



Alternative Opening Prayer

God our Father,
gifts without measure flow from your goodness
to bring us your peace.
Our life is your gift.
Guide our life's journey,
for only your love makes us whole.
Keep us strong in your love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflecting on Living the Gospel

If we take some time to think about the way we live, most of us would have to admit that the pressures of everyday life tend to be our main focus. We are concerned about calendars and schedules, bills and getting ahead, sickness and health. Our lives tend to be so busy that our immediate goal is to get through another day. What would happen if we would truly take some time to think about what we possess (and where we store it all!) and what possesses us?

The rich man is a fool because he mistakenly thinks his future happiness is guaranteed by his possessions. Even had his life not been demanded of him, those possessions could not have bought him happiness. Jesus cautions us to "guard against" such greed and turn our attention to where our real inheritance lies: in the fullness of life God wishes to give us. How mistaken the rich man was to identify good living with material things and miss "[W]hat matters to God"!

It takes conscious effort to ask the question, To whom do we belong? In some sense this is a question about priorities and putting God truly at the center of our lives. The answer must be more than an intellectual commitment to grow in our relationship with God and have God as our center. We must stop building (using) larger storage barns and begin changing the way we live so that our priorities are evident. Practically speaking, this probably means settling for fewer possessions. But with God at center, we really gain everything—fullness of life.

Closing Prayers

May we support one another in seeking what matters most to God.
May we share with others what we have been given by God.
Our Father . . .



For Reflection:

- Where I am often tempted to build "larger barns" is . . . At such times trusting in God means . . .
· For me being "rich in what matters to God" means . . . and is revealed by . . .

Suggestions for group and individual use:

- 1. Pray aloud the (alternative) opening prayer.
2. One person read aloud the gospel.
3. Each read prayerfully "Reflecting on Living the Gospel" and spend some time in personal prayer.
4. Share together responses to "For Reflection."
5. Pray the "Closing Prayers."

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Gospel

Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me." He replied to him, "Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?" Then he said to the crowd, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Then he told them a parable. "There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, 'What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?' And he said, 'This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, "Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!"'



But God said to him, 'You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?' Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God."

Readings for the week:

Table with 9 columns: 18th Sunday in Ord. Time, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Transfiguration, Saturday, 19th Sunday in Ord. Time. Each column lists biblical readings for that day.



Alternative Opening Prayer

Father in heaven, God of power and Lord of mercy, from whose fullness we have received, direct our steps in our everyday efforts. May the changing moods of the human heart and the limits which our failings impose on hope never blind us to you, source of every good. Faith gives us the promise of peace and makes known the demands of love. Remove the selfishness that blurs the vision of faith. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflecting on Living the Gospel

In this gospel episode Zacchaeus is the epitome of the despised person—chief tax collector, wealthy, a sinner. And yet he is the one person in the crowd in whose house Jesus chooses to stay. Encountering Jesus does not depend upon goodness of life, but encountering him can bring about conversion of life: Zacchaeus undergoes dramatic changes (he sets his affairs right and gives to the poor). His newfound concern for others is a sign of encounter with Jesus who brings salvation. Our own encounters with Jesus can bring about just as dramatic a change in our lives. We need only be willing to go to ever greater heights to “see him.”

Most of us don't have to be so creative or go to the extreme of climbing a tree to encounter Jesus. Creativity in seeking Jesus might mean that we are innovative in our personal prayer life rather than continually reciting the prayers we might have learned long ago. What prayers might better meet our spiritual needs now so that we can grow in our relationships? It might mean that we keep certain days of the year (perhaps the days of the Triduum or some days during Advent) as a “mini retreat” in order to diligently seek Jesus and a better relationship with him. It might mean that we don't wait for people to come to us and ask for help but that we notice others' needs and offer to help before they ask. In these and countless other ways we encounter Jesus—and salvation comes to our house.

Closing Prayers

May we continually open ourselves to encounters with Jesus and his transforming love.

May we embrace change and enter into a deeper relationship with God.

Our Father . . .



For Reflection:

- Like Zacchaeus, the greater heights to which I would go to see Jesus are . . .
- A change in me that encountering Jesus needs to bring about is . . .

Suggestions for group and individual use:

1. Pray aloud the (alternative) opening prayer.
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Gospel

Luke 19:1-10

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.”

Readings for the week:

31st Sunday in Ord. Time	All Saints	All Souls	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	32nd Sunday in Ord. Time
Wis 11:22–12:2 Ps 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14 2 Thess 1:11–2:2 Luke 19:1-10	Rev 7:2-4, 9-14 Ps 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 1 John 3:1-3 Matt 5:1-12a	Wis 3:1-9 Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 Rom 5:5-11 or 6:3-9 John 6:37-40 (or other readings)	Phil 2:12-18 Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14 Luke 14:25-33	Phil 3:3-8a Ps 105:2-3, 4-5, 6-7 Luke 15:1-10	Phil 3:17–4:1 Ps 122:1-2, 3-4ab, 4cd-5 Luke 16:1-8	Phil 4:10-19 Ps 112:1b-2, 5-6, 8a and 9 Luke 16:9-15	2 Macc 7:1-2, 9-14 Ps 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15 2 Thess 2:16–3:5 Luke 20:27-38 or Luke 20:27, 34-38