

# Gospel Texts for Life Observance Sunday

## (Series C)

### Third or Fourth Sunday in Epiphany

**Theme of Day:** (3<sup>rd</sup> Sun.) Jesus reveals Himself as the Lord's Anointed

**Theme of Day:** (4<sup>th</sup> Sun.) Jesus reveals Himself as the Prophet sent from God

**Gospel Text:** Luke 4:14-30

**Theme:** Can we lighten the image, without losing our edge?

1. Don't be jealous of God's love
  - My church mentality: we have not done it that way before, those people are sinners C not welcome here
  - Notice the cultural norms and mores that Jesus overcomes: view of worship, Jew/Gentile, man/woman
  - Church isn't a place for perfect people, but for sinners made perfect by Christ
2. But zealously spread Christ's mercy
  - It is possible to retain the truth of the Word, while reaching out to sinners to turn to the truth
  - Christian Life Resources centers try to do just that: helping young women who sometimes come from troubled backgrounds, are pregnant and alone. Not only do we strive to help them in their physical needs but also to quench the thirst of their spiritual needs.
  - God gives opportunities to reach out and love. You can help through donations and by volunteering. You can also help by speaking with visitors, assisting them with the liturgy, making them feel comfortable, inviting them back, etc.

**Focus:** Without a clear understanding of Christ, people can't distinguish the truth for their own lives. This is especially evident in those who are faced with critical life issues. Decisions regarding the unborn child and the disabled or elderly family member are confusing when the principles aren't clear.

#### **Facts:**

U.S. abortion rates **B** around 1.3 million per year **B** equate to 3,600 abortions per day or 1 every 24 seconds.

Physician-assisted suicide (PAS) is currently legal in Oregon, the Netherlands, and Belgium.

Studies indicate many of the victims did not consent to the action, but rather family members made the decisions.

The number of Down Syndrome children continues to decline in the U.S. Evidence shows this downward trend began when prenatal testing could screen for Down's Syndrome, and parents were able to abort those babies.

## Second Sunday in Easter

**Theme of Day:** Jesus' resurrection gives us a new life filled with joy and peace

**Gospel Text:** John 20:19-31

**Theme:** Make the case for life!

1. By the external evidence
  - Thomas required physical evidence to confirm this was Jesus
  - Witness of Emmaus disciples, women, disciples in general, even guards at tomb
  - The baby in the womb is also a life Jesus died and rose for!
2. By your example of faith
  - Thomas believed only after he saw Jesus; seeing the external evidence isn't good enough
  - Though our actions do not get people to heaven, people see our faith in Jesus (1 Peter 2:12)
  - Use the opportunities you have to speak for the unborn, to write to officials, to listen to people-helping them with the Word, and to love

**Focus:** Life is a word with many definitions, but in most cases it is measured in some form. Life is evident when there is a pulse or breath. Life is absent without a soul. Someone can be called the "life" of the party, because of his or her sense of humor. Since many people define "life" by evidence they can measure, it is easily understood why those same people talk about a "quality of life" that is also measurable. This can be very confusing when evaluated in the light of Scripture which teaches the absolute value of all people as evidenced in the salvation won for us through Christ Jesus.

**Facts:** Since physician-assisted suicide (PAS) has been practiced in the Netherlands for many years, find current actions taking place in that country.

A June 4, 1997, article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) indicated that 80% of euthanasia deaths are not requested by the patient.

According to the Oregon Department of Human Services' Eighth Annual Report on Oregon's Death with Dignity Act, the top three reasons listed for choosing physician assisted suicide included loss of autonomy, decreased ability to participate in activities, and loss of "dignity."

Virtually every established medical and nursing organization in the U.S. declares physician-assisted suicide to be unethical.

In 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Washington v. Glucksberg* that there is no federal constitutional substantive right to assisted suicide. In *Vacco v. Quill*, its companion case, the Court found no federal constitutional equal protection right to assisted suicide.

[SOURCE: [www.Nightingalealliance.com](http://www.Nightingalealliance.com)]

## Eighth Sunday in Pentecost

**Theme of Day:** True faith in Christ, created and strengthened by the Word, produces fruit

**Gospel Text:** Luke 10:25-37

**Theme:** A lesson in Christian neighborliness

1. Love in caring

- The entire law of God is summarized in the word LOVE. Knowing God's love, but not being moved by it, is no love at all. A Christian responds to God's love by caring.
- The good Samaritan demonstrates God's love: does not care who person is and helps not out of coercion, but out of compassion. That's what mercy is.
- How can God's people see their congregation, their synod, and their community and not be moved to care?

2. Love in sharing

- Your neighbor is not someone 100 miles away, but it is your wife, your physical neighbor, the person sitting next to you in the pew, your pastor, your community
- "Go and do likewise" - we don't simply share to affect the outward circumstances of people, but we seek to change the heart
- Opportunities to share: praying for good government (to help take care of homeless, abortion issues, prisons, impoverished, etc.)

**Focus:** In Christ's kingdom we are commanded to use our unique gifts to serve Him and His church. In the world's kingdom we are urged to evaluate a person's talents and wisely decide which talents are worth using and which are not. The world's attitude is then extended to a person's life. If a life carries enough value, in the world's evaluation, then only should it continue. Christians, however, value every person's life, and every person is able to serve Him regardless of the perceived *quality* to that life.

**Facts:** Those who want to rid society of the disabled are not the disabled. Most disabled people are more than willing and eager to live their faith too. The stated mandate of Disabled Peoples' International reads:

*"Disabled Peoples' International is a network of national organizations or assemblies of disabled people, established to promote human rights of disabled people through full participation, equalization of opportunity and development."*

In 2004 over 1,060,000 Americans sought hospice care - an increase of 110,000 in just one year's time. Over 95% of hospice care is provided in the patient's home. According to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Foundation, over 3,650 hospice programs existed in the United States in 2004. Sixty-three percent (63%) were run by non-profit organizations; the remaining were run by for-profit or government agencies.

### 14th Sunday in Pentecost

**Theme of Day:** The way to heaven is through the “narrow door” of Jesus Christ

**Gospel Text:** Luke 13:22-30

**Theme:** Set your sights on heaven

- The way to heaven is narrow
- Still, Jesus says that it is virtually impossible to get through the “narrow door,” which flies in the face of many ecumenical groups
- The way to heaven is Christ; it is impossible to get through on your own
- Jesus doesn’t answer the question! He simply says: make sure you are going to heaven!
- This gives reason to take every opportunity to share the Gospel! What a home Jesus has waiting for His people - and the survey shows people want to go there!

**Focus:** Christians know the blessings and comfort that come with salvation through Christ Jesus. We also realize our responsibility to share the Gospel with others. Yet many times, your members ask, “But how do I do it?” Life issues open more doors for evangelism than any other topic. The opportunity to talk about your eternal salvation comes easier when discussing a person’s life or health. A conversation about cancer or Alzheimer’s gives you a wonderful opportunity to share your faith. The loss of a loved one opens the door to talking about the confidence you have through faith.

**Facts:** A Barna Research poll (October 2003) reported that most Americans do not expect to experience hell first-hand: just one-half of 1% expect to go to hell upon their death. Nearly two-thirds of Americans (64%) believe they will go to heaven.

**Theme of Day:** Disciples of Jesus count the cost of following him and making him first priority in life

**Gospel Text:** Luke 14:25-33

**Theme:** Face life issues with faith

- Faith helps you through life’s challenges
- Take your faith seriously, even to the point of denying friends/relatives for Christ
- Faith is a lifestyle of allegiance to God
- Faith enables you to trust the Lord’s promises
- Faith allows us to *live* life trusting Christ. Often people take the “seemingly” easy way out: an abortion, pulling the plug on the elderly. By doing so, people assume life has minimal value. Through faith in Christ, all life is precious to God
- Faith doesn’t ask, “What do I want?” but, “What would God have me to do?”

**Focus:** Society makes life a commodity. A life that is not wanted (unexpected pregnancy) can be thrown away. A life that has lost its value (elderly or disabled) is discarded. A desired life (infertility) is over-pursued in spite of moral implications. In fact, the issue

of money is also a major factor in making decisions. Your members live in this society that has established these standards, but they also are members of Christ's kingdom. Help them live by the principles of God's Word and shine that light to a world that doesn't share the same respect for all human life.

**Facts:** Over 92,000 people are waiting on the U.S. organ transplant list for an organ donation. Each day, about 74 people receive transplants. Due to the shortage of donated organs in 2005 nearly 6,500 people died waiting for an organ transplant. That translates to 19 deaths each day. [SOURCE: about.com]

### 18th Sunday in Pentecost

**Theme of Day:** Our attitude about material possessions and the way we handle money reflects our relationship with God

**Gospel Text:** Luke 16:1-13

**Theme:** Use life issues to serve God

- Be faithful steward of your gifts
- Use money to earn your way into heaven? No! Use money faithfully to bless those you will see in heaven
- It does not *pay* to use your gifts shrewdly and yet not attain the goal of paradise by being shrewd with your witness
- This section in Scriptures is ultimately used for *outreach*
- Use your spiritual gifts not only to bless the church, but also as a witness to the community
- How do you deal with life issues - abortion, euthanasia? Do you speak up for the countless souls that are dying? Do you use your shrewd witness to show the folly of such things?

**Focus:** Most people in the world, even many Christians, seem to separate faith and daily sanctified living. The perception is that the resources that have been earned are their reward for hard work, long hours, etc. Getting people to give a faithful percentage of their gifts back to the Lord is the first step. Getting them to realize that all their possessions are to be used for God's glory is a bigger challenge.

**Facts:** Christians sometimes favor abortion and euthanasia. Locate surveys indicating the current statistics in this regard.

### Second Sunday in End Times

**Theme of Day:** The Lord's justice is not something to be trifled with. There will come a day when all who rejected Jesus will be repaid for their evil.

**Gospel Text:** Luke 19:11-27

**Theme:** Jesus will reign with authority

- He will demand an accounting

- Jesus is king, He is coming back, He will demand an accounting
- There is no second chance for those who fail
- People will reap what they sow C arrogance, haughtiness
- He will expect faithfulness
- Have you been responsible with your wisdom, your abilities C standing up and speaking out for the unborn, for the aged, for the disabled, for *His* children?
- God has given each person gifts in many areas to use and put to work
- God will reward those faithful in Christ with the ultimate reward

**Focus:** This theme is often used as a law message filled with fear and warnings. This theme can also have a Gospel message that we gladly and willingly serve Him throughout our lives. A Godly attitude is that we are privileged to use our gifts to serve others in this world and also reap the blessings of eternal salvation that is provided through Christ's love.

**Facts:** In previous generations, the majority of people died at home, but now an increasing number of people die in institutions. Few people want to live their last days in a nursing home or hospital, yet these trends continue. The world's end times are going to be filled with challenges and troubles. A person's last days are also filled with temptations and difficulties. Home hospice, visiting nurses, etc. are programs that can help demonstrate love and care of a loved one in those personal end times.