

# Forming Good Stewards

*Good stewards are formed, not forced!*

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

## Bulletin Bites

November 4, 2018

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mark 12:28b-34

### Option 1

The scribe said to Jesus, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying,

“*לְאֶרְשֵׁי עַמֶּיִךָ* *Shema Yisrael - Hear, O Israel . . .*

**To love God with all your heart . . . and to love your neighbor as yourself  
is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”**

*לְאֶרְשֵׁי עַמֶּיִךָ* (*Shema Yisrael - “Hear, O Israel”*) are the first words of a section of the Torah that is the centerpiece of Jewish morning and evening prayer, encapsulating the monotheistic essence of Judaism: “*Hear, O Israel: G d is our L rd, G d is one.*” The *Shema* leads to the *Two Great Commandments*, an abbreviation of the *Ten Commandments*. The first step in loving God is accepting God as One. We love God by loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. Imagine a world in which that truly existed: Everyone loving everyone else as we love ourselves. That would be heavenly. Is that not what we hope heaven will be. It does not require that we all be alike. That would be boring. On the contrary, it requires that we acknowledge our own uniqueness and accept the uniqueness of our neighbor. Of course, it is difficult to love someone who does not love us. But God will not ask us if our neighbors loved us. God will know if we loved our neighbors. And if God knows that, God will know we loved God - The One God.

### Option 2

**“You are not far from the kingdom of God”**

Imagine how we would feel if Jesus approached us and said “You are not far from the kingdom of God!” Well, it turns out that it is not very complicated to be far from the kingdom of God. We must love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Loving God is not too difficult, especially if we believe that God is the creator and source of all that we are, all that we have and all that we ever will be. And loving our neighbors as ourselves is not that complicated. But it is not easy. It means wanting and doing for our neighbors what we want and do for ourselves, including those neighbors who do not return our love; those who reject us; those who clearly do not love us. When we do meet Jesus how far will He say that we are from the kingdom of God?

**November 11, 2018**  
**Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Mark 12:38-44**

**Option 1**

**“Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more  
than all the other contributors to the treasury.”**

Jesus seems to be critical of rich people. But Jesus was friends with Joseph of Arimathea who buried Jesus in his tomb, and Zacchaeus the tax collector, a man hated by others for his wealth but who gave half of his wealth to the poor. Jesus did not confront people because they had wealth. He challenged those who took advantage of others to gain their wealth and those who did not properly share their wealth with others; who use their possessions to distinguish and separate themselves from others; who think their wealth makes them better than others. Jesus uses the example of the poor widow who gave all she had to contrast with those who gave large sums from their surplus that they had acquired by taking advantage of widows. He is also challenging us to pray and reflect on our “wealth,” the “things that we own,” or more accurately, the “things that own us.” What thing or activity are we so attached to that we cannot share with others. What “owns” us?

**Option 2**

**“But she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had,  
her whole livelihood.”**

Like the widow from Zarephath, who baked a cake for Elijah with the small amount of flour and oil she had left for herself and her son, the widow in the temple gave all that she had - her whole livelihood, to God. Such generosity springs from great faith in God’s love for us and sincere gratitude. It is important that we regularly reflect on *who we are and whose we are*. At our Baptism we are called “*a child of God, for so indeed we are*.” Do we acknowledge and accept God as Father and Creator? Are we grateful to God for all that He has given us? Is our gratitude to God reflected in our generosity like the widow of Zarephath and the widow in the temple? Jesus was not favorably impressed by large sums that the wealthy contributed out of their surplus wealth. How much of what we have is because of what we *want*, not what we *need*? How much of what we claim to be *mine* is actually surplus that we could share with others in need? How much do we give back to God out of all he has given to us?

**November 18, 2018**  
**Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Mark 13:24-32**

**Option 1**

**“Learn a lesson from the fig tree.  
When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves,  
you know that summer is near.”**

Jesus used images from everyday life: workers in the fields; the birds in the air; the vineyard; shepherds tending their flocks, that people knew well and understood to teach many truths. In today’s Gospel Jesus uses images about interpreting the signs of the times. He was not warning about a cataclysmic end of the earth. He was teaching his disciples to be diligent in observing

the world in which they live; to recognize the ways in which they were not treating each other the way God intended, and the need to *change*. We do not like to *change*; to be told to *change*; or the person who calls us to *change*. There can be dark times and tribulations when we realize we must change, and when we challenge others to change. But, if we want to be all that God created us to be, and the world to be all God intended it to be, we must constantly look for the signs that call us to *change*, like when *the branches of the fig tree becomes tender and sprout leaves, you will know summer is near*.

### **Option 2**

**“And they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds . . .”**

Are we ready to encounter “the Son of Man coming in the clouds?” We can be sure He won’t be coming just to wave and say hello or talk about the weather. He will be coming to ask for an accounting of how we have done with all the talents, abilities and gifts God has given to us. Henny Youngman, the great Jewish humorist, quipped that “My uncle knew exactly when he was going to die. The warden told him.” Most of us will not have such a precise time for our passing. Now is the acceptable time to review and reflect on how we have cared for, used and shared all that God has entrusted to us. Will we be prepared to report to Jesus that we understood that all that we are and all that we have came from God and belongs to Him, and that we used it to the best of our ability for ourselves and for others? What are we going to report when we see “the Son of Man coming in the clouds . . .?”

**November 25, 2018**

**Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe**

**John 18:33-37**

### **Option 1**

**Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?"**

**Jesus answered, "You say I am a king."**

That exchange between Pilate, the governor of the Roman Empire in Palestine, and Jesus, a innocent man delivered to Pilate in chains by the Jewish leaders of his day, seems rather surreal. Pilate knew the charge that Jesus had claimed to be a king was not true. But Pilate could not conceive of a kingdom not of this world, and Jesus was the King of just such a Kingdom. Pilate only knew of a kingdom of man-made law enforced by tyranny and brutality. Jesus was the herald of a Kingdom of Love. Can there be an example of the extreme differences between a kingdom made by man without God and a Kingdom created for man by God? What is our kingdom? Is it a political system constructed by people; a company we helped to build or are dependent upon; a social group; an athletic team; or our family? To the extent that such kingdoms help us to attain the Kingdom of God, they are good. To the extent that such kingdoms lead us away from the God’s Kingdom, they are not good for us.

### **Option 2**

**“My kingdom does not belong to this world.”**

The response of Jesus to Pilate, the most powerful human authority in Palestine at that time, raises a very important question for those of us who call ourselves Christians and claim to be followers and imitators of Jesus Christ: *Where is our kingdom?* Is it our home? Is it our family? Is it our job or profession? Is it our material wealth or financial security? Is it our hobby or a certain sport? Is it a combination of some or all of these? All of these are good. And to the

extent that we have them, God wants us to use and enjoy them for ourselves *and for others*, to the best of our ability. That is how we imitate Jesus. If and when one or more of those things becomes *our kingdom* to which we devote an inordinate portion of our time, energy and resources, we become so attached to *our kingdom in this world* that we risk of losing our right to join Jesus in *His kingdom that is not of this world*.