

Calendar of Lessons

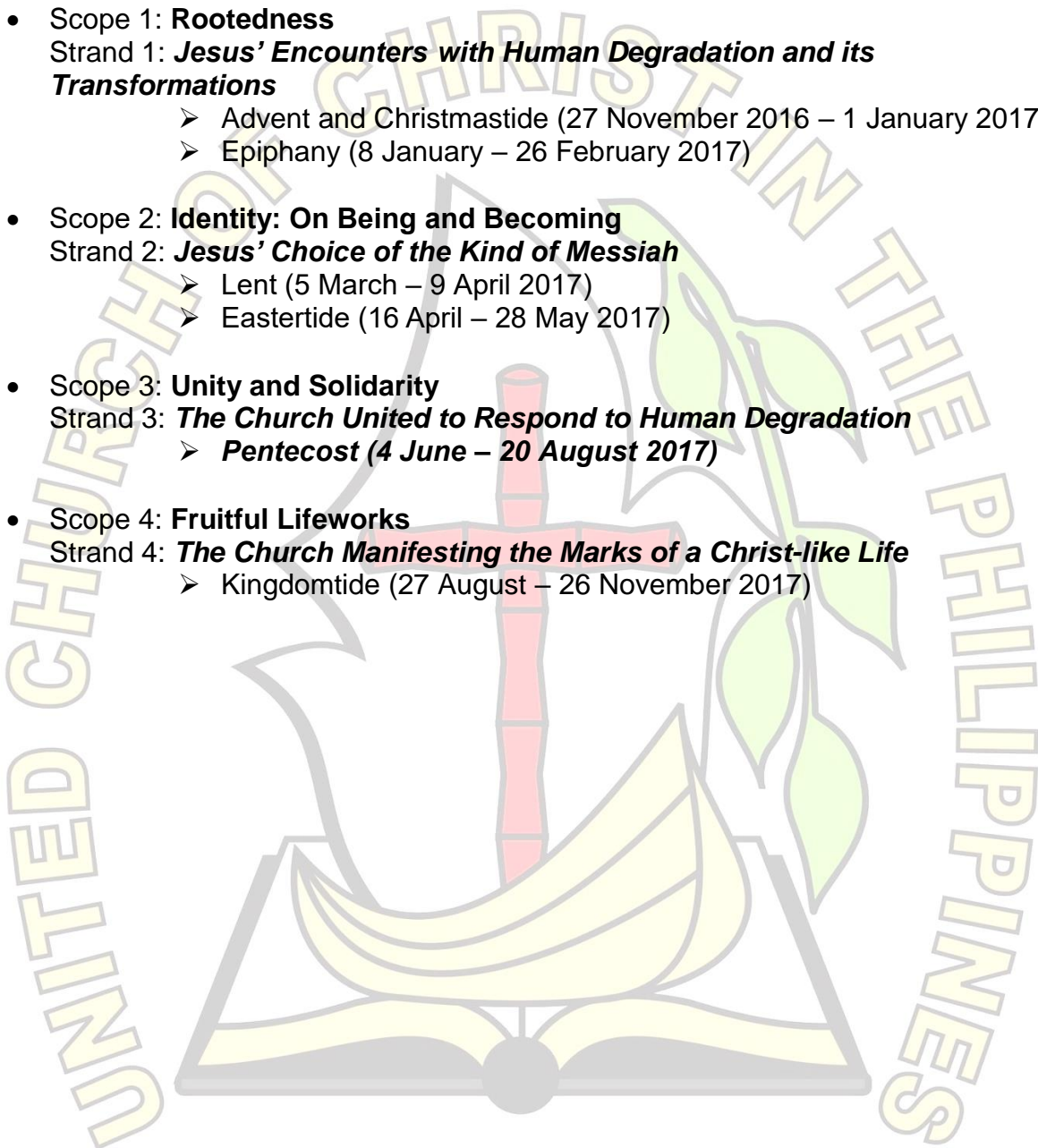
For Liturgical Year 2016-2017, the lessons are subdivided into these four scopes and strands:

- **Scope 1: Rootedness**
Strand 1: ***Jesus' Encounters with Human Degradation and its Transformations***
 - Advent and Christmastide (27 November 2016 – 1 January 2017)
 - Epiphany (8 January – 26 February 2017)

- **Scope 2: Identity: On Being and Becoming**
Strand 2: ***Jesus' Choice of the Kind of Messiah***
 - Lent (5 March – 9 April 2017)
 - Eastertide (16 April – 28 May 2017)

- **Scope 3: Unity and Solidarity**
Strand 3: ***The Church United to Respond to Human Degradation***
 - ***Pentecost (4 June – 20 August 2017)***

- **Scope 4: Fruitful Lifeworks**
Strand 4: ***The Church Manifesting the Marks of a Christ-like Life***
 - Kingdomtide (27 August – 26 November 2017)



Quadrennial Theme: Spirituality for These Critical TimesYear 3 Theme: **Human Degradation and Spirituality for a New Humanity 2016-2017**Scope 1: **Rootedness**Strand 1: ***Jesus' Encounters with Human Degradation and its Transformations***

Included Sundays for Advent and Christmastide Season (6 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(1) November 27, 2016	First Sunday of Advent	Liberating Cultural Breakthroughs	1 Samuel 25:13-34 Matthew 1:18-24	There are cultural practices and beliefs that cause human suffering and degradation, thus, the church should make a cultural breakthrough in the transformation towards a new humanity.
(2) December 4, 2016	Second Sunday of Advent/Family Sunday	Seeds of New Humanity	Isaiah. 7:14 Luke 1:26-35	Like the enslaved people in Egypt, the new humanity emerges from among the victims who long for freedom and wholeness.
(3) December 11, 2016	Third Sunday of Advent/Human Rights Sunday	Challenging Oppressive State Powers	1 Kings 12:1-16 Luke 2:1-6	The church has the duty to expose and challenge state policies that violate human rights.
(4) December 18, 2016	Fourth Sunday of Advent	Jesus as God's Love Incarnate	Isaiah 49:1-3 John 3:11-17	In the midst of a broken humanity, God came in Jesus

				to mend it and make it whole.
(5) December 25, 2016	First Sunday after Christmas	The Birth of Jesus	Psalms 91:11 Luke 2:7-18 John 1:14	We joyfully celebrate the birth of Jesus in a world that longs for fullness.
(6) January 1, 2017	First Sunday after Christmas	Defending Children, Symbols of a New Beginning	Isaiah 43:18-19 Matthew 2:1-16	Upholding the rights and welfare of children makes a just and compassionate society now and in the future.
Included Sundays for Epiphany Season (8 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(7) January 8, 2017	Epiphany Sunday	Channels of God's Healing	2 Kings 7:1-16 John 9:1-41	We are all healers to one another.
(8) January 15, 2017	First Sunday after Epiphany/Christi an Unity	The Inclusive Healing Ministry of the Church	2 Kings 5:1-19 Mark 1:29-31	"The kingdom of God is present...where healing is given to the sick." (UCCP Statement of Faith)
(9) January 22, 2017	Second Sunday after Epiphany/Nation al Bible Sunday	Healing of Animosities	Isaiah 11:1-9 Galatians 3:28	Respecting and appreciating differences is a condition for creative unity and harmony.
(10) January 29, 2017	Third Sunday after Epiphany	Healing as a Message of Salvation	2 Kings 4:8-37 Luke 8:41-56	Salvation comes whenever healing happens.
(11) February 5, 2017	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	Healing of Social Divides	Ruth 1:1-21 Luke 13:10-17	Social division is eradicated when human fellowship, care, respect,

				and dignity are restored.
(12) February 12, 2017	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	Healing of Broken Relationships	Genesis 32:1-32, 33:1-4 Matthew 5:24	Where there are broken relationships, it is the duty of the church to bring about reconciliation through forgiveness and repentance.
(13) February 19, 2017	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany	Healing from Demon Possession	1 Samuel 16:14-23 Mark 5:1-20	The Spirit of God drives away the demons of envy, fear, and greed for the Spirit to dwell in.
(14) February 26, 2017	Seventh Sunday after Epiphany/Transfiguration Sunday	Healing towards Transformation	Exodus 34:29-35 Mark 9:2-8	The transfiguration of Jesus is a preview of his resurrection which is our hope and destiny.

Scope 2: **Identity: On Being and Becoming**
Strand 2: ***Jesus' Choice of the Kind of Messiah***

Included Sundays for Lent (6 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(15) March 5, 2017	First Sunday in Lent	Choosing our Destiny	Jeremiah 1:4-10 Matthew 16:21-23	Jesus chose to obey God's will and it became his destiny. When we make a choice to follow Jesus, it becomes our destiny.

(16) March 12, 2017	Second Sunday in Lent	Servant Messiah	Isaiah 53:4-6 Mark 10:42-45	As a servant messiah, Jesus served the suffering ones. As a result, he suffered with them. When we serve the suffering ones, we also suffer with them.
(17) March 19, 2017	Third Sunday in Lent	Loyalty to God	Ruth 1:16-17 Luke 7:1-10	The love for God is the basis of our unwavering loyalty to God.
(18) March 26, 2017	Fourth Sunday in Lent	Peace-building	Jeremiah 1:9-10 Matthew 10:34	Building peace, as a messianic mission, requires forcible removal of obstacles to peace— inequitable distribution of resources, abusive relationships, and injustice.
(19) April 2, 2017	Fifth Sunday in Lent	Marks of the True Messiah	Isaiah 42:1-7 Matthew 11:2-6	The true messiah is known through his healing, liberating, and restoring deeds.
(20) April 9, 2017	Sixth Sunday in Lent/Palm Sunday	Jesus Encountering the Powers	Zechariah 9:9-10 John 12:12-19	Jesus enters Jerusalem to challenge the powers-that-be that cause human misery.

Included Sundays for Eastertide (7 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(21) April 16, 2017	Resurrection Sunday	Resurrection of the Righteous	Daniel 12:1-3 John 11:25-27 Romans 6:5	Those who remain faithful to the end will not perish but have eternal life.
(22) April 23, 2017	First Sunday after Resurrection	Suppressing the Truth of the Resurrection	Jeremiah 28:15-17 Matthew 28:11-15	The response of the powers-that-be to the resurrection was to cover up the truth with a lie and criminalize those who believe.
(23) April 30, 2017	Second Sunday after Resurrection	Moment of Human Frailties	2 Samuel 21:10 Mark 16:1-8	After Jesus died, the disciples experienced a lacuna moment of mourning, confusion, fear, depression, and disbelief. This experience is not sin but needs to be accepted and brought to the Lord.
(24) May 7, 2017	Third Sunday after Resurrection	Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene	2 Kings 7:7-20 Mark 16:9-11	The testimony of those who speak the truth are often discredited on account of their status in society.
(25) May 14, 2017	Fourth Sunday after Resurrection	Failure to Recognize the Appearance of Jesus	Genesis 18:1-15 Mark 16:12-13	Due to their extreme grief, the disciples were not able

				to apprehend the risen Lord. But Jesus overcomes our failure to discern and communes with us.
(26) May 21, 2017	Fifth Sunday after Resurrection/UC CP Sunday	Celebrating the Resurrection	Exodus 16:1-26 Luke 24:36-46	Jesus comes to commune with us in ordinary, basic, and common activities and struggles.
(27) May 28, 2017	Sixth Sunday after Resurrection/Ascension Sunday	Anticipating the Fullness of God's Reign on Earth	Daniel 12:13 Mark 16:15-20	Jesus ascends to heaven to receive God's authority to realize God's reign in its fullness.

Scope 3: **Unity and Solidarity**Strand 3: ***The Church United to Respond to Human Degradation***

Included Sundays for Pentecost Season (12 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(28) June 4, 2017	Pentecost Sunday	The Spirit Breaking through Cultural Captivity	Joel 2:28-29 Acts 2:1-12	The Spirit enables the Gospel to be communicated in the languages and cultures of the people.
(29) June 11, 2017	First Sunday after Pentecost/Trinity Sunday	The Holy Trinity in the Faith of the Church	Genesis 1:26-27 Jude vv. 19:21	God is a community of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the source and basis of the

				church as community.
(30) June 18, 2017	Second Sunday after Pentecost	The Holy Spirit Sustaining the Church	Jeremiah 7:1-11 Matthew 23:13-28	The Holy Spirit bids the church to unite with the people to confront the oppressive powers.
(31) June 25, 2017	Third Sunday after Pentecost	Defending the Powerless	Psalms 82:3-4; 146:5-9 Proverbs 31:8-9 James 1:27	The Holy Spirit sustains the church in its ministry of protecting the oppressed and the helpless and upholding their rights.
(32) July 2, 2017	Fourth Sunday after Pentecost	Breaking Down Walls that Divide	Isaiah 56:3-8 Amos 9:7 Luke 14:12-14	The church, by nature, is inclusive. It embraces differences and does not harbor animosities.
(33) July 9, 2017	Fifth Sunday after Pentecost	Confronting Human Greed	Deuteronomy 5:21 Acts 2:44-47; 4:33-35	The church confronts the issue of human greed which is the root of many evils and broken relationships.
(34) July 16, 2017	Sixth Sunday after Pentecost	Casting Out Demonic Powers	Psalms 103:2-5 Mark 1:23-27; 7:24-30	The church's ministry of healing requires the driving out of demonic powers that hold people in their sway.
(35) July 23, 2017	Seventh Sunday after Pentecost	Being Present	Deuteronomy 31:8 Psalm 40:1-3 Revelation 21:3-4	The church embraces the ministry of presence to embody God who is Immanuel.

(36) July 30, 2017	Eighth Sunday after Pentecost	Nurturing Hope	Job 5:15-16 Psalm 34:17-20 Matthew 11:28-30	The church journeys with people in the darkness of despair, reviving the hope and keeping it alive.
(37) August 6, 2017	Ninth Sunday after Pentecost	Reaching Out to Victims of Abuse and Social Evils	Isaiah 25:4 Matthew 18:21-35	The church is a community that provides comfort, assistance, shelter, and intervention to victims in their needs.
(38) August 13, 2017	Tenth Sunday after Pentecost	Pursuing and Building Peace	Psalm 34:11-14 1Peter 3:8-12	The church plants peace in a world rocked by conflict, violence, and wars.
(39) August 20, 2017	Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost	The Church Awakened to Do Mission	Isaiah 59:17 Ephesians 6:14	An awakened church girds up and equips itself for mission.

Scope 4: **Fruitful Lifeworks**Strand 4: ***The Church Manifesting the Marks of a Christ-like Life***

Included Sundays for Kingdomtide Season (14 lessons)	Celebration	Lectionary Title	Scriptural References	General Concept
(40) August 27, 2017	First Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Mission Sunday	Leaving Everything to Follow Christ	Isaiah 6:1-8 Luke 5:1-11	Obedience to Jesus means letting go of those cares that keep us from following him.
(41) September 3, 2017	Second Sunday in Kingdomtide/ CEN Sunday	Mission to the Periphery	1 Samuel 18:1-5 Philippians 2:5-8 2 Corinthians 8:9	Removing our self from the center of our life so that we can put others in its place.
(42) September 10, 2017	Third Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Children' Sunday	Humility-Powered Mission	Proverbs 15:33, 11:2 Luke 18:9-14	Behind genuine mission is a humble heart that seeks the well-being of others.
(43) September 17, 2017	Fourth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Youth Sunday	Accountability in the Kingdom	2 Samuel 12:1-13 Luke 15:11-24	Being created in the image of God, we are responsible and accountable to each other.
(44) September 24, 2017	Fifth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Fellowship of the Least Coin Sunday	The Kingdom as a Forgiving Community	Genesis 45:1-5 Acts 7:59-60	Being forgiving is a quality of those who belong to the Kingdom of God.
(45) October 1, 2017	Sixth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Worldwide Communion Sunday/ CYAP Sunday	Towards a Reconciled Community	Genesis 45:9-15 Philemon 1:10-20	True reconciliation moves relationships to a higher plane.
(46) October 8, 2017	Seventh Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Peace Sunday	Living the Faith	Esther 4:13-16 James 1:27	Forgiven and reconciled, we

				are freed to do good.
(47) October 15, 2017	Eighth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ UCM Sunday	Being Accepted in the Kingdom of God	Hosea 1: 1-3, 3:1 John 4:7-15	The Christian community is accepting of others unmindful of any advantage.
(48) October 22, 2017	Ninth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Solidarity with Indigenous People Sunday	Reverence for Life	Exodus 2:1-10 Luke 7:1-10	Life is respected beyond social class, ethnicity, and religion.
(49) October 29, 2017	Tenth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Reformation Sunday	Discerning God's Ways through Jesus	Job 42:1-6 John 14:5-11	To know Jesus is to know God. The gospel makes faith simple to everyone.
November 5, 2017 (50)	Eleventh Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Church Workers Sunday	Prayerful Life	Daniel 6:6-23 Mark 14:32-38	Communing with God through prayers encompasses all of life.
(51) November 12, 2017	Twelfth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Theological Education Sunday	Audacious Compassion	1 Kings 17:8-16 Luke 10:25-37	Those who have less in life or regarded low are the most compassionate.
(52) November 19, 2017	Thirteenth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Migrant Workers Sunday	Learning from the Faith and Witness of Migrants	Psalms 137:1-6 1 Peter 1:1 James 1:1-4	Being steadfast in the faith makes us complete and whole.
(53) November 26, 2017	Fourteenth Sunday in Kingdomtide/ Stewardship Sunday	Service Motivated by Love	Judges 5:6-13 Mark 2:1-12	Stewardship is manifested through the collective response of the faith community.

Quadrennial Theme: **SPIRITUALITY FOR THESE CRITICAL TIMES**

Year 3 Theme: **Human Degradation and Spirituality for a New Humanity CC 2016-2017**

Scope 1: **Identity: On Being and Becoming**

Strand 1: **Jesus' Choice of the Kind of Messiah**

Season: **Lent**

Age Level: **Youth and Adults**

March 5, 2017

First Sunday in Lent: **Choosing our Destiny**

Old Testament: Jeremiah 1:4-10

4 Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, ⁵Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'

⁶Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.'⁷But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, "I am only a boy"; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.

⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.'

⁹Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰ See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'

New Testament: Matthew 16:21-23

21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.'²³But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

General Concept: Jesus chose to obey God's will and it became his destiny. When we make a choice to follow Jesus, it becomes our destiny.

Key Concept:

Youth/Adults: **Jesus chose to obey God's will and it became his destiny. When we make a choice to follow Jesus, it becomes our destiny.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The Book of Jeremiah is a book about a prophet who was strongly conscious of his call from the Lord to be a prophet. As such, he proclaimed the word given him by God. Jeremiah began prophesying halfway through the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BC), and continued towards the reign of Jehoahaz (609), Jehoiakim (609-598), Jehoiachin (598-597) and Zedekiah (597-586). It was a period of storm and stress when the doom of entire nations, including Judah itself, was being sealed.

Jeremiah 1:4-10 is a narrative of the event of Jeremiah's call. Here in the first few verses, God is so clear about God's intention for Jeremiah even if he was still in the womb of his mother, as

indicated when God said to the prophet: "Before I formed you, I knew you." This gives the sense of making Jeremiah the object of God's choice. The Hebrew verb used here is translated "chosen" in Gen. 18:19 and Amos 3:2. Because he was the object of God's choice, God set him apart or consecrated him and appointed him prophet, literally "the one who has been called" to be God's spokesperson to the nations which includes Judah. But Jeremiah made some excuses. He claimed inability to be a prophet owing to his youth, yet his objection was denied immediately by the Lord. Youth and inexperience do not disqualify the person when God calls. God equips and sustains those God commissions no matter what level of preparation or qualification a person may have. Therefore, "Do not be afraid, I am with you," says the Lord, is God's promise of continuing presence that calms the fears and anxiety of the most reluctant prophet. The Lord does not promise that Jeremiah will not be persecuted nor imprisoned, nor that no physical harm will come to him. The accompanying presence of the Lord is enough to empower and embolden the prophet to proceed with his calling whatever may be the prospects and the price of obedience waiting ahead. Finally in verse 10, God gave four pairs of strong verbs that define Jeremiah's task ahead. The first two pairs of verbs: "uproot" and "tear down" and "destroy" and "overthrow" are strongly negative, stressing the fact that Jeremiah is primarily to be a prophet of doom. The prophet is to pronounce a grim prophecy of judgment that will bring to an end a highly despised set of rulers and their kind of rule marked by oppression and much injustice. The last pair of positive verbs however, "to build and to plant" clearly indicates that he is also to be a prophet of restoration even if only secondarily. Upon the ruins of the old that was condemned by God there will arise a completely new community of a restored and cleansed and forgiven community of God's people. The message of the prophet always has this double aspect of judgment and salvation, doom and hope, destruction and revival. This will always have to be pattern of every prophetic proclamation of the word of God.

The main purpose of the Gospel according to Matthew is to prove to the readers that Jesus is their Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Matthew, whose name means "gift of the Lord", was a tax collector who left his work to follow Jesus. In Mark and Luke, he is called by his other name, Levi.

The text in Matthew 16:21-23 tells of Jesus' prediction of his coming suffering and death in the hands of Jerusalem's elders, chief priest and teachers of the law. Jesus is somehow preparing His disciples for these coming events in His life. But here we see Peter rebuking Jesus for what he was saying and so Jesus rebuked him as well and even called him "satan" because he was intervening with the will of the One who sent Him. Thus, calling him a person who does not have in mind the things of God but the things of humans.

These passages give us an idea that fulfilling the destiny set for us starts with obedience, the willingness to do the task that sets the end goal of our journey. There could however be instances when even the most well-intentioned followers may unconsciously take a stand and speak more on things of this world, the values and ways of this age, the normal drive and urge towards material success, position, and possessions and the avoidance of sacrifice and the neglect of what is essential in the calling of a disciple-prophet. This is where Jesus may rebuke us for falling into things "satanic" rather than for things of God. This is why we need to be guided always with the consciousness of the promise given to all those called by God of the Lord's continuing empowering presence as we accept our chosen destiny.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Entering Jerusalem, Jesus stepped on the edge of realizing his destiny. Looking back, each step that he took was a deliberate act of his freedom to respond to the challenges that were

thrown his way. But at this point, the realization dawned on him that he was led to this course according to a plan that God had prepared for him from the very beginning. Early on, Jesus went about preaching the imminent establishment of God's reign on earth, healing disease, exorcising demons, comforting the despairing and challenging the powers-that-be. Late in his journey, he began talking about his impending suffering and death. There was no turning back because it was his destiny.

It is not consistent with God's ways in creation to think of Jesus as a passive actor who simply followed a preconceived script handed to him by an autocratic God. God works out the divine plan while preserving and enhancing human freedom rather than overriding and in effect destroying it. Submission to God's will ("Not my will but yours be done.") was not forced on Jesus but came out of a prayerful struggle with God. His prayer to "let the cup pass" from him was an expression of his freedom to refuse or to yield to God's will. In the end, he surrendered himself completely to God. Destiny is when personal freedom and calling or vocation meet. This is the road to a realized human existence under God. Jesus has completed his journey, and he bids each one of us to follow him. Human beings, and all creatures, are made for freedom. This is God's design for creation. Jesus was sent by God to show us the way of freedom which runs alongside God's ultimate intention for us. It is the Devil's work to test our freedom into using it contrary to God's purpose, thus preventing us from realizing our destiny. Failure to realize our true destiny is pictured as being thrown into the abyss of hell. Being in hell represents a state of being that has missed the goal of living "in community with God, with other persons and with all creation" (UCCP Statement of Faith).

On the one hand, we choose our destiny; on the other we yield to it. But accepting one's destiny is not likely to be accomplished at the beginning of one's consciousness. Learning from Jesus' example, it starts from a recognition of our innate creaturely freedom and an awareness of God's benevolent and purposive will for our lives. Our journey in life and of faith makes progress through the decisions that we make wherein freedom and submission to God interact. It is in the face of making fateful decisions in life that we begin to grasp more firmly that we are moving closer to the destiny prepared by God or drifting away from it. What matters most at any point is that we are moving on at the right direction.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Define, compare, and contrast God's call and destiny
2. Describe and compare how Jeremiah and Jesus were called by God
3. Deduce the thoughts and feelings of Jesus when he chose to obey God's will
4. Demonstrate the things one can do in consonance with God's will and one's destiny

II. Concept: God's will and it became his destiny. When we make a choice to follow Jesus, it becomes our destiny.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), audio equipment (MP3 player or laptop with speakers), "I'm Letting Go" MP3 or video downloaded from the internet, I'm Letting Go lyrics print out, Venn diagram, small colored cards, markers, masking tape, pens and journals/notebooks

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Have a student lead the opening prayer
2. Have a student read Jeremiah 1: 4, 5

- Distribute the lyrics to Francesca Battistelli's "I'm Letting Go" and play the music twice. Have students listen the first time it is played and encourage them to sing along the second time around. YouTube source link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8A-2jhdN0Vc>
 "I'm Letting Go" (Francesca Battistelli, *My Paper Heart*, 2008)

My heart beats, standing on the edge, but my feet have finally left the ledge
 Like an acrobat, there's no turning back

[Chorus]

I'm letting go of the life I planned for me, and my dreams
 Losing control of my destiny
 Feels like I'm falling and that's what it's like to believe
 So I'm letting go

This is a giant leap of faith, trusting and trying to embrace
 The fear of the unknown, beyond my comfort zone [Chorus]

Giving in to your gravity, knowing You are holding me
 I'm not afraid

Feels like I'm falling and that's what it's like to believe
 Feels like I'm falling and this is the life for me

B. Getting Ready

- Get responses from 2 or 3 students in the big group on the following question: What do you think were some of the reasons that made it difficult for the singer/song writer to let go of her own plans?
- Say: We all have a part to play in the story that God is telling. In order to play our part, we must be willing to let go of our own plans and choose to obey God's will. When we choose to obey God and follow Jesus, we are fulfilling our God-given destiny. Today, we will look at two characters from the Bible who had a special calling from God and became obedient to this call.

C. Learning Time

- Using a Venn diagram, have the students write out words or phrases that they associate with the words "calling" and "destiny." Encourage the students to visually represent what makes the two words similar and/or different. Have them write the similarities in the area where the two circles meet and write the differences within the main section of the respective circles.
- Say: "Calling" is from God. It is God who calls God's people. "Destiny" on the other hand is when God's people respond to God's call. It is important to remember that God is not a dictator who will impose God's own wishes on humankind. God calls us but it is still up to us if we would respond. We will now look at the life of two men and see how they responded when God called them.
- Have the students open their Bibles to Jeremiah 1:4-10 and Matthew 16:21-23. Give the students a few moments to read the passage on their own then ask two students to read aloud one passage each.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

In groups of three, discuss the following questions. Allot time for sharing with the big group the highlights of each small discussion group's sharing.

1. What did you like about the way God called Jeremiah?
2. What didn't you like about the way God called Jesus?
3. What makes Jeremiah's call easier than a call like Jesus'?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

1. Ask the students the following questions, have them write their answers (words/phrases) on small cards to be posted on the board.
 - What were God's promises to Jeremiah when God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to the nations?
 - What is Jeremiah's task as a prophet to the nations?
 - What must Jesus go through in order to fulfill God's call in His life?
 - What can we learn about human character if we looked at how Jeremiah and Jesus responded to God's calling?
2. The students will write their responses on small cards and post them on the board with the teacher assisting them in organizing ideas according to the following themes:
 - What is God's calling?
 - What is God's commitment to those God calls?
 - What makes a person respond to or reject God's calling? (make sure to include both positive and negative responses)
3. Say: We are all called to bless the nations with the message of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. In whatever context we are in, God desires to use us to let others know about God. God promises to empower us to be able to fulfill this calling in the same way that God empowered Jeremiah and Jesus. It is ultimately our choice to obey or reject God's call in our life. When we reject God's call, we miss out on a life that is full and abundant, powerfully used for God's purposes. When we respond to God's call, we fulfill our God-given destiny. To struggle with obeying God's call is normal but we can always look to Jesus for encouragement and courage. He desired to "let this cup pass," he struggled with His call, and yet He still obeyed God.
4. Ask: What would have happened if Jesus had rejected God's call?
5. Say: Coming to a point in our Christian walk where we can automatically say "yes" to God's call is a journey, it takes time and we need to be patient with ourselves in the same way that God is patient with us. It is important to note that Jesus was honest about His struggle; we can be honest about our struggles as well. Through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, coupled with our desire to obey God, we will be able to let go of our fears and doubts in order to respond to God's call in our lives that we might fulfill our God-given destiny.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Give the students time to reflect on this: Think of something that you feel God is calling you to do. What makes it easy or difficult to fulfill God's call? What are steps that you can take in order to start working towards fulfilling God's call in your life?

Have the students write their responses in their journal.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: Have volunteers read what they have written in their journal. Pass the offering plate after this while singing "I'm Letting Go".
2. Prayer: Take the time to pray for each student by name. Speak words of encouragement into their lives.



March 12, 2017Second Sunday in Lent: **Servant Messiah***Old Testament: Isaiah 53:4-6*

⁴ Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

New Testament: Mark 10:42-45

⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

General Concept: **As a servant messiah, Jesus served the suffering ones. As a result, he suffered with them. When we serve the suffering ones, we also suffer with them.**

Key Concept:

Youth/Adults: **As a servant messiah, Jesus served the suffering ones. As a result, he suffered with them. When we serve the suffering ones, we also suffer with them.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Isaiah is a book that unveils the full dimensions of God's judgment and salvation. God is "the Holy One of Israel" (1:4; 6:1) who must punish the rebellious people (1:2) but will afterward redeem them also (41:14, 16). Israel is a nation who has become so blind and so deaf to God's instructions especially on matters concerning social justice and responsibility to the neighbor. Because of all these, they have experienced the awful judgment of God. Yet God still has compassion on God's people, and will rescue them from both their political and spiritual oppression. Their restoration is like a new exodus as God redeems them and rescues them. This day is marked by peace and safety when a king will descend from the line of David who will reign in righteousness, God's people will no longer be oppressed by rulers, and Jerusalem will truly be a "City of the Lord" (32:1-2; 60:14). Isaiah's idea of peace is like the rest of the prophets', when justice is served to the needy and the oppressed and the wicked are punished and destroyed (1:10-17).

Chapter 53 of the book of Isaiah actually belongs to the second book of Isaiah, "The Book of Comfort" wherein we learn the sufferings and glories of the Lord's righteous servant. Verses 4-6 tells us of the righteous servant of God, who suffered for the iniquities and infirmities of the people whom he served. Here, instead of the people, it was the servant—the righteous one of God, who shows that he was with the people in their suffering and can do everything on their behalf. Verse 4 is quoted in part in Matthew 8:17 with reference to Jesus' healing ministry. Infirmities refer to diseases that often result from sinful living and are ultimately consequences

of “original sin”. People generally believed that the person who was stricken by God could only be being punished for her/his own sinfulness. Here, such traditional theological assumption is changed by the prophet of the Lord. The righteous one of God actually took upon himself all those painful fruits of the sinfulness of the people in order that they may be cleansed of such sins and be forgiven and restored by God. Indeed, suffering happens even to the righteous one not because of her/his sins, but because she/he took upon herself/himself the suffering intended for others who were supposed to receive and endure them. Here, we see the essence of what it means to be a true messiah sent by the Lord. The messiah is one who saves not with the use of power and might but only with the willing spirit, capacity and love to suffer for her/his own people. The true messiah is one who saves her/his people as a suffering servant, not as a conquering, mighty and dominating ruler.

The Gospel According to Mark has special characteristics that we can actually discover. This Gospel is a simple, concise, unadorned yet vivid account of Jesus’ ministry, emphasizing more on what Jesus did than what He said. Mark moves quickly from one episode in Jesus’ life and ministry to another often using the adverb “immediately”. The book as a whole is characterized as “The Beginning of the gospel” (1:1). The life, death and resurrection of Christ comprise the “beginning,” of which the apostolic preaching in Acts is the continuation.

The text in Mark 10:42-45 tells us of how Jesus himself overturn the value structure of this world. Thus, Jesus is telling the disciples that discipleship is actually characterized by humble and loving service. Verse 45 may have been the key verse here, wherein Jesus introduces Himself as a servant to the world—he came to serve and not to be served. A servant who is willing to suffer and die for the redemption of the world just as Isaiah stipulated in his book. This represents a very radical reversal of the prevailing value system and structures in that old Greco-Roman civilization, where the quest for power, wealth, secular knowledge and elitist privileges become a foremost value to uphold, fight and even die for. Such quest has been the reason for the various conflicts and wars that are still being fought even today. People just want to possess more and acquire and control more. What Jesus teaches to his own disciples is very much in contrast to the normal cultural norms and expectations of the time. This is why he and his teachings will always be received with alarm and a sense of being threatened by this kind of new teaching. It is a teaching that is indeed turning the world of values upside down. Jesus himself lives by such teaching, with total humility and uncompromising devotion to serve the least, the last, and the lost. This is why he was looked upon as a real threat by those who rule, dominate, and benefit from the prevailing value system of the world. Jesus as messiah taught by example, even to the point of laying down his own life, sacrificing himself for the sake of upholding such a sacred mission entrusted to him by his father. These verses really aim to enlighten and transform our own perspective and value systems in life, if we hope to be Christ’s disciples. Meaning, if we say that we are Christ’s disciples we should be, like Jesus, willing to serve with total humility and even suffer with those who suffer.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

It is customary in the church’s rituals and prayers to address Jesus as king. Our hymns and prayers routinely attribute to him royal titles. We need to be reminded that the only time he was addressed king was when he was tortured by Roman soldiers to mock rather than to honor him. During his ministry the disciples preferred to address him as rabbi or teacher. This was because they received Jesus as one who taught them the way rather than as ruler over them. Following the resurrection, his followers began to call him Lord, the very title of God in the Hebrew Bible and just as significantly the title of the Roman Emperor. Even at that time, the terms “lord” and “king” were not necessarily associated with one another. The title Lord ascribed to Jesus

connotes singular loyalty and obedience to Jesus rather than to any other deity or to the emperor himself. It was during the period of the church's incorporation to the Roman Empire when bishops acquired the status of secular princes that the church also devoted images of Jesus that corresponded with the imperial and kingly rulers. The church, of course, followed the path pursued by Israel when it turned into a kingdom not different from the kingdoms around it. Christians today need to be reminded that Jesus preferred to be considered a servant: God's servant who was sent by God to serve people who had the status of servants imposed on them by society. Jesus served people who lived as the doormats of history. The moment the church forgets this apostolic memory, it tends to lose the right perspective to the ministry. Leaders would tend to give inordinate importance to their power and authority to rule rather than teaching the faithful and serving their spiritual needs. The title bishop had gained greater political than theological meaning. This is emphasized by wearing vestments harking back to the Middle Ages. Fortunately, much of the UCCP's heritage has been passed on to it by the Reformation (Reformed and independent varieties) that was largely bishop-free.

By recovering the servant-perspective, the UCCP would be poised to regain the true meaning of Christian witness, which means faithful witness to Jesus to the point of suffering and even martyrdom. The church is called to witness to Jesus' undiluted commitment to serve the lowly whereby releasing them from an oppressive social bondage that degrades human dignity. This kind of world is unfriendly, in fact, hateful of its victims and hostile to those who take up their cause. Just as the world has condemned Jesus, the church that is faithful to him shall suffer likewise.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Describe how Jesus demonstrates servant leadership
2. Equate servant leadership of Jesus with Christian witness and service
3. Explain the outcome of serving those who suffer as suffering with them
4. Deduce the desire of Jesus to be considered as a servant rather than a king or lord
5. Be ready to suffer for taking up the cause of Jesus as the suffering messiah as one chooses a particular church witness and service

II. Concept: As a servant messiah, Jesus served the suffering ones. As a result, he suffered with them. When we serve the suffering ones, we also suffer with them.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), Materials for worship altar to symbolize leadership in the family, community, church, country (e.g., Dad/Mom mug, picture of the barangay hall, pastor's stole/vestment, flag), small pieces of paper and pen/pencil for application activity

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Before the class, the teacher has to set up a worship altar that has objects to symbolize leadership in the family, community, church, and country.
2. Invite one of the students to read Mark 10:45 as a focusing verse.
3. The teacher starts the class with a word of prayer: Almighty and ever loving God, thank you for this new day. Thank you for the leaders in our family, our community, our church and our country. Thank you for Sunday School. Help us today to listen and learn more of Jesus, especially as a servant leader and suffering messiah. Teach us to be more like Jesus in whose mighty name we pray. Amen.
4. Sing: "Make Me a Servant"

Make me a servant, humble and meek

Lord, let me lift up those who are weak
 And may the prayer of my heart always be
 Make me a servant, make me a servant, make me a servant today.

B. Getting Ready

1. Let the students go through the items you have laid out on the worship altar.
2. Ask: Who are the people that comes to your mind when you see these symbols? What makes them good at what they do? Get responses from 5—6 students.
3. Say: Today, we will look at one of the traits a leader must have.

C. Learning Time

Play: Back to Back Game

Get a volunteer to be the “leader.” This is the game where you start out with two people (the leader and a second player) sitting back to back and they have to stand straight up without using their hands. Add one person every time they stand up successfully.

The Point: This is a great game for showing students what teamwork can do. It would be nearly impossible to accomplish this by oneself because the players will have to push on each other’s backs for leverage in order to stand up. This also shows that the leader has to be one with the people she/he is leading in order to accomplish the task, sometimes this means “suffering” with the rest of the group.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Say: A leader must be willing to suffer for and with the people he/she is serving.
2. Ask: What is the difference between a boss and a leader? Invite 2 or 3 students to respond.
3. Say: A leader serves. Let us look at Jesus and how he led.
4. Have one of the students read Isaiah 53:4-6 and another student Mark 10:42-45. Tell the students to take note of the things that Jesus had to go through as the servant Messiah.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

1. Divide the class into 2 groups and have the students discuss the following questions:
 - What do these texts reveal about the world’s definition of leadership?
 - What do these texts reveal about God’s definition of leadership?
 - Think of a time where you were able to exercise leadership according to God’s standard. What made it easy or difficult?
2. Say: The messiah is one who saves not with the use of power and might but only with the willing spirit, capacity and love to suffer for her/his own people. The true messiah is one who saves her/his people as a suffering servant, not as a conquering, mighty and dominating ruler [from the exegesis]. Jesus considered Himself to be the servant of all humankind. He was willing to go through much suffering for the people He was serving.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Say: Think of a ministry in the church where you can serve.
2. Ask: What are the possible difficulties that you will encounter if you serve in this ministry? What kind of support will you need and from whom?
3. Have the students write their answers to the questions in small pieces of paper and have them submit these to the teacher. The teacher is encouraged to look at these answers and find ways to personally exercise servant leadership by offering the students the kind of support they need.

G. Closing Worship

1. Divide the class into 4 prayer groups and give each group a symbol of leadership from the worship altar. Have each group pray for leaders in the family, church, community, and country to be able to exercise true servant leadership. The teacher closes the prayer time by praying for the students to be willing to step into leadership and service roles in the church.
2. Closing song: "Faith in the Service of the People"



March 19, 2017Third Sunday in Lent: **Loyalty to God***Old Testament: Ruth 1:16-17*

¹⁶But Ruth said, “Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

¹⁷ Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!”

New Testament: Luke 7:1-10

⁷After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.

²A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death.

³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy of having you do this for him, ⁵for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.” ⁶And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go’, and he goes, and to another, ‘Come’, and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this’, and the slave does it.” ⁹When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” ¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

General Concept: The love for God is the basis of our unwavering loyalty to God.

Key Concept:

Youth and Adults: **The love for God is the basis of our unwavering loyalty to God.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The Book of Ruth powerfully underscores the importance of faithful love in human relationships among God’s people. The author somewhat focuses on Ruth’s unswerving and selfless devotion to desolate and barren Naomi as well as Boaz’s kindness to these two widows. Ruth 1:16-17 tell us of Ruth’s confession of total devotion and loyalty to Naomi even if Naomi urged Ruth to just leave her and return to her home in Moab. Here, it may seem surprising that the one who reflects God’s love so clearly is a Moabite, a non-Jewish, non-Israelite. Yet, her complete loyalty to an Israelite family into which she has been received through marriage and her total devotion to her desolate mother-in-law marks her as a true daughter of Israel and a worthy ancestress of David. She strikingly exemplifies the truth that participation in the coming reign of God is decided not by blood and birth, but by the conformity of one’s life to the will of God through the “obedience that comes from faith” (Romans 1:5). Her example of unconditional loyalty becomes a mirror, a reflection, of the kind of loyalty (steadfast love) shown by God to God’s own people throughout history. At the same time, this kind of loyalty is also the one virtue being asked of those who would decide to follow their Lord Jesus Christ, as the only one they will follow and whose teachings they will obey all the way.

The Gospel according to Luke, the third gospel in the canonical order, presents the works and teachings of Jesus that are especially important for understanding the way of salvation. Its

scope is complete from the birth of Christ to His ascension. Its arrangement is orderly, and it appeals to both Jews and Gentiles. It was written to strengthen the faith of all believers and to answer the attacks of unbelievers. Luke wanted to show that the place of the Gentile Christians in God's reign is based on the teaching of Jesus. He wanted to commend the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world.

Luke 7:1-10 tells a narrative about the faith of the centurion that made his servant whole again from being so ill. Here, the centurion, out of his sense of shame and humble acceptance that he is not worthy to even face Jesus because of his sinfulness, sent out his servants to Jesus to tell him that his valued servant is about to die but can be healed if only Jesus would say so. This faith, with such unwavering degree of trust and belief in his power to heal amazes Jesus that he made well the sick servant.

These passages gives us glimpses of how our God responds to our unwavering trust and faithfulness despite what may be considered as discouraging circumstances around us. May these passages give us more encouragement in our daily Christian endeavor to remain faithful to God by bringing and showing our loving relationship with God through our living and dealing with one another. Let us be reminded as always that our love for God is the foundation of our untiring loyalty to God and all that gives glory to God and the very reason why we respond in earnest and humble service to the least of our sisters and brothers.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Jesus affirmed the Hebrew Scriptures regarding the greatest commandment: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). The Hebrew word for the Law is Torah, the basic meaning of which is "teaching." In that understanding, loving God is more of a teaching than law since at the practical level love cannot be commanded but instead learned. But this nuance does not erase the truth that the true and lasting basis of loyalty is love.

This fine point makes it clear that in fact loyalty can be bought or forced. God does not desire loyalty that is either bought or forced because the kind of loyalty that is worthy as an offering to God is one that is untainted with self-interest. Loyalty that is reserved for God is above all kinds of loyalty which are subject to human deceit and manipulation. Believers must therefore approach God not with the intent of bribing God with favors or manipulating the divine will but unconditionally from a point of utter poverty and helplessness.

It does not mean that we do not make requests and petitions to God in our hour of dire need and threat. On the contrary, the prayer that Jesus taught the disciples encourages us to bring to God our cares in life: food to sustain life, forgiveness of sins and deliverance from evil and the lure of temptation. But Jesus taught us that prayers to God is not based on what we are and have in order to impress God that we deserve more than the others. If we have confidence in those things, it is not really love for God. Unless it is motivated by love, loyalty fails under severe conditions in life. It is not that God will not hear us because our motives are impure. Rather, we would be unable to sustain a genuine relationship with God because our loyalty is founded on shaky ground that shifts whenever circumstances are unfavorable. The result is a self-imposed alienation from God rather than God distancing the divine being from us. God is not like us who gets offended when we fail to measure up to the divine standard of loyalty. Trusting in God's mercy and forgiving love, we pledge loyalty to our Lord Jesus unencumbered with fear and guilt.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Describe and compare Ruth and the Roman officer
2. Define love and loyalty
3. Demonstrate one's faithfulness to God through creative activities

II. Concept: The love for God is the basis of our unwavering loyalty to God.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), 4 Pics 1 Word print outs, videos and audiovisual equipment, Manila paper and markers

III. Learning Experiences**A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time.
2. Sing "I Love You, Lord"

I love you, Lord
And I lift my voice
To worship You
Oh, my soul, rejoice!

Take joy my King
In what You hear
Let it be a sweet, sweet sound
In Your ear

I love you, Lord
(I love you, Lord)
And I lift my voice
(And I lift my voice)
To worship You
(To worship You)
Oh, my soul, rejoice!
(Oh, my soul)

Take joy my King
(Take joy my King)
In what You hear
(In what You hear)
Let it be a sweet, sweet sound
(Let it be a sweet sound)
In Your ear

I love you, Lord
And I lift my voice
To worship You
Oh, my soul, rejoice!

Take joy my King
In what You hear
Let it be a sweet, sweet sound
In Your ear

I love you, Lord
 (I love you, Lord)
 I love you, Lord
 (I love you, Lord)
 (And I lift my voice)

I love you, Lord
 (Take joy my King)
 (Take joy my King)

I love you, Lord
 (I love you, Lord)
 I love you, Lord
 (Let it be a sweet, sweet sound)

“I Would Be True”

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
 I would be pure, for there are those who care;
 I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
 I would be brave, for there is much to dare.
 I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend of all—the foe, the friendless;
 I would be giving, and forget the gift;
 I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
 I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift.
 I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift.

Who is so low that I am not his brother?
 Who is so high that I've no path to her?
 Who is so poor I may not feel her hunger?
 Who is so rich I may not pity him?
 Who is so rich I may not pity him?

May none, then, call on me for understanding,
 May none, then, turn to me for help in pain,
 And drain alone his bitter cup of sorrow,
 Or find she knocks upon my heart in vain.
 Or find she knocks upon my heart in vain.

I would be faithful through each passing moment;
 I would be constantly in touch with God;
 I would be strong to follow where God leads me;
 I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.
 I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.

3. Have one of the students open in prayer.

B. Getting Ready

Play 4 Pics 1 Word using photos.

Answers:

1. Ruth
2. Roman soldier/centurion
3. Love
4. Loyalty
5. Faithfulness

C. Learning Time

Have the students read Ruth 1:16-17 and Luke 7:1-10 quietly. Divide the class into 2 groups. Give each group a manila paper and a marker. Have one group list down the characteristics of Ruth that they would like to emulate. Have the other group list down the characteristics of the Roman Centurion that they would like to emulate.

Ask a representative from each group to share to the rest of the class what they have listed down.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Ask: What do these characteristics tell us about love and loyalty?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

1. Explain: The text in Ruth 1:16-17 tells us of Ruth's confession of total devotion and loyalty to Naomi even if Naomi urged Ruth to just leave her and return to her home in Moab. Here, it may seem surprising that the one who reflects God's love so clearly is a Moabite, a non-Jewish, non-Israelite. Yet, her complete loyalty to an Israelite family into which she has been received through marriage and her total devotion to her desolate mother-in-law mark her as a true daughter of Israel and a worthy ancestress of David.
2. Explain: The text in Luke 7:1-10 tells a narrative about the faith of the centurion that made his servant whole again from being so ill. This faith, with such unwavering degree of trust and belief in his power to heal amazes Jesus that he made well the sick servant.
3. Say: God does not desire love and loyalty that is either bought or forced because the kind of love and loyalty that is worthy as an offering to God is one that is untainted with self-interest. Ruth did not know what will become of her if she went with Naomi yet she confessed her love and loyalty so freely. The Roman Centurion was so certain of Jesus' ability and willingness to heal, he confessed his belief in Him even before his servant was healed.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Say: Take a few moments to reflect and think about the ways you can show your love and loyalty to God. God might be asking you to do something that you have never done before, like Ruth who left what was familiar to her in order to be with Naomi. You might be needing God to do something that seems impossible, like the miracle that the Roman Centurion wanted for his servant.
2. Ask: How can you show your love and loyalty to God in these circumstances?

G. Closing Worship

Have the students stand in a circle and take a few moments to prayerfully submit their

circumstances to God. Sing "I Would Be True". Have the students pray for the person on their right, while speaking a blessing to their fellow students that each might be able to demonstrate the love and loyalty God desires to see in their lives. The teacher closes the session in prayer.



March 26, 2017Fourth Sunday in Lent: **Peace-building***Old Testament: Jeremiah 1:9-10*

⁹Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, “Now I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰ See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

New Testament: Matthew 10:34

34 ‘Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

General Concept: **Building peace, as a messianic mission, requires forcible removal of obstacles to peace—inequitable distribution of resources, abusive relationships, and injustice.**

Key Concept:

Youth and Adults: **Peace building is the removal of abusive relationships and injustice.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The Book of Jeremiah actually preserves an account of the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah starting with the report on his call. Jeremiah was a member of the priestly household of Hilkiyah, from the small town of Anathoth, so he may have been a descendant of Abiathar, a priest during the time of Solomon. The Lord commanded Jeremiah not to marry and raise children because the impending divine judgment on Judah would sweep away the next generation.

Jeremiah 1:9-10 is God’s utterance of the purpose of Jeremiah’s call containing very strong and vivid instructions in doing the prophet’s task. Here we can find pairs of verbs wherein we can discern a negative indication of his call. This somehow stresses the fact that Jeremiah is to be primarily a prophet of doom, while the last pair is positive, indicating that he too is to be a prophet of restoration even if only secondarily. The first verb “uproot” is the opposite of the last “plant”, and fully half of the verbs “tear down,” “destroy,” “overthrow” are the opposite of build. Even though it may appear that the prophetic task is predominantly that of destroying and demolishing the old structures and systems that were at the root of the basic inequality and injustice in society, very critical and decisive also for the task of the prophet to be complete is the building of a new community based on the foundations of the covenant given by God to God’s own people. This is where the values of shalom which includes peace, justice, love for one’s own people and solidarity with the least will be at the core of the alternative society that will be set up. Here the prophet and all those who are being called to carry on the prophetic task will have to embrace and get engaged with the very demanding task of building new structures that will give no more room for the old to re-emerge, as the all-embracing concept of Shalom (holistic peace) becomes the dominant reality that will be upheld, enjoyed and defended by all the people.

Matthew’s main purpose is to prove to his Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah. He does this primarily by showing how Jesus in his life and ministry fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures. Although all the Gospel writers quote the OT, Matthew includes nine proof texts

unique to his Gospel (1:22-23; 2:15; 2:17-18; 2:23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 27:9-10) to drive home his basic theme: Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament's predictions of Messiah. To accomplish his purpose, Matthew also emphasizes Jesus' Davidic lineage right from the very first chapter of the Gospel.

Matthew 10:34, at first glance, somehow sounds like a contradiction of Isaiah's prophecy about the "Prince of Peace" who will come to bring peace to the world. Yes, it is true that Christ came to bring peace—peace between the believer and God, and peace among humans. Yet the unavoidable result of Christ's coming is conflict—between Christ and the antichrist, between light and darkness, between Christ's children and the devil's children. This conflict can occur even between members of the same family. This only shows that the task of obeying and following the mandate of our Lord will never be easy. It will even invite and ignite serious division within the community and among and within the family.

These above-mentioned passages are guiding us to an understanding that to truly gain real peace or shalom is to combat first those that have contributed to the prevailing unpeace and chaos in the kingdom of God. This would only mean that passivity does not have room in achieving the goal of real peace. Jeremiah was called to proclaim the message of doom for the people to realize that they have been deviating from the will of God, yet there was also the proclamation of the task of rebuilding and restoration from the ruins of what has been demolished and done away with. The experience of rebuilding together as a community united by a common faith and unity in spirit becomes the prelude in itself to experiencing real shalom. Utmost devotion to this task of shalom-building is the key to initiating meaningful change and transformation in the lives of people and in the structures of our society and of the world.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Peace-building is like building a new house on the same lot where an old house stands. Not only that the old house is really old, its design is quite unfriendly to children and elderly occupants. The owner has decided to demolish the old house and build a new one that is strong and safe. Similarly, violent conflicts and insecurity plague a nation because it rests on unjust social relations that: allow a few to accumulate excessive wealth while leaving so many others without food; employ guns to silence dissenters; threaten the environment's sustainability, and; abuse basic human rights with impunity. Peace that is genuine and sustainable cannot be built on top of injustice. These bases of unpeace have to be demolished and removed to clear the ground where seeds of peace may grow and flourish.

Unjust social relations are not ordained by God, nor are they extensions of the human being as created by God. They grow from seeds planted by the Devil and cultivated by evil people who have no respect for God. But the prophet Jeremiah's anguished cry to God, "Why do the wicked prosper?" can't be answered simply by looking into the heart of the wicked. Today, it requires employing tools of scientific analysis to discover the social dynamics and institutional mechanisms behind concrete experience of unjust suffering.

What are vital links in the chain of injustice that fetters the people? First, the unlimited and unrestrained control of the means to sustain life and social well-being by only a few families; second, the concentration of the power to govern in the hands of those who have monopoly ownership of social wealth; third, security apparatuses to suppress dissenting voices and protest actions; and fourth, cultural, educational and religious institutions that create a false consciousness.

Breaking the chain of injustice begins with the fourth among the links. It is the weakest and the most vital link in the whole chain of injustice. Enforced human degradation is being legitimized (accepted as legal, moral, necessary, natural) through a sustained and “full-spectrum” process of deception, propaganda and mis-education. Cruel domination is by itself repulsive to the human conscience, but when it is masked as natural, even beneficial or unavoidable and unstoppable the tendency of its victims is to acquiesce and live with it. Jesus’ message and good works were meant to convince and show to the victims that it is a mental and spiritual captivity by the Devil, that the Devil has no real power over them and that God’s reign of freedom and justice is about to break in. Truth is a weapon over which injustice cannot prevail. Deprived of legitimacy the tools and structures of domination will shake and tumble down like the walls of Jericho in the face of an enlightened people who are determined to reclaim their freedom and right to enjoy the abundance of nature and the fruits of their labor. Justice is an essential mark of a good and benevolent human regime and a necessary condition for the establishment of God’s reign on earth, but the two are not one and the same. When “justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” then all people will breathe in peace like air.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Define peace building efforts
2. Describe abusive relationships and unjust practices that do not promote peace
3. List and describe the ways of removing abusive relationships and injustice
4. Commit oneself and participate in the program of peace building in the church and in the community

II. Concept: Peace-building is the removal of abusive relationships and injustice.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), newspaper headlines, videos and audiovisual equipment, Manila paper and markers

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Have one of the students open in prayer.
2. Sing together “Here I am, Lord”

YouTube source link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcXOkht8w7c>

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save

Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

B. Getting Ready

1. Prior to the start of the class: Print pictures of news headlines on poster-sized paper and set them up in the classroom to create a mini-gallery.
2. During the class: Have the students walk around the classroom to look at the pictures. After spending a few minutes doing the gallery walk, have the students sit in a circle, facing each other.
3. Ask: What makes you sad or angry about these pictures and news headlines? What do these pictures tell you about humanity?
4. Say: Today we will talk about what it means for followers of Jesus to remove obstacles to peace and to become peace-builders.

C. Learning Time

Divide the class in 2 groups and give each group a poster-size manila paper with the PROPHET and PEACE acrostic. Have each group write a characteristic of a PROPHET for each letter of the word and a fruit or result of PEACE for each letter of the word.

Give each group time to share characteristics of a PROPHET and fruits/results of PEACE that they have identified.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Say: Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet to the nations and kingdoms. To be called for such a task (i.e., plucking up and pulling down, destroying and overthrowing, building and planting) is not an easy task. As the Church of today, we are also called to be the prophetic voice in the places of influence that God has put us in.

Ask: What makes the job of a prophet exciting? What makes the job of a prophet difficult? In what ways do you think God is calling you to be a prophet in the place of influence (e.g., school, neighborhood, family) God has put you in?

Give the students time to discuss in their groups and invite a group representative to share the highlights of their discussion to the rest of the class.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Have a student read Jeremiah 1:9-10

Say: In today's lesson we learned about what it means to be a prophet. Earlier, during our activity, you learned that the Church is also called to have a prophetic voice. There is a need for a prophetic voice because we live in a fallen world, people need to be called out when they are being unjust, abusive, etc.

Have a student read Matthew 10:34

Say: Earlier, during our activity, you wrote down fruits/results of “peace.” Because we live in a fallen world, there are obstacles to peace. Jesus as the Messiah said that He came not to bring peace but a sword. Does this mean that Jesus wants chaos? What do you think Jesus meant by His words?

Invite the students to share their ideas.

Say: Peace comes with a price. In order to enjoy the fruits/results of peace that you have written down in our activity earlier, there is a need to remove obstacles to peace. Sometimes this requires us to apply force. This is what Jesus meant by coming with a sword. It is not to bring chaos but to remove hindrances to peace. As Christ’s Body, the church is also called to do the same.

Ask: What are ways you can remove abusive relationships and injustice?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

The teacher shares about the church’s peace-building efforts.

Say: Churches and organizations are intentionally making efforts to remove obstacles to peace. These obstacles might be inequitable distribution of resources, abusive relationships, and injustice.

Ask: Are there similar things happening to you in your school/community/work context? What can you do to be a peace-builder?

G. Closing Worship

Say: There are numerous opportunities for us to be peacebuilders. The world needs the peace that comes from Jesus and we are His instruments. Prayerfully submit the opportunities for peace-building that you have identified in your school/community/work context.

As a prayer of commitment to become peace-builders, sing this prayer song: “Let There Be Peace on Earth”

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me
 Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be
 With God as our Parent, children all are we
 Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.
 Let there be peace on earth, let this be the moment now
 With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow
 To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally
 Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me. Amen.

April 2, 2017Fifth Sunday in Lent: **Marks of the True Messiah****Old Testament: Isaiah 42:1-7**

42 Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him;

he will bring forth justice to the nations.

² He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;

³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

⁴ He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

⁵ Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it,

who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:

⁶ I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

New Testament: Matthew 11:2-6

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" ⁴Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me."

General Concept: The true messiah is known through his healing, liberating, and restoring deeds.

Key Concept:

Youth and Adults: **The true messiah is known through healing, liberating, and restoring deeds.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The book of Isaiah may have been written in the stormy period marking the expansion of the Assyrian empire and the decline of Israel, but this book unveils the full dimension of God's judgment and salvation. Peace and safety marks the new Messianic age wherein a righteous king will descend from David. God's people then, will no longer be oppressed by wicked rulers and Jerusalem will truly be the "City of God". The Lord calls the Messianic King "my servant" in chapters 42-53, a term also applied to Israel as a nation. It is through the suffering of the servant that salvation in its fullest sense is achieved. Cyrus was God's instrument to deliver Israel from Babylon, but Christ delivered humankind from the prison of sin. He became the "light for the Gentiles" (42:6), so that those nations that faced judgment could find salvation. These Gentiles also became "servants of the Lord".

Isaiah 42: 1-7 tells us of the kind of servant God wants for God's people. Servant here meant something like a trusted envoy or confidential representative of the One who sent him or her. The one who will bring about order in this world will not shout nor cry out but will bring

peace; is weak but will mend broken lives; is a servant that will be a new Moses that would free God's people and bring about order through justice and peace.

The writing of the Gospel according to Matthew aims to introduce to the audience the fulfilment of the prophecy and introduces Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of that prophecy.

Reading Matthew 11:2-6, we can fully understand that it is Jesus the Christ who embodies the kind of servant God wants for God's people. Here, we learn that Jesus may not have directly answered the disciples' question, but what he revealed about what he was doing here were clear manifestations of the Messiah the people were longing for.

For us Christians of today, as followers of Christ, we too are given the opportunity and the accountability to be God's suffering servants of today. As mentioned above, we are also urged to be servants to do what is expected of us as the Lord wills. May we truly embody that servant character in all that we do as we continue to journey through life.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Demagogues rise only to lead people to damnation in the end. They succeed in deceiving people who long for liberation and vindication. They prey on people who have suffered degradation and humiliation and are waiting for a messiah, like the German people during the Nazi rule. Hitler aroused the people not only for the promise of national vindication but also for the vision of the Third Reich, an empire that would rule Europe and then the whole world. Their crushing failure to conquer Russia and the arrival of the American forces at the tail-end of World War II sealed the end of the dream.

False messiahs promise power to dominate, as Jesus said of Gentiles. Jesus, the true messiah walks among humble folk to teach them God's ways, to heal them of their infirmities, to comfort and rescue them from despair, to restore their honor and dignity as human beings. This was Jesus' response to John the Baptist's emissaries who asked him if he was The One.

Jesus is God's model of a true messiah. Jesus did give an inspiring message of the coming of God's reign on earth. But he made it clear by example that God's dominion is not to be won in the way human kingdoms are won, which is by violent force. Rather, it will emerge from among the people who are poor in spirit, meek, merciful, peace-makers, victims of violence, who thirst for justice and are persecuted for the cause of justice (Matthew 5: 3-10). Jesus was sent as the messiah who would "save the people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Those who have broken out of their captivity to the power of sin will compose the people of God's dominion.

Jesus is proclaimed to the world as God's true messiah by witness of the church with its message and good deeds. It is not enough to simply introduce the name of Jesus to people for them to accept him as their personal Lord and Savior. Nor is it enough to tell them of Jesus' death and resurrection and the promise of their own resurrection by faith in him. That in itself is not genuine and effective witnessing to Christ. It was because people saw him heal the blind, feed the hungry, exorcise demons and challenge the self-righteous but uncaring religious authorities that they accepted him as the messiah. People would believe the church's witness if they actually experience the benefits of God's care for their needs.

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Describe the healing deeds of the true messiah
2. Describe the liberating deeds of the true messiah
3. Describe the restoring deeds of the true messiah
4. Realize that the deeds of the true messiah will redound to the benefits extended to people
5. List ways by which the believers can participate in the healing, liberating, and restoring ministries of the church

II. Concept: The true messiah is known through healing, liberating, and restoring deeds.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), pictures showing different humanitarian aid services (refer to the Applying the Biblical Truth Activity), videos and audiovisual equipment, Manila paper and markers

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

Have the students sit around in a circle.

Ask: What has God done last week that you are thankful for?

Invite the students to spend a few moments remembering the things that God has done for them over the past week. Have each student share one thing they are thankful for.

Sing the prayer song "Bless the Lord, My Soul"

Bless the Lord, my soul
And bless God's holy name.
Bless the Lord my soul
Who leads me into life.

B. Getting Ready

Say: The things you shared earlier all point to what God has done in your lives. These things happened because God is willing and able to do such things.

Ask: What are other things that God is able to do? Answers may vary (create, forgive, heal, transform, etc.)

Say: Today, we will look at the deeds of a true Messiah.

C. Learning Time

Game: Bible Dig

Instructions: Divide the class in 3 groups and have them list down as many events from the Gospel accounts where Jesus (1) healed, (2) liberated, and (3) restored. Give the class 10 minutes to work on this after which have each group share their list to the rest of the class.

Next, have the groups write the people's reaction, the impact, or the benefit/result of what Jesus did beside each event they have listed.

Say: All these events point towards Jesus as the Messiah. The true Messiah heals, liberates, and restores. What He does results to the improvement and transformation of

people's lives.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Have the students watch the 3-minute video on Mother Teresa on YouTube.

YouTube Source Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzH13X88kbM>

In pairs, have the students share about a time when they shared about who Jesus is and what He does.

Ask: What do you think made Mother Teresa's proclamation of the Gospel so powerful? Invite the students to share.

Say: It is important that we share the Gospel of Jesus to people who do not know Him yet. It is as important that our proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus is coupled with deeds. This shows that God is a God who cares about all aspects of human life and needs. Our God is a holistic God.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Have the students read Isaiah 42:1-7 and Matthew 11:2-6. Using a T-chart, with the Isaiah text on the left and the Matthew text on the right, have the students identify the similarities and differences of how the Messiah was described by Isaiah the prophet and by how Jesus described His deeds to John the Baptist's followers.

Say: For us Christians, Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah. Jesus is our Messiah. God sent him to be with us and did many wonderful things for us. We know God loves us because of Jesus. Because of what Jesus taught the people, they too were able to do good things for others. We too must do good things for others just like what Jesus did so that other people may know that God loves them too.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Show the students pictures of the following activities and have them label what kind of service is happening:

1. Feeding program for street children
2. Food and clothes distribution for typhoon victims
3. Medical and dental mission
4. Legal assistance for indigents
5. Marriage and family counseling

Ask: What do you think will happen if all we did as a Church was preach about Jesus and did not couple it with action? What do you think will happen if all the Church did was good deeds without preaching the Gospel?

Say: There are numerous development agencies that respond to people's needs. What makes the Church different? The Church, as Christ's Body, has a deeper motivation than just responding to needs. The Church responds to needs as an outpouring of love for Christ. It is Christ's love that compels us and motivates us to be healers, liberators, and agents of restoration in this fallen world.

Ask: What church ministries do you know of that respond to people's needs? Which interests you?

G. *Closing Worship*

Sing “Called as Partners in Christ’s Service” (Hymnal of a Faith Journey)

The teacher prays for the students for God to grow a genuine desire in their hearts to be involved in ministries of the church that respond to people’s need for healing, liberation, and restoration.



April 9, 2017Sixth Sunday in Lent/Palm Sunday: **Jesus Encountering the Powers****Old Testament: Zechariah 9:9-10**

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the warhorse from Jerusalem; and the battle-bow shall be cut off,

and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

New Testament: John 12:12-19

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!"

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written: ¹⁵ "Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. ¹⁸ It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. ¹⁹ The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

General Concept: Jesus enters Jerusalem to challenge the powers-that-be that cause human misery.

Key Concept:

Youth and Adults: **Jesus enters Jerusalem to challenge the powers-that-be that cause human misery.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Zechariah's prophetic ministry took place in the post-exilic period which according to scholars was the time of Jewish restoration from Babylonian captivity. The theology of Zechariah's prophecy matches his name, which means "The Lord (Yahweh) remembers." "The Lord", is the personal, covenant name of God and is a perpetual testimony to God's faithfulness to God's promises. God "remembers" God's covenant promises and takes action to fulfill them. In the book of Zechariah, God's promised deliverance from Babylonian exile, including a restored kingdom community and a functioning temple, leads to even grander pictures of the salvation and restoration to come through the Messiah. The book as a whole also teaches the sovereignty of God in history over people and nations: past, present and future.

The passage in Zechariah 9:9-10 is a very familiar passage happening in Jesus' time, particularly Jesus' Triumphant Entry to Jerusalem as king riding not on a chariot but on a donkey. This would tell us of Jesus' humble confrontation of the powers-that-be; a total contrast to what people perceived. A sharp contrast to Alexander's empire, which was founded on bloodshed, the Messianic King will establish a universal kingdom of peace as the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Therefore, all daughters of Zion and Jerusalem were called to shout and

rejoice for their rightful king, who conforms to the divine standard of morality and ethics, has finally come to them.

John's gospel is rather different from the other three. In any event, his witness to Jesus goes its own way, highlighting matters that in the other Gospels remain implicit and underdeveloped. Here, the focus is on the "signs" of Jesus' identity and mission and on lengthy, theologically-rich discourses/discussions. John begins with the profound announcement that Jesus is "in the beginning" as the creative Word of God who has become incarnated as a human being to be the light of life for the world. After this, comes the proclamation that this Jesus is the Son of God sent from the Father to finish the Father's work in the world. God's own glory is made visible in Him.

The event in John 12:12-19 is the actualization of Zechariah's prophecy where Jesus made His way to Jerusalem to confront the powers-that-be. This time, we see addenda to that prophecy: the use of palm branches that were used to celebrate victory; the shouts of the people who welcomed Him and called Him "King of Israel" that eventually ignited fear in the Pharisees.

These passages are telling us that if we have Christ with us, even though how small we think we are, as long as we remain true and in conformation to the divine standard of morality and ethics; as long as we remain humble like Jesus, we can successfully confront the powers-that-be in our times. Let us remain humble in the service of the Lord who gives us the strength and the power to fulfill God's mission even as we continue to reflect and seek God's purpose in this season of Lent.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Jesus final act of going to the nation's seat of power was the culmination of his messianic mission. He realized that the people's miseries were imposed on them by the Jerusalem authorities in collusion with the Roman Empire. In the end, his messianic path led him to a fateful confrontation with the world's earthly powers. In his mind, this was both inevitable and necessary.

This crucial point in Jesus' life debunks the idea of entirely and exclusively spiritualizing Jesus' mission. If his mission had nothing to do with earthly rule, there was no need for him to go down to Jerusalem since he had already won a large following among the peasant masses of Galilee. The urbanized population of Jerusalem was not likely inclined to listen to a rural prophet who lacked proper rabbinical credentials. Perhaps some of them had heard of him and were impressed but they preferred to remain midnight visitors like Nicodemus or anonymous donors like Joseph of Arimathea.

But he came to realize that the people were not to blame for their miserable condition. He did not believe that they were sick, poor, demon-possessed, etc., because they were sinners and rightly deserved God's punishment. Rather, they were neglected and exploited by the Jerusalem authorities who cared only to maintain their political connection with Rome and gain from the heavy taxes imposed on the people. Jesus stormed the temple to remove the apparatuses of exploitation not without a degree of violence. He knew all too well what the authorities would do to him. But he thought he would rather bear the consequences than hide in his comfort zone in Galilee.

For him, entering the gates of Jerusalem was his moment of triumph, to his total dedication

to his mission regardless of the cost. His decision to confront the powers of Jerusalem and Rome was the final piece of his messianic calling. He voluntarily embraced death to announce God's judgment on the moral and spiritual culpability of the world's ruling powers for the people's suffering. In having a just and innocent person executed by crucifixion, the authorities showed their defiance of God's justice, thereby losing their moral and spiritual legitimacy. It was a trap that the Devil took hook, line and sinker. Wicked authorities may rule by sheer power of violence but they can no longer wear the mask of God.

Today, the church's continuing witness to God's justice particularly in regards to the killing of the just and innocent has made the ruling powers' mask of legitimacy and justice more transparent, revealing their true nature—corrupt, abusive, oppressive and deceitful. It is only a matter time, in God's own time, when God would realize Mary's song:

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:52)

I. Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the learners are expected to:

1. Define and describe human misery and powers-that-be
2. Relate the activities done by the powers-that-be that cause human misery
3. Analyze the role of the church in alleviating human misery as manifested by Jesus in his triumphal entry to Jerusalem
4. Participate in the youth program of the church that promotes human welfare

II. Concept: Jesus enters Jerusalem to challenge the powers-that-be that cause human misery.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (in different versions), palm leaves, lyrics to "10,000 Reasons", Charades list, Manila paper and markers

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Give each student a palm frond. Invite each one to think of a reason that Jesus is worthy to be praised. While the song "10,000 Reasons" by Matt Redman (or Jesus Culture or Kim Walker-Smith, whichever is available) is being played, invite the students to prayerfully lay their palm fronds down at the altar as they say out loud their reason why Jesus is worthy of their praise.
2. Sing:
 "Ho-Ho-Ho-Hosanna"
 Ho-ho-ho-hosanna, ha-ha-ha-hallelujah!
 He, He, He, He saved me, I've got the joy of the Lord! (repeat song)

B. Getting Ready

Say: Today, Palm Sunday, we will look at Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This happened after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. People were shouting "Hosanna!" and the Pharisees became worried that Jesus was challenging the status quo. The Pharisees have become comfortable in their corrupt ways and no one was challenging them. But their corruption was making life difficult for majority of the people. We will play a game that will show different ways corrupt people in power can cause misery.

C. Learning Time

Game: Charades

Divide the class in 2 groups and have each team take turns in guessing what human misery is being acted out.

1. Poverty
2. Demolition without relocation
3. Sickness
4. Unfair wages/salaries
5. Government corruption
6. Death
7. Overworked employees

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Divide the class in groups of 3. Have the students share personal experiences of misery and unjust treatment by people in power/leadership.

After 15 minutes, the teacher lists down on the board the different kinds of misery people go through.

Say: Sometimes, when things are inconvenient or when things don't go our own way we feel miserable. Although these feelings are valid, it is important to remember that every day, people experience a deeper kind of misery, the kind that powerful people inflict on them.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Have the students read Zechariah 9:9-10 and John 12:12-19 individually.

Ask: What did you like about the way Jesus entered Jerusalem?

Have a student read John 12:12-19 using a different version. Invite the students to listen and imagine that they were in the crowd when Jesus entered Jerusalem while you ask the following series of questions:

Ask: If you were there during that time, where do you imagine yourself to be and what would you be doing? Who are you with? What is your reaction to Jesus?

Have another student read John 12:12-19 using yet another version. Invite the students to listen and imagine what Jesus looked like as He entered Jerusalem while you ask the following series of questions:

Ask: What is Jesus' facial expression as He enters Jerusalem? Does He notice you? How does He react to your presence there? Does He notice the Pharisees? How does He react to them?

Say: Jesus, the promised King of Israel, entered Jerusalem in such a humble way. This simple act was actually the beginning of Jesus' journey to the cross, where He willingly gave His life in order to announce God's judgment on the moral and spiritual culpability of the world's ruling powers for the people's suffering.

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Ask: What kind of suffering do you notice people go through?

List down the students' ideas on the board.

Ask: What do you think is our church doing in order to address this suffering?

List down the students' ideas on the board.

The teacher presents the church's ministries that promote human welfare. Invite the students to collectively decide which they are most interested in. After picking a ministry, the teacher facilitates a short planning session where the students decide on a day when they will volunteer to help out in this ministry.

Say: God has blessed us and has given us multiple reasons to be thankful. We are called to pay this forward. Let us offer this plan to God and believe that God will order things so that we can be actively involved in what God is doing to address people's suffering through this particular ministry.

G. Closing Worship

Distribute copies of the lyrics of "10,000 Reasons" and invite the students to sing along.

The teacher closes in prayer, offering the plan the students made and mentioning that in the face of human misery, God has given us multiple reasons to rejoice.

10,000 Reasons

By Matt Redman/Jesus Culture/Kim Walker-Smith

Bless the Lord, Oh my soul
Oh my soul, worship his holy name
Sing like never before, Oh my soul
I'll worship your holy name

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

Bless the Lord, Oh my soul
Oh my soul, worship his holy name
Sing like never before, Oh my soul
I'll worship your holy name

You're rich in love and you're slow to anger
Your name is great and your heart is kind
For all your goodness, I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Bless the Lord, Oh my soul
Oh my soul, worship his holy name
Sing like never before, Oh my soul
I'll worship your holy name

Bless the lord, oh my soul
Oh my soul, Worship his holy name
Sing like never before, oh my soul
I'll worship your holy name

And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore
Forevermore

Bless the Lord, Oh my soul
Oh my soul, worship his holy name
Sing like never before, Oh my soul
I'll worship your holy name

Bless the lord, oh my soul
Oh my soul, worship his holy name
Sing like never before, oh my soul
I'll worship your holy name

Bless the lord, oh my soul
Oh my soul, worship his holy name
Sing like never before, oh my soul
I'll worship your holy name

