

The Kingdom of God is present where faith in Jesus Christ is shared, where healing is given to the sick, where food is given to the hungry, where light is given to the blind, and where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed.

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

February 24, 2019

LESSON 40: GOD’S KINGDOM IS WHERE FAITH IS SHARED

General Concept: The Kingdom of God is present where faith in Jesus Christ is shared.

<i>NKP</i>	<i>YE</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I pray to God. • I pray with my family. • I go to Sunday School. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We pray to God. • We pray together as a family. • We go to Sunday School. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We pray to God as an expression of sharing our faith. • We pray together as a community. • We regularly attend and invite our friends to attend Sunday School, worship, and mission activities of the church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We share and learn from each other’s faith journey. • We pray together as a community. • We regularly attend and invite our friends to attend Sunday School, worship, and mission activities of the church. • Our faith compels us to proclaim God’s Kingdom of love, justice and peace to all people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We share and learn from each other’s faith journey. • We pray together as a community. • We regularly attend and invite our friends to attend Sunday School, worship, and mission activities of the church. • Our faith empowers us to proclaim God’s Kingdom of love, justice and peace to all people.

Learning Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell who Jesus is for them • Be happy about knowing about Jesus • Promise to share stories about Jesus to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell why it is important to trust in God • Describe who Jesus is for them • Relate what they would share about Jesus to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss their understanding of what faith is • Explain how some Bible characters expressed their faith in God • Identify ways of expressing faith in God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share their own stories of faith • Express their concern and care for each other in a prayer • Invite other members of the community to join church activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share and learn from each other's faith journey • Resolve to attend and participate in all activities of the church as an expression of their faith in Jesus Christ • Realize that it is our faith in Jesus that empowers us to do kin-dom building •
Biblical References				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 37:3-5; John 4: 4-42 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 37:3-5; John 4: 4-42 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 37:3-5; Romans 10: 14-17; Hebrews 11:1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 37:3-5; John 4: 4-42 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 37:3-5; Acts 10:24-48

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Genesis 45:3-11, 15; Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50; Luke 6:27-38

Biblical Background

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

This biblical account marks the beginning of a relationship. It was a special kind of a relationship because it was made between a deity (a God) and an ordinary human being. More importantly, it was God who initiated the relationship. God made himself known to Abraham and has bound him to Him through a “covenant- relationship”.

A covenant is understood as a treaty or a contract between two parties. Both parties involved in such a treaty are bound to whatever agreement they might have and is expected to adhere to what the treaty expects from them. God promised Abraham to give him a son

through whom Abraham's descendants will become numerous. God intends to make Abraham's family His people and that they are only to worship YAHWEH and no other gods.

The covenant God made with Abraham has set the direction of an entire people's journey. Abraham was found faithful by God despite the shortcomings of the members of his family and so God continued to bless the household of Abraham and remained faithful to the promises He made. On the other hand, Abraham remained true to God up to the end of his life. This kind of faith was articulated, translated, and taught to generations upon generations. Abraham's family and descendants continued to be recipients of God's blessings despite their sinfulness. This tells us that God's love and faithfulness exceeds beyond what has been agreed upon in the covenant. "God accepted Abraham not because he led a perfect life, but because of his responsiveness to God's promises."

Jesus became the sign of the new covenant God established with the people. It is not different from what was established before, but this time, it was Jesus' blood that sealed such agreement. Through faith in Jesus Christ, God continues to fulfill his promises. Believers are called to proclaim and share this faith to remind the people of God's will and intention.

Psalm 27: 13-14

This portion of a psalm is a declaration of faith. The psalmist conveyed his message with such confidence and conviction that God will never leave him especially at times when everybody seems to forsake him. He did so because he wanted to assure the readers that God will come to rescue anybody who waits. Here, faith, then, is expressed as having a strong heart and belief in the goodness of God while waiting for Him. The writer has effectively shared his faith through this song so that others may have the same faith as he has.

Acts 10:24-48

The greatest barrier to the spread of the gospel in the first century BC was the Jewish-Gentile conflict. Most of the early believers were Jewish and to them it was scandalous to even think of associating with Gentiles who were the early Greek Christian believers. But God told Peter to take and share the gospel to a Roman, to which Peter obeyed despite his background and personal feelings since God was making it clear that the Good News of Christ was for everyone! We should not allow any barrier – language, culture, prejudice, geography, economic level or educational level – to keep us from telling or sharing others about Christ. In every nation there are hearts that are restless for God and are ready to receive the gospel – but someone must share and take it to them. Seeking God is not enough – people must find Him.

Peter's brief and powerful sermon contains a concise statement of the gospel. It proclaims Jesus' perfect life of servanthood; his death on the cross, his resurrection, which he personally witnessed and experienced. Being a witness for Christ or a sharer of the faith to others

need not take the form of long sermons to be effective. It should be Spirit-led and should center on Christ – the way and the truth and the life.

Cornelius, a wealthy Gentile and a military man became a Christian convert through Peter’s testimony and sharing of his faith. A new chapter in Christian history was written once a Jewish Christian leader and a Gentile Christian convert discovered something significant about God at work in each other. Cornelius needed Peter and his gospel to know the way to salvation. Peter, on the other hand, came to a realization that Gentiles are included in God’s plan of salvation, and that they also needed to hear the stories of salvation of those who have experienced it. (Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, pp. 1971-1972).

**Transfiguration
Sunday**

Last Sunday before Lent
March 3, 2019

LESSON 41: GOD’S KINGDOM IS WHERE HEALING IS GIVEN TO THE SICK

General Concept: The Kingdom of God is present where those who are physically sick are given healing and wholeness; and where a society that is sick is healed and transformed.

NKP	YE	OE	Y	A
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God heals me. • I help take care of the sick. • I am happy when the sick is healed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God heals us. • We help take care of the sick. • We are happy when the sick is healed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God heals those who are sick in mind and body. • We can help in the healing of others. • God wants everyone to be healthy always. • God calls us to help heal the sick people and our sick world today. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God heals those who are sick in mind, body and spirit. • God restores not only physical ailments, but also ailments of society. • God’s Kingdom means the healing of the whole person including his or her environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God heals those who are sick in mind, body and spirit. • God empowers us to be partners in the restoration of the wholeness of life. • God empowers us to work for the radical transformation of

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are called to help build a Kingdom of healing where people's life and dignity are made whole. 	rotten structures of society that breed all forms of sickness.
Learning Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell their story of when they were sick Show how to take care those who are sick Pray for God's healing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share about the time God healed them from sickness Enumerate ways by which they can help sick people Express thanks to God for healing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State that healing is a sign of the presence of God's kin-dom and a gift from God Discuss the implication of healing in the lives of people Demonstrate some ways on how Jesus and his disciples healed the sick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State that healing is a sign of the presence of God's kin-dom and a gift from God Identify issues that reflect the ailments of society and the environment Articulate the church's understanding of healing Resolve to participate in the work for wholeness and healing of both society and environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain what holistic wellness/healing means according to the biblical perspective Discuss the effects of personal wellness and sickness to both church and society Resolve to participate in the work for the restoration of wellness/healing of the society
Biblical References				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts 3:1-10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Psalm 99:3</u>; Luke 9:37-43a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matthew 4:23-25, 10:1; Mark 16:18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isaiah 35: 1-7; Luke 9:1-11; Acts 3:1-10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts 3:1-10

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

Biblical Background

Isaiah 35: 5-7

In the Jewish history, Isaiah is a name that has great significance. Among all the prophets, Isaiah was most quoted in the New Testament. Isaiah is known for his rich vocabulary and imagery and had spent most of his prophetic days within the corridors of power. In fact, many kings call him for advice and help with regards to political decisions. Though he was known to be a 'court prophet', he was not a mere yes-man in the halls of the kings. Isaiah was uncompromising in his message especially when he saw the signs of grave danger awaiting Judah (southern Kingdom) and its people.

The prophet Isaiah lived during the times of Judah's glory days – when it was strong and healthy. There, he witnessed the rich abuse their power; he saw men who went around drunk; he saw women who cared more about their clothes than their neighbors' hunger and poverty.

Another kind of danger looms outside the walls of Judah. Empires around it were growing fast and had begun to pose a great threat to Judah. Isaiah never failed to remind Judah to put their trust in the Lord rather than to make alliances with other countries for it may bring more harm than gains.

The biblical text talks about a time when God will come to restore and redeem those who suffered from the hands of the conquerors. Isaiah talks about a time when God will restore the land and people will 'see the glory of God'. Not only will the people be restored from their physical impairments ("the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped (vs.5); lame will leap and the mute tongue shouts (v.6)), but even the land and everything in it will also be restored ("...waters will gush out to the desert (v.6); parched land will be glad and wilderness will rejoice and blossom (v.1)). There will also be restoration of all of the shattered souls here on earth ("gladness and joy will overtake the people, there will be no more sorrows and sighing).

Isaiah envisioned a restoration that is whole – a restoration that involves not just people but even the environment as well. People will see "God's glory" when everything is restored into wholeness.

Luke 9:1-6, 11

Luke may not have been necessarily present or may not have personally known Jesus, but he was a dedicated convert to Christianity and might have went with Paul on several trips. In fact, Paul had fondly mentioned Luke in some of his writings. Luke is a gifted writer so much so that many would find pleasure in reading his book. As an author, Luke emphasizes on relationships between his characters.

Our biblical text here is part of his account of when Jesus sent his Twelve disciples to preach about the Kingdom of God, and in doing so, he had given them power and authority to drive out demons, cure diseases and heal the sick. It is clearly pointed out by Luke that healing the sick, driving out demons and proclaiming about the Kingdom goes hand in hand. They are not separate tasks but each task is as equally important as the others. The good news does not cover preaching only seeing as healing means nothing if people are not informed about the Kingdom.

Peter and other apostles continued the ministry that Jesus has entrusted to his disciples. They roam the cities to teach and introduce Jesus to the townsfolk. Along with their proclamation of God's kingdom, the apostles manifested the authority given them by healing the sick. (Acts 3:1-10)

Acts 3:1-10

The Jews observed three times of prayer – morning (9:00 a.m.), afternoon (3:00 p.m.) and evening (sunset). At these times, devout Jews and Gentiles who believed in God often went to the temple to pray. Peter and John were also heading to the temple at 3:00 p.m.

The gate called Beautiful was an entrance to the temple, not to the city. It was one of the favored entrances and many people passed through it on their way to worship. There, a lame man was begging to be placed where he would be seen by the most people. Giving money to beggars was considered praiseworthy in the Jewish religion. So, the beggar wisely placed himself where pious people might see him on their way to worship at the temple.

The lame man asked for money, but Peter gave him something much better – healing – so that he can use his legs. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 1948*). Peter and John understood that the lame beggar was not just asking for money but he was begging for more. He was actually pleading for the restoration of his own self-respect, his dignity as a human person, which the Temple might have neglected or might not have seen throughout its existence. As Peter and John were confronted by this reality of a lame beggar in front of the Temple, they could not simply ignore it. They had to identify themselves with the struggles and hopes of the lame beggar in restoring his life and dignity into wholeness. For the kingdom of God, which their Lord and Master had inaugurated and of which they had to bear witness, is a kingdom where people's life and dignity are made whole.

Healing as Wholeness of Life

Since sickness involves the whole of human life, healing should be viewed as the restoration of the wholeness of life. This would mean that healing does not only concern the curing of a person's physical illness, but it more importantly involves ensuring that he or she would not get sick. This does not merely imply providing adequate medical services, rather it involves the radical transformation of the

sick structures of society that breed people’s physical sickness and hinders them to rise up and walk. (*Luna Dingayan. We Believe in the Kingdom of God (A Study Guide on the UCCP Statement of Faith, p. 21-22).*)

The Executive Committee of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines issued a statement on the healing ministry of the church during its meeting on August 20-27, 1987. It states, “*The UCCP engages itself in holistic health ministry in obedience to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ for abundant life for all. Though the Church focuses her attention upon people, she cannot close her eyes to the ills of society which give rise to poverty of body and spirit. It is therefore necessary for the Church to address herself to the historic problems of domination, unequal distribution of land, inequality in economic opportunities and resources and oppression and exploitation of less privileged and marginalized Filipinos.*”

First Sunday in Lent

March 10, 2019

LESSON 42: GOD’S KINGDOM IS WHERE FOOD IS GIVEN TO THE HUNGRY

General Concept: The Kingdom of God is present where food is given to the hungry and the world’s resources are equitably distributed.

NKP	YE	OE	Y	A
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I thank God for the food. • I share food with others. • God is happy when I share food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We thank God for the food. • We share food with others. • God wants us to share. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God created a world where there is enough food for all to share. • There are hungry people because there are those who do not share. • In God’s Kingdom, there is sharing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God created a world where there is enough food for all to share. • There are hungry people because there are those who do not share. • The Kin-dom of God is about sharing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God created a world where there is enough food and other resources to be distributed to all. • There are hungry people because there are greedy people. • The Kingdom of God is about the

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God mandates us to share God’s abundance and blessings. 	equitable distribution of the world’s resources.
Learning Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say a prayer of thanks for the food • Share food with the hungry or those in need • Express what they feel when they give/share food to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge God as the source and provider of our food • Share food with others • Express what they feel when they give/share food to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge God as the source and provider of our food • Explain why we have to share food with the needy • Express what they feel when they give/share food to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the meaning of “equitable sharing” • Demonstrate equitable sharing in class • Express appreciation to God for creating a world where there is enough food for all to share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand why there are a lot of poor and hungry people in the world • As a church, suggest solutions to the government to stop this unequal distribution of the nation’s resources • Affirm that each one has to share God’s blessings to others so that no one will go hungry • As a church, create or design a program on food distribution for the poor and the needy
Biblical References				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deuteronomy 26:1-11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deuteronomy 26:9-11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deuteronomy 26:9-11; John 6:5-15; Isaiah 58:7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deuteronomy 26:9-11; Luke 4:1-4; John 6:11, Joshua 5: 9-12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deuteronomy 26:9-11; Luke 4:1-4; 9:10-17; 16:19-31

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16; Romans 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13

Biblical Background

Joshua 5:9-12

Our biblical text is considered as a part of the fast-paced accounts of action in a battle in a book called the “The Book of War”. The book talks about a new leader of Israel in the person of Joshua, who is an untested leader but a known warrior among the older generations. Joshua is fated to lead a more daring generation who decided to trust God, contrary to the previous generation who were fearful and full of panic. As we read the book of Joshua, we cannot find an instance where the people rebel against God or grumble for any reason. Joshua is like a book of “good news” in contrast to other books like Numbers and Deuteronomy.

There are two main tasks that Joshua wanted to accomplish in his leadership: One, he is to command a military campaign against their enemies and take control of the land promised to them by God. Second, to divide the land they conquered among the twelve tribes of Israel.

V. 12 mentioned that once the day people ate from the produce of the land promised them came, manna would stop coming or falling for the Israelites. This account tries to tell us that for each generation of Israelites who continued to wander in the wilderness, God had never stopped providing them their food. Despite the grumbings of the older generation led by Moses, God remained faithful and continued to provide for their needs. This account is an affirmation that God (YAHWEH) never had an intention to let people live in hunger and poverty. God sustained them according to their needs. In one instance, along their journey, the people in fear of hunger disobeyed God’s instructions and kept manna beyond what they need for the day- a display of distrust and lack of faith.

The distribution of the land among Israel’s tribe is a concrete affirmation of God as a sustaining God. God cannot afford to see His people in need of food and live in dire poverty while the neighboring rich nations are enjoying the riches of their conquest. It is God’s intention that His people shall live from the produce of the land and not from the morsels that had fallen from the table of the rich.

John 6:1-14

John has a different purpose from that of the other gospel writers – Luke, Matthew and Mark. Though they write accounts of Jesus’ miracles, John’s accounts of miracles were called “signs”. Usually, a sign tries to point something to someone. Every miraculous work of Jesus tries to teach a lesson to its audience and readers. When he fed the multitude, he claimed it as the work of the “bread of life”. When he restored the sight of a blind person, he declared himself as the “light of the world”. John specifically handpicked these miracles to prove a point – that Jesus is not just any ordinary man, he is the Son of God.

Chapter 6 of John's gospels shows how people reacted to Jesus. At first, they were amazed and awed at Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five thousand. With much excitement, the people wanted him to be king, but Jesus went away from the crowd. The very next day, he rebuked them for being so concerned with their physical needs that they had ignored the spiritual truth. It was as if Jesus was explaining to them that as much as he responded to the physical needs of people, he was also offering a way to gain higher satisfaction which requires not just miracles but faith in him as the son of God. In response to this litany, the people were so disappointed and had started to turn away from Jesus.

John was trying to point to us that in Jesus Christ as the Son of God- the bearer of the message of the Kingdom, we can find abundance and fullness of life. As Jesus claimed to be the "bread of life", he gives us assurance that our physical and spiritual hunger will be filled through him. Responding to the needs of people and sharing what we have is a basic virtue in God's Kingdom. Hunger and poverty is no longer an issue of concern in God's Kingdom. Greed, immediate satisfaction, and selfishness are never welcomed in God's kingdom.

Luke 16:19-31

Lazarus and the Rich Man

The Pharisees considered wealth to be a proof of a person's righteousness. Jesus startled them with this story where a diseased beggar is rewarded and a rich man is punished. The rich man did not go to hell because of his wealth but because he was selfish when he refused to feed Lazarus, take him in, or care for him. The rich man was hardhearted in spite of his great blessings. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 1839*)

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus deals with the question of hunger in the midst of plenty. It pictures the scandalous gap between the rich and the poor. It shows how man's selfishness, greed, and gluttony would make him blind and indifferent to the reality of suffering and hunger around him. Such blindness and indifference have created an unbridgeable abyss that has isolated the rich man from the rest of humanity – from Lazarus and Abraham himself. (*Luna Dingayan, We Believe in the Kingdom of God. A Study Guide on the UCCP Statement of Faith, p 25*).

Luke 9:10-17

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

The people who followed Jesus in his ministry were not only hungry; they were also selfish. After a day of healing the sick and preaching about the kingdom of God, Jesus and the disciples stopped to rest and eat. No doubt some of the people present brought food, but others did not. Jesus and his disciples had only five loaves and two fishes. Hence, the disciples suggested that the people be told to go and buy food for themselves.

Instead of following the disciples' suggestions, Jesus used the occasion to teach by example a very important value in God's kingdom, the value of sharing. Thus, he said to his disciples, "You yourselves give them something to eat" (v. 13). And so the disciples laid before

the multitude what they have, and thereupon others were also moved to share what they have. In the end, there was more than enough for everyone.

What was miraculous in this incident was that people suddenly ceased to be possessive about their food and they had begun to share, only to find out that there was more than enough to go around. Things do tend to multiply when you share them. (*Luna Dingayan, We Believe in the Kingdom of God. A Study Guide on the UCCP Statement of Faith, p. 28*).

Second Sunday in Lent

March 17, 2019

LESSON 43: GOD’S KINGDOM IS WHERE LIGHT IS GIVEN TO THE BLIND

General Concept: The Kingdom of God is present where the physically blind is given sight and those who are blind to society’s realities are enlightened.

NKP	YE	OE	Y	A
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God made me eyes to see. • I see the things happening around me. • I ask about the things I see. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people have eyes that can see, some people are blind. • There are kinds of blindness that can be cured. • We can help those who cannot see appreciate the world around us. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blindness can be a physical condition. • Blindness can also be refusing to see the things happening around us. • Helping others see and understand things happening around us is also a way of giving light to the blind. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are different kinds of physical blindness; some kinds can be cured, other kinds cannot. • Blindness can also be refusing to see the harsh realities of society. • Helping others see and understand the harsh realities happening in our society is also a way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are different kinds of physical blindness; some kinds can be cured, other kinds cannot. • Blindness can also be refusing to see the harsh realities of society. • Helping others see and understand the harsh realities happening in our society is also a way

			of giving light to the blind.	of giving light to the blind. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enlightening people means leading them to commit to the work of establishing the Kingdom of God.
• Learning Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell how it feels to be blind Thank God for the eyes that can see Describe all they can see around them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affirm that sin is not the cause of blindness Understand that not all blindness can be cured Suggest ways to help the blind appreciate the world around us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience even briefly how it is to be blind Name some reasons why some people refuse to see what is happening around them Show ways how to help others to see and understand things happening around us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiate between physical blindness and blindness to the harsh realities of society Feel what it is to live without sight Give suggestions for how one can be of help to those who are blind to the realities of society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss different aspects of blindness and how each can be cured Evaluate our Church's vision and determine whether we see clearly the realities of life Take initiatives in "giving light to the blind"
• Biblical References				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isaiah 35:5; Psalm 27:1; Mark 10:46-52 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isaiah 35:5; Psalm 27:1; John 9:1-25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psalm 27:1; Mark 10:46-52; <u>Ephesians</u> 4:18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psalm 27:1; Mark 10:46-52; Ephesians 4:18, Isaiah 43:16-21; John 12:1-8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psalm 27:1; Mark 10:46-52; John 8:12

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philipians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35

Biblical Background

Isaiah 35:5

In the Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 35 proclaimed God's healing for the blind, "the eyes of the blind be opened...". It is a vision of God's kingdom where everyone received healing from God. Blindness may be understood as physical blindness but may also be understood from the perspective of the prophet – the inability of the people to see God's love and initiative to liberate and give them a kind of life that is far different from what the people are experiencing in the hands of their captors. Blindness may also mean the inability of the people to see visions of a life with God.

Psalm 27:1 is an affirmation that God is the source of light in times of darkness. When people live in a condition wherein hope seems so dim, the people turn to God for help and understanding.

Mark 10: 46-52

In the New Testament, Mark relay the story of the blind man named Barthimaeus. He was begging in the streets. When he heard that Jesus and his disciples would pass by, he shouted "Jesus, son of David have mercy on me"! Many people stopped him but he keep shouting, Jesus stopped, called him and healed him.

Healing from blindness may be a physical condition but the writer intends to make the readers realize that Jesus was actually addressing another kind of blindness – the kind of blindness that turns the heart of the people into stone; the inability to see what is happening around them; the strict obedience to the Law that hinders them to see beyond the physical condition of the people specially the poor and needy. Somehow, Mark through his accounts is like telling us that Jesus look at us as all blind who needs to be healed and freed.

Isaiah 43:16-21

In the beginning of the 40th chapter of Isaiah, harsh words of warnings from the previous writings are replaced with a soft reassuring tone of comfort. Judah lies in ruins, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jews were held captive. Some 200 years had already passed since the events prophesied in the book of Isaiah had occurred.

It is best to understand what happened during those years. Isaiah being a court prophet witnessed the inevitable downfall of Judah. As this was happening, Babylon slowly rose into power and eyed Judah as a possible target for invasion. Then, Babylon successfully invaded Judah and left Jerusalem a total wreck. Prophets at that time raised questions of why God allowed such things to happen to His chosen nation.

In Isaiah, chapters 40-66, the tone shifts again. Instead of fearful warnings and judgment towards the Jews, Isaiah proclaimed his prophecies to be full of hope and expectations of what is to come. The prophet tries to bring comfort to the downtrodden Jews and makes

them see that something big and new is in store for their people. God is never defeated nor has He abandoned them. Instead, big events are carefully planned by God.

The biblical text in Isaiah 43:16-21 urges the people to forget the past which blinded them to see what is waiting for them in the near future. The God who saved the slaves from Egypt is the same God who will deliver them from the hands of Babylon. The people were urged to acknowledge God and re-establish their broken relationship because of their unfaithfulness. The Israelites were once again so blinded by pride and arrogance that they had put their trust in earthly alliances which Isaiah had already warned them against.

Mark 10:46-52

Mark possesses a distinct feature in his writings. He is more dramatic in his accounts of Jesus. He doesn't dwell long on speeches but focuses more on actions to get the attention of his readers. It was as if Mark was addressing a restless and impatient audience. Despite the fast-paced recording of events that involves Jesus and the disciples, Mark never failed to draw people's attention to the main character.

The biblical text seems handpicked from among all other miraculous stories accounted for by the other gospel stories. It tells of a miracle performed by Jesus which was where he was giving sight to a person who is physically blind. Upon hearing about Jesus, Bartimaeus, a blind man, shouted and begged for help. Without hesitation, Jesus called out to Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" (v.51). "I want to see," replied the blind man (v.51). "Go, your faith has healed you" (v.52). These are very striking statements. Though Mark successfully delivered the story as quick as it can be, he did not forget to deliver the message he wanted to convey to the audience and to the readers.

Indeed, healing those who are incapacitated with illnesses— like blindness - is a concern of the Messiah. But in the process of healing, firstly, one has to recognize his/ her condition, that there is something wrong with him/her that needs to be healed. Secondly, one has to recognize what kind of help they need. And, thirdly, one has to have faith that they can be healed in order to be healed. Blindness could be a physical weakness or it could be a condition wherein one refuses to see or recognize his/her own reality. "Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?" (8:18). Either way, one has to have faith to open up blinded eyes. Faith is necessary to healing as one cannot see without faith.

John 8:12

Light stands for truth and clarity. To be blind is to live with no direction, no clarity of purpose and goal in life. To be blind is to live in falsehood and deception. On the other hand, to live in the light is to live in clarity of truth, to live in the knowledge of what is right and wrong, to know the difference between truth and deception. Jesus is light and life because he has borne upon himself the truth and clear meaning and direction of human existence.

The kingdom of God is not a kingdom of blindness but a kingdom of light. Giving light to the blind, therefore, is a sign of the presence of God’s reign. Light is one of the primary gifts which God gave and created for the world. This is affirmed in Genesis when the writer wrote of God saying, “Let there be light and there was light.” The coming of the Son of God is described as the coming of light in the midst of a world in darkness. As an inaugurator of God’s kingdom, Jesus’ own ministry involves giving light to the blind. (*Luna Dingayan, We Believe in the Kingdom of God. A Study Guide on the UCCP Statement of Faith, p. 31*)

Ephesians 4:18

Paul addresses the Gentiles in this verse. He described their minds to be confused, like blind men who can see nothings. There is no real wisdom in their minds. He warned the new Christians to be mindful and careful. He wants them to listen to what he is saying “I say this in the name of the Lord”, he says. He reminded them of their past lives before they became Christians. It was the very worst kind of life that they can think of.

The following was Paul’s description of their life:

- They do not know about the life that God gives. People who do not know God have no real purpose in life.
- They refuse to listen to him. These people were separated from God because they have no knowledge of God.

We could probably ask why these people did not know about the life that God gives. It might be because they did not hear the good news. But there will be no excuses, because they have not lived with the knowledge that they already have. We cannot see God, though we can see the things God has created. We cannot see God because our spirits and minds have become like hard stones. (Easy English and Bible Commentary)

Third Sunday in Lent

March 24, 2019

LESSON 44: GOD’S KINGDOM IS WHERE LIBERTY IS GIVEN TO THE CAPTIVE AND OPPRESSED

General Concept: The Kingdom of God is present where those unjustly prisoned are set free and the oppressed delivered from the tyrants; this we proclaim as Christ’s disciples.

<i>NKP</i>	<i>YE</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am free to be a child. • I enjoy playing with my friends. • I want other children to be free like me. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are free to be children. • We enjoy playing with our friends. • We want all children to be free. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God wants all of us to be free from abuse and violence. • We enjoy being ourselves. • God wants us to participate in decision-making processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God intends for all persons to be free from all forms of bondage and oppression. • We must take the side of those unjustly accused and imprisoned and work for their release. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God intends for all persons to be free from all forms of bondage and oppression. • We must take the side of those unjustly accused and imprisoned and work for their release. • We must denounce all forms tyranny and announce the breaking forth of the Kingdom of God.
<i>Learning Objectives</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express their feelings when they are treated badly • Feel sorry for treating others badly • Thank God for listening to their cry for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assert that children need to be free • Affirm that children need to play • Express their feelings when they are treated badly • Ensure that they do not treat others badly • Acknowledge the right of children to enjoy their childhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define what freedom means • Identify some situations that God wants us to be free from • List some situations that allows us to enjoy life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give examples of oppressive situations • Discuss what God's intention is for those who are oppressed • Resolve to take the side of the oppressed and participate in the call for release of those unjustly imprisoned • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how oppression prevents people from experiencing the good life intended by God • As a church, take actions to help release those unjustly accused and imprisoned • Make a stand to denounce all forms of tyranny through non-violent actions • Realize that helping the poor and the

				oppressed is an expression of our faith in Jesus Christ and is part of our responsibility as Christians
Biblical References				
• Exodus 3:7-10; Isaiah 55:7; Luke 4:18	• Exodus 3:7-10; Isaiah 55:7; Luke 4:18	• Exodus 3:7-10; Isaiah 55:1, 7; Luke 4:18	• Exodus 3:7-10; Isaiah 55:1, 7; Luke 4:18-19, Isaiah 50: 4-9a	• Isaiah 55:1, 7; 61:1; Luke 4:18-19

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

Biblical Background

Isaiah 50:4-9a

In Isaiah, chapters 40-66, the tone shifts again. Instead of fearful warnings and judgment towards the Jews, Isaiah proclaimed his prophecies to be full of hope and expectations of what is to come. The prophet tries to bring comfort to the downtrodden Jews and makes them see that something big and new is in store for their people. God is never defeated nor has He abandoned them. Instead, big events are carefully planned by God.

Isaiah always talk about predictions of coming events such as the rise of someone who will be instrumental for the freedom of those who remained faithful to God. Isaiah also mentioned about a Messiah, a suffering servant through whom God will show his power. The book of Isaiah never fails to remind Israel of their intended destiny – to be the light to all nations and to bring God’s salvation to the ends of the earth. This intention was declared ever since the beginning of God's covenant with Abraham.

The biblical text in Isaiah's 50th chapter mentioned Israel’s sin and how God protected and helped His obedient servants. With God’s protection, according to the servants, no one can condemn him nor disgrace him. The text tries to remind Israel to put their trust and faith back unto Him and to rely on God. Despite their sin He intends to save them from their suffering and pain and from the oppression they have suffered from the hands of their invaders. God intends to free them from their captivity through whatever means possible.

Psalm 31:9-16

The psalm tells of a person in dire need of someone else's help. It may be someone is in distress, in anguish and affliction, or might be a person who has received threats from his enemies. The psalm invokes God's mercy and unfailing love to deliver him from his situation. This implies that freedom and deliverance from all that could hold them captive and oppressed can come from God because God will never allow his people to live in oppression and distress. From the very start of the covenant, God always heard the cry of the people and delivered them out from their bondage and captivity.

Luke 4:18-19

This biblical text was directly taken out from the Old Testament and was quoted by Jesus as he started teaching in the synagogue. This declaration emphasized that Jesus' words and works from that day on has something to do with God's intention even before his time. It signifies the continuity of God's work in the lives of His people. The agenda of Christ is in fact God's agenda which was to save his people. Jesus' declaration was sent to him by the Spirit of the Lord as a declaration that he is the fulfillment of the prophecies in the Scripture. The end that Jesus' life and works have tried to achieve is the exact same end that God is trying to achieve – for His people to live within and in accordance to the covenant relationship we have with God.

Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18-19

Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2, when He read the scriptures to the people in the synagogue (Luke 4:18-19). Isaiah pictures the deliverance of Israel from their exile in Babylon as a Year of Jubilee when all debts are cancelled, all slaves are freed, and properties are returned to their original owners (Lev. 25). But their release from the Babylonian Exile had not brought Israel the fulfillment that they had expected; they were still a conquered and oppressed people. So, Isaiah must have been referring to a future Messianic age. Jesus, then, boldly announced, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus was proclaiming himself as the one who would pass this good news to future generations. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 1800*).

Captivity is a situation wherein people are denied of freedom. People can be captives in many ways. For instance, the poor is a captive of his poverty, and the rich is a captive of his wealth and greed. The oppressed is a captive of his situation where he is trampled on by the oppressor, and the oppressor is a captive of his thirst for power. The pious is also a captive of his religiosity which creates a false sense of self-righteousness and the sinner is a captive of his condemnation for not being able to obey religious laws. All these forms of captivity are evil because they destroy life.

People can also be captives to God's will. Jesus, for instance, is a captive to God's will and purpose. Captivity to God's will is true liberty because it enhances life. The essence of liberty is life. The moment life is denied of us, then, we are not truly free. If we have more guns to end life than food to sustain it, , we have no freedom. In the same manner, the essence of life is liberty. A person who is not free is as good as dead. Hence, life and liberty are one and the same thing.

Jesus viewed His mission and ministry as one that would give life and liberty to the captives and the oppressed. By adopting the Jubilee Celebration as His program (Lev. 25:1-55) and by following the traditions of the prophets (Isaiah 61:1-4), Jesus intends to bring the good news to the poor, return the sight of those who are blind, and restore the liberty of those held captive and to those who are oppressed. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of liberty. It is where people are free from all forms of captivity that destroy life, and is where they can become captives only to God's will and purpose for life. (*Luna Dingayan. We Believe in the Kingdom of God, p. 33-34*).

Exodus 3: 7-10

The book of Exodus tells us of the story of a specific people - the Hebrews who were enslaved in Egypt and later called "Israel". They suffered hard labor, oppression and hunger under the rulers of the land. Their suffering was so unbearable that they call to God for. Chapter 3:7-10 of Exodus is a declaration of God's intention to save the Hebrews from their oppression and captivity. The text tells us that God cannot bear listening to the cries of the suffering people. God is so merciful and just that the condition of the slaves made him take the initiatives to liberate them.

The same story reverberates even up to Jesus' time. The account in Luke 1:68 tells of this affirmation of God's saving acts in Israel's life. As Jesus started his ministry, the reading of Isaiah's writings is also an affirmation that God intends to continue His saving acts through Jesus. "He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed..." is a declaration that Jesus commits himself to the work of liberating people from that which oppresses people. Salvation and freedom from oppression and captivity reflects the conditions of the Kin-dom.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 31, 2019

LESSON 45: GOD PROVIDES FOR OUR NEEDS AND WE ARE THANKFUL

General Concept: As a compassionate God, God provides for our basic needs of food, shelter and unconditional love.

<i>NKP</i>	<i>YE</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God gives us food and home. • God loves us. • I am thankful to God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God provides food and shelter. • God loves unconditionally. • We are thankful to God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God provides for our needs through the strivings of our elders. • God's unconditional love is shared through family, friends and the community. • We are ever grateful to God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God provides for our needs through the strivings of our elders and of our own. • God's unconditional love is shared through family, friends and the community. • We share of God's blessing with others. • We are ever grateful to God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God provides for our needs through our strivings. • God's unconditional love is shared through family, friends and the community. • We share of God's blessing with others. • We are ever grateful to God.
<i>Learning Objectives</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell how God provides for them through their family • Feel God's love through family • Thank God for love and for giving food and a home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell how God provides for their needs through their family • Feel God's love through family and friends • Thank God for love and for providing for their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell how God provides for their needs through the strivings of their elders • Feel God's love through family, friends and the community • Thank God for unconditional love and for enabling their elders to strive to provide for their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell how God provides for their needs • Feel God's love through family, friends and the community • Thank God for unconditional love and for strength 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell how God provides for their needs • Feel God's love through family, friends and the community • Thank God for unconditional love and for strength to secure provisions for their love ones
<i>Biblical References</i>				

• Joshua 5:11-12	• Joshua 5:11-12	• Joshua 5:11-12; Luke 15: 11-32	• Joshua 5:11-12; Psalm 32:7; Luke 15:11-32	• Joshua 5:11-12; Psalm 32:7; Luke 15:11-32
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List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Biblical Background

Joshua 5:11-12

Some 40 long years have passed and not much has changed to the life of the Israelites. The band of slaves who fled from Egypt are still trying to survive along Jordan River. It was most likely that the older Israelites have gone and died off in the desert and the new generation of Israelites were left in the hands of the new and young leaders, Caleb and Joshua. In the time of Joshua, the Israelites were still facing threats from enemies and their long-awaited entry to Canaan has been delayed yet again.

The generation of Israelites led by Joshua were far different from their predecessors. They were more faithful to Him and had decided to trust God, no matter what. Joshua himself declared that he would wholeheartedly serve God and follow God's instructions. This kind of faith was manifested upon their entrance in Jericho. While the residents of Jericho waited for the incoming onslaught from their conquerors, the Israelites, as instructed, held a Passover Feast, performed circumcision rituals, and built a monument to God. It was a demonstration of their gratitude to a God who continuously provided for their needs ever since they fled Egypt and wandered in the wilderness; to a God that would care for them even while they wait for the time where they can eat the produce from the Promised Land.

Our text in Joshua 5: 10-11 is a testament to God's unconditional love and faithfulness. God never stops to provide for the needs of His people. God sustains the people till the end of their journey until they can provide for themselves. But even so, the generation of Joshua acknowledged that even the fruits of their labor in Canaan was a manifestation of God's continuing participation in their lives. The Israelites led by Joshua could do nothing but show their gratitude, faithfulness and obedience to their steadfast God.

Luke 15: 11-32

The collection of stories found only in the gospel of Luke tries to make us understand the intention and character of Jesus' message. On one hand, Jesus gives a harsh warning against those who think highly of themselves or those who see no need for God and refuse to pay the cost of following him. On the other, these are also stories that serve to showcase a God whose love is limitless, unconditional and willing to forgive those who choose to turn back to God.

The Parable of the Lost Son gives us a vivid picture of the character of God. God's love is not just for the righteous but it is also for the sinners. In fact, God's love always seeks the lost and rejoices when they are found. The writer is telling us that such kind of love is being proclaimed and demonstrated in Jesus. He was the perfect example of how God loves his creations. Jesus' life and ministry was a testimony to God's all-compassing and unconditional love. This is just only goes to show that to a faithful person, the task of spreading His word and

love is not difficult to do since it was already done by a man named Jesus. It can happen and begin in our ordinary lives and can be manifested in whatever situations we may find ourselves.

Fifth Sunday in Lent

April 7, 2019

LESSON 46: GOD DOES GREAT THINGS FOR US AND WE ARE THANKFUL

General Concept: We are thankful for God’s compassionate deeds for God’s people.

NKP	YE	OE	Y	A
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God does a lot for me. • God protects me. • God forgives me when I do wrong. • I am happy and thankful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God does good deeds for us. • God protects us. • God forgives us when we do wrong. • We are happy and thankful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God does compassionate deeds for God’s people. • God forgives us for our sins. • God saves us. • We are repentant and thankful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God does compassionate deeds for God’s people. • God forgives us for our sins. • God saves us. • We are repentant, thankful and hopeful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God does compassionate deeds for God’s people. • God offers forgiveness for our sins. • God saves us. • We are repentant, thankful and hopeful.
<i>Learning Objectives</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell some of the things God has done for God’s people in the Bible • Tell some of the things God has done for her or him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell some of the good deeds God has done for God’s people in the Bible • Tell some of the things God has done for them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell some of the compassionate deeds God has done for God’s people • Repent of their sins • Express gratitude to God for salvation and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell some of the compassionate deeds God has done for God’s people • Repent of their sins • Express gratitude to God for salvation and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell some of the compassionate deeds God has done for God’s people • Repent of their sins • Express gratitude to God by participating

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say sorry for the wrong done • Express thanks to God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologize for the wrong done • Express thanks to God for all the good deeds God does 	for all the compassionate deeds God has done	for all the compassionate deeds God has done	wholeheartedly in God's mission
<i>Biblical References</i>				
• Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126	• Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126	• Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126	• Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126;	• Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126;

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8

Biblical Background

Isaiah 43:16-21

For much of Isaiah's life, he had witnessed and experienced Judah in its prime. Those who live in it pride themselves for being a strong and abundant nation. But, it was later prophesied by prophets that Judah would soon experience devastation and captivity in the hands of Babylon. Jerusalem, which was also considered as the center of the people's worship, now lies in ruins as well. The confident nation that Isaiah once knew suffered so much from the brunt of Babylon's might. Questions were raised as to why God allowed these things to happen; "How can God allow the 'throne of David' be trampled upon?" The people once again needed God's help.

Under these circumstances, the prophets during this period began to change the tone of their messages. We can notice that harsh warnings and predictions of judgments are now gone. Instead, messages of hope and comfort reverberate in their prophecies with the intention of bringing joy and comfort in times of suffering. It also tried to reassure and bring back the people's faith in God. Isaiah pointed three great hopes that would come to the life of the people of the captured people of Judah – three things that the people could look forward to. Firstly, the people will be freed from captivity through Cyrus, a ruler from the east, who will rise and set the Jews free to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. Secondly, the figure of a "servant" will come and suffer in order to rescue the whole world. Thirdly, the prophet looked beyond time to foretell of a time when "the Holy One of Israel" will establish a "new heaven and a new earth".

It is within this hopeful note that our biblical text was written, mentioning the great things that God intends to do for His people despite their unfaithfulness. It talks about a point in time where God will continue to participate in the lives of the people by doing great things so that the people may understand that God did not leave them to suffer but intends to bring them to a new life.

Psalm 126

It is believed that while almost half of the psalms are credited to David, many of the poems were written by other contributors, many of whom were anonymous. The psalms may reflect the varied personalities and experiences of the different writer, however, the poems, songs and prayers found in the book carry the same theme. Readers of the book may not notice that one psalm was written centuries older than another. Yet, one can appreciate the consistency of the theme in the whole book which is the never changing reality of a strong, loving and caring God.

Psalm 126 reflects a joyous declaration of grateful praise for the “great things’ that God has done for the people. It reflects the experience and struggle of the people who dream of change in their lives. The psalm was written not by a person without faith but by someone whose joy and praises came not from the absence of problems in their lives but from a strong conviction that a great God can overcome them.

Liturgy of the Palms

April 14, 2019

Sixth Sunday in Lent

LESSON 47: GOD SAVES US AND WE ARE THANKFUL

General Concept: God loves us and saves us and we see this in the life of Jesus.

<i>NKP</i>	<i>YE</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus loves me. • Jesus loves other people too. • Jesus is our Savior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus loves me. • Jesus loves other people too. • Jesus is our Savior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus loves me. • Jesus loves other people too. • Jesus is our Savior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus loves all of us. • Jesus is our Savior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus loves all of us. • God’s saving acts are manifested in the life of Jesus.
<i>Learning Objectives</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say that Jesus is her/his Savior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say that Jesus is their Savior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say that Jesus is their Savior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm that Jesus is their Savior and Companion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm that Jesus is their Savior and Companion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell why Jesus saves the people including children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell why Jesus saves the people including children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell why Jesus saved the people including children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the world's need for change and salvation • Commit to be an agent of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the world's need for change and salvation • Commit to be an agent of change
<i>Biblical References</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40

Biblical Background

Luke 19:28-40

Everything about Jesus and his ministry seems to come to an end as soon as he enters the city of Jerusalem. His last days offer a key to understanding his character and purpose. The last days of Jesus include the triumphant scene of his entrance in Jerusalem as a king. People spread their cloaks on the road, praise God in loud voice, and said "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!", "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" The religious leaders like the Pharisees wanted to stop them but Jesus told the Pharisees; "If they keep quite the stones will cry." The people proclaim who Jesus is. But against the tumultuous background, Jesus silently weeps because he is painfully aware of how hollow these praises are.

Luke records the last days of Jesus on Earth with his disciples and friends. It is full of emotional twists – from the triumph of entering Jerusalem to the painful betrayal of Judas to his capture; from his suffering and death in the hands of his enemies to his coming back to life.

Jesus' entry to Jerusalem should be understood in the light of God's bigger salvific design which Jesus had committed himself to fulfill. His manner of entry contradicts all expectations from that of an earthly king and savior just as God's way of saving the people does not conform to human expectations and plan. As painful as it was, Jesus submitted himself, in faithful obedience, to God's salvific work and will.

WE BELIEVE

That the resurrection of Jesus Christ has overcome the power of death, gives assurance of life after death, and we look forward to His coming again in all fullness and glory to make all creation new and to gather all the faithful under God's Kingdom. Amen.

Resurrection of the Lord

April 21, 2019

Easter Day

LESSON 48: THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

General Concept: The ruling authorities nailed Jesus on the cross, but God raised him from the dead to demonstrate the power of God over the principalities and powers of the world.

<i>NKP</i>	<i>YE</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus died. • Jesus lives again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus died on the cross. • Jesus lives again. • God is powerful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus died on the cross because there were those who wanted him killed. • Jesus lives again and has overcome the power of death. • God is more powerful than the powers of the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ruling authorities had Jesus crucified. • Jesus lives again and has overcome the power of death. • God raised him from the dead to demonstrate the power of God over the principalities and powers of the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ruling authorities had Jesus crucified. • Jesus lives again and has overcome the power of death. • God raised him from the dead to demonstrate the power of God over the principalities and powers of the world.
<i>Learning Objectives</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell that Jesus died and lives again • Express thanks that Jesus is a living God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell that even though Jesus was nailed to the cross and died, He lives again • Express thanks that Jesus is a living God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall the story of Jesus' Resurrection • Explain the importance of Jesus' Resurrection to our faith as believers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain in their own words their understanding of the resurrection of Jesus • Articulate the relevance of the resurrection of Jesus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the reasons why Jesus was crucified • Explain God's purpose of bringing Jesus back to life

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain God’s power over death through the Resurrection story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrate through art the resurrection story and how they would value Jesus’ resurrection in their daily lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the good news of the resurrection to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm that Jesus rose from the dead to demonstrate God’s power over the principalities and powers of the world • Believe that Jesus’ resurrection overcomes the power of death
<i>Biblical References</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 20:1-18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 118:1-2; John 20:1-10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 118:1-2, 14, 24; John 20:1-18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 20:1-18; Acts 10:34-43; I Corinthians 15:20-26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 20:1-18; Acts 10:34-43

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, [14-24](#); I Corinthians 15:[20-26](#); John 20:1-18

Biblical Background

Acts 10:34-43

The Book of Acts is considered to be the bridge between the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the letters of Paul). One might ask, " By the way, who is Paul?" or "How on earth did the story of Jesus reach Rome?" The Book of Acts puts everything into its place. It connects the stories of Jesus’ life and works to how Christianity spread to big cities. The book talks about the works of the apostles and also introduces Paul to the scene of the movement. Jesus himself has given the clue as to how and where the good news will be spread by saying, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." The Book of Acts followed said outline; the first seven chapters talk about the churches in Jerusalem; the following five chapters talk about Judea and Samaria, and the rest of the book talks about the churches that were under Roman rule.

The biblical text mentioned a man named Peter. He was a formidable apostle whose ministry was documented in the 9th to 12th chapters. Here in this text, Peter was invited into the house of a Gentile. Peter tried to remind the Gentile that his presence is against the Law –an indication that Peter represents the conservative Jewish block that has turned Christian. But God showed him a vision that hinted that proclamation and witnessing should reach even the homes of the Gentiles, "not to call anything or any man impure." Peter testified about the life and works of Jesus as well as about his death and resurrection. According to Peter, Jesus was God’s appointed as judge over the living and the dead.(10:42) The biblical account is telling us that raising Jesus from the dead is part of the God's grand plan, as seen by

Peter in his vision. By reaching out to the uncircumcised or the Gentiles, it may also be understood that the message of Jesus' resurrection can also be made available to anyone who believes.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthian Christians to address the problems that confront their church. Most of the problems that Paul dealt with concern personal behavior of members in the church, except for one doctrinal concern. This issue raised questions within the church itself, some going as far as to challenge the church's belief on said subject. This controversial issue was Christianity's belief in life after death. According to some people, there is nothing beyond death but the end of life on earth. Paul saw that the issue of the resurrection poses a danger to the church if not addressed immediately, thus prompting him to write his letter.

1 Corinthians 15 is an attempt of the letter sender –Paul- to weave together the belief of Christians about death, resurrection, and life after death. Here, Paul emphasized that if there is no life after earthly death, then the whole crucifixion and resurrection testimonies about Jesus would go to waste; that the effort of the apostles as well as Paul's ministry are wasted; that everything they preached is a lie. Paul tries to emphasize in his letter that Christ's death and resurrection has overcome death and conquered the powers and trivialities of this world. Paul also reiterated in v.24 that Christ will first put his enemies under his feet – all dominion, authority and power. This is what the resurrection story is trying to achieve. It tries to tell us that death is not the end but a beginning to a different life with the resurrected Christ. It is in this belief that Christians were challenged by Paul to “stand firm “in their faith.

John 20:1-18

People who hear about the resurrection for the first time may need time before they can comprehend this amazing story. Like Mary and the disciples, they may pass through four stages of belief. At first, they may think the story is a fabrication, impossible to believe. Secondly, like Peter, they may check out the facts and still be puzzled about what happened. Thirdly, only when they encounter Jesus personally are they able to accept the fact of the resurrection, and lastly, as they commit themselves to the risen Lord and devote their lives to serving him, they begin to understand fully the reality of his presence within themselves.

Jesus' resurrection is the key to the Christian faith. Why? Just as he said, Jesus rose from the dead. We can be confident, therefore, that he will accomplish all he has promised. Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ, not a false prophet or imposter, is ruler of God's eternal kingdom. We can be certain of our own resurrection because Jesus himself was resurrected. Death is not the end – there is a life beyond it. The divine power that brought Jesus back to life is now available to us; with faith, we can bring our spiritually dead selves back to life. The resurrection is the basis for the church's witness to the world. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 1925-1926*)

Second Sunday of
Easter
April 28, 2019

LESSON 49: JESUS CHRIST'S RESURRECTION OVERCOMES THE POWER OF DEATH

General Concept: The resurrection of Jesus has overcome death and gives strength and courage to proclaim the gospel amidst adversities.

<i>NKP</i>	<i>YE</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus loves me. • Jesus' love can help me not be sad and afraid. • I can help others not be sad and afraid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus loves us. • Jesus' love can help us not be sad and afraid. • We can help others not be sad and afraid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus was raised from the dead. • This knowledge gives us strength and courage, especially in times of trouble and sadness. • We will help each other in times of trouble and sadness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus' resurrection has overcome death. • Our society has so many problems. • The knowledge of Jesus' resurrection helps us face society's problems. • Jesus' resurrection gives us strength and courage to help solve society's problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus' resurrection has overcome death. • Our society is faced with so many adversities. • The knowledge of Jesus' resurrection helps us face society's problems. • Jesus' resurrection gives us strength and courage to help solve society's problems and in proclaiming the gospel.
<i>Learning Objectives</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express that Jesus' love can take away our fears and sadness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share experiences of the times when they felt the love of Jesus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share their saddest experience, including, if any, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how the resurrection can help believers today 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how the resurrection of Christ overcomes death

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show how they can help others not be sad and afraid • Be open about their feelings to the class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express that Jesus' love can take away their fears and sadness • Tell how they can show love to others and help them not be sad and afraid • Sympathize with how others feel 	<p>those related with death</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall how these experiences were handled courageously • Express assurance that Christ's Resurrection overcomes the power of death and gives us strength and courage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what it means when we say "Jesus resurrection has overcome death" • Express gratitude to God for giving believers strength and courage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the forces of death in society • Explain how the resurrection of Christ breaks the forces of death in the society •
<i>Biblical References</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 20:19-31 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 20:19-31 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 20:19-31; Psalm 118:14-17 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts 5:27-42; Revelation 1:4-8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts 2:22-33; 5:27-42; I Corinthians 15:20-25;

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Acts 5:27-42; Psalm 118:14-29; Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31

Biblical Background

Acts 5:27-42

We may wonder how the disciples or apostles during the early church managed to have the courage and energy to make such a great influence. They were just a handful of determined believers whose commitment was beyond reproach. Despite the persecution, the apostles "never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (v.42).

The biblical text in Acts 5:27-42 tells us about the confrontation between the Jewish authorities and the disciples. They (the apostles) were brought to the Sanhedrin for a trial in relation to their continued preaching about the Jesus Christ and Christ's death, implicating the Jewish authorities. The Jewish authorities and even the members of the Sanhedrin wanted them hanged. Still, Peter stood firm in their conviction about Christ and was bold enough to face the consequence. Suddenly, somebody from the Jewish court intervened and argued to let them continue their work because if their task was to mainly fulfill a human agenda, it will surely fail. But if the apostles' work and mandate comes from God, nobody can stop them despite the persecution and threats to their lives. If the court were to execute them, the whole Jewish court will be against God's will and agenda.

At this point of the Church's story, as accounted in Acts, the apostles draw their vigor and steadfastness from the knowledge that Jesus, whom they believed as the Christ, is alive and has ascended to be with the Father. In his stead, the Holy Spirit was sent, as promised, to give them courage and strength to proclaim the good news. "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (v.42). Suffice to say, the very premise for the increase of believers and converts to Christianity is their belief in the resurrection of Christ to which the apostles are witnesses.

Revelation 1:4-8

John, known as the writer of Revelation could have written the book while imprisoned in a special prison in Patmos made by Rome for the enemies of the empire. It is believed that the book was written 60 years after Jesus left the earth. The book of Revelation is as mysterious as it is hard to understand. It is different in style from that of the gospels and letters because the writer uses coded language to protect the writer and the readers themselves from the Roman authorities. It is presumed that even during the writing of the book, persecution still persisted against believers of Christ. When criticizing Rome, the writer uses Babylon instead, should the writings will fall into wrong hands.

We also must appreciate the reason behind the writing of the book. Questions were raised as to when Jesus' return will be, where he went, and what he would do when he comes back. The book tries to address these issues seeing as people are getting anxious about their future.

The book of Revelation presented to the readers a unique picture of who Jesus Christ is as a mighty ruler of the cosmic forces of good, the one who overcomes the power of death. The Gospels described Jesus' life and works from four different perspectives while the letters of Paul explained and tell of the great significance of the resurrected Christ to the life of the church. We cannot say that Revelation provides the exact timetable for future events but it tells of Jesus' triumph not just over the power of death but over all forms of evil and sinfulness in the universe. From this belief, springs the hope needed by the believers.

The biblical text in Revelation 1:4-8 is an affirmation of the significance of Christ in the lives of the believers. The writer seems to assure the readers that the Christ of the apostles is the same as the One who is to come back in the future. The Christ who died and has risen from the dead is the same one who will free them from all evils; the same Christ who overcame the power of death is the same Christ who will defeat the powers of the present and future.

John 20: 19-31

The biblical account in John 20: 19-31 tells us about the event wherein Jesus appeared to his disciples and greeted them by saying, "Peace be with you" and continued saying, 'As the father has sent me, I am sending you, receive the Holy Spirit if you forgive any of their sins are

forgiven; if you do not forgive they are not forgiven'. Jesus also appeared to Thomas, he showed the marks of His death the scars of Christ suffering.

The appearance of Jesus before them is just what the disciples needed at the time. His presence gave the disciples an assurance and at the same time confirmation that indeed the Jesus whom they have followed around is the Christ. Jesus' presence among them and before them destroyed their disbelief and fear and gave them a renewed faith. This kind of faith made Jesus' disciples fearless even before threats to their life. The disciples like Peter were unstoppable in their proclamation about Christ in Jesus that even a Jewish teacher of the Law recognized their vigor and that something has moved them strongly that their influence has become widespread.

Third Sunday of Easter

May 5, 2019

LESSON 50: JESUS CHRIST'S RESURRECTION GIVES ASSURANCE OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

General Concept: The resurrection of Jesus calls us to trust that God continues to journey with us in life, in death and beyond.

Lectionary References: Psalm 30; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19; Acts 9:1-6, (7-20)

Other Appropriate References:

NKP	YE	OE	Y	A
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is always with me. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is always with us. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is with us in life, in death, and even beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus' resurrection gives us reason to trust that God will always be with us throughout life, in death, and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus' resurrection gives us reason to trust that God will always be with us throughout life, in death, and beyond.
<i>Learning Objectives</i>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the ways they feel God's presence • Thank God for being with them always 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify situations when they feel God's presence • Express thanks that God is with them always by caring for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the manifestations that God is with us in life and even in death • Cull out verses of God's assurance of eternal life to believers • Express thanks to God for giving assurance of life after death and promise to live life according to God's purpose • Identify situations when they feel God's presence • Express thanks that God is with them always by caring for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what would life be like in that 'life after death' • Tell the significance of believing in life after death • Express gratitude to God for the assurance of life after death • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share experiences of victory over forces of death • Keep trusting God throughout life despite all odds and uncertainties, and even in the face of death •
<i>Biblical References</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 21:1-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 30:4-5; John 21:1-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 30; John 21:1-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 6:41-58; 20:17-23; Matthew 25:31-46 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 11:17-27; 21:1-19; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10,

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Psalm 30; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19; Acts 9:1-6, (7-20)

Biblical Background

John 11:17-27

This story presents a vivid picture of how Jesus showed compassion to those who are experiencing the deepest pain brought on by the loss of a loved one. In reassuring them, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he

dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." He emphasized that through Him and in Him, dead souls can and do rise up out of the sleep of death, become alive, grow sensitive, active, purposeful, and endowed with powers they did not have before. Jesus has power over life and death. The raising of Lazarus is a proof to this general and abiding truth. (*The Interpreter's Bible Vol. 8, p. 644*). He who is life can surely restore life. Whoever believes in Christ has a spiritual life that death cannot conquer or diminish in any way. To those of us who believe, what wonderful assurance and certainty we have, "Because I live, you also will live (14:19).

Martha is best known for being too busy to sit down and talk with Jesus (Luke 10:38-42) but here we see her as a woman deep faith. "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." Her statement of faith is exactly the response that Jesus also wants to solicit from us which will prove that we trust Him even in our deepest hurts and pains.

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Paul explained to the believers in Corinth that we will have new bodies that will be perfect for our everlasting life or the life that we will attain after death. The Holy Spirit within us is our guarantee that God will give us everlasting bodies during the resurrection. This truth of life after death should give us great courage and patience to endure anything we might experience in our life (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 2099*), because when we have withstood the test, we will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him (*James 1:12*).

John 6:41-58; 20:17-23

As we have already learned from the previous lessons, John, as a writer, is distinct from the other Gospel writers because he focuses more on the meaning and implication of events and words rather than the details and facts of the events, which the other gospel writers has successfully documented. We also learned that his choice of miracle stories to include in his gospel is intentional. John was trying to tell us that these miracles and stories are pointing to something – the coming of the Kingdom in and through Jesus Christ.

Our biblical text in John talks about Jesus teaching about the bread that fills the hungry. Jesus saw that the people are more concerned with witnessing acts of miracles but, at the same time, never seem to understand what these acts are trying to tell them. People are more concerned with filling their hungry stomachs rather than working to receive the bread that makes one never go hungry again. People are more awed at the miracles rather than the miracle worker just as we praise the beauty of creation but not the Creator. Thus, Jesus declared himself as the "bread of life" sent from heaven, and those who believe or feed from him will live forever.

Life even after death is a life with God, a life in His Kingdom – "for wherever I am, there you will be also". But this kind of life requires belief in the one "whom...sent the Bread"; he who believes in Him will have everlasting life. The meaning of the resurrection should be understood using the eyes of faith. Life after death is an assurance brought about by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus has already exemplified what it is like living with God even before death. Therefore, the kind of life we wish to experience after death can already be experienced once we have affirmed our belief and faith in Jesus Christ.

Matthew 25:31-46

The book of Matthew is considered the book that links the Old Testament to the New Testament. Matthew tries to establish the link of the Messiah, in the person of Jesus, to the patriarchy of the olden times, especially from the line of the kings. That is why, Matthew started his writings with tracing the genealogy of Jesus to the family of David. Matthew is trying to establish the roots of Jesus if he is to be declared the Messiah. But later in his writings, Matthew presented Jesus as the Messiah that contrasted the traditional Jewish understanding of a Messiah. In Matthew, Jesus is truly the Messiah they waited for so long, but he has come to establish a different kind of kingdom – a kingdom that is exactly the opposite of how people normally view it. The Messiah that was sent by God is far different from the Messiah that the people expected.

Our biblical text talks about Jesus giving a parable that has something to do with the ‘returning or coming of the Son of Man’. The parable tells of the coming of the Son of Man on the day that judgment will befall all the righteous and the cursed presumed as the evil ones. The basis of the judgment that qualifies them for eternal life is not on what they know but on what they did to the least of their fellow human beings.

As always, the discussion on “life after death” is associated with the discussion of the “coming again of Christ”, “the judgment” and “the end of days”. These are referred to as “eschatological” discussions which are matters that have something to do with the future or end of time. But what happens in our last days or even after earthly death has something to do with what we are doing in our present time. The future is significantly connected with a human being’s present life and works. This means that our actions today has implications and consequences in the future or beyond death. What qualifies us to gain the life with God beyond death is our current actions towards others. This implies that to gain passage into God’s Kingdom or a life lived with God, one does not need to have a life filled with personal merit but a life celebrated with other human beings and the whole of creation.

Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 12, 2019

LESSON 51: WE LOOK FORWARD TO JESUS CHRIST’S COMING AGAIN

General Concept: We await Jesus Christ’s return with anticipation and hope while continuing to serve Christ by serving others: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, visiting the prisoners.

<i>NKP</i>	<i>YE</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can help give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. • I make friends with those who do not have friends. • I can give clothes to those who have nothing and help care for the sick. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can help give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. • We make friends with those who do not have friends. • We can give clothes to those who have nothing and help care for the sick. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We serve Christ by serving others. • We can help give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. • We make friends with those who do not have friends. • We can give clothes to those who have nothing and help care for the sick. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus promised that he will come again. • While waiting for his coming again, we continue to serve him by serving others. • We will feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit the prisoners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus promised that he will come again. • While anticipating his coming again, we continue to serve him by serving others. • We will feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit the prisoners, and do other ministries to prepare for Christ's coming again.
<i>Learning Objectives</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give food and other things to other children • Express joy in being friends with other children • Say that God is happy with those who do good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give food and other things to others in need • Befriend someone who does not have a lot of friends • Express satisfaction in being able to help • Plan activities with children like them to show that they care for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Jesus Christ's coming again as a hoped-for reality • Review some the biblical references that suggest what believers should do while waiting for Christ's coming • Plan how to extend help and service to those in need as they anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express their belief in Christ's coming again • Propose plans for programs for those in need while waiting for the coming of Christ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the meaning of the affirmation that Christ will come again • Mention some effects of this belief on the early Christians as well on the Christians of today • Continue to be creative and productive according to God's plan and purpose for their

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lives until Jesus comes again
Biblical References				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revelation 7:15-17 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revelation 7:15-17 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revelation 7:15-17; Matthew 25: 31-46 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matthew 24; Revelation 22: 12-14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts 1:1-12, I Thessalonians 4:13-18, 5:1-11;

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Psalm 23; Acts 9:36-43; John 10:22-30; Revelation 7:9-17

Biblical Background

Acts 1:1-12

We read in this account Christ’s ascension and his final instructions to his disciples. It is stated that Jesus will be coming again in the same way that he ascended. This is called “*Parousia*” (Greek). One could perhaps imagine the sense of anticipation that people felt; they are thrilled at the idea of something glorious about to happen soon in their lifetimes. For in His return, Jesus will judge and rule over the earth. This is what characterized the actions, attitudes, and lifestyle of the early Christians. (*We Believe in the Resurrection, UCCP Statement of Faith Study Guide for Youth, p. 50*). One should be ready for Jesus’ sudden return, not by standing around “looking into the sky,” but by working hard to share the gospel so that others will be able to share in God’s great blessings

I Thessalonians 4:13-18, 5:1-11

The Church in Thessalonica was very young, having been established only two or three years before this letter was written. There arose a misunderstanding concerning Christ’s second coming for many years had already passed and Christ did not return yet. Some of the early Christian converts began to wonder as to what will happen to their loved ones who have already died and doubt began to grow as they continued to be persecuted. Their anticipation for Jesus’ return turned into anxiety. But Paul wanted the Thessalonians to understand that death is not the end of the story. When Christ returns, all believers – dead and alive – will be reunited, never to suffer or die again. He also reminded them of their task to continue living the faith, to continue proclaiming the gospel to all peoples, and to continue being responsible Christians in all areas of life, assuring them that Christ will indeed return. Paul emphasized to them that they can’t be effective in sharing their faith to others if they have not lived a life worthy of respect and emulation. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 2174*).

Matthew 24

As we already have noted in our previous lessons, the gospel writer in the book of Matthew tries to establish the identity and credibility of Jesus as Messiah. Matthew traced the lineage of Jesus back to the line of David implying that Jesus, as the Messiah, is God’s anointed

and chosen one who has come to save the people and the world. But Jesus as the Messiah will clothe himself as a suffering servant who serves the poor, dines with sinners, heals the sick and gives forgiveness to those who are repentant. Jesus as the Messiah exemplified obedience to God all the way from the cross, to his resurrection and to his promise to return for his believers.

Matthew 24 records the longest statement about the coming days. Here in this text, Jesus gave clues as to what will happen to the earth before he comes back – many will claim that there will be rumors of war between nations, famine and earthquakes, and false prophets performing miracles to deceive believers. Jesus reiterated that these will come to pass and God's word will remain. Yet, Jesus also gives a warning to everyone that nobody can tell the exact time of his coming. Instead, he reminded the people to prepare for the coming end.

Matthew 24 serves as a prologue to the parables told by Jesus that talk about the end of time. While preparing for the coming end of time, believers are reminded to do what is right and pleasing to God which to serve the least of God's people, meaning that one should continue feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and setting the captives free.

Revelation 22: 12-14

These last two chapters of the Revelation contains parallels situations in the Garden of Eden as accounted for in the beginning chapters of Genesis. Revelation 21-22 shows how the Garden will be restored, and how things have spoilt the Garden will vanish.

Our biblical text in chapter 22:12-14 is an affirmation by the writer, presumed as John, that Jesus is coming. When Jesus comes again, everyone will be judged according to their deeds. Those who are found righteous will have the privilege to enter the city gates of the New Jerusalem, and the right to the tree of life in the restored Garden of Eden. The words of the writer bear warnings and reminders to believers to always choose a holy and righteous life.

Matthew 25: 31-46

We have here a record of the process of the last judgment. The passages are parabolic; the separation between the sheep and the goats, the dialogues between the judge and the persons judged.

There are some facts of enlightenment in this passage as the judge is placed upon the judgment seat:

- There is surely a judgment to come, in which everyone shall be sentenced to a state of eternal happiness or misery, in the world of recompense or retribution, according to what she/he did in this world according to the rule of the eternal gospel.
- The administration of the judgment of the great day is committed to the Son of man; for by Him, God will judge the world and to him all judgments are committed.

- Christ's appearing to judge the world will be splendid and glorious. Christ will come to judgment seat in real glory. The Son of Righteousness shall then shine in his radiance, the Prince of the Kings shall show the riches of His glory, the honors of his majesty and the whole world will testify to the brightness of God's glory.
- When Christ comes in His glory, he will bring with him the holy angels. The holy myriads, not only to be his attendants, but ministers of justice. They shall come with him for both ceremony and service; to call the court and to be witnesses of the saint's glory and sinner's misery (1 Thess. 4:16)
- Christ will sit upon the throne of His glory. He is now on the throne of God; a throne of grace, of government; a priestly throne and the throne of glory. (MHWBC)

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 19, 2019

LESSON 52: JESUS CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN IN ALL FULLNESS

General Concept: All creation awaits the return of Jesus Christ in all fullness, the Alpha and the Omega, making a home with them, God's children.

<i>NKP</i>	<i>YE</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a child of God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are all children of God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is the beginning and the end. • All life begins and ends with God. • We are all children of God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus Christ will come again, and we wait with hope. • Jesus is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. • When Jesus Christ comes, he will dwell with us, God's children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All creation awaits the return of Jesus Christ in all fullness. • Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. • When Jesus Christ comes, he will make a home with all of us, God's children.

Learning Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say that she or he is a child of God • Recognize that others are children of God too • Give thanks to God for calling us God's children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express what it means to be children of God who love one another • Recognize that everyone of us are children of God, no exceptions • Give thanks to God for calling us God's children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss what is meant by "Jesus is the beginning and the end" and that "all life begins and ends with God" • Recognize that everyone of us are children of God, no exceptions • Write a statement about their belief that all are children of God who love one another 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share their experiences of patiently waiting and the positive results these produced • Speak out about their expectations of that time when Jesus comes again • Thank God for the coming of Jesus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the Biblical concept of "fullness" • Explain the meaning and significance of Jesus as the Alpha and Omega • Describe the kind of home that Jesus will make when he returns • Wait with joyful expectancy for Jesus' return •
Biblical References				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 148; Revelation 21:5-7; John 13:34 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 148; Revelation 21:5-7; John 13: 34-35 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 148; Revelation 21:5-7; John 13: 34-35 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation 21:5-7; John 14:23-29 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation 21:5-7; 22:1-5, Ephesians 3:19, 4:10-13

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Acts 11:1-18; Psalm 148; Revelation 21:5-7; John 13:31-35

Biblical Background

Revelation 21:5-7

The book of Revelation is said to have been written by a writer who is imprisoned. He is believed to have written the book of Revelation 60 years after Jesus ascended to heaven. More so, it is also believed that persecution against Christians is still widespread during the time the book in which the book is written. Therefore, to prevent further suffering from the hands of the Roman authorities, the writings of this book are full of symbolism and codes. The writings may reflect the on-going movement to suppress the Christian movement or they tell of events that that are to come, to which the writer refers to as signs of the coming of Jesus or the coming of the end of days. The writings are supposed to give hope to Christians who are afraid and are hiding for their lives, and yet, continue to proclaim Jesus as the Christ.

The biblical text in Revelation 21 is an affirmation of who God is for Jesus Christ. The God who created the heavens and the earth will be the same God who will restore creation to its full glory. The God that was acknowledged in the beginning will be the same God who will be recognized and glorified in the end. This means that no matter what happens after creation of and before the end of the world, God was, is and will be there. Our hope lies in the promise that God will be there in the end, and that we are to live a life with God – God in us and with us.

Alpha and Omega

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It is common to use these letters to denote the whole of everything; from beginning to end. Jesus, as the beginning and the end of all things is a reference to no one but the True God. This eternity could apply only applies to God. In Revelation 22: 13 Jesus declares that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Christ, as the Alpha and Omega, is the first and last in so many ways. He is the “author and finisher” of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), signifying that He begins it and carries it through to completion. He is the totality, the sum and substance of the Scriptures, both of the Law and of the Gospel (John 1:1, 14). He is the fulfilling end of the Law (Matthew 5:17), and He is the beginning subject matter of the gospel of grace through faith, not of works (Ephesians 2:8-9). He is found in the first verse of Genesis and in the last verse of Revelation. He is the first and last, the all in all of salvation, from the justification before God to the final sanctification of His people.

Life Begins and Ends with God

God is the source and author of all life. God brings life into existence, sustains it and ends it, all according to God’s purpose (Gen. 2:7, Deut. 32: 39). As the Bible says, human life is sacred, for people exist in God’s image. Often times, people dichotomize physical and spiritual life, but God’s intention is that all aspects of a person’s life be united harmoniously.

God wants people to enjoy life fully, but at the same time to live life in a right relationship with God and with others. But sin has changed the nature of human’s life and life is no longer as it should be. Because of sin, people’s lives are affected and are doomed to death, for the wages of sin is death. The sin cut off from life abundant and free, thus, cut off from the spiritual or eternal life God promised.

God’s promise of salvation, God’s grace of salvation, paved the way and power of death. Jesus’ death and resurrection overcome the power of death and remiss the sting of death and brought back human life to God’s eternal love and salvation.

Eternal life is from God, the very source of eternal life. It is God’s nature and characteristics revealed in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ, separated lives were reunited, redeemed and eternal life made possible. To all those who repent of their sins and commit and recommitted themselves in faith to Jesus, new and eternal life will be experienced. Those who have eternal life can look forward that life will be

experienced in its fullness in the coming days. When Jesus Christ returns, the faithful will be raised from the dead to enjoy the resurrection life of glory, perfection, power and eternity (Matt. 25: 46; John 5: 28-29; Rom. 2: 7). (Bridgeway Commentary)

John 14:23-29

We already learned from the previous lessons that what makes John distinct from other gospel writers is that he is not interested in details and facts but focused his writing on the meaning of what Jesus had done and said. If we read John, we see a writer who seemed to have plenty of time to reflect upon the tales and stories of his teacher. John's gospel accounts try to answer the question who Jesus is and what the reason of his existence is. He chose seven miracles in order to point to something or emphasize a message. These miracles are sometimes considered "signs" that point to an important meaning.

The story in the text tells us about Jesus having a dinner with his disciples. After a time, Jesus had warned them about his coming suffering and death to which the disciples have different reactions. Jesus told the disciples that he is going away and that when he comes back, they who believe in him will be with him. Jesus even further explained that these things are only revealed to those who loved and obeyed him. Jesus was not making the story up but everything came from God.

John is telling us that believers should expect and wait for Jesus' coming with faith and obedience. Everything has been revealed and the way to God has already been made clear to us. Believers should not falter in their faith but must wait with hope because God intended from the very beginning to dwell among his children – his people.

Ephesians 3:19, 4:10-13

The fullness of God is fully expressed only in Christ. Through a union with Christ and his empowering Spirit, we are complete. We will have all the fullness of Christ through faith and through prayer as we continue to live for Him. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 2135*).

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 26, 2019

LESSON 53: JESUS CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN IN GLORY

General Concept: God is glorified in Christ and Christ in God; God's rule of peace will be welcomed by all peoples when Christ comes again, making a home with them, God's children.

NKP	YE	OE	Y	A
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Specific Concepts				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus goes to heaven. • Jesus will come to be with us again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus goes to heaven to be with God. • Jesus will come to be with us again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus ascends to heaven to be glorified with God. • Jesus will come to be with us again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is glorified in Christ and Christ in God when Christ ascended into heaven. • All people will welcome Christ when He comes again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is glorified in Christ and Christ in God when Christ ascended into heaven. • All people will welcome God's rule when Christ comes again.
Learning Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell how God is happy with the life Jesus lived • Show how we can make God happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain why all people should be happy • Tell of ways that God is seen in Jesus' life • Relate how God can be seen in our life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express how we may welcome Jesus when he comes again • Paraphrase the word "glorified" • Tell of ways that God is glorified in Jesus' life • Relate how God can be glorified in our life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain in their own words what 'glory' or 'being glorified' means • Tell of ways they can glorify God • Show how they will welcome Christ when he comes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how God's glory is manifested in Christ • Discuss how we can partake in God's glory • Affirm and follow God's rule until Jesus' return
Biblical References				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>John 14:23-29</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Psalm 67; John 14:23-29</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Psalm 67; John 14:23-29; Acts 16:15, John 17:4</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Psalm 67; Acts 1:1-11; 16:15</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Ephesians 1:15-23</u>

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Acts 16:9-15; Psalm 67; Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5; John 14:23-29

Biblical Background

Acts 1:1-11

The Book of Acts is considered to be the bridge between the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the letters of Paul). One might ask, "By the way, who is Paul?" or "How on earth did the story of Jesus reach Rome?" The Book of Acts puts everything into its place. It connects the stories of Jesus' life and works to how Christianity spread to big cities. The book talks about the works of the apostles and also introduces Paul to the scene of the movement. Jesus himself has given the clue as to how and where the good news will be spread by saying, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." The Book of Acts followed said outline; the first seven chapters talk about the churches in Jerusalem; the following five chapters talk about Judea and Samaria, and the rest of the book talks about the churches that were under Roman rule.

The beginning chapter of Acts seemed to be addressed to a single person named Theophilus who is most probably a student or a convert to Christianity. The writer talks about Jesus' ministry and the concluding days of Jesus which bears great significance to all believers. The writer particularly mentioned Jesus' resurrection and the instances wherein he appeared to other people before his disciples and before he ascended to heaven. The account specifically mentioned about the disciples' reaction to the glorious moment when Jesus was taken up to heaven; "they were looking intently up to the sky" and, later, received the wonderful news that Jesus will come back in the same manner as he had been taken – people will gaze upon with awe and with great reverence the One whom God has sent and with whom God's name is glorified. Jesus' complete obedience to God's plan has glorified God. Thus, he ascended in heaven in God's glory and will come back the same.

Psalm 67

This psalm is an affirmation of God's majestic reign over all nations. The psalmist has clearly pictured out in his song the manner by which all nations should exalt the name of the Lord. He tells how people should express their awe and gratitude to God who reigns over all powers of the earth. Only God deserves such exaltation and praise. Such glory should be attributed only to the God present since the beginning of the world. The psalm is affirming that the name of the Lord should not only be glorified in the end times but in every moment of the peoples' lives.

Ephesians 1:15-23

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would know this Christ better. Christ is our model and the more we know of him, the more we will be like him, and the more we will experience his glory.

The hope that we can partake of God's glory is not vague – the future will be positive. There is a complete assurance of certain victory through God and this complete certainty comes to us through the Holy Spirit working in us. The world fears the power of the atom, yet, we belong to the God of the universe who not only created that atomic power we fear but also raised Jesus Christ from the dead. God's incomparably great power is available to all who believe.

Having been raised from the dead, Christ is now the head of the Church, the ultimate authority over the world, the sovereign Lord of all. Jesus is the Messiah, God's Anointed One, the One Israel longed for, and the One who would set the broken world right. As Christians, we can be confident that God has won the final victory and is in control of everything. We need not fear any dictator or nation, or even death or Satan himself, for the God of victory is reigning in all his glory over all nations throughout the whole universe. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, pp. 2131-2132*).

John 17: 4

Glory is one of the common words developed in the bible. When it refers to people or things in relation to everyday life, it indicates wealth, honor, fame, power and splendor. But more than ordinary usage, it is used more frequently by the majestic all-powerful God and became significant characteristic word both in the Old and New Testament.

God's revelation of glory, oftentimes, are through clouds, fire and lightning and therefore, associated with brightness or shining. When God's glory, symbolizing God's presence, filled the tabernacle or temple, its brightness was so intense that no human being could look upon it.

God's glory is an expression of God's character – goodness, love, justice, power and holiness. Thus, the bible speaks of God's revelation through nature and history as the revelation of God's glory.

Christ is the greatest revelation of God's glory. In the past, God's glory dwelt in the world that usually filled the temple and tabernacle. But now, the glory dwelt in the world of a human form. The God whom no one could see, except in vision, is now revealed in Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6 and Heb. 1: 3) (Bridgeway Commentary)

**Seventh Sunday of
Easter**

June 2, 2019

LESSON 54: JESUS CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN TO MAKE ALL CREATION NEW

General Concept: Christ will make all creation totally and completely new; we are called to participate in this task of making all things new.

NKP	YE	OE	Y	A
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Specific Concepts				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Jesus comes back, the world will become better. • Jesus wants me to help make the world a better place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Jesus comes back, the world will become better. • Jesus wants all of us to help make the world a better place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Christ comes back, all creation will be totally new. • We are called to help make all creation new. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Christ comes back, he will make all creation totally and completely new. • We are called to help make all creation new. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Christ comes back, he will make all creation totally and completely new. • We are called to participate in this task of making all creation new.
Learning Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell what they see around them • Share their feelings about it • Describe what kind of world they wish to live in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enumerate the things people do that destroys creation • Share their feelings about it • Illustrate what kind of world they wish to live in • Participate in their own way to make the world a better place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enumerate the concepts within the Biblical references that signify that everything will be totally new • Compare and contrast the old and the new creation • List down ways by which to help make all creation new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enumerate situations that tell creation is groaning or suffering • Cite ways how young people can participate in making the whole creation new • Express their commitment to help in making the whole creation new • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the new creation that Christ will bring on His return • Decide to take part in the task of making all creation new • Continue to hope for the coming of a new creation •
Biblical References				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation 21:5b 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 97:1-6; John 17: 26; Revelation 21:5b 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 97:1-6; Revelation 21:1-4; John 17: 26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation 21:1-8; Romans 8: 19-22 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation 21; 22:1-6

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Acts 16:16-34; Psalm 97; Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17:20-26

Biblical Background

Revelation 21, 22: 1-6

The Book of Revelation was written by John in A.D. 95 when the people of God were experiencing severe persecution that took place under Emperor Domitian (A.D. 90-95). It seems that the Roman authorities had exiled John to the island of Patmos (off the coast of Asia). John, who had been an eyewitness of the risen Christ, had a vision of the glorified Christ. God also revealed to him what would take place in the future; that there would be judgement and that God would ultimately triumph over evil. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 2295*).

The sea being mentioned in the text was viewed as dangerous and changeable. It was also the source of the beast (13:1) – the symbol of blasphemy and war against the saints. In the new world, the sea is gone, so with the beast. And so, in this new world, God alone is glorified and worshipped and the saints will experience peace, security, and prosperity.

Revelation 21 pictures the new world that Christ will bring and establish in his return. The “Holy City, the new Jerusalem” is described as the place where God will “wipe every tear from their eyes.” Forevermore, in this city, there will be no death, pain, sorrow, or crying. The new Jerusalem is where God lives among his people. Instead of going up to meet him, he comes down to be with us, just as God became man in Jesus Christ and lived among us. And where God reigns, there is peace, security, and love.

The following summarizes the picture of the new world that Christ will establish (as described in Revelation) in contrast with the old world (described in Genesis):

GENESIS

The sun is created
Satan is victorious
Sin enter the human race
People run and hide from God
People are cursed
Tears are shed, with sorrow for sin
The garden and earth are cursed
The fruit from the tree of life is not to be eaten
Paradise is lost
People are doomed to death

(Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 2331)

REVELATION

The sun is not needed
Satan is defeated
Sin is banished
People are invited to live with God forever
The curse is removed
No more sin, no more tears or sorrow
God’s city is glorified, the earth is made new
God’s people may eat from the tree of life
Paradise is regained
Death is defeated, believers live forever with God

Romans 8:19-22

The purpose of Paul in writing this epistle is to address the problem that confronts the church. Paul emphasized in his letter that there is no distinction between the Jewish convert and the Gentile convert and that one gains more favor than the other. The Jewish Christians tried to shut out the Gentiles from any share in the blessing of salvation brought by Christ.

The particular passage in chapter 8:19-22 tries to explain that the sufferings of the saints will not last. These are only light afflictions. In fact, Paul explains that they are not alone in their sufferings for even creation itself is groaning and is waiting to be freed. As humans fall into sin, creation suffers. There is abuse, deformity, and infirmity of creation because of human sinfulness. Yet, there is hope that awaits creation. God will deliver it from its bondage from the sinful hands of human beings when Christ comes.

John 17:20-26

Jesus was praying to God for his disciples and believers to be one with one another and with God as Jesus and God are one. Not only the unity that Jesus prayed for his disciples and coming believers but that they would feel that they are loved beyond measure. That they are sent by Jesus as well as God the Father. All that Jesus did has authority from God. So all the authority was also given to the disciples. Whatever they do, it should be according to the will of Jesus and of God. People have known God in all that Jesus did, so God will also be known in all that the disciples will be doing.

Day of Pentecost

June 9, 2019

LESSON 55: JESUS CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN TO GATHER ALL THE FAITHFUL UNDER GOD’S KINGDOM

General Concept: All who believe will be gathered together and the Holy Spirit will abide with them in God’s Kingdom of love, peace and justice, as they do all that Jesus commanded them.

<i>NKP</i>	<i>YE</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Specific Concepts</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus gathers us all as one big, happy family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus gathers us all as one big, happy family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All who believe will be gathered as a community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All who believe will be gathered together as a community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All who believe will be gathered together as a community.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will all follow what Jesus says. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will all follow Jesus' commandments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Holy Spirit will be with us. • We will all follow Jesus' commandments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Holy Spirit will be with us in God's Kingdom of love, peace and justice. • We commit to follow Jesus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Holy Spirit will be with us in God's Kingdom of love, peace and justice. • We commit to follow Jesus.
<i>Learning Objectives</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give thanks for being part of God's big family • Tell stories about their families • Describe their church community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what it means to be one big, happy family • Express that they will follow Jesus' commandments • Thank God for being part of their church community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how Jesus will gather all the believers and faithful together • Identify who the faithful and the believers are who Jesus Christ will gather • Enumerate the ways by which believers may show love for God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act out the passage in the Bible about Jesus coming again • Express commitment to follow Jesus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the kind of life that we will live in God's kin-dom • Await with hope and gladness the gathering of all believers as one community • Affirm their faith and belief in Christ expressed in trustful obedience to God •
<i>Biblical References</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts 2:1-18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 14:15-16; Acts 2:1-18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 14:15-16; Acts 2:1-18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John 14:18-20; Acts 2:1-18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matthew 25:31-40; Revelation 22:12-17

List of Lectionary Readings for the Week: Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Romans 8:14-17; John 14:8-17, 25-27

Biblical Background

John 14:18-20

In this biblical passages, Jesus talked with his disciples before he ascended to heaven. Jesus sensed the anxiety of the disciples when he made mention of his going away. The passages gives the disciples and other believers reassurance that even if Jesus is away, he will continue to care for them. On the other hand, Jesus reminded them that the surest evidence of their love for him is their obedience to Christ. If there is love, tasks will be performed in obedience. Jesus declared that he will come again and in that time, he will take

pleasure in loving the faithful and will dwell with them. God will make the people his home. Such privileges will be experienced only by those who keep his teachings close to their hearts and will commit to follow him, his way of life, and his works.

Matthew 25:31-46

When Jesus returns, God will separate his obedient followers from pretenders and unbelievers. The real evidence of our belief is in the way we act. We are called to treat everyone we encounter as if they are Jesus, and this is no easy task. What we do for others demonstrates what we really think about Jesus' words to us; do we really feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, and look after the sick just as He had commanded us to do?

This parable describes acts of mercy that we can all do every day as a manifestation of our faith in God. These acts do not depend on wealth, ability, or intelligence; these are simple acts freely given and freely received. We have no excuse to neglect those who have deep needs, and we cannot hand over this responsibility to the church or government. Jesus demands our personal involvement in caring for others' needs, whoever they are. The point of this parable is not the *who*, but the *what* – the importance of serving where service is needed. The focus of this parable is that we should love every person and serve any one we can. Such love for others glorifies God as we reflect our love for Him unto our fellow men. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 1707*). What we have done as a result of our faith brings us closer to be reunited with Christ when he returns to gather all the faithful.

Revelation 22:12-17

In his return, Jesus will gather all the faithful; those who seek to purify themselves from a sinful way of life and whose sins are forgiven. There will be no more evil and no more sinners in God's presence to corrupt or harm any of the faithful. Jesus will come with his reward which is to give to everyone their due according to what one has done in their lives. (*Zondervan, Life Application Study Bible, p. 2334*).

Both the Holy Spirit and the bride (the church) extends the invitation to come to Jesus to the entire world. They ask us to be a part of the assembly that will experience the joys of salvation given to us by Christ, where no one shall feel thirsty or hungry anymore, and no one to experience fear and pain – but only Jesus' peace, love, and justice.

Acts 2: 1-18

The book of Acts is sometimes called the transition book. Imagine, reading the letters of Paul to the different churches but not knowing how the church came to be. The book serves as a bridge that connects the stories of Jesus to the birth and life of a community of believers.

The books starts with the story in Jerusalem during the Pentecost holiday. There were many people gathered that day when something happened to the believers. Approximately 3,000 people joined the disciples who were later called apostles. The spirit poured out to them marked the birth of a community. This community has become "God's household" or "God's body" in which Jesus is the head. Those who are led by God's spirit are called sons of God. (Romans 8:14)