

For groups using the Gospel Centered Format

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 22, 2018 B

(Before starting, allow a few minutes for the members to exchange greetings, then call the group together to prayer.)

Facilitator: Let us take a minute to consciously place ourselves in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.

(Pause for a minute.)

(Play a religious song if you are able to do so.)

Opening prayer: *Good Shepherd, we are the people whom you have gathered beside restful waters so that we can listen to your Word and allow it to penetrate our minds, hearts and deeds. Bless our sharing today and keep us close to your heart. Amen.*

*(Prior to your meeting you are encouraged to read the first and second readings and the commentary on them. After the opening prayer, go to the section titled **Proclamation of the Gospel**, i.e., skip the first and second readings as well as the commentaries.)*

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 23:1-6

This reading begins with a strong condemnation of the shepherds (read Kings) who have not cared for God's people. Not only have they not cared, they have also led them astray. The strong word of condemnation is followed by a promise of a new Shepherd who will show true concern for the people.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 23

This well-loved psalm speaks of the author's absolute trust in God to care for him.

SECOND READING: Ephesians 2:13-18

This reading describes the unifying effect of Christ's blood. The Gentiles "who once were far off have become near" (2:13). Lacking the covenant and therefore access to salvation, the Gentiles were without hope prior to Christ's sacrifice (2:11-12). But through the blood of Christ, both Jew and Gentile are made one (2:15). The walls that had separated them—the commandments and legal claims—are abolished, so that now both have access to God.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

Facilitator: As we listen to this gospel, let us listen with our *heads* for the *content* of the message.

(A member of the group reads the gospel.)

(After the reading pause . . .)

Facilitator: In this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our *heart* to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge for you to embrace

Facilitator: *Let us now take a moment to quietly meditate on the Gospel text.*

GOSPEL COMMENTARY

Facilitator: *Let us now read quietly the gospel commentary.*

GOSPEL: Mark 6:30-34

This Gospel is one of *contrast* to the first reading. Here we are given the image of a Shepherd who truly cares for his people. First, he shows concern for his first-time missionaries who return exhausted. He tries to bring them away to a restful place where they can be renewed in spirit. Secondly, Jesus shows himself to be the Good Shepherd to the crowds by feeding them with his Word.

FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse in the Gospel caught your attention. Why?

Share the next questions with the whole group.

2. Do you tend to be a doer, always on the go? Do you find it hard to relax? What forms of relaxation do you like?

3. Jesus says, “Come away by yourselves to a quiet place”. When was your last retreat experience? If you had one, what was the experience like? If you have never been on a retreat or have not been on one for a long time, how do you feel about going on a retreat?

4. Jesus’ heart was ‘moved with pity’ for the crowd. What in today’s world or local town moves your heart with pity?

5. What is one thing Jesus is saying to us in this Sunday’s gospel about how a disciple should speak or act?

JOURNALING ON THE WORD **(2 or 3 minutes)**

(Gather the group back together.)

Facilitator: This section of your time together gives you the opportunity to express in writing further thoughts on the gospel. What is the gospel asking of you and how can you respond in *prayer* to the message of the gospel.

In this time of journaling, go wherever the Spirit leads you.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Consider sharing your response to this question with one other person. How can you name one way you can act on or respond to the message of this Sunday’s Gospel?

Suggestions: If not already taking out time for quiet time on a regular basis, begin to do so. If already doing so, look at *how* you spend the time. For example, how much of the quiet time is spent in being still versus in reading and *saying* prayers?

SHARE PRAYER RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD

Stand, form a circle and if comfortable, hold hands. See if you can share a prayer, however brief on the gospel you have just heard, discussed and journaled on.

Facilitator: Do not be afraid of long pauses. When all or some have shared a prayer on the gospel say:

Let us now conclude with any personal prayers of petition (prayers for self) and intercession (prayers for others).