ²But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." ⁴And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." ⁵And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

1. How is God a shield to Abraham and thus to us?

At the present time, there was concern in Abraham's life about the danger of four kingdoms that surrounded him. God was not only going to provide protection for Abraham and his people, but provision and care for them as well. God still protects us from evil dangers and provides for our every need.

2. Who was Eliezer of Damascus?

He was the servant in Abraham's household in charge of all that Abraham owned and all whom Abraham cared for which involved many servants, herdsmen, etc.

3. What would have enabled Abraham to believe God's promise as he did?

God's grace and it alone. See Romans 5:1-2

4. What promises do we have from God that we believe and do not see like Abraham?

We have the promises of eternal life in Jesus' name, of heaven, of forgiveness, of His presence in our lives, etc.

5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

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6. How does the definition of faith clarify understanding about our own faith?

Answers will vary.

7. What does it mean that Abel's faith still speaks?

Knowing the circumstances associated with Abel's faithful offering, we still recall it today and remember the faith that led him to give of the first fruits of what God had given him. He left a legacy of faith.

8. What does it mean that without faith we cannot please God?

People can do all kinds of humanitarian deeds, but done without faith and confidence in God's providence and mercy, they are merely humanitarian deeds and not God-pleasing actions done out of faith and from the heart.

9. All those mentioned acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on earth. How does that play into the matter of believing God's promises and even the promise to sustain us?

Once God's children learn to disassociate themselves with this world and acknowledge that we are merely strangers here and that heaven is really our home, believing God's promises sincerely and trusting in His mercy become second nature. This is a matter of God's grace at work in us. This is what happens each time we confess our transgressions and receive God's forgiveness openly and honestly. Then the things of this world seem far less important than the matters of the spirit and of eternity.

10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

READ: Luke 12:22–34

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11. Jesus spoke of our providence in the Gospel reading for last Sunday and again this week also. That reading dealt primarily with coveting things, what does this reading deal with primarily?

He was dealing with them about the matter of being anxious about the things of this world.

12. Being anxious about things fails to add a single hour to the span of life, but how can it take away from the span of earthly life?

Anxiety plays huge affects on the health and well-being of our bodies. Anxiety leads to heart problems, digestive problems, etc. all of which can affect our earthly life and perhaps even shorted or embitter it.

13. How do the nations of the world seek after the things of this world?

Every nation seeks the wealth of the world in all the matters of commerce, trade, etc. These thing ultimately will be of no worth in the end, but nations are primarily concerned with them in order to be powerful and successful as sovereignties.

14. What does Jesus mean by selling your possessions and giving them to the needy?

Jesus does not mean for us to sell everything we have so as to be in poverty ourselves, but He is illustrating that where we have excess, we can easily give up things we have for the sake of those in need.

15. How do we go about making certain that our treasure is the right treasure?

By keeping our eyes and hearts on Jesus and the promised inheritance of eternal life.

16. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Discipleship Bulletin Blub

What are you most anxious about in your life? Is it the things of this world which are merely temporary or the spiritual matters that are important for an eternity? Christ invites us to store up treasures in heaven that cannot be taken from us. This is possible solely by the grace of God which is at work in us through the Word and Sacrament. When we store up those spiritual treasures we also find that the earthly ones are more easily used on the needs of others than on our wants and desires.

Discipleship Prayer Thought

Dear God our heavenly Father, Help us not to be anxious about the things of this world, but to trust in Your mercy to provide for all we need and to protect us and to be our shield and defense in all things. Move us, O Lord, by Your grace to grow in love for the spiritual things that lead to eternal life and to store up those spiritual treasures which can never be taken from us so that we might also be a spiritual influence on others and agents of hope for those in need. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**