



### Middle and Older Elementary Levels

February 18, 2018

1st Sunday in Lent

#### Jesus as the Suffering Messiah

*Old Testament: Isaiah 53:1-12 (NRSV)*

<sup>1</sup>Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? <sup>2</sup>For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup>He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. <sup>4</sup>Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. <sup>8</sup>By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. <sup>9</sup>They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. <sup>10</sup>Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

*New Testament: Matthew 16:21-23 (NRSV)*

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

<sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' <sup>23</sup>But 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 embraced his destiny as a suffering Messiah.*

Key Concepts ME/OE: **Jesus, as a savior, is willing to experience difficulties.**

#### Exegesis of the Biblical References

Isaiah 53 is one of the four "Servant Songs" in which the prophet describes how God will redeem Israel through the suffering servant. It portrays the arrival of a kind of messiah who will challenge the existing powers that dominate, oppress and humiliate the Israelite people. Here, the suffering messiah though not identified by the writer is suffering and afflicted. But he will become God's instrument to exalt and restore Israel's glory. However, he will be the kind of messiah that confronts rejection and endure torment for a greater cause in a manner contrary to the usual ways of the world which is to conquer and impose change through military and political power and authority. The messiah however will carry on with his mission through silence and nonviolence, and even in his

acceptance of suffering and death. This is the new image of messiah that will now define the mission and ministry of Jesus as the messiah sent by God.

After being affirmed by Peter as the Christ, Jesus now prepares for the next phase of his destiny, his eventual death. Here, Jesus not only anticipates his suffering in the hands of the worldly power, but also prepares his disciples by explaining and describing to them what will happen to him in the days to come. Peter's reaction to Jesus' attitude of embracing his forthcoming suffering symbolizes the typical reaction of the world, a reaction contrary to how God works. Jesus' rebuking Peter suggests opposition and defiance of God's unique redemptive plan through Jesus and his own adherence to the usual ways of the world. Jesus reveals the human's incapability to understand this new mystery in God's ways.

Jesus continued his ministry after he predicted his death and suffering proclaiming a sort of reversal theology which suggests opposition to the norms of the world. Jesus now use opposing illustrations in his teachings that signify contradictions in meaning with disorienting implications for one party but empowerment for the other such as the last becoming the first, adults becoming a child, and the rich not inheriting the kingdom but the poor among other examples.

The suffering servant described by Isaiah who underwent many forms of misery to bring redemption and restoration to the people in a way reflected how Jesus understood his destiny. Both the suffering servant in Isaiah and Jesus embraced their destinies as suffering messiahs prepared to undertake all the gruesome challenges for the good of the people. In addition, both intend to create a conflict highlighting the differences between the worldly ways and that of God's ways. Furthermore, Jesus shares similar view with the suffering servant who disregard the option of conquering adversaries by force to fulfill his mission. Rather Jesus mirrored the suffering servant's full reliance on God's power despite the great physical, emotional and spiritual demands involved in the process of liberating the people. Jesus took upon himself the identity of a suffering messiah as his act of total obedience to God's will and full dependence on God's righteousness.

Early Christians point to Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecy because of the manner he gave his life for the people. Though this has been debated, we cannot deny that Jesus reflects the description of Isaiah's suffering servant. Moreover, whether Jesus is the expected messiah long waited by the Jews to restore their nation and redeem them from the Roman rule or not, Jesus has successfully overcome the ways of the world and proved that God's ways is the ideal way even how seemingly contradictory, absurd and difficult it may appear to be.

### **Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users**

In his time, the traditional image of God's anointed, that is, messiah, is that of a conquering hero like King David. It was this kind of messiah that the disciples expected Jesus to be. But Jesus was not a populist political leader whose aim was to please the crowd in order to keep their loyalty. As they drew closer to Jerusalem he intimated to the disciples that he was going to suffer in the hands of wicked men, but even his most trusted disciple, Peter, didn't get it and rebuked him. At that point, the notion of a suffering messiah has not appeared on their horizon.

Jesus didn't invent the idea of a suffering messiah. He was acquainted with what may be considered a marginal concept of a suffering servant of Yahweh in the hind portion of the Book of Isaiah which scholars today refer to as Deutero- or II Isaiah. Here, it's not by fiat of conquest but by virtue of the affliction suffered by the Lord's servant that Israel may obtain redemption. Jesus rejected the dominant or mainstream view of a conquering messiah as he saw himself fulfilling the role of a sacrificial lamb being dramatically played out by an obscure and mysterious messiah.

In his mind, Jesus realized that his journey to Jerusalem was not an entrance of a king seeking to reclaim his crown but an act of total defiance and provocation to the powers of the authorities. In this, he wished to bring about the ultimate confrontation between the powers of Rome and Jerusalem and the



righteousness of God. Either the authorities would respond by crucifying him or God would bring down the heavenly forces to scatter his enemies and right then and there establish God's reign throughout the world. He offered his life to set up the final crisis between heaven and earth. He was hoping for God's vindication but he also expected Rome to claim his body. From hindsight, the church believed that Jesus got both — God's vindication and Rome's pound of flesh. For Rome it was just a routine cleaning up of a minor commotion. But God elevated that piece of human history into the realm of the eternal.

### Objectives

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

1. enumerate the different things that Isaiah foretells the Messiah will suffer;
2. describe how Jesus foretells his suffering;
3. realize that suffering is part of our desire to follow Christ; and
4. resolve that in suffering with Christ, life becomes victorious.

**II. Concept:** Jesus, as a savior, is willing to experience difficulties.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), old magazines, pairs of scissors, paste, coloring sheet: cross, crayons or water colors, glue, pen

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug. Make a distinct hand-shake for your learners, e.g., Fist-bump
2. Opening prayer: Body Prayer  
Be in your comfortable position and just close your eyes. Be aware of God's presence who is with us and for us. Breathe in God's love, joy and peace. Let this breath fill every cell and fiber of your being. Breathe out God's shalom that people and other creatures seen or unseen around you will experience such love, joy and peace. Place your palms down in front of you or on your lap, symbolizing your desire to release whatever you need like tiredness, boredom, worries and problems—hold that position for 60 seconds. Turn your palms upward, symbolizing your desire to receive from God whatever you need. Pause in that position for 60 seconds. Bring your hands together in a folded prayer position. Be still. Be in that position for 60 seconds. Let all God's children say, "Amen." (Amen.)
3. Opening songs: "Jesus Loves Me" by gbb and "Jesus Helps" by gbb

#### B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to make a big circle. Hold up a wooden cross or any cross. Ask: "Do any of you know what this is?" Pass the cross around and encourage them to feel it. Share: "During the time of Jesus, criminals were killed on crosses. The crucifixion is a very horrible way to be punished. Criminals would be forced to carry their cross to the place where they would be hung. Everyone who saw them knew they had done something wrong. This would be very shameful for the criminals."

#### C. Learning Time

Tell the class to read the verses found in Matthew 16:21-23. Then let them say if the sentence below each verse is a correct paraphrasing of the verse. Let them explain their answers.

### Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

<sup>2</sup> 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.

*Jesus tells his disciples that he will go to Jerusalem to do his mission. He will suffer from the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes. They will kill him by hanging on the cross. But on the third day, he will be raised from the dead.*

<sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.'

*Peter tells him not to go. He does not want him to suffer and die.*

<sup>23</sup>But 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.'

*Jesus gets angry with Peter. He said that Peter prevents him in fulfilling his mission of God's plan of salvation. Peter thinks only of the things of men and not of the things of God. Jesus knew that the only way to fulfill his mission is by the way of the cross.*

#### D. Deepening Activity' Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson. Ask these questions.

1. What did Jesus tell his disciples? (He tells them that he will suffer, die, and rise from the dead.)
2. Where is Jesus going? (He is going to Jerusalem.)
3. What does Jesus need to undergo? (He must undergo great suffering.)
4. Why do you think Jesus did it? (Jesus did it to save us.)
5. Why is it important for Jesus to tell his disciples? (He wanted them to know ahead what will happen and to know God's plan of Salvation.)
6. What is a suffering Messiah as defined by Isaiah? Read Isaiah 53:3-7. <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. <sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> 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. 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. <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

#### E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: "Jesus was obedient to his Father, willing to suffer and even to the point of death. Ask: "What can we do to show our gratitude to Christ for his sufferings to save us?"

#### F Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the memory verse: "... for you (Peter) are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." (Matthew 16:23b)

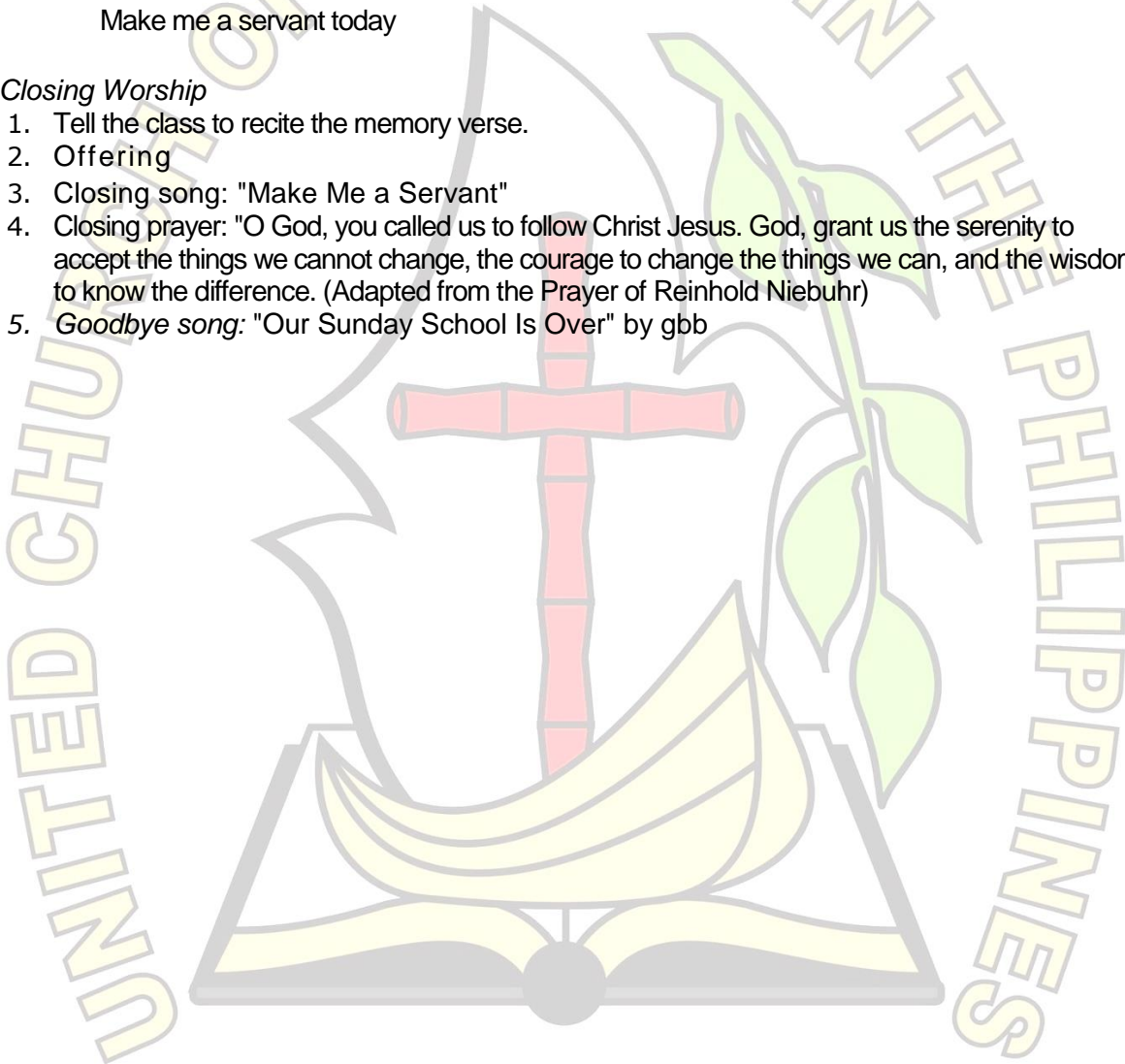
2. Teach the following song. After singing the song, ask the class the different ways by which they can serve others.

"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

G. *Closing Worship*

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "Make Me a Servant"
4. Closing prayer: "O God, you called us to follow Christ Jesus. God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference. (Adapted from the Prayer of Reinhold Niebuhr)"
5. *Goodbye song*: "Our Sunday School Is Over" by gbb





February 25, 2018  
Second Sunday in Lent

### **Jesus, the Messiah for All**

Old Testament: **Genesis 21:18-20** (NRSV)

<sup>18</sup>“Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.”

<sup>19</sup>Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. <sup>20</sup>God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow.

New Testament: **Matthew 15:21-28** (NRSV)

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

<sup>21</sup>Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>Just then, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” <sup>23</sup>But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.” <sup>24</sup>He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

<sup>25</sup>But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” <sup>26</sup>“He answered, It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.” <sup>27</sup>She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” <sup>28</sup>Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

*General Concept:* **The inclusiveness of Jesus' mission is formed through his encounters with outcasts and people of other faiths.**

Key Concepts ME/OE: **Jesus is willing to help all.**

### **Exegesis of the Biblical References**

Hagar and Ishmael were threats to Sarah's security as wife of Abraham. She considered them rivals to Abraham's attention and inheritance. So she drove them away to the desert. When travelling in the desert, the ideal Middle Eastern practice was to bring enough water, food and other supplies on camels or horses. They usually travelled in groups for safety and to ensure survival in the harsh desert. But Hagar and Ishmael travelled by themselves with only a little food and water. They were unsure of where they were going. They were at risk from possible attacks from bandits. Their chances of survival in the desert were minimal. But God saw their struggles and heard their cries. Even without Abraham's protection, God provided for their needs and took care of them, especially Ishmael. God is merciful and just to all people, especially the suffering, oppressed and rejected.

In the Book of Matthew, the story of Jesus encounter with the Canaanite woman comes before the story of the feeding of the five thousand. The way the stories are arranged is fitting. Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman is the turning point of Jesus' ministry. It is a reorientation of his purpose as Messiah. From being the messiah exclusive only for the Jews, he becomes the bread of life that provides spiritual nourishment to many people, and eventually to all nations. Jesus and his disciples are on their way to the region of Tyre and Sidon. This region was where the non-Jews lived. Here they encounter the disturbing and persistent Canaanite woman. Jesus and his disciples respond to her in the usual way Jews respond to non-Jews, to people they consider less important or even to an enemy. At first, they ignored the cry of the Canaanite woman. They avoided responding to her needs. They viewed her as an outcast unworthy of their time and attention. But the faith and persistence of the Canaanite woman made Jesus realize that he needed to reevaluate the scope of his mission. Here, the Canaanite woman is teaching and reminding Jesus that his God is one and the same as the God of other peoples.

After Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman, we see a shift in the tone of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus' ministry now extends and offers salvation to all people regardless of ethnic or religious background. In fact, he commissioned his disciples to go and baptize all nations. His commissioning symbolizes the breaking of boundaries. Jesus abandons the old thinking that only Jews are the chosen people worthy of God's love and mercy. Here, the loving, accepting and forgiving character of God in the Old Testament is embodied in Jesus' dealings with the people, especially the outcast and neglected.

Jesus now becomes identified as the messiah that will save not just the Jews, but also the outcast and the oppressed. Jesus intends to fulfill God's call for justice and to exhibit God's love, acceptance and mercy so all may experience the Reign of God.

### **Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users**

The term, messiah, which means "anointed" has a specific meaning in Jewish history and theology. It refers to God's chosen agent to save the people of Israel. When used by the church as a divine title exclusive to Jesus, the word took on new meaning. Jesus Christ is savior of both the Jewish people and the nations of the world (Gentiles). This transition is not a church invention but is derived from Jesus' earthly ministry itself. Jesus' messianic self-understanding was first informed by Jewish tradition. But his encounters with people in need who were ethnically non-Jewish caused him to make a radical turn outwards. It was the Canaanite/Syro-Phoenician woman who educated him that Israel's God was also her God. This broadened understanding about God was already anticipated by the Old Testament prophets but had been drastically toned down by the more dominant nationalistic authorities of the law. In this instance, Jesus the messiah has fulfilled the prophecies of old.

Jesus the Christ reveals and realizes in his ministry the all-encompassing broadness of God's love, justice and mercy. Faith communities that emerged alongside tribal, ethnic or national formations tend to develop a narrow theological perspective. There is a close association of religious identity with national, tribal or ethnic identity. For example, being Jewish is both an ethnic and religious identity. For several centuries at the peak of modern Western colonialism, Christianity was identified with Europe and North America while paganism was used as a generic religious term referring to native populations. Today, Muslim people are profiled also in terms of their demographic origins.

A particular community of faith is like a window from which one is able to view the larger environment outside the house. This means that Christians see Muslims from a Christian point of view and tend to evaluate them based on Christian standards. This is unavoidable and may not be completely overcome but this limitation does not necessarily lead to religious bigotry. Let it serve as a condition and challenge to seek dialogue and cooperation in a mutually enriching relationship. Underlying the process is a genuine recognition that they are both children of one and the same God and that God has a different and special plan of salvation for each.

#### **I. Objectives**

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

1. retell the story about Ishmael and the Canaanite woman;
2. compare how God extends His help to them;
3. describe the role of these two persons in the willingness of Jesus to help; and
4. demonstrate acts of kindness to others with Jesus as the model.

**II. Concept:** Jesus, as a savior, is willing to experience difficulties.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (NRSV), Bible drill, song chart, offering plate, coloring sheets (Canaanite woman and her daughter, Hagar and Ishmael)

#### **III. Learning Experiences**

##### **A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners warmly with your welcoming smile and your big warm



- hug. Give them a high five and lead them to their seats.
2. Opening prayer: "Our Creator God who created all things with colors and shapes, we thank you for loving us all. Thank you for this beautiful day and for the loving fellowship with one another. Lord, teach us how to accept others and to welcome them as you welcomed and cared for Hagar and the Canaanite woman. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen."
  3. Opening songs:
    - a. "The Love of Jesus"
 

The love of Jesus sweet and marvelous (thrice), O..o.. Wonderful love...  
Higher than the sky above, deeper than the ocean  
Wider than the universe, O..o.. Wonderful love.
    - b. "I'm Part of You" by gbb (Tune: "His Banner over Me")
 

I'm part of you and you're part of me together in God's family (thrice). We're living together in God's household.
- B. Getting Ready**
1. Bible drill. Distribute Bibles of the same version to the learners. Say: "We will find out how well you can locate the following verses that I will tell you. (Example: John 3:16)
  2. After the activity, ask: "What do you think all these verses say about God?" (God's love)
- C. Learning Time**
1. Tell the class to read the biblical references in unison.
    - a. Genesis 21:18-20. The story of Hagar and Ishmael
    - b. Matthew 15:21-28. The story of the Canaanite woman and her daughter
  2. Form two groups to discuss the two stories. Assign the first group the story of Hagar and Ishmael and the second group the story of the Canaanite woman and her daughter. Provide this outline for the discussion.
    - a. Description of the characters
    - b. Their problem
    - c. How God showed God's love for them
  3. Ask both groups to share their discussion to the whole class.
- D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time**
1. Discuss the stories. Ask these questions.
    - a. Who are the characters in the first story? (God, Hagar and Ishmael)
    - b. Who are the characters in the second story? (Jesus, the Canaanite woman, disciples of Jesus)
    - c. How can you compare Hagar and the Canaanite woman? (Both women are not Jews. Hagar has a dying son and the Canaanite woman has a daughter who is possessed by the demons.)
    - d. How can you compare Ishmael and the daughter of the Canaanite woman? (Ishmael is about to die because of hunger and thirst. The daughter of the Canaanite woman is restless because of the demons who torture her.)
    - e. How did God help Ishmael? (God showed Hagar where to look for water and food.)
    - f. How did Jesus help the daughter of the Canaanite woman? (The story does not say how Jesus helped her but she was healed instantly.)
    - g. Which of these adjectives describe God? Explain your answer. (Expect all the three adjectives fit to describe God.)
 

1) kind	2) compassionate	3) inclusive
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  2. Prepare the class to dramatize the two stories. Use the same grouping and let the first group present the story of Hagar and the second group, the story of the Canaanite

woman.

3. Have both groups present their dramatizations one after the other.

#### E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Why do you think God extended God's grace to Hagar? What made Jesus change his mind and help the Canaanite woman?" (Jesus' messiahship is for all.)

#### F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the memory verses:
  - a. "God was with the boy, and he grew up" (Genesis 21:20a)
  - b. "O woman, great is your faith!" (Matt 15:27)
2. Think-Group-Share. Say: "Jesus welcomes and helps every person who needs his help especially those people who are considered as the least, the lost and the last of our community." Tell the class to form dyads and ask each dyad to discuss how they can help people who are in need. Tell them to include these ideas: welcoming a newcomer, accepting people who are different from them, planning ways of extending help to victims of flood, fire or other natural calamities in the communities near them.

#### G. Closing Worship

1. Let the class recite the memory verses.
2. Reflective action: I want to be like Jesus. I will do my best to help others.
3. Offering: Put a basket offering at the center and instruct the children to bring their offering while singing the doxology.
4. Closing song: "Make Me a Servant"
5. Closing prayer: "We thank you, O God, for the lesson of welcoming others in your grace. May you teach us to help and love others as you helped and loved us. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen."
6. Goodbye song: "Our Sunday School Is Over" by gbb

March 4, 2018

Third Sunday in Lent

### Jesus' Encounters with the Powerful and Wealthy

*Old Testament: Psalm 72:1-7* (NRSV)

Prayer for Guidance and Support for the King

Of Solomon.

<sup>1</sup>Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. <sup>2</sup>May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. <sup>3</sup>May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. <sup>4</sup> May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. <sup>5</sup> May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. <sup>6</sup>May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth. <sup>7</sup>In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

*New Testament: Mark 10:17-25* (NRSV)

The Rich Man

<sup>17</sup>As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>18</sup>Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. <sup>19</sup>You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; honor your father and mother.'" <sup>20</sup>He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." <sup>21</sup>Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." <sup>22</sup>When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. <sup>23</sup>Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" <sup>24</sup>And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

*General Concept: Jesus is challenging the powerful and the wealthy to become compassionate, repentant, and just.*

*Key Concepts ME/OE: Jesus calls us to care and share and to repent.*

### Exegesis of the Biblical References

Psalm 72 indicates that it is a prayer originally of Solomon but it was later adapted by succeeding kings as the standard prayer for use during their coronation. The prayer is asking God for wisdom that will allow the king to see the needs of his people. The king is asking God to help him know what is righteous, to discern what is just, to have compassion to defend those who are poor. This in effect, defines the qualities that would characterize and differentiate Israel's kings from the kings of other nations. This suggests that there had been kings before who succeeded in power but avoided following this standard for the rule of an anointed king. The prayer reflects the experience of a person who witnessed the cruelty and abuse of the powerful and wealthy towards the lowly and the weak of the land. This is supposed to provide the yardstick for evaluating the rule of every ruler and leader of any nation, how he/she practices justice toward those who have less in life as a defining quality of one's regime and administration.

The life and ministry of Jesus undeniably favors the poor, oppressed and marginalized. On the other hand, his teachings is seen as an antagonist that is persistently challenging the powerful and wealthy usually identified with the Pharisees and scribes and the rest of the ruling elite of Judah. They have become the usual target of his denunciations and bitter critical diatribes (e.g., Matt.23). After Capernaum, Jesus went to the region of Judea across the Jordan and met again a large crowd. Here, Jesus directs his teaching towards the powerful and wealthy who are capable of either upholding justice or inflicting oppression. Jesus also reminds them of their responsibility towards the poor who are weak,



vulnerable and helpless. This passage reflects the context during the Roman regime where there are a few rich and powerful while so many are poor and struggling because of very unequal distribution of wealth and because of the abuse and corruption of government officials and temple leaders. Jesus' encounter with the rich young man is part of Jesus' teachings that challenges the powerful and wealthy to look into their relationship with the poor and how they use their power and wealth.

Power and wealth are highlighted by Jesus as the stumbling block for the rich young man that keeps him from becoming one of those who can enter the Kingdom of God despite his efforts of following the law. The rich young man's obedience to the law is admirable, yet for Jesus it is not enough since this has only benefited him but not others specially the poor. Here, Jesus was concerned not about the person's obedience to the law but how the man used his wealth and power.

Inheriting the kingdom of God entails following Jesus and becoming an agent of change and reform for oneself and for one's relationship with others especially the poor. Jesus provided the rich young man the way to inherit eternal life. However, Jesus' answer was not favorable to the rich young man so he was displeased. This suggests that the rich young man was not willing to surrender not only his wealth, but also his status, power and privileges. The rich young man's resistance to Jesus' invitation to follow him clearly shows his unwillingness to participate in a just reordering of relations by sharing his wealth and helping the poor. A just reordering of economic relations involving sharing and redistribution of wealth to uplift the poor and the downtrodden is a vital expression of a life of repentance and commitment to follow Jesus all the way.

Like the kings, people with power and wealth are viewed as people entrusted with God's blessings so they can look after the welfare of their subordinates. They are not to abuse and maltreat the people from the lower social classes. Kings and the wealthy who possess power are expected to become the defenders of the powerless against all forms of unrighteousness and injustice. Their leadership should primarily benefit the poor and the downtrodden. Perhaps the powerful and wealthy can learn from the prayer of Solomon who asks God for wisdom to know the purpose why God has blessed him. The powerful and wealthy are not ruled out as unable to enter the kingdom of God, they are constantly being invited by God just like Jesus invited the rich young man to follow him—all they have to do is to have the compassion, to repent and to practice justice.

### **Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users**

Jesus preached a message of repentance in view of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God. His intended primary audience was the rich and powerful of his time whose repentance would benefit the poor and downtrodden. This is dramatically illustrated in the story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus. So, the gospel is good news (Greek, euangelion) to the poor. This line comes straight from the prophets of old, whose prophetic message was addressed to the rulers of the nation. To those who bore the brunt of injustice, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount which enumerates the blessings of the coming kingdom of God for them.

In other words, Jesus' message was good news to the poor but he was speaking to the rich. Aside from being theologically sound, there is a good economic sense to it. We live in a world where so very few people own so much wealth, while so many subsist on so little. According to Oxfam International, 1% of humankind own more than half of the world's total wealth. A simple redistribution of the world's wealth could easily provide food, health care, housing and education to every family everywhere. That would, of course, require a new mechanism of managing the world's resources. Before God, everything has a spiritual dimension in that nothing lies outside God's judgment. For every amount that a person makes, she or he will have to account to God on the Day of Judgment. In an intricately interconnected world, the bulging wealth of one is the impoverishment of many others. To people with moral scruples, this is scandalous; before God, this is an abomination. According to Oxfam again, this situation is leading towards a global catastrophe that will spare no one. To put it theologically, it means

the apocalyptic coming of God's final judgment.

No other message rings with more urgency today than this: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." The rich and the powerful must repent, that is, smash the poverty-generating machine of corporate globalization and replace it with a social economy that puts the public well-being first before profit. Short of that, the world will perish.

### I. Objectives

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

1. tell the meaning of repentance;
2. tell how Jesus answered the man who desires to inherit eternal life;
3. deduce from the story the need for every person to share and care for others as modelled by Jesus; and
4. express one's resolve to help others.

**II. Concept:** Jesus calls us to care and share and to repent.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), checklist Biblical Costumes  
Camel Paper Art: Card board, Pair of Scissors, Pen, Crayons

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome Time: Greet the learners with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug. Initiate your unique class hands shake with your learners and converse with 5 learners about their whereabouts last week.
2. Opening prayer: "God, our Parent, free us from boredom that we may praise and magnify your name. Open our senses that we may see, hear, feel, and encounter your love and care to everyone here. Be here with us we plea. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.
3. Opening songs:
  - a. "We Shall Overcome"  
We shall overcome, we shall overcome, we shall overcome someday;  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome someday.
  - b. "Make Me A Servant"  
Make me a servant, humble and meek  
Lord let me lift up those who are weak.  
And may the prayers of my heart always be  
Make me a servant, make me a servant, make me a servant today.

#### B. Getting Ready

*Making a butterfly mobile.* Prepare the needed materials: model of a medium-sized butterfly, colored paper, glue, pair of scissors, and crayons. Let the pupils make four butterflies using the available materials. In each butterfly, let them write the words: NEW LIFE IN JESUS. Then have them decorate each butterfly. Tell them not to cover the words. Using thread, instruct them to make a mobile. Let the class display their work and have them talk about their new life in Jesus.

#### C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read Psalm 72:1-7 in unison. Then call on selected pupils to talk about the writer of this psalm and name some of the things that a righteous king can expect from God.

2. Form two groups and tell each group take turns in reading the role of Jesus and the rich young man. The teacher acts as the narrator. The class may opt to wear costumes or masks.

#### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions

1. Was this young man a good person? Why? (The rich young man had been very good for he followed all of the commandments.)
2. Did this young man love Jesus with His whole heart? Why? (The rich man was not willing to give up all of his nice things for Jesus. He could not love Jesus with his whole heart because he loved his things more!)
3. Why would Jesus ask us to give up our things for Him? (Jesus wants us to follow Him.)
4. Why do you think obedience is an important ingredient in entering God's kingdom? (Being obedient to God is a discipline needed to become God's follower.)
5. Why do you think Jesus says that it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God? (Riches can make people forget God.)

#### E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "According to Jesus, how can we enter God's kingdom?" (Jesus calls us to care and share and to repent.)

#### F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

(Mark 10:21 b)

2. **For ME:** Present these materials. Let them think of how they can share these things with others who are in need.

Possessions To whom can they be shared to show their concern for others

- a. Clothes
- b. Shoes
- c. Gadgets
- d. White gifts
- e. Food

3. **For OE:** Tell the class to list their treasures and ask them to plan what they can do to share these to those who need them.

#### G. Closing Worship

1. Reflective action: / will *always put my trust in the Lord.*
2. Offering: Put a basket offering at the center while singing the song: "We're Sharing" (Tune: I'm Giving)
3. Closing song: "With God All Things Are Possible" (gbb Tune: London Bridge) With God all things are possible, are possible, are possible,  
With God all things are possible, that's why we trust God.
4. Closing prayer: "O God our Parent, we thank you for teaching us today how to share with others. May we hold nothing from you. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen."
5. Goodbye song: "Our School Is Over"



March 11, 2018

Fifth Sunday in Lent

**The Mystery of the Messianic Grace**

*Old Testament: Isaiah 58:6-12* (NRSV)

<sup>6</sup> Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? <sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? <sup>8</sup> Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard. <sup>9</sup> Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am." If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, <sup>10</sup> if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. <sup>11</sup> The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. <sup>12</sup> Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

*New Testament: Matthew 20:1-16* (NRSV)

The Laborers in the Vineyard

<sup>1</sup> For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup> When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; <sup>4</sup> and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. <sup>5</sup> When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. <sup>6</sup> And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" <sup>7</sup> They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard."

<sup>8</sup> When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." <sup>9</sup> When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. <sup>10</sup> Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. <sup>11</sup> And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, <sup>12</sup> saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." <sup>13</sup> But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? <sup>14</sup> Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. <sup>15</sup> Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" <sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

*General Concept: Jesus is the embodiment of God's grace.*

**Key Concepts ME/OE: Through Jesus, we know and experience God's love.**

**Exegesis of the Biblical References**

The practice of fasting has always been part of Israel's life, faith and religious tradition. The Israelites practice fasting either individually or communally as an expression of grieving or mourning or as a form of repentance and seeking forgiveness or as part of their worship ritual or as an expression of total reliance on God's grace. Whether fasting is done in private or as a community, it requires a sincere faith with a concrete corresponding action in the hope of receiving God's favor. Over time,

however, fasting as a practice became a venue for some people to project their religiosity even as they continue with their sinful ways, ignoring the more important social and ethical implications of their faith in God.

After Israel has returned from their exile in Babylon and have settled back in their homeland, people began putting more emphasis on the ritual dimension of fasting. In response to this new development, the unknown prophet of the post exilic period (known to the scholars as Third Isaiah) began criticizing the kind of fasting that people are practicing and the hypocrisy behind such practice as he sees the contradiction between the rituals undertaken by the rich Jews and the denial of basic care, compassionate assistance and support for the needy especially for those fellow Jews (kababayan) who are working for them. The prophet wants to remind the Israelites about the true essence of fasting that God expects from them - providing food for the hungry and clothes for those with nothing to wear especially during the winter. In other words, Isaiah is proclaiming the kind of fasting that God intends them to do and that is to become God's instrument of grace and source of hope especially for their fellow Israelites who are poor and weak. It also illustrates one very profound truth about what is really the true essence of religious faith- that religious rituals such as fasting become empty and devoid of any relevant meaning at all if the actual practice of the ethical requirements of such religion is ignored. Actual practice of these ethical requirements in daily life experiences is indispensable and non-negotiable for one's faith to be acknowledged as truly an authentic one.

The parable of the workers in the vineyard illustrates the rather unexplainable mystery behind God's sovereignty in dispensing God's grace. Jesus' teaching in parables mirrors God's mysterious nature and ways - incomprehensible, unpredictable and hidden to those unworthy to receive the grace, but for those chosen by God who remained obedient, faithful and trusting it is not impossible to understand and follow. In this parable, Jesus emphasizes that the grace of God is available to all and will be given to all who accept and help propagate the gospel not on the basis of one's social, religious or economic status or of one's vocation nor of the amount of effort a person gives. Grace depends on God's prerogative, will and purpose and not on human effort nor on the amount of time, energy or talent invested or offered for the advancement of God's kingdom. Jesus reminds the people that no one can dictate the amount of grace a person deserves to receive. Here, Jesus proclaims a radical message that challenges the traditional interpretation of how one can earn the grace and favor of God. He also challenges the authority and integrity of the Pharisees and scribes as the acknowledged dispensers of God's grace and official teachers and implementers of the law. The gospel of Jesus reverses the traditional understanding that the grace of God depends upon one's obedience to the law and constant good works. Instead, Jesus reminds the people that God's grace does not rely on human efforts or obedience to the law but through one's faith and loyalty to God's will regardless of whether they have been long time believers in God like the Jews or new or late entrants to the faith like the newly converted Gentiles.

For Christ's followers, the law remains an important part of their faith that guides them in their daily living. But they now also perceived that God's grace abounds so much that they become empowered to live and aspire more than what the law requires. Like Jesus who embodies the grace of God, his followers now accept their call not because the law mandates them but it is an expression of their faith and loyalty to God in response to the grace of God they received in and through Jesus Christ.

### **Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users**

Law determines the standards of justice. Laws may vary from one society to another but underneath the various legal provisions are universal concepts of justice. This is true from the time of Hammurabi, the ancient lawgiver of Mesopotamia up to the modern times. Of course, there are laws that are patently unjust because they serve special vested interests rather than the entire population. But on the whole the law is justice's most trusted servant.



The Jewish law continues to have an important role for the regulation of Christian life and community. This was affirmed by Jesus himself and recognized by the Apostle Paul. But the place and value of the law was now to be seen only in the light of the gospel which is about God's grace that was manifested in and through Jesus Christ. The glory of the law shines forth from the light reflected from grace.

God's grace was already there in the law but it had remained a mystery until it was disclosed in Jesus Christ. Due to human weakness, human beings have misunderstood and misused the law to serve and glorify one's self rather than be subject to it to fulfill humanity's destiny as appointed by God. As a result, God's grace is hidden from human beings and consequently have missed the law's true and primal purpose. In Jesus' life and work, death and resurrection, grace and law found their rightful places in the economy of God's salvation.

Created and redeemed by grace, Christians obey the call to mission in gratitude rather than being compelled by law. Such obedience exceeds the requirements of the law and without any thought of reward as promised by the law. Jesus exemplified grateful obedience to a gracious God as he subjected himself completely to God's will.

### I. Objectives

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

1. listen carefully as the story of the workers hired in the vineyard is read;
2. describe the workers and the landowner
3. compare the love of the landowner to his workers with the love of God to His people
4. infer that we can experience God's love for us; and
5. express one's gratitude for God's love for us.

**II. Concept:** Through Jesus, we know and experience God's love.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (NRSV), activity sheet

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the learners with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug. Initiate your unique handshake and converse with some children about their whereabouts last week.
2. Opening prayer: Our loving and gracious God, we thank you for your love you have shown to us each day through Jesus Christ. May we learn more about this love as we study your word. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening songs:
  - a. "Jesus Loves Me"  
Jesus loves me the way I am. I love you the way you are  
Jesus loves us the way we are.  
Hallelu-hallelujah, Halle-hallelujah (thrice), Jesus loves us the way we are.
  - b. "A Thankful Heart"

#### B. Getting Ready

Gather all the learners and ask them what household chores they do at home. Have them share their experiences—how much time they spend in doing them, how easy or difficult the chore is, and how they feel after doing them. Then ask them how their parents show their appreciation of their work.



### C. Learning Time

1. Ask the class to listen carefully as the teacher reads the story in Matthew 20:1-16 aloud. Discuss the terms that the children find difficult in the story to help them understand the story. Then tell the class to read the story responsively.
2. Divide the class into five groups. Assign each group with any of the characters in the story—narrator, landowner, first set of workers, second set of workers, and third set of workers. Let each group read their parts silently and get ready to read their parts aloud with the other characters.
3. Let the class read their parts in the story.

### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Discuss the lesson. Ask these questions.
  - a. What is a vineyard? (It is a place where grapes are grown.)
  - b. How can you describe the landowner and the workers? (The landowner showed concern for all the workers he hired. The workers are laborers who are hired to harvest grapes in the vineyard.)
  - c. How were the workers hired? (The workers were hired at different times of the day.)
  - d. What did the landowner offer the workers who came at different times of the day? (The landowner offered them the same daily pay.)
  - e. What happened at the end of the day's work? (All the workers received the same amount of pay.)
  - f. Who among the workers got angry? Why did they complain? (The workers who worked longer hours complained because they consider giving equal pay to everyone when some worked for shorter hours unfair.) Do you agree with these workers? (Yes, because they gave more work and they feel they deserve higher pay. No, because all of them were offered the same pay regardless of the time they spend for working and they accepted this offer.) How do pride and envy reflected in the story? Explain your answer.
2. Tell the class the representations of the characters and the situation:
  - a. The landowner represents God who shows concern for all God's people.
  - b. The offer of equal pay represents God's love by offering salvation to everyone who believes in Him through His Son, Jesus.
  - c. The different times of hiring during the day represent the different times used by Jesus to offer people the gift of salvation.
3. Ask: *Using the theme of the story, do you think we can also experience God's offer of salvation for us at present? Can we earn the gift of salvation?*

### E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How can we experience God's love at present?" (Through Jesus, we know and experience God's love.)

### F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach them the memory verse: "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (Matthew 20:16)
2. Let the children look back at the representation of God's grace in the story. Then ask them what things they can do to show their gratitude to God's gift of salvation.
3. For ME: Ask the class to talk about the bad effect of envy at home or in school. Let the class list ways to show respect and tolerance for others.  
For OE: Ask the class to talk about the bad effect of pride in the church or in the community.

Let them list how they can humble themselves when serving others.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering

4. Closing songs: "We Will Live in Love"

5. Closing prayer: "O God our Parent, we thank you for teaching us today how to love as Jesus loved. Move us to love everyone even to those who are hard to love. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen."







March 18, 2018

Fifth Sunday in Lent

**The Amazing Gift of God's Grace**

**Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:34**

<sup>34</sup>No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the LORD', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

**New Testament: Luke 15:11-24**

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

<sup>11</sup>Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup>A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup>When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup>He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup>But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'"

<sup>20</sup>So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

<sup>22</sup>But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup>And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup>for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

**General Concept: God's amazing grace builds a forgiving community by restoring the alienated back to the fellowship of the church.**

**Key Concept**

**ME/OE: By God's amazing grace, we receive forgiveness.**

**Exegesis of Biblical References**

The Israelites were exiled to Babylon as God's punishment to them for their disobedience. Despite the warnings and repeated calls for repentance by Jeremiah, the Israelites, led by their ruling elite in Jerusalem, refused to listen and continued their evil ways. As a result, chaos broke and there was disunity and disharmony among themselves. This is why the Babylonian enemy was able to easily defeat them and took them into captivity. However, after spending years as an alienated, uprooted and a vanquished people in a foreign land, God once again heard the cry of His people and the Lord began to listen to their hearts asking for forgiveness. God then sent a word through Jeremiah to proclaim God's desire for forgiveness and plan of restoration saying "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." After all they have been through, the people still have a future to look forward to right in their own homeland where they can once

more live as a people able to freely worship and serve their God as a forgiven, restored people.

Jesus use parables to make his message more understandable for his audience and to emphasize better his point. In the parable of the lost son, Jesus cited the human capacity and tendency to sin as exemplified by the son who craved for and took his share of wealth and spent it unwisely. But Jesus, in the parable, also taught about forgiveness as illustrated by the father who welcomed and accepted his son despite of what he has done and what he has gone through. Jesus presented to his audience a God who is prepared and willing to forgive those who humble themselves and would turn back from their evil ways.

As followers of Jesus who comprise the church and as recipient of God's grace, we are reminded of our capability to forgive others, gifted with the ability to restore those who are alienated, and our duty to accept those who are lost. Being a forgiving and accepting community of fellow forgiven sinners becomes one of the abiding and outstanding marks of a true fellowship of the church that is imbued with the spirit of our Lord Jesus. Let God's grace direct, motivate and empower us so we can be the church that is meant and called to be, one that accepts and embraces all peoples.

#### *Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users*

Like the good shepherd who left the ninety-nine in order to find one lost sheep, the church never gives up seeking to restore an alienated member. The church is a community that doesn't take delight in punishing the offender; it rejoices in the return of a forgiven sinner. If punishment needs to be handed out as the law requires, it is for the purpose of restoring relationships that have been broken by the offense committed. The satisfaction served by punishment, however, does not make a forgiving heart. It is God's grace that heals the hurt suffered by the violated and at the same time breaks down the violator towards repentance. God's grace working on both sides prepares the ground for reconciliation and restoration.

As God's children, the church lives under the rule of the gospel rather than the law. In contrast to the law which is harsh and punitive, the gospel is tender and forgiving. The intents of the law are self-evident and self-operational, whereas the power of the gospel comes from God's grace that knows no bounds. That does not, however, abolish the function of the law in the Christian life. In actual fact, God employs the services of the law in order to make the work of the gospel effective.

Accordingly, the church employs the co-operation of the law and gospel by which the offender accepts the guilt and submits to the process of making amends for the injury done. At the same time, the offended party goes through a process of healing to soften the ground for forgiveness to sprout. The two-pronged process takes place under the grace of God. Finally, damaged relationships are repaired and the separated members are restored back to the fellowship of the church.

### **I. Objectives**

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

1. analyze the parable of the "Prodigal Son";
2. explain the actions of the father and his son;
3. state that the Holy Spirit enables the believers to forgive others and ask for forgiveness; and
4. list ways by which one can forgive or ask for forgiveness.

### **II. Concept:** By God's amazing grace, we receive forgiveness.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (NRSV), song chart, pictures of the story, 2 fresh fruits like banana, apple or mango (for the game), candies/chocolates/banana/kamote, bond paper, pens, pencils, cartolina

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children as they arrive. Set the mode for a joyful classroom. You feel the presence of God by being happy and friendly.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, thank you for gathering us today! We know you are always with us. Please help us to forgive. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen!"
3. Opening song: "Rejoice in the Lord"  
Rejoice in the Lord always and again, I say rejoice and again I say rejoice (2x).  
I'm excited (3x) in the Lord (3x),  
When you're walking with the Lord you can't get bored.  
Oh, oh, oh, somebody touched me (3x)  
It must have been the hands of the Lord.

#### B. Getting Ready

Prepare the class to play the game "Fresh Fruit Relay" to enable them to appreciate the value of forgiving, giving, and receiving.

1. Have the children form two teams and tell each team to form one line. Give the fruit to the first player. She/He then passes it to the next without looking back and turning around. When the fruit reaches the last player, she/he will shout, "Thank You", and passes it back to the player in front of her/him who will in return receive the fruit. The player in front will shout "You're welcome!" This is round 1 of the game. For the next rounds, the teacher may direct the class to change the underlined words with-I love you, I love you too-, I need you-I need you too-, I care for you-I care for you too--, I forgive you-I forgive you too. The team that earns the most points wins the game.)
2. Write the word prodigal on the board. Ask the class what they remember about the meaning of the word "prodigal". Present the meaning of the word being, "wasteful" or "lavish" and to use this word in appropriate contexts such as, "How would a prodigal feast look like?" (With lots of food on a banquet; exquisite and expensive china; visitors in fine, formal and extravagant clothes) Who are the people you know who live a prodigal lifestyle? (politicians, business people, actors, etc.)

#### C. Learning Time

1. Ask: Who is prodigal in this story? Tell the class to read Luke 15:11-24.
2. Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group specific verses and tell the members to discuss the verses. Let each group choose their reporter who will present the highlights of the given verses.
 

a. Group 1. Verses 11-12	c. Group 3. Verses 17-21
b. Group 2. Verses 13-16	d. Group 4. Verses 22-24
3. Process the report of each group.

#### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Tell the class to answer the following"
  - a. Who is called prodigal in this story? (The son)
  - b. Why do you think the son is called prodigal (He wasted his inheritance.)
  - c. How exactly was he considered wasteful or prodigal? (First, he asked for his share of the family's property which his father appropriately granted. Then, he went to a far place and recklessly spent all his inheritance.)
  - d. What was the result of his reckless actions? (Soon his money was all gone. He became poor.)



- e. How did he try to deal with this consequence? (He worked as caretaker of pigs.)
  - f. Who helped the father to forgive? (God)
  - g. Why do you think we must forgive those who sinned against us? (Forgiveness is not ours to keep. God has commanded us to forgive. God has accepted and loved us despite our sins. God commands us to do the same.)
  - h. How do you think we should forgive? (First, we have to ask God to guide us. Then, we understand and learn from what has been done. We accept that we want to become better persons.)
2. Tell the class to act out the story. Use the same grouping and let each group act out the verses assigned to them.
- E. Discovering the Biblical Truth**  
Ask: When we ask for forgiveness, what does the God do? (The God guides us. We follow.)
- F. Applying the Biblical Truth**  
Tell the children to do the following activities:
1. Discuss the memory verse: "'Father I have sinned against heaven and before you." (Luke 15:21)
  2. *Show and tell.* Tell the children to recall any experience wherein he/she apologized to someone who did wrong. Emphasize that the God enables the believers to forgive others and ask others for forgiveness.
  3. *Candy/chocolate/banana/kamote of forgiveness.* Distribute 3 pieces each of the food. Tell them not to eat them yet. Let them share to their classmates who did something wrong to them or bullied them. As they give the food, they may say, "Peace be with you" or "I forgive you." They may also accept food from their classmates who they have wronged.
- G. Closing Worship**
1. Offering
  2. Commitment: "I commit or promise to forgive others."
  3. Closing songs: "Come Holy Spirit" and other good-bye songs
  4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we thank you for your loving kindness. We thank you that we can come to you whenever we have a problem and that you will always be there for us. We know that you are quick to forgive us when we mess up and will always welcome us back when we return to you. Amen."

March 25, 2018

Sixth Sunday in Lent/Palm Sunday Lectionary

Title 17: **Entry to Jerusalem**

*Old Testament: Psalm 118:26* (NRSV)

<sup>26</sup> Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD: We bless you from the house of the LORD.

*New Testament: Mark 11:1-10* (NRSV)

Jesus Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem

<sup>1</sup>When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples <sup>2</sup>and said to them, Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately." <sup>4</sup>They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, <sup>5</sup>some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup>They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. <sup>7</sup>Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup>Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup>Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! <sup>10</sup>Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

**General Concept: Jesus defines his being the Messiah not from the Jewish and imperial perspectives but according to God's call.**

**Key Concepts ME/OE: Jesus enters Jerusalem to obey God's call.**

### **Exegesis of the Biblical References**

The entire chapter of Psalm 118 can be observed as taking place in the context of worship to God for the protection and victory experienced by the worshipper. Some scholars attribute this psalm to David during his ascension to the throne or someone appointed by God for a higher position praising God with so much joy. Verse 26 is a line used by priests to greet and welcome pilgrims who are entering the gate of Jerusalem during the celebration of Passover.

Jesus' triumphant entry to Jerusalem is part of the fulfillment of his messianic plan. Jesus had long foreseen the arrival of this moment and he knew the outcome of this occasion. Jesus' entering Jerusalem marked the climax of his ministry and this portrays his total obedience and loyalty to God despite the plots and plans of religious leaders against him. Jesus' entry to Jerusalem conveys a strong message to the authorities that Jesus was not afraid of their power nor the suffering that awaits him. This is also to provide encouragement to his disciples who are worried and afraid of losing Jesus.

As Jesus marched into Jerusalem, people celebrated by waving palm leaves and putting their cloaks on the ground to welcome him in anticipation of the eventual restoration of Israel's glory as in the time of David. But how people welcomed Jesus in his supposed triumphant entry was nothing special at all. This is a common expression by people who welcome generals in the same manner during their homecoming after winning battles. Jesus' riding on a colt instead of a war-horse or chariot suggests that he came in peace and not as a conquering savior that people wanted and hoped him to be.

Jesus's entry to Jerusalem is his concrete expression of responding to God's call in total, unconditional obedience. His entry was not to fulfill the vision of the Jews nor to satisfy their desire for glory, but to respond to God's call to come to Jerusalem to fulfill God's plan to establish God's reign

here on earth.

The passage does not describe Jesus' response to the celebration and call of the people. This is unusual since Jesus often responds by instructing people not to disclose his identity as the Messiah. Nearing the end of his ministry, Jesus perhaps knew that it was time for all people to know his identity as the Messiah specially the religious leaders who, understandably, will feel threatened with his coming and being acclaimed as the Davidic Messiah. His seeming triumphant entry represents the open and public acknowledgement of his messianic claim and the alternative reality and alternative message that he represents which has given hope to the hopeless and powerless of the land. This is certainly most threatening for the powers-that-be in the land who would do and resort to anything just to protect the status quo. The prevailing system benefited them so much that they prevented any meaningful change to occur that will benefit the majority especially the poor of the land. The day of Jesus' entry was the start of the open clash between the powerful Jewish and Roman authorities and the solitary Jesus who had taken an unequivocal stand of solidarity with the powerless and marginalized of the land. The powerful simply had to act to stop the advance of this alternative reality and message this simple carpenter had been proclaiming and witnessing to. They had to immediately act against him. This was the way Jesus' mission was to be fulfilled as he courageously confronted his soon to be persecutors and executors.

God in Jesus expects his believers to respond in similar degree of loyalty and obedience to the call of God to proclaim the gospel and establish the Kingdom even in the face of danger, and resistance from those who may feel threatened. Jesus' followers must be prepared for the consequent sacrifice and suffering that await. Furthermore, believers must not be distracted with the glamour, cheers, and ecstatic ovation while marching toward God's call. Instead, believers must stay focused, committed and faithful not to satisfy others' expectation, but to simply and sincerely respond to God's call in all loyalty and obedience to God's gracious, loving, and liberating will.

### **Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users**

As Jesus and his retinue entered the gates of Jerusalem, the people waved branches, put clothing on the road and shouted his name in acclamation signifying the entry of the long-awaited messiah. It was a rehearsed action after the manner of welcoming a Roman military commander returning from conquest. They expected Jesus to seize control of Jerusalem, the nation's seat of power. Jesus went on to enter the temple, overturned the tables of the money changers and drove them out with a whip. It was an outrageous act that had a chilling effect on the authorities of the city.

Most probably, the religious leaders went on a hurry to report the incident to the Roman governor with an urgent appeal to quell a rebellion against the Empire. Apparently, Pontius Pilate sent in his soldiers not so much to suppress a real uprising as to oblige and accommodate Rome's allies. It was clear to him that Jesus' action was more symbolic of the Jewish people's aspirations for freedom rather than a real and imminent danger to the Empire. It was also possible that Pilate was a kind of person who could not tolerate a mere nuisance to the Pax Romana.

But Jesus had other things in mind when he entered Jerusalem. He was there for a meeting with destiny—the fate of a suffering messiah. Everything that happened from the time he accepted God's call in the wilderness up to the moment of his arrival in Jerusalem pointed to just one direction—the cross. He knew what the cross meant to the sufferer since many before him had gone that way. It was the most gruesome way of leaving this world ever invented, the most horrifying prospect of dying. But he could not have known what lay behind the cross. Was it going to be worse than dying by crucifixion? Was it but a passage to a glorious life never disclosed to any human being? Or was it simply the end?

God has disclosed to him the cause for which he was going to suffer and die. But God is silent about what awaits him after the cross. Perhaps this was more horrifying than crucifixion itself. But it is not for him to know. It was sufficient for Jesus to know that he was putting his fate completely in God's



hands.

### I. Objectives

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

1. listen to the story of Jesus when he entered Jerusalem;
2. discuss what the people shouted to welcome Jesus
3. talk about Jesus' entry to Jerusalem as an act of obedience to God; and
4. recall occasions when families do good deeds to others as a sign of obedience to God

### II. Concept: Jesus enters Jerusalem to obey God's call.

**Materials:** The *Holy Bible* (NRSV), activity sheet, materials for the Palm Sunday placemats and Palm Sunday flags

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome Time: Greet the children with your welcoming smile and your big warm hug. Initiate your unique handshake with children and converse with some of them about what they did during the week.
2. Opening prayer: Tell the class to gather around and say their one-sentence prayer of thanks to God. "Thank you, O God, for \_\_\_\_\_"
3. Opening songs:
  - a. "Hosanna"
  - b. "Who Is He?" (Tune: "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee")  
Who is He who comes in triumph? Who is He who comes to die,  
Comes in peace and comes in power, Hidden One now lifted high? Jesus,  
Jesus, Lord, Messiah, Mighty master of the grave!  
See Him ride, the King of Glory! God Incarnate come to save!  
See Him there in humble splendor. Hear them shouting all around.  
Joy explodes in wild procession. Praise is now the victor's crown.  
  
"Glory, glory in the highest!" Like the angels, hear them sing,  
Dancing round the long-awaited, once their hope, and now their King.  
Rise and join the glad procession! Hear them passing by again.  
All the ransomed, all God's children, marching to Jerusalem!  
Look ahead, the gates of splendor! Hear the everlasting hymn!  
Open wide your hearts in worship! Let the King of Glory in!

#### B. Getting Ready

1. Ask the class what their families do to welcome important guests in their homes. Lead the discussion on the value of being hospitable by warmly welcoming people. Let them imagine if this attitude will please God.
2. Show placards showing important terms. Tell the class to read them. Discuss their meaning to help the class in understanding the story.
  - a. *Passover*. It is an important annual Jewish festival celebrating the night that God freed his people from Egypt. (You can talk about the blood of the lamb posted on each door of the homes of the Israelites in order that the angel of death will pass them over and save them from death.)
  - b. *Hosanna*. It means "Save us!"
  - c. *Palm Sunday*. It is the Sunday before Resurrection Sunday.

d, *Holy Week*. Starting with Monday after Palm Sunday up to Saturday, it is the week by when Jesus spent his last days on earth before he rose from the dead on Resurrection Sunday.

### C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read Mark 11:1-10 responsibly.
2. After reading the verses, ask the class to do a choral reading. Assign parts such as the narrator, Jesus, the disciples, the villagers, and the people in Jerusalem.

### Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

(Based on Mark 11:1-10)

Narrator: When Jesus came close to Jerusalem, he wanted to celebrate the Passover.

He also obeyed what God wanted him to do. He calls his two disciples.

Jesus: Go to the next village. You will find a donkey that is tied. Untie it and bring it to me.

Disciples: Yes, Jesus.

Village men: Why are you untying the donkey?

Disciples: The Lord needs it.

Narrator: The villagers did not stop the disciples. The disciples brought the donkey to Jesus.

They laid clothes on the donkey and set Jesus on top of it. Jesus rode on it and went to Jerusalem.

People in Jerusalem: Is that Jesus coming to Jerusalem? Come, let us tell the others that Jesus is coming.

Narrator: Many people came. Some went before Jesus and some followed Jesus. They put their cloaks on the road where Jesus passed. Some brought palm leaves. They waved their leaves and shouted.

People in Jerusalem: Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Narrator: The people were happy. They welcomed their king. They knew that Jesus loves them. They made a grand parade.

### D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson.

1. What are the two reasons why Jesus decided to go to Jerusalem? (To celebrate the Passover and to obey God.)
2. What do you think God wanted Jesus to do? (To establish God's reign here on earth and to save people from sinful systems.)
3. Why do you think being obedience and humility were shown by Jesus when he entered Jerusalem?
4. Why do you think Jesus told his disciples to tell the village men that he needed the donkey? (They have to get the donkey because it symbolized humility as foretold by the prophets. The people knew he was the king. However, they also knew that kings usually ride on horses to show greatness.)
5. Why is the triumphal entry of Jesus significant? (Jesus showed that he was a different kind of Messiah and not like a powerful king (humility), and it symbolized his obedience (servanthood) to God's will by establishing God's reign.)
6. If Jesus is coming today, how will you welcome him? What will you say? Why? (Expect different answers from the class.)
7. Which of the following sentences do you agree with? Explain your answers.
  - a. Jesus went to Jerusalem to establish God's reign and because of this, the powerful

wanted to kill him.

- b. The people considered him as their awaited king but they were expecting a different type of king. But they welcomed him just the same.
- c. Jesus is our messiah who suffered and died so that we can be saved.
- d. We can follow Jesus as the King of our lives at present and in the future.

#### *E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: "Why do you think Jesus entered Jerusalem?" (Jesus enters Jerusalem to obey God's call.)

#### *F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Discuss the memory verse: "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9b)
2. Ask the class to list good things that they can do as a family to show obedience to God. Examples are: helping in the home chores, doing things for sick people in the community, helping the elderly, or giving food or clothes to the hungry.
3. **For ME:** Tell the class to prepare Palm Sunday placemats. With the use of a palm leaves, construction paper, a plastic sheet to cover the placemat, and glue, let the class make a placemat creatively. Tell them to write the memory verse on their placemat.
4. **For OE:** Tell the class to prepare Palm Sunday flags. Tell the class to think of a flag design. Ask them to write any of the following: Praise to God, Shout for Joy, or Hosanna in the Highest. Then let them decorate their flags and paste them on sticks.

#### *G. Closing Worship*

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Who Is He?" (Tune: "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee")
3. Closing prayer: "Our Parent God, we thank you for sending Jesus to us that we may know how to live with you and with other people. Continue to make us like Jesus, in words, in thoughts, and in deeds. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."