



Season: **Easter**

Age Level: **Youth**

April 1, 2018

Easter Sunday

The Victory of the Crucified Messiah

Old Testament: Job 19:25-27 (NRSV)

²⁵ For I know that my Redeemer lives and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;
²⁶ and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!

New Testament: Luke 24:1-12 (NRSV)

The Resurrection of Jesus

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Matthew 4:11 (NRSV)

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

General Concept: God vindicated Jesus' choice as the Messiah.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

Youth: **God vindicates Jesus and his mission as the Messiah.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The passage is part of Job's series of laments to God on his condition of relentless suffering. Seemingly God is punishing him. Job was raising questions while trying to understand and find answers as to why God was allowing him to undergo pain and shame. But, despite Job's wailing and complaining he continued to hope that there is life beyond all his misery and ordeal. Here, Job expresses a strong confidence that somehow and somewhere when his end comes, he would still meet God face to face. Job here speaks of a hope that overcomes and transcends what appears to be an irreversible fate of death, isolation and despair. He upholds the faith that death is not the end of all life and all hopes of the human since the ultimate destiny of life is the eventual reunion and reconciliation with God.

Jesus died and it seemed that his adversaries had successfully stopped him from proclaiming the gospel and establishing the Kingdom of God. Jesus was crucified and suffered the most shameful and violent form of punishment because of his obedience to God's will. Jesus faced death and persecution alone because his disciples turned their backs on him out of fear. But, early morning on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James went to Jesus' tomb and were surprised to not find his body. Instead they were told by two men wearing bright clothes that Jesus had risen from the dead. The women then told Jesus' disciples what happened but they did not believe because initially they assumed that their story is nothing but an idle tale, or a fabricated story by the women themselves, reflecting clearly the men's own low regard for women. But these disciples have forgotten what Jesus told them about his suffering and rising on the third day. Their disbelief was illustrated further by Peter who ran to the tomb to see for himself the unbelievable news he heard from the women followers of Jesus.

Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem as his own choice and decision not only to confront the powers and authority that despised him but to fulfill his purpose as the Messiah who will suffer and die an ignominious, humiliating death. In dying he did not only conquer death but received the gift and power of resurrection. Now, Jesus' resurrection from the dead became humanity's ultimate gift, the hope for eternal life, especially of those who are being crucified each day by an unjust system that victimizes and abuses, of those who are oppressed, marginalized, neglected and persecuted by the powerful in society. The resurrection of Jesus is God's affirmation of the path Jesus chose as the Messiah who brings good news to the weak and the poor so that those who follow him may now also conquer death and experience the same resurrection.

As we follow Jesus as our Messiah, we are called to the same degree of obedience to the will of God to confront and challenge the powers and authority that cause affliction on the weak and the poor in our land. We are expected to tread the same path Jesus chose and that is to proclaim the good news to all people especially to those who are desperate and hopeless in their situation, even in the face of danger and various threats. As Jesus' followers we partake in his suffering and being with the marginalized so that through our own witness, service and efforts of solidarity with them in their plight the lowly will also experience the Kingdom of God. The resurrection of Jesus should remind us that we can now overcome suffering and even death as we follow Jesus toward the establishment of God's kingdom here on earth. In Jesus' resurrection we receive hope and assurance that in our obedience to God's call we too will receive the gift and power of the resurrection.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Mocked by his tormentors and abandoned by his closest friends, Jesus breathed his last with the sole assurance that he had accomplished the mission that God sent him for. It didn't matter what lay in store for him beyond his crucifixion. But God gave Jesus an answer that he didn't ask for. He bestowed on him a blessing never received by anyone before – the power of resurrection from the dead! God didn't just rescue him from the world of the dead which was the destination of every mortal being. God granted him the power of resurrection that no one else can give but the almighty and eternal God. Sharing this power with God, Jesus has received the authority to share it also with those who believe and follow him. God has more than answered Jesus' question about his fate. God made Jesus' resurrection the end goal of every believer who followed him and carried their crosses for his sake.

There is another side to God's answer to Jesus. God affirmed and vindicated his chosen path of obedience. Jesus took up the cause of those who have suffered abuse, violence, neglect, humiliation and oppression by society's powers-that-be. Instead of being decorated he was despised, persecuted, criminalized and made to suffer. By his resurrection, God upheld his choice to be with the world's sufferers. God endorsed Jesus' pursuit of truth and

justice as the right path towards the establishment of his kingdom on earth. Jesus' resurrection is the ultimate proof of God's approval of his work in the world.

I. Objectives

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

1. describe the circumstances surrounding the resurrection of Jesus;
2. explain the meaning and significance of Jesus' resurrection;
3. relate what Job tells in relation to the resurrection of Jesus;
4. point out to the affirmation and vindication of Jesus being the Messiah by God, and
5. identify areas in their lives that they need victory over things that they need to overcome with Jesus as their Messiah.

II. Concept: God vindicates Jesus and his mission as the Messiah.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheet, song sheets, metacards, notebook and pen, seeds and seedlings

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, we are happy to come together to celebrate Easter. Help us to fully understand the meaning and significance of Christ' resurrection as we apply them in our daily life. We earnestly pray in Christ's name. Amen.
3. Opening songs:
 - a. "He Lives" (HFJ #164)
 - b. "Celebrate, Jesus, Celebrate"
Celebrate, Jesus, celebrate! (4x)

B. Getting Ready

1. Ask the class about their random thoughts during the following events:
 - a. Last Supper celebrated during Maundy Thursday service
 - b. The passion and death of Jesus remembered during Good Friday service
2. Tell the class to prepare masks or emoticons showing these feelings: happy, worried, doubtful, afraid, sad, and victorious. Have them set aside these masks for use later.

C. Learning Time

1. Invite learners to close their eyes as they listen attentively to a fellow learner while he/she reads Job 19:25-27 and Luke 24:1-12.
2. Have the whole class read the exegesis and companion guide, one learner per paragraph or three lines, depending on the size of the class.
3. Form small groups and instruct each group to discuss the reading using these topics: circumstances surrounding the resurrection of Jesus; what Job said in relation to resurrection; and God's affirmation and vindication of Jesus as the Messiah. Then ask each small group to share their discussion to the big group.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Ask the following questions. Tell the students to use the masks or emoticons that they have prepared earlier to express their feelings.
 - a. How would you explain Job's declaration of his Redeemer being alive in relation to Jesus' resurrection? (Job's words seem to foretell the resurrection of the Messiah or Redeemer.)

- b. What facts or ideas point to the meaning and significance of the resurrection of Jesus based from the readings? (Answers may vary.)
- c. Having identified the meaning and significance of the resurrection, think of how this affects or strengthens your faith. What does the fact that Jesus resurrected have to do with how you live your life today? (Answers may vary.)
2. Tell the class to explain this: "By raising Jesus from the dead, God showed that Jesus was indeed the Messiah."
3. Showing the seed and the seedling. Ask: "Can you differentiate between the seed and the seedling? What do you think is the relationship of these things to Jesus' death and resurrection?" Explain: "Like the seed that has to be buried to sprout and grow, Jesus was buried and rose from the dead. As His followers, we can be assured that there is new life in Jesus."

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Recalling the circumstances surrounding Jesus' resurrection, how did God vindicate Jesus and his mission as the Messiah?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Ask, "If Jesus had victory over death, is there anything that He cannot have victory over?" Tell the students to prayerfully offer to Jesus the "battles" that they need to have victory over such as having difficulty in passing a certain subject/class, difficulty in their relationships, or difficulty letting go of vices.
2. Ask the students to greet each other "Happy Resurrection! Jesus is Alive!"

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: After giving their offering, tell the students to express what makes him/her joyful today other than understanding the meaning and significance of Jesus' resurrection.
2. Closing song: "He Lives" HFJ #164
3. Closing prayer: "May our lives prove to be useful to Jesus' resurrection. May our lips continue to proclaim Jesus is risen, our works manifest Jesus' obedience to God, and our lives channels of love and life for the people we relate with. In Christ's name, we ardently pray. Amen."

April 8, 2018

Second Sunday of Easter

Encountering the Doubters and the Fearful

Old Testament: Joshua 1:9 (NRSV)

⁹'I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.'

New Testament: Mark 16:4-8 (NRSV)

⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

John 20:24-29 (NRSV)

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.' ²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' ²⁸Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' ²⁹Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

General Concept: The risen Messiah manifests himself to the doubting and fearful disciples. Experiencing the Risen Lord removes our doubts and fears.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

Youth: **Jesus' appearance removes the doubts and fears of the disciples.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Joshua succeeded Moses in the task of leading the Israelites to the promised land. It took forty years for the first generation of Israelites to reach the vicinity of the River Jordan where the promised land was already within reach. After forty years, some Israelites might have already lost hope, got tired, grew impatient and became discouraged and doubtful waiting for the time when they can enter and inherit the promised land. But God assured Joshua that God will be with him and with the people as they enter and occupy the land where they will establish an alternative community of God's chosen people, an alternative to what they have experienced and suffered for so long in Egypt.

In the resurrection account of the Gospel of Luke, women visited the tomb of Jesus

when the Sabbath was over. They went there to bring spices. But they were surprised that the large stone at the entrance of the tomb was already rolled away and Jesus' body was no longer there. Instead, they saw two men in dazzling clothes who told them that Jesus has risen from the dead. The men instructed the women to tell Jesus' disciples. So they told the eleven and all the rest what they have experienced.

In the Gospel of John, after Jesus had risen he appeared first to Mary Magdalene who stood outside the tomb crying because she thought Jesus' body was stolen. When Mary Magdalene experienced the Risen Lord, Jesus removed her fears and she received assurance and comfort. Thomas, on the other hand, who was not around when Jesus appeared to his disciples doubted the news. Thomas insisted that only upon seeing the nail marks of Jesus will he believe in the story that he indeed was risen. After a week the disciples were gathered in a house when Jesus appeared and confronted the unbelieving Thomas and told him to put his fingers on the nail marks so that he would stop doubting. Jesus went on to tell Thomas and his disciples that those who believed even if they have not seen are even more blessed.

In the Gospel of Mark, the resurrection passage highlights the name of Peter. The young man dressed in white robe specified to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome to inform Peter and the other disciples that Jesus has risen. Peter who earlier affirmed that Jesus is the Messiah, and through whom Jesus promised to build his church, is also the one who denied him three times later on. The mention of Peter's name in connection to the resurrection of Jesus can be understood as a preparation for Peter's restoration from a person who doubted and feared towards a person becoming one who is a courageous and loyal witness to the resurrection of his master and Lord. He now becomes a source of hope for acceptance and forgiveness to those similarly fearful and weak of heart and who may have also the tendency to deny Christ in crucial moments. They can be assured that they can and will also experience the presence of the Risen Lord in their lives.

Indeed, the encounter with the Risen Lord has given Christ's followers the courage, assurance and motivation to stand firm and defend their faith that Jesus is the Messiah. Their encounter with the resurrected Jesus has given them the understanding, focus and direction to continue the work as mandated by Jesus. And in times of their doubts and fears, the Risen Lord appears to them in many ways and in various occasions to remove their unbelief and fear. In the same manner that whenever Christians succumb to doubts and fears in their ministry and service which can lead them astray and make them confused and discouraged, Jesus would appear through the equipping of the Holy Spirit to give us new direction, focus and determination allowing us to confront and press on with challenging the powers and authority that prevents the establishment of God's kingdom. The resurrection of Jesus is Christianity's source of hope for power to realize and experience the new life and the completely new reality that the risen Lord now bestows to all those who would remain steadfast and loyal in their faith and witness to his truth and liberating love even up to the end.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

For Christians, Jesus' resurrection is the indispensable anchor of faith. This is also the main stumbling block that keeps others from becoming or remaining Christian. The resurrection episode depicting Thomas' reluctance to recognize the risen Jesus exemplifies the challenge that believers face then and now. Our rational faculties tell us to verify the truthfulness of any claim from empirical evidence. If there is nothing empirical to support such claim, either it is rejected or the rational processes are suspended in order to allow the mind to accept the claim. Faith-claims, however, don't need the consent of reason because faith, particularly faith in the risen Jesus, originates from experience *prior* to the operation of the intellect. Thomas touching Jesus' wounds is a metaphor of an experience with the risen

Lord.

The question is what sort of experience can mediate a faith-experience? Those who require a mystical kind of experience would shut out others who are not given to any shade of mysticism. But Christ is Lord and Savior not just of the mystically inclined but also of those whose perception of reality is that of a secular modern world. A secular kind of Christianity (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) would show the utter hospitality and inclusive reach of the Christian faith.

For other believers whose faith is ethically oriented, experience with the risen Jesus is truly and effectively mediated through a faithful following of Jesus' ethical stance. They take Jesus' challenge to carry their own crosses to the extent that the powers who dominate people's lives are challenged and unmasked for what they truly are.

Many others devote themselves to building up the church from the inside. They carry the burden of nurturing young members in the ways of Jesus as a counterforce to the corrupting influence of a decadent environment. Some of them encounter Jesus in the care for the sick, the shut-in, the despairing and confused, and many more according to the diversity of gifts poured out by the Spirit to the church.

In short, it is by immersing in the life and work of Jesus through the church and in the larger society that believers may find a living Lord and Savior.

I. Objectives

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

1. describe the details of Jesus' appearance to his fearful and doubting disciples;
2. explain the significance of Jesus' appearance to his fearful and doubting disciples;
3. relate the command of Joshua to be strong in the Lord with Jesus' resurrection, and
4. express one's thanks to God for making Jesus alive to give us hope of eternal life.

II. Concept: Jesus' appearance removes the doubts and fears of the disciples.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheet, song sheet, notebook and pen

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, we come today mindful of your abiding presence in our midst through the Holy Spirit who casts our fears and doubts away. Teach us once again your ways so that we may continue to become better persons and channels of your love and justice, so that the world may know and feel that you are alive in us. This we pray in Christ' name. Amen.
3. Opening song: "He Lives" (HFJ # 164)

B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to do a mural using an art medium of their choice. Have the class refer to the following biblical references to recall the events before, during and after Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. Have them label their artwork. If possible, ask them to invite other Sunday schoolers to view their work.

1. Matthew 26:26-28
2. Matthew 26:39
3. Matthew 26:14-15
4. Matthew 27:2, 3, 7
5. Matthew 27:66
6. Matthew 29:5-6

C. Learning Time

1. Instruct the class to read the biblical references silently. After the silent reading, tell the students to describe the details of Jesus' appearance to his fearful and doubting disciples. Under each reference, ask the class to discuss the text by answering the guide questions that follow:
 - a. Mark 16:4-8
 - 1) What do you think happened to the stone covering the tomb?
 - 2) Why was the tomb empty?
 - 3) Who informed the women about what happened to Jesus?
 - 4) Why did the young man tell the women to go to the disciples?
 - 5) What will Jesus do to the disciples?
 - 6) What does the Markan text tell you about the character of Jesus' disciples?
 - b. John 20:24-29
 - 1) Who visited the disciples?
 - 2) Who missed meeting with Jesus?
 - 3) Why do you think Thomas did not believe the story of the disciples about Jesus?
 - 4) What does the Johannine text tell you about Thomas' character?
 - 5) When Jesus came to visit again after a week, what happened to Jesus and Thomas?
 - 6) What does Jesus' response to Thomas tell you about Jesus' desire for His disciples?
 - 7) What lesson on faith did Jesus teach the disciples?
 - 8) Like Thomas, can we believe, too? Why or why not?
2. Tell the class to read Joshua 1:9 in unison and ask them to relate the exhortation of Joshua to the Israelites and to how the disciples should feel regarding Jesus' resurrection.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Prepare the class to play the trust game "The Walk of Faith". Make groups of three players and have them stand in line. All the middle players will be blindfolded and the other two players will stand in front and at the back of the middle player. Tell the two players to guide the middle player to run through an obstacle by instructing him/her on the turns and footsteps without holding his/her hand. When the third player runs successfully through the obstacle again without blindfolds, the team wins. If not, another player is blindfolded and runs through the obstacle again. This time, the obstacle is changed.
2. Discuss the game. Ask the class about the importance of one's trust in God and having supportive friends that will help in making good choices. Let them relate this activity in their youth ministry in the church.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How can we, as followers of Jesus, overcome our fears and doubts?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Engage the students to enumerate the doubts and fears in their lives they want removed and how they think these will be removed.
2. Say: "Overcoming fears and doubts is something we decide to do with Jesus. He can remove our fears and doubts if we ask by believing that He is willing and able to do so. We can trust him to fulfill his promise of eternal life for there is nothing we can do

apart from Him.”

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: Each one joyfully says, "Thank you, loving God, that Jesus is alive to give us hope of eternal life!" and puts his/her offering into the basket.
2. Closing song: "He Lives" (HFJ # 164)
3. Closing prayer: "We believe you are alive and you go with us daily in our lives. Your resurrection, O Lord Jesus, removes our fears and doubts away. Thank you once again for your abiding and caring love even as we show others our utmost care. We now leave this place to live lives of trust in you. Amen."



April 15, 2018

Third Sunday after Resurrection

Witnessing to the Risen Lord

Old Testament: Isaiah 43:10-12 (NRSV)

¹⁰You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. ¹¹I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior. ¹²I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses, says the LORD.

New Testament: John 21:4-19 (NRSV)

⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' ⁶He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. ⁸But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards* off. ⁹When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. Jesus and Peter

¹⁵When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' ¹⁶A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' ¹⁷He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' ¹⁹(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

General Concept: Having encountered the Risen Lord, the disciples went about telling the good news of God's victory over sin and death.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

Youth: **The disciples of Jesus proclaim and witness the Good News of God's victory over sin and death.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The influence of other gods introduced by the Babylonians during the time of exile competed with the influence of the God of Israel. This was a cause of struggle among the Israelites specially while in exile. Some Israelites began to doubt Yahweh's power and slowly turned towards other gods worshiped by their powerful captors. Second Isaiah, the prophet who was also among the exiles, became God's voice that strongly criticized and warned those who were unfaithful and idolatrous. God through Isaiah confronted the exiles by pointing out to them that these gods has not done anything at all for them. God reminded the Israelites that there is no other God like Yahweh who can save them from their captivity. God calls on the chosen people to become the witnesses to God's saving power.

After Jesus has risen, he appeared unexpectedly to his disciples for the third time while his disciples were in the boat fishing. The disciples did not recognize it was Jesus at first perhaps because it was early in the morning and Jesus was at a distance standing on the shore. When Jesus instructed them to cast the net on the right side of the boat and a large number of fish were caught, only then did they realize it was Jesus. Upon realizing it was Jesus, Peter jumped into the water and rushed to meet him. When the disciples came to the shore, Jesus invited them to have breakfast with him. After eating Jesus asked Peter three times "do you love me?" to which Peter answered three times also, "I love you" and every time Peter answered, Jesus would tell him, "feed my sheep." Jesus then revealed to Peter the task he needed to accomplish for the glory of God. Afterwards, Jesus invited him to "follow me."

Today, as believers respond to the invitation of Jesus to follow him, at times they encounter unexpected hurdles that may prevent them from recognizing the presence of Jesus. It is always ideal to listen well to the words of Jesus so we can always set our eyes on accomplishing the task entrusted to us. And when doubts, disappointments and discouragement seem to cloud our vision, our ears need to always hear his voice and discern his will for us so that we can be led back to him and to his mission. Just like the disciples who did not at first recognize Jesus and yet they threw their nets upon hearing his words, we too need to have a believing heart that Christ will always be there to he bless us and sustain us with what we need as we carry out the task of sharing and witnessing to the good news. And when we exhibit the same kind of trusting obedience as that of the disciples, we too may reap the same abundant blessings that they received from Jesus.

Witnessing for Jesus requires focus and attention because just like Peter who was asked three times by Jesus, we may encounter the same kind of questioning that would repeatedly challenge our sincerity and intention. We may even be confronted by strong reactions from those trying to resist and even oppose the kind of teaching and witnessing that we do in the name of Jesus. For we are representing a new set of values and perspectives, those that characterize life in the kingdom of God which run counter to and opposed to the dominant materialistic and individualistic values of this age. We need to be consistent with the kind of message we tell and the kind of love we render in our ministries. At times we may feel tired, frustrated or hurt when people seem to question our actions, yet we have to be prepared for Jesus has already told us that following him will always be painful, difficult and at times costly. But as followers of Jesus, we must be ready to give our life as we tell the world the good news that Christ has risen and that we can glorify God even more meaningfully through our faithful adherence to the teachings and examples lived by Jesus while he was on earth. Every day we are always called, and every day we are

expected to follow and obey in all faithfulness and trust in the power and grace of God in and through Jesus.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Unlike the mystery religions of the Greeks who kept the mysteries of the gods within the closed confines of the circle of believers, the early Christians received from the Lord the mandate to announce his resurrection to the whole world. They were to tell all people that Jesus has conquered death and that everyone is invited to share with him the power of resurrection. This was the church's instant message following their encounter with the risen Jesus.

The ancient Greeks were obsessed with the problem of death. Hades, or the abode of the dead awaits even the heroes who are not among the immortals of Mt. Olympus. The Greek mystery religions offer a way of salvation from mortality through a mystical experience with a god who descends from the immortal realm. On the other hand, the gospel tells the story of a flesh-and-blood person who was executed by the Romans as an enemy of the Empire. In Jesus they will find a savior whom God has awarded immortality for resisting the evil powers of the world. He is the true savior of those who suffered death for the sake of truth and justice. Jesus was speaking about them when he said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for justice's sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10) – that is, immortality in the mind of Gentiles.

This message threatened the guardians of the Empire more than the man himself, and sought to put an end to this "nonsense." It is likely the reason why most of the apostles, including Paul and many of the early Christians, suffered violent deaths courtesy of Rome. Many of those who survived were forced to renounce Jesus to escape being fed to wild animals or torched alive. As time passed, however, it appears that the essentially dangerous elements of the primitive gospel were suppressed, if not expurgated, as Christianity eventually joined the ranks of religions that gained imperial favor.

History may have done violence to the gospel but its primitive message has remained and is now the best kept secret of the church. Nevertheless, some Christian activists who may have despaired over the church's historical complicity to the genocide of native populations and other crimes under the regime of colonialism and neo-colonialism have found inspiration and hope in the rediscovery of the gospel's early message. The truth of Jesus will not be silenced forever for it is God's power to free the world from all forms of captivity.

I. Objectives

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

1. explain the circumstances surrounding the appearance of Jesus to his disciples by the seaside;
2. point out to the significance of the witnessing of the disciples about the victory of Jesus over death;
3. discuss the command of Jesus to Peter and its implications in the post resurrection mission of the disciples, and
4. express commitment to tell others about Jesus who is raised from the dead.

II. Concept: The disciples of Jesus proclaim and witness the good News of God's victory over sin and death.

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

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, we will continue to talk about Jesus today, the Risen Lord. Be with us once again through the Holy Spirit to teach us how to live in the way Jesus lived in his lifetime and ministry. Help us also to deeply understand our roles as followers of the risen Lord in these critical times where the powers of sin and death prevail. We pray in Christ's name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "Yours is the Glory, Resurrected One" (HFJ#171)

B. Getting Ready

Inquire: "What is meant by the words proclaim and witness? How would you characterize one who proclaims and witnesses?" Say: "The word *witness* comes from the Greek word "marturia" which means martyrdom. Jesus' disciples proclaimed and witnessed to the good news of Jesus' victory over death even if it meant their persecution and even death. Many of them were martyrs of faith."

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the learners to read silently Isaiah 43:10-12 and John 21:4-19.
2. After the silent reading, emphasize that Isaiah 43:10-12 tells of Isaiah's prophetic words to the Israelites whom God chose to be witnesses of God. Ask: "What was God's people going to be/do? Who are they to be witnesses for? What were they to be witnesses of?"
3. For the reading of John 21:4-19, form three groups and assign specific verses to each group. Remind the class that the objective of the activity is to explain the circumstances surrounding the appearance of Jesus by the seaside.
Group 1: John 21:4-8
Group 2: John 21:9-14
Group 3: John 21:15-19
4. Instruct each group to summarize in their own words the highlights of each set of verses using the About/Point Chart.

About/Point Chart	
Proposed Title given by Group #	:
Author:	John, one of the disciples of Jesus
The bible reading is ABOUT the circumstances surrounding the appearance of Jesus to the disciples by the seaside.:	
The author's POINTS are:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Tell the different groups to be ready to present their work to the big group.
2. Ask the following questions:
 - a. What is the significance of the witnessing of the disciples about the victory of Jesus over death? (The witnessing of the disciples about the victory of Jesus over death proves their faith, obedience, and loyalty to the risen Lord.)
 - b. What can you say about the command of Jesus to Peter and its implications in the post resurrection mission of the disciples? (Jesus orders Peter to care and nurture the people whom Jesus loves. It implies boldness in the preaching and teaching of the good news of God's victory over sin and death; boldness that actually brought many of the disciples to suffering and death.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How can you proclaim and witness about the risen Lord?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Have the students make a list on the board of the activities the students think up. Encourage them to use the following sample table.

PROCLAIMING AND WITNESSING PLAN			
Activity	Expected Outcome	Date/Place	Responsible
Ex. Youth Night "Resist the Forces of Sin and Death"	100 young people or more expressed commitment to say "NO" to the forces of sin and death at present like corruption, injustice, destructive mining, human rights violations and others.	Sixth Sunday after the resurrection / church or covered court	Church workers/CYF officers

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations" (HFJ 310)
3. Closing prayer/Statement of commitment: "We, young people, believe that the early Christians received from the Lord the mandate to announce his resurrection to the whole world and that they were to tell all people that he has conquered death, and that everyone is invited to share with him the power of resurrection; and the truth of Jesus will not be silenced forever for it is God's power to free the world from all forms of captivity. Today, we express commitment to proclaim and witness to God's victory over sin and death in words and in deeds. Amen."

April 22, 2018

Fourth Sunday after Resurrection

Affirming Christ's Lordship

Old Testament: Psalm 24:1-2 (NRSV)

Entrance into the Temple of David. A Psalm.

¹ The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; ² for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.

New Testament: 1 Corinthians 10:14 (NRSV)

¹⁴ Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols.

General Concept: The earth belongs to the Risen Lord and not to idols and gods shaped and created by people.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

Youth: **The earth belongs to the Risen Lord and not to idols and gods created by people.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Psalm 24 is a poetry attributed to King David. It takes the form of a song sung during worship or celebration in ancient Israel. The psalmist here is praising God's lordship over all realms, affirming God as the creator of all things and that everything belongs to God. By strong implication, the psalmist affirms that God owns all things and humbles and mocks anyone who claims lordship over creation other than God. It is a praise that also warns those who may attempt to attribute creation to other gods apart from the creator God. There is no power and being in this world to whom the origins, the existence, meaning, sustenance and redemption of all creation from the forces of chaos may be attributed. There is only one creator, redeemer, sustainer God who reigns sovereign over all creation, and no creature, no matter how gifted he or she may be, can ever make such a claim. The creature can never take the place of the creator. The mortal can never assume the powers of an eternal, immortal being. This relationship can never be reversed. The creature should always be reminded of his/her proper place in the scheme of creation.

Paul wrote the letter to the church in Corinth to address serious issues reported to him. Since Corinth is a commercial city that caters to both land and sea trade, it is normally crowded with different peoples with different religions and practices. Christians in Corinth are a minority group so members strive to compete and worship in the midst of a pagan-dominated environment. Thus, it may not be easy for Christians to remain firm and loyal to their faith in the midst of such a highly cosmopolitan context.

From what may be discerned from the text and its immediate background, it would seem that the church in Corinth have successfully converted practitioners of other religions to Christianity. However, these new converts may not have totally forgotten nor gotten rid of their old practices. Thus, idolatry became one of the issues that Paul has to address in his letter to the Corinthian Christians warning them of the different forms idolatry may take. Since Paul included idolatry in his letter, this may have become a serious problem in the church that could be affecting their unity. Paul's warning for Christians to flee from idolatry is part of his long list of warnings not to succumb to the same sins committed by their forebears. Paul encouraged the Christians not to partake and participate in any idol worship

as this is not in accordance to the teachings they inherited from Jesus.

Idolatry today is no longer just the worship of little gods nor of certain images popularly recognized as objects of religious veneration. Idolatry could be any practice, habit, belief or values that distract our attention and focus from what essentially should be the work and mission of the church. It could be any system that diverts our time and priorities away from affirming that everything belongs to the risen Lord and that God is sovereign Lord over all things and all creatures of the earth. It becomes real when the work and mission of the church as embodied and exemplified by Jesus begins to take lesser priority in our daily life activities, when we begin acquiring values and perspectives that are contrary to the values of the kingdom of God as preached by Jesus, when we become more enamored with acquiring possessions and working only for our own advancement rather than aiming to be possessed by the spirit of the Lord which leads us towards a more selfless life of obedience, service and witnessing. Avoiding idolatry is not only a matter of being in church every Sunday though it will certainly help in the nurturing and equipping of the believers for mission work. To avoid idolatry is to reject any attachment to anything that ruins our relationship with God and with others. It is avoiding all efforts that advance selfish interest at the expense of other people's welfare and happiness. It is finding one's own peace and security solely in God as one simply puts all his/her trust and faith in God's ability to sustain, protect, and redeem the faithful even in the most difficult of times.

Though we live in a Christian-dominated country, we live in a culture and religious context dominated by foreign values and foreign perspectives imposed upon us by our former colonizers that do not reflect the authentic life of faith exemplified by Jesus. Most of us may have become alienated already from the indigenous values bequeathed to us by our indigenous ancestors: the basic love and care for nature and the rest of creation, the value of caring for each other and of being part of a community of kindred faith, the value of loving and accepting even the stranger, those different from us. These are all values reflective of the Gospel message exemplified and taught by Jesus. Thus, this is a situation similar to the struggles of Christians in Corinth against idolatry. We can still see people putting so much time appreciating material possessions yet giving less time to help the needy. But we have the church and faithful servants who are the Pauls of modern times who continue to remind us to flee from idolatry. God through the church and its members continue to remind us not to commit the same mistakes of our history but learn from these mistakes. We must be vigilant in guarding the interest of the mission of the church in our community. We must be conscious always in everything we do and aspire for in life, and of the time and effort we spend on such things that can become our own idols. We must not blindly accept and embrace concepts that represent idolatrous values and perspectives, and which prevent us from being possessed by that spirit of selfless service and witness to the love and righteousness of our God in and through Jesus. Just like the Psalmist we need to passionately affirm the lordship of God in all creation, in all spheres of life, possessed by that same spirit and exhibiting the same zeal when affirming the lordship of Christ in our own daily work and activities.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

At the very outset it must be made clear that Christ's lordship over all the earth is not a chauvinistic claim against other communities of faith. It is addressed to Christians who lack the will to submit all of life under Christ's lordship. They would rather reserve some compartments of their lives for loyalties other than Jesus Christ upon whom God has granted all authorities in heaven and on earth. These objects of loyalties are called idols because they are formed and chosen by their worshippers. A favorite idol, for example is Profit. It's an idol that rivals Jesus Christ because its domains are strictly off limits to the gospel's demands. Another idol that rivals Christ's lordship is called Political Expediency.

When politics is played without ethical considerations it becomes an alien domain that shuts out the gospel. And there are many lesser idols that compromise Christ's sovereignty.

The worship of idols is not confined to the occasion of personal, family or public worship. It takes place most hours of the day on a daily basis. In fact, worshipping the Lord Jesus may be confined only to an hour or two on Sundays at the church. For all intents and purposes, idols may be worshipped more regularly and religiously than the one true God. The UCCP declaration that Jesus is the living Lord of all of life and of all creation cannot be compromised. Rather, it must be affirmed again and again every time believers of Christ are faced with situations that challenge the gospel. It is a primary task of the church to remind the members of Peter's declaration – "I would rather obey God than persons" – especially during its community gathering in worship.

The challenge of the environment is posed most urgently to all of humankind. Scientists have found out that the current environmental crisis that is leading to an ecological catastrophe is human-made. People that are supposed to have a Christian conscience cannot escape from the Lord's judgment because they form part of a cabal of economic and financial managers who make decisions in obedience to the commands of idols. It is a test of the church's loyalty to the risen Jesus to announce God's judgment on a world for its failure to stop the continuing despoliation of creation.

I. Objectives

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

1. begin to identify that Jesus is the Lord of creation;
2. begin to acknowledge that Jesus is the Lord of His people,
3. explain what Jesus' Lordship over creation and His people mean; and
4. express one's thanks for Jesus being our Lord.

II. Concept: The earth belongs to the Risen Lord and not to idols and gods created by people.

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

II. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: We come today prepared to learn from you, O God, who nurtures us in Jesus Christ. Be with us again through the inspiring and enabling power of the Holy Spirit that we may fully affirm with conviction that the earth belongs to the Risen Lord and not to idols and gods created by people. This is our prayer. Amen.
3. Opening song: "The Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer" (HFJ # 1)

B. Getting Ready

Tell the students to share their enjoyable experiences in any of these activities: visiting beaches, mountain resorts, diving areas, forest parks, bird sanctuaries, caves, nature's land and water formations, farms, etc. Ask them to share not only information but how they felt physically and spiritually.

C. Learning Time

1. Divide the class in two groups. Tell each group to list down words/ideas/phrases that come to mind when they hear/read the given words: Group 1 - earth, lord; Group 2 - worship, idols.
2. Tell the class to read Psalm 24:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 10:14 in unison. Let them work as group.
 - a. Group 1: *Psalm 24:1-2*. Our exegesis reads: "There is only one creator, redeemer, sustainer God who reigns sovereign over all creation, and no creature, no matter how gifted he or she may be, can ever make such a claim. The

creature can never take the place of the creator.”

- b. Group 2: *1 Corinthians 10:14*. “

To avoid idolatry is to reject any attachment to anything that ruins our relationship with God and with others. It is avoiding all efforts that advance selfish interest at the expense of other people's welfare and happiness. It is finding one's own peace and security solely in God as one simply puts all his/her trust and faith in God's ability to sustain, protect, and redeem the faithful even in the most difficult of times.”

. According to Mahatma Gandhi, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

3. Let each group share their ideas and discuss their presentations.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Discuss the insights shared by the class by asking the following questions:

- Who owns the earth, and those who live in it based on Psalm 24:1-2? (The Lord owns the earth and therefore deserves the worship of all His people and the rest of creation.)
- How can you relate this truth to the experiences that you have shared at the beginning of this lesson?
- Why is this significant? “Anything that replaces people's loyalty and obedience to God becomes an idol; something that becomes more valuable than kingdom values of peace, justice, caring, sharing, service is an idol. Worship is not just confined to church services; worship is the feeling of adoration and the importance/value that a person places on something. It is possible for Christians to worship idols! When money becomes more important than sharing, money can be considered an idol. When personal gain is valued more than justice, it becomes an idol. and their likes.” (Expect varied answers.)
- In Psalm 24, David asks, “Who can stand in God's presence?” (Apart from Christ, none of us can stand in the presence of God.)
- What other idols that people may have been worshipping today? (Have the students look through the magazines and newspapers and cut out pictures of things (powerful position, profession, gadgets, beauty tools) that they see young people like them give high value. Let students stick these on meta-cards and write their captions and stick on the board or wall.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: “How can young people in the church show that they acknowledge Jesus as the Lord of all creation? In what areas does Jesus' Lordship need to be more evident?”

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

- Ask the class to affirm this truth: “Jesus is the Lord of Creation. He alone deserves all worship.”
- Ask the class to identify ways to acknowledge Jesus as Lord by taking care of the environment by giving up bad habits, by valuing kingdom values of peace, justice, caring, sharing, service.
- Instruct the students to put themselves in Paul's role writing an appeal letter to young people to acknowledge Jesus as the Lord of his people and the whole earth. This can be their template:
Dear Beloved in the Lord,
May this letter find you in good health!
I write to beseech you to acknowledge Jesus as the Lord of his people with your actions.
Your brother/sister in Christ,
(Name)
- Allow for few minutes of writing and letter reading.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "The Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer" (HFJ # 1)
3. Closing prayer: Gather the children around in a circle and let each one say a prayer of thanks to God for having Jesus as his or her Lord and Savior.
4. Response: Threefold Amen.



April 29, 2018

Fifth Sunday after Resurrection

Knowing God through the Risen Christ

Old Testament: Psalm 2:7 (NRSV)

⁷ I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you.

New Testament: Colossians 1:15-17 (NRSV)

The Supremacy of Christ

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or omions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

General Concept: Jesus Christ is the expression of who God is for us.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

Youth: **Jesus Christ is the expression of who God is for us.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Psalm 2 belongs to the category of Royal Psalms whose primary concern is to give a clear definition of the significance of the choice of King David as the king of Israel. This also includes the religious-theological justification for the Davidic Dynasty. This kind of choice or election may be seen as a manifestation of the very special relationship established by God with the Davidic Kings but first and foremost with King David himself. Messianic prophecies have foretold the anointment of one who will come as messiah-king and whose description is identified in a very close relationship with God to the extent that he will be called God's son. King David and his successors had established the Davidic dynasty particularly in the southern part of Israel which is Judah. They had never extended its boundaries until its collapse into the hands of the Babylonian invaders. The Israelite ruling elite was brought into exile in Babylon in the years 597 BCE and 587 BCE.

Psalm 2:7 as a royal psalm was expressed primarily as a tribute to the Davidic king, and as a message also to peoples beyond the boundary of Israel whom the Davidic dynasty had failed to conquer and control. The ends of the earth or the whole world are destined to be governed by the Davidic person identified in Ps.2:7. It is by God's initiative in line with the Davidic dynasty that the appointed one or Messiah will soon arise. Historically, the Davidic dynasty had failed to establish its kingdom beyond the territory of Israel. The insistence on the long ignored special relationship that has been revealed in Ps 2:7 represent a paradigm shift in the revival of the royal and divinely inspired claims of the Davidic dynasty.

Pauline Christological understanding presents Jesus Christ as the head of all creation and the representation of the unseen image of God. Christ holding the authority and power over the whole creation is a fact that must be asserted by the believers; thrones, dominations, sovereignty and all powers and all things were created through Christ and for Christ alone. The death of Jesus on the cross has brought to the forefront the significant shift of meaning in the re-establishment of the relationship of God with God's chosen one and the redemption and reconciliation (instead of domination) of all peoples and nations in the most universal and inclusive sense. Jesus has set a new standard as far as concern and reconciliation for all humanity is concerned. The new universal norm set by Jesus as the

chosen son of God means that humanity will regain their dignity and real freedom by looking at Jesus and believing, following in the way he had blazed for them. The love of God has been revealed to all humanity through Jesus Christ. This love of God is not a simple walk in the park for this will involve pain and sacrifice in faithful obedience as people become imbued with the spirit of the truth that will set them free. Thus, the awakened child of God emerges as a new being in Christ with a clear sense of purpose and mission in life, filled with the spirit of God's liberating love, reconciliation and peace.

The special relationship revealed by God to the Davidic dynasty as the sole appointed ruler of Israel had met strong opposition. The Davidic dynasty eventually collapsed into the hands of the Babylonians. But the Royal Psalm was not forgotten by the people. They kept praying for an eventual time of the return of their much awaited Davidic messiah. After some time, Christians found the new and ultimate meaning of the messiah in the image of Jesus the Christ who suffered but whose family lineage could be traced back to King David. Paul in the letter to the Colossians has identified Jesus Christ as the head of all Creation, the sole holder of all power and authority and the revealed image of God. Jesus the Christ is truly the fulfillment of the Psalmist's messianic hope and affirmation as Jesus according to the Colossians is the fulfillment of God's revelation, the God revealed in human form. The risen Christ has something to tell us, that God was in Him and that all humanity can find its meaning, purpose and dignity in Him.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

According to the apostolic testimony, Jesus Christ is the fullest expression of who God is for us. The law and the prophets of the Jewish Scriptures testify to this truth but in Jesus Christ this testimony has become flesh and blood. The doctrine of God's becoming human in the person of Jesus is the fountainhead of Christian doctrine. The conviction that God is holy and eternal has been revealed to all faith-communities. It has also been revealed to them that God is just and merciful. The unique Christian witness is that which has been revealed in Jesus: that the holy and eternal God took on a real human existence, lived and died for the salvation of the world and the whole creation.

This testimony separates the story of Jesus from all human conceptions about God. Knowledge of Jesus' life and work on earth provides a sufficient knowledge of God. It also discloses to the believer God's design and goal of creation. The question as to how human beings should live and relate to one another and in relation to the natural environment finds answer in the way that Jesus lived. Knowing Jesus' destiny as it was fulfilled by his resurrection and elevation to God's very glory holds the key to understanding what awaits us after death and at history's final destination.

That God is there-for-us has the same sense of a child's truth that parents exist in order to be there for children. The conventional theological line is that humans are created for God's glory, meaning that being human is there-for-God. The truth of God's descent for our salvation puts Christian theology's feet back on the ground rather than its head. This reversal of role is not new but actually based on the classical doctrine of the incarnation (Athanasius' *Cur deus homo?* Why God became human?), which says that God came down from glory in order that we may be raised to glory. In other words, God became that we might become. The divine self-reduction was graphically demonstrated as Jesus passively submitted himself to total humiliation and defeat by human powers. How salvation is wrought via this incomprehensible divine act has been a subject of endless theological speculations. But the "how" is not the point. What is certain is what God did to Godself for our sake, which revealed God's immeasurable love for us.

I. Objectives

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

1. affirm that God is for us through the coming of Jesus;
2. describe the love of God to God's people by sending Jesus to us,
3. discuss the attributes of Jesus Christ; and
4. demonstrate one's their appreciation of God's love for God's people.

II. Concept: Jesus Christ is the expression of who God is for us.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheet copies of KWL Chart

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

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "God of wisdom, we come as we are learners of your kingdom to listen to your instructions. Guide our teacher and guide each and one of us to come to the full knowledge of who you are, what you are, and what you do for the sake of your beloved people. You are with us through the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live out our faith, especially in this time of lingering challenge for us to be a community of hope not only of the future but today in this very hour. This is our prayer in Christ's name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "The Church that Is Called by God" HFJ #315

B. Getting Ready

1. Say: "Speak out your mind. Tell us what you think now. Share your insights or questions you have in mind from the last session."
2. Divide the class into two groups. Present the K-W-L chart and let each group fill up the first two columns first and the last column after discussing the lesson.

What I Know

What I Want to Know

What I Learned

3. Tell each group to share what they have discussed in the first two columns.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the students to read Psalm 2:7 and Colossians 1:15-17.
2. Discuss the supremacy of Christ over everything using the following discussion flow:
 - a. *The begotten son of God*. He is brought forth by God.
 - b. *Image of the invisible God*. God is not seen because God transcends space and time. Since Christ is being fully God, we are able to have a tangible look at him when he was on earth and this makes it possible for us to look at an intangible God. If we want to look at God, we have only to look at Jesus Christ.
 - c. *The firstborn of all creation*. Jesus has the highest honor, first rank in authority and importance.
 - d. *All things created by him and for him*. Creation was made as an expression of God's love for us and the rest of creation. Creation's main goal is to glorify Christ.
 - e. *His being before all things*. Christ is eternal. He was not created. He has always existed. He has no beginning and no end.
 - f. *In him all things being held together*. all things hold together Christ is the One for whom we exist and have meaning; He also gives us substance and community.

The case of the significance and superiority of Christ continues. He not only made the universe, He sustains it by holding it all together. He is also displayed throughout the universe

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

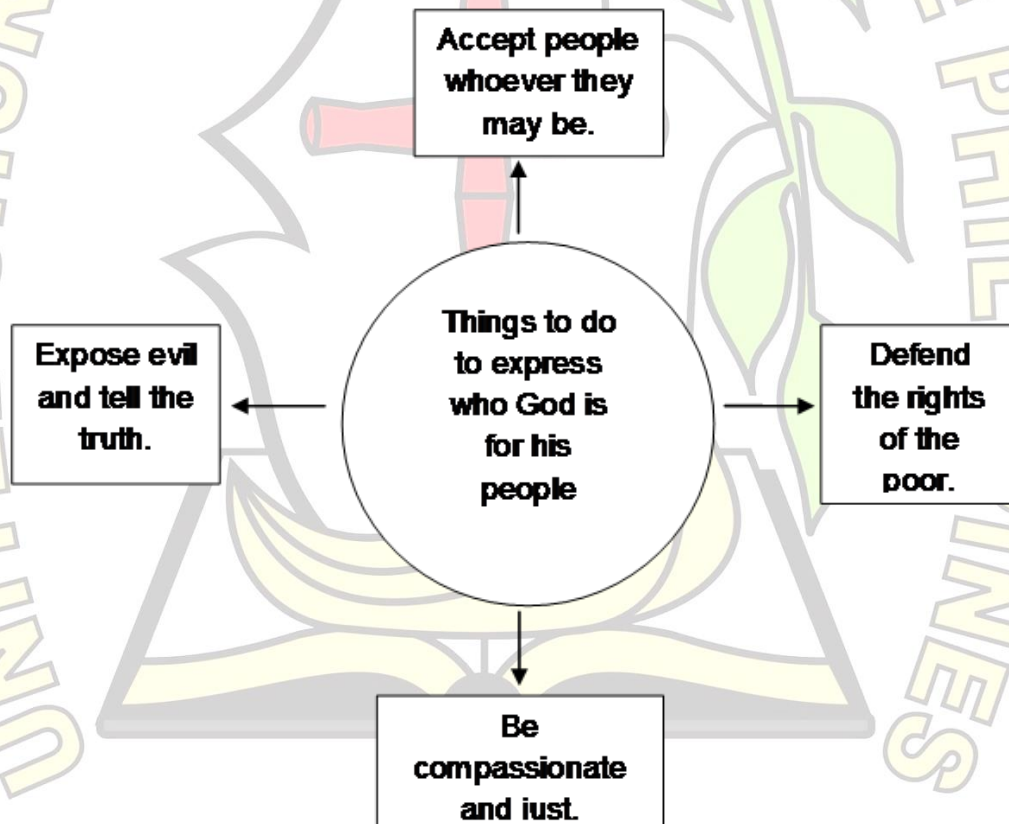
1. Back to the KWL Chart, learners in groups continue to brainstorm and write what they learned in the third column. Plenary follows.
2. Ask these questions:
 - a. Does Paul's description of Jesus in Colossians 1:15-17 support our claim that God is for us through the coming of Jesus Christ? How?
 - b. What conclusions can we draw from our discussions? (God loves God's people and the whole creation that God became human in Jesus Christ to show that God is for us.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "What did Jesus Christ do to express who God is for us?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Draw a graphic organizer on the board or cartolina or manila paper and solicit what they can do to express who God is for people.



G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "The Church that Is Called by God" HFJ #315 and "Ang Tanging Alay Ko"

- Salamat sa iyo aking Panginoong Jesus. Ako'y inibig mo at inangking lubos.
3. Closing prayer: Invite learners to pray silently as they thank God for God's love for all of us shown in Jesus Christ in his lifetime and ministry. Encourage learners to ask God to empower them so they might be able to express who God is to the people they meet this coming week. Say this prayer to end: "Now we want to thank you God for the love you gave to us. Thank you for becoming human in Jesus Christ to live with people and tell of your wonderful love. Christ lived out your unconditional love. You are God for us."



May 6, 2018

Sixth Sunday after Resurrection

Glorification of the Crucified Messiah*Old Testament: Isaiah 52:13* (NRSV)

The Suffering Servant

¹³See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.*New Testament: Acts 1:6-11* (NRSV)

The Ascension of Jesus

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

General Concept: Jesus' ascension has opened up our own destiny to share in his glory.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

Youth: **Jesus' ascension has opened up our own destiny to share in his glory.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The Hebrew word Messiah is referring to the anointed one of God whose main concern is to fulfill the liberating task assigned to him by God. Around 540 BCE, the Israelites in Babylon were nearing the end of their exile as the once mighty Babylonian empire begins to collapse following a series of defeats in the hands of the rising Persian Empire under the mighty king Cyrus. An atmosphere of uncertainty is beginning to cause confusion and demoralization even among the exiles. But then, an unknown prophet from among the exiles whom scholars could only identify as Deutero or Second Isaiah since his oracles became part of the book of the prophet Isaiah, rose to the occasion and began to speak words of hope, comfort and restoration to his fellow exiles.

His collection of oracles of hope and salvation are located in chapters 40-55 of Isaiah and he is widely considered as truly a follower of the continuing Isaiah prophetic tradition wanting to pursue and reinterpret for his own generation the teachings of the prophet who proclaimed God's words of judgment some 160 years earlier in Jerusalem. Most of the oracles of Deutero Isaiah are delivered in beautiful, lyrical poetry-song and the prophet wrote four special compositions referring to the servant of the Lord and one of his poetic compositions is known as the Song of the Suffering Servant in Is. 52:13-53:12 with which our text is closely connected.

Being a Jew himself the writer of Second Isaiah is quite knowledgeable in the Jewish cultic worship traditions and one of them is the sacrifice of animals or holocaust for the forgiveness of the sins of the Jewish believers. It may be seen as expressive of a distinct understanding of divine forgiveness. In Second Isaiah's view, however animal sacrifice is not actually effective in the forgiveness of sins since people may just rely only on this ritual act

as a purely mechanical means of seeking forgiveness devoid of real sincerity. Instead, he introduced the image of the suffering servant offering himself as an innocent sacrifice for the sins of the many as the most effective means given by God for the forgiveness of not only the Jewish community but also of all people. Here, the suffering of God's servant is clearly not to be seen as punishment for sin as traditionally understood by the Jews, but the suffering of the innocent servant is now revealed as a part of the divine plan towards forgiveness and reconciliation of the whole world to God the redeemer and reconciler.

This image of a suffering, innocent, non-resisting, totally submissive servant has become definitive for the kind of ministry and mission that Jesus would then carry out. In contrast to popular understanding, this image defined how Jesus as messiah is to be understood later on and how his mission is to be carried out. The image of this suffering servant became the template by which Jesus as the messiah is to be understood by his followers.

The time came when people from different parts of Judah and Jerusalem heard a voice in the wilderness near the Jordan River. The voice touched the hearts of many people as it called for repentance and baptism in the river Jordan. John was initially suspected as the Messiah but he denied it, proclaiming that he is only preparing the way of the Lord who is coming. When Jesus appeared on the scene of the Jordan River, John the baptizer was so amazed and immediately he announced that Jesus is truly the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Around 33 CE, Jesus began his ministry and preached about the kingdom of God. In faithfully doing so, he disturbed the comfort zone of the religious leaders of his time as well as the Roman authorities. It became inevitable that he was arrested, condemned as a rebel, tortured and crucified but on the third day he rose from the dead. His followers were then reminded of what Jesus himself said to them earlier that his suffering is for the reconciliation and forgiveness of the sins of many people.

Almost 577 years after the Song of the Suffering Servant was composed by the writer of Second Isaiah, it found its proper place and meaning in the life and mission of Jesus Christ. And before the sight of his disciples Jesus ascended right toward heaven but he assured them not to be worried because God will enable them to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus also instructed his disciples before his ascension to be his witnesses not only in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, but also to the ends of the earth. Here, the disciples are already witnessing Jesus' own glorification, his own complete vindication for his total submission and faithfulness to his mission as the messiah sent by God. Now Jesus is offering his disciples the opportunity to share in this glorious moment, to experience also the kind of glory and vindication accorded to all those who faithfully follow and carry out the mission of Jesus.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Jesus' ascension to heaven is the sequel of his resurrection in which his glorified body does not remain in the old creation which is subject to corruption and decay (Romans 8:19-23). One man's victory over a whole establishment of evil – the political and spiritual dominion of the evil Roman Empire – signals a cosmic event in which creation, too, will be liberated from its subjection to corruption and decay. This refers to the ultimate overcoming of the great divide between heaven and earth, between immortality and mortality, between God and creation. In the Book of Revelation, this is depicted as heaven coming down to earth as God will make earth his very dwelling (Rev. 21:3). It is a poetic rendition of the Christian vision of what awaits the new life in Christ – a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth.

Central to the Christian understanding of reality is that the incarnation of the Son of God has activated God's original design to heal creation's alienation from the Creator as a result

of sin. The dialectic of salvation is this: what the incarnate Son accomplished on earth is certified in heaven such that an earthly event translates into a cosmic event. The earthly arena consists of the political and spiritual dimensions which permeate one another. Thus, Jesus' confrontation with the forces of the Empire was also a cosmic confrontation between God and the devil, and his moral and spiritual victory was meant to yield political dividends and vice-versa. Consequently, the struggle for political justice is at the same time a struggle in the spiritual realm. In the end, God's justice would translate into earthly justice – the kingdom of God wherein God's will in heaven would also be done on earth (the Lord's Prayer), and a new social order would correspond to the new being in Christ. And God would accomplish a full-dimension reconciliation of creation to one's self. Despite all signs today that point to humanity's bitter end, the Christian faith is sustained by the hope that God is at work to reverse history's march to creation's total destruction. This assurance should not make the church complacent, for it is called to participate in this work.

I. Objectives

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

1. describe how Jesus is obedient to his Father as he ascended to Him and its impact on the disciples' life;
2. explain the significance of Jesus' ascension in relation to coming back to God in a glorified body, and
3. make commitments to obey persons of authority using Jesus' example of obedience to his Father.

II. Concept: Jesus' ascension has opened up our own destiny to share in his glory.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheet, song chart, index cards, pens.

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, we thank you for the experience of knowing you more and how to live as good neighbors to others. We appreciate well being with other young people searching for life's purpose and meaning. Thank you too to our teachers who patiently guide us to understand so many good things. We pray in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen."
3. Opening song: "The Hands of God" HFJ # 295

B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to share their experiences on being abandoned by loved ones and friends.

C. Learning Time

1. As a background, read aloud Philippians 2:5-9. After reading it, say: Jesus submitted himself to the father's will all his life, hence, God glorified him and ascended to heaven victoriously.
2. Ask the learners to read silently Isaiah 52:13 and responsibly Acts 1:6-11.
3. Add this to stress further Jesus' ascension: Jesus' ascension to heaven is the sequel of his resurrection in which his glorified body does not remain in the old creation which is subject to corruption and decay (Romans 8:19-23). One man's victory over a whole establishment of evil - the political and spiritual dominion of the evil Roman Empire - signals a cosmic event in which creation, too, will be liberated from its

subjection to corruption and decay. Jesus completely submitted himself to God in humble obedience to God's will. Therefore, God glorified him.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Group the learners into three groups. In 15 minutes or less, challenge the learners to prepare a creative presentation depicting the Ascension story of Jesus based on Acts 1:6-11. Presentation may be in the form of skit, song, news and other methods. Appreciate the learners after the presentation.
2. After the presentation, process the activity by discussing the following:
 - a. How the disciples reacted when they saw Jesus ascending into heaven
 - b. How the disciples felt abandoned as Jesus left
 - c. How the disciples made a resolution as a result of Jesus' ascension
3. Ask: How would you compare/relate what Isaiah 52:13 says to what Acts 1:6-11 tells?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How can you follow Jesus in his obedience to God? What is the significance of Jesus' ascension to us?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Direct the class to their first activity on abandonment. Ask them to relate this abandonment to how the disciples felt, how the hope in Jesus helped them cope with it, and the resolution they can make to share this success of feeling loved and cared for with others.
2. Tell the learners to prepare commitment cards. Distribute three index cards to each learner. Instruct them to write down their statement of commitment to obey three persons of authority.

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory verse: "See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted." (Isaiah 52:13)
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "The Hands of God" HFJ # 295
4. Closing prayer: "Creator God, we continue to commit ourselves to obey you like Jesus Christ who lived in obedience to your will and purpose. May we continue also to discern your will and purpose for our lives as we strive even harder to be obedient to persons of authority. But most importantly may our obedience to you bring us even closer to our family and neighbors serving them in all humility. May your name be praised and glorified through us. This is our prayer in Christ's name. Amen."

May 13, 2018

Seventh Sunday after Resurrection/Mother's Day Sunday

Mothering as a Messianic Function

Old Testament: 1 Samuel 1:9-20 (NRSV)

⁹ After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. ¹⁰She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly.

¹¹She made this vow: 'O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a Nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.' ¹²As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. ¹⁴So Eli said to her, 'How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.' ¹⁵But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. ¹⁶Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.' ¹⁷Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.' ¹⁸And she said, 'Let your servant find favor in your sight.' Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer. ¹⁹They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, 'I have asked him of the LORD.'

New Testament: Matthew 23:37 (NRSV)

The Lament over Jerusalem

³⁷ 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

General Concept: Mothering is a way of witnessing to God.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

Youth: **God is known through our caring mothers.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

In the biblical drama, women are said to be designed to give birth and those who cannot do so are considered cursed or not blessed by God. To give birth was considered as a sign of God's blessing. According to the story in our text, there was a man from the tribe of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah. He had two wives; Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children but Hannah had no children. Though Hannah had no children her husband loved Hannah more compared to Peninnah.

Every year the family of Elkanah would go to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord in accordance with the Mosaic Law. According to their common belief and practice,

Peninnah knew that Yahweh was pleased with her and she thanked God for giving her children. After they worshipped and offered their yearly sacrifice, the family of Elkanah would eat together. Peninnah would insult Hannah. The happy family fellowship over food was affected by the weeping and walk-out of Hannah. Peninnah was also actually in pain because her husband loved Hannah more than her. Elkanah would assure Hannah, "Why do you weep? And why do you not eat? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" Hannah had expressed her bitterness before God at Shiloh to the extent that even Eli the high priest suspected her of being drunk. She then made a bargain with Yahweh, that if Yahweh would give her a son, she will offer him to serve Yahweh all of his life and no razor shall touch his head. Eventually Hannah gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, who later became a prophet and the last judge of Israel's tribal confederacy.

In the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus was near the City of Jerusalem he lamented the historic and bloody end of prophets in Jerusalem. He used the metaphor of a hen in gathering her chickens under her wings as a kind of protection against any dangerous threat. But as far as Jesus is concerned, Jerusalem has not learned much throughout her historical experience. Jesus expressed his own feelings and concerns as he uses the lesson that can be learned from what the hen regularly does to her chicks. For Jesus, mothering is a kind of sacrifice. A sacrifice that needs compassion and dedication. A sacrifice of even life itself if it is needed for the protection of the beloved. God in Jesus Christ proved His love even in a very critical situation.

Peninnah out of her love for her children and her right in accordance with common belief and practices, confronted and even insulted her rival Hannah before the eyes of her husband. Peninnah may just have been asserting her rights and fighting in behalf of the rights of her own children. The hen too has that readiness to fight in order to protect the brood. It is difficult to witness faithfully to God! There are a lot of challenges that may shake us to the core of our being. But there will always be the need for compassionate and caring love to endure the pain and even to give a life which only a mother can give. Mothering is a metaphor for faithfully bearing witness before our God even in the face of enormous challenges knowing that the God we serve is a God who will also fight for us and care for us in a manner only a mother can truly understand and approximate.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Mothering and fathering represent the two-sided nature of caring for a young child. It has been used as a metaphor for God's care. However, it is inevitable that the patriarchal culture of the biblical times has determined the one-sided dominance of the paternal role especially when it is employed in religious language. Actual experience, however, shows that even in patriarchal cultures mothers play a much greater role in the raising of children and even when they are grown up. This is borne out in the stories of Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, and others.

Recent studies on the changing nature of the family also indicate that mothering and fathering are not necessarily the respective roles of mothers or fathers. Each may be doing both roles together with the other partner. They represent two complementary ways of providing children the full extent of parental care. This has become an accepted reality to progressive couples to the point that gender-based roles are getting diffused and overlapped.

The new consciousness in family relationships has exerted a game-changing impact on theological articulation. But this early shift is fraught with danger owing to the fact that the gender discourse has yet to complete its circle. On the other hand, by its very nature theological articulation is unable to keep up with the pace of cultural developments. But some very preliminary statements can be made.

Mothering is being recognized as a more apt metaphor for the tenderness of God's love

and compassion. On the other hand, the severity of God's justice and rule appears more as a function of a fathering figure. And yet, God's forgiving love is shown by the father of the lost son in Jesus' parable. There is also ambivalence in describing the role of the shepherd who risks danger to find one lost sheep. In other words, there is no hard and fast rule for attributing specific actions of God to either male or female. Although distinct from each other, the mothering and fathering roles complement to offer a fuller view of how God relates to us.

If we take the current progressive concept of the mothering-fathering distinction, Jesus was a male person who demonstrated a stronger mothering than fathering instinct. He was tender and welcoming to the vulnerable and marginalized, like women and children. But at certain moments he was harsh on the scribes and Pharisees and even to his disciples. What is clear is that in the totality of his life and work, he demonstrated God's mothering care underlying the divine-human relationship.

I. Objectives

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

1. describe how Jesus showed his love for his people when he compared himself to a hen;
2. explain the significance of the mothering function of Jesus;
3. deduce from the Scriptures how Jesus used his mothering-fathering function to do his mission, and
4. list creative ways by which one can show God's love by being caring mothers or fathers to others.

II. Concept: God is known through our caring mothers.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheet, song chart, manila papers and pentel pens.

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, as we study our lesson today, let us be mindful of Jesus who concretely showed God's love to all of us. Teach us today to show our love the way Jesus showed God's love to people, especially the least, the lost, and last. Amen."
3. Opening song: "I Am Yours, O Lord" HFJ # 283

B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to recall experiences when they cried over some problems. Let the students share how they felt and the reasons for shedding their tears. Process the answers of the students. Emphasize the role of their mothers and fathers in responding to their needs.

C. Learning Time

1. Say: Today's session is about knowing God through our caring mothers. How could that be? How can we know God's love through our mothers?
2. Ask the learners to read silently Matthew 23:37.
3. Let them explain the metaphor of Jesus likened to a hen keeping her chicks under her wings. Allow a few minutes for learners to reflect on the meaning and message of the Bible reading and the meditation.
4. Invite learners to listen attentively to a short reading of the following meditation:
Women's experience is intimately related to life's mystery, hope amidst suffering,

comfort and assurance amidst perplexities, courage and faith amidst death. When a woman gives birth to a new life she actually and symbolically celebrates life's mystery and nature's way of creating and recreating. For nine months she patiently waits for the coming out of a child like a farmer who waits for a harvest season. As she nurtures the life in her womb, life-giving bonding is reinforced and validated. Her womb serves as the world of a child and indeed the child's protection and sufficient shelter. Bearing a child teaches wisdom that in waiting there develops a sense of cooperative and active participation with nature's rhyme. Anguish and suffering during labor is replaced by joy and celebration when she beholds a newborn baby. Such experience is an indispensable episode in the life of the community. That is why we celebrate with her in this powerful event. (Kalinangan 1994)

5. Discuss the mothering-fathering function of Jesus. Emphasize that this mothering-fathering function reflects His messianic function.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Ask these questions to the learners:
 - a. What is meant by the above meditation for you?
 - b. Can you say that Jesus reflects his mothering function when he compared himself to a hen? Why?
 - c. What is the significance of the mothering function of Jesus?
2. Divide learners into four small groups. Each group draws a Bible text and discusses how Jesus used his mothering-fathering function to do his mission. Ask the groups to act out the text and briefly explain.
 - a. John 10:1-30: Jesus as the Good Shepherd
 - b. Matthew 23:1-36: Jesus criticizes the Scribes and Pharisees
 - c. Matthew 14:13-21: Feeding of the Five Thousand
 - d. Luke 15:11-32: The Parable of the Lost Son

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How do you feel when your parents reflect God's love for us?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Using the abbreviation JESUS, ask the same groupings to list creative ways by which one can show God's love by being caring mothers or fathers to others. Present a sample. Talk about the work of the class.

J - ust in dealing with others

E - ncouraging those who lose hope

S - upportive -of a good cause

U - nderstanding of others' limitations

S - ympathetic to others' joys and pains

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory verse: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matthew 27:37b)
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "I Am Yours, O Lord" (HFJ # 283)
3. Closing prayer: Each learner says a thank you prayer to Jesus for his love to people like a hen. He/she promises also to relate with others like a caring mother-father.