THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

- 1. You shall have no other gods before me.
- 2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.
- 3. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
- 4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
- 5. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
- 6. You shalt not kill.
- 7. You shall not commit adultery.
- 8. You shall not steal.
- 9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

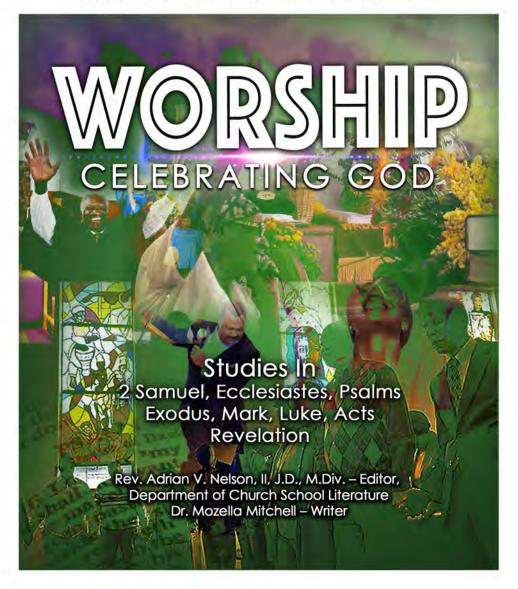
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First Quarter September, October, November – 2021



THE LORD'S PRAYER

"9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen."

Matthew 6:9-13 (KJV)

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under the Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: The third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy, catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and life everlasting.

Amen.

*catholic means universal

Notes:	



October: "To God Be the Glory," AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #50, or "God Gets the Glory," Mississippi Mass Choir, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MglgEAG88FE.

November: "When Morning Gilds the Skies," AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #39, or "The Heavens Are Telling," Karen Clark Sheard, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrj5FZ6uoNl.

CALL TO WORSHIP

September: Led by the Sunday School Superintendent (1st Sunday); a child (2nd Sunday); Christian Education Director (3rd Sunday); a missionary (4th Sunday)

Leader: "Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!" (Psalm 150:1 NRSV)

All: "Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness." (Psalm 150:2 NRSV)

October: Led by the pastor or a minister (1st Sunday); a senior (2nd Sunday); a lay person (3rd Sunday); a youth (4th Sunday); a young adult (5th Sunday)

Leader: "Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!... Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!" (Psalm 150:1,3 NRSV)

All: "Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with string and pipe!" (Psalm 150:4 NRSV)

November: Led by a girl (1st Sunday); a boy (2nd Sunday); a woman (3rd Sunday); a man (4th Sunday).

Leader: "Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! . . . Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!" (Psalm 150:1, 5 NRSV)

All: "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 150:6 NRSV)

CHORAL INVOCATION (Sung corporately):

"Breathe on Me, Breath of God" (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #209)

MORNING HYMN:

September: "Once More We Come Before Our God," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #7)

October: "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #11)

November: "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #29)

RESPONSIVE READING Psalm 100 NRSV

Leader: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

People: Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

Leader: Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

People: Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.

All: For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

RALLY SONG:

"Anthem of Praise," Richard Smallwood and Vision, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7Yo2HDxbJo.

STUDY PERIOD:

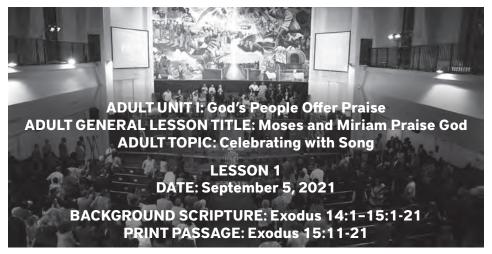
Learners study the lessons in their classes.

CLOSING ASSEMBLY:

Class members will commit and dedicate themselves to engaging in acts of worship and praise that celebrate both God's divine attributes and God's actions on behalf of the whole created order.

SUNDAY SCHOOL BENEDICTION:

Sunday school is over for another day. Hear us, Heavenly Father, as to Thee we pray. Through the week be with us in our work and play; Make us kind and loving, help us to obey. Amen.



Home Daily Bible Readings

Aug. 30	М	Exodus 14:1-9	God Hardens Pharaoh's Heart
Aug. 31	Τ	Exodus 14:10-20	Don't Just Do Something; Stand There!
Sept. 1	W	Exodus 14:21-31	Victory by the Sea
Sept. 2	Th	Luke 1:67-75	Blessed Be God Our Savior
Sept. 3	F	1 Corinthians 15:51-58	Victory in Jesus
Sept. 4	Sa	Exodus 15:1-10	Moses Sings of God's Triumph
Sept. 5	Su	Exodus 15:11-21	Moses and Miriam Praise God

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or Leaner

Celebration - "Praise Him! Praise Him!"-#268 A.M.E.Z. Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Exodus 15:11-21 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

Affirmation – We celebrate God's faithfulness with joy. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

¹¹"Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders? ¹² You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them. ¹³"In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode. ¹⁴ The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia. ¹⁵ Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away. ¹⁶ Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O Lord, passed by,

until the people whom you acquired passed by. ¹⁷ You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O Lord, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established. ¹⁸ The Lord will reign forever and ever." ¹⁹ When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

The Song of Miriam

²⁰ Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. ²¹ And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

This quarter focuses upon acts of worship and praise that celebrate who God is and what God has done for God's people. The lessons offer several examples of biblical people who celebrate God, psalms that call God's people to praise and celebration, and visions of praise for God's ultimate work in establishing an eternal realm of justice and righteousness.

Unit I, "God's People Offer Praise," has four lessons that give examples of persons who celebrate God. Both Moses and the Prophetess Miriam sing songs of praise for God's mighty acts. David dances before the Ark as he brings it into Jerusalem. Bartimaeus glorifies God in Mark. In Acts, after their experience of Pentecost and Peter's sermon, early believers enter into a life of praise for God's redemption through Jesus Christ.

People compose poems and songs for different celebrations. How can songs and poems express thankfulness and rejoicing in victory? After their deliverance from Egyptian slavery, Moses and Miriam composed songs and led the

people in praising God.

Break into two groups and each list songs that celebrate important events. Relate how songs and poetry express emotions that prose alone does not. Why do you think this is so? Talk of stories that you may never tire of hearing over and over again. Share times

when you have longed and prayed for justice and were assured in your heart that justice will prevail over injustice. Share your group's ideas with the entire class as you come back together.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Exodus 15:11-13: Yahweh's action in freeing Israel from Egypt is a common and significant theme in Old Testament songs. See also Psalms 78:12-16, 51-55; 135:8-9; 136:10-15; and others. This and two other Bible songs are referred to as "the Song of Moses" (Deuteronomy 32; Revelation 15:3-4). The common theme is Yahweh's acts to free His people and judge their enemies. The phrase steadfast love "translates the Hebrew word hesed, the precise sense of which is difficult to render in English. Here, it refers to God's loyalty and devotion to His people, a loyalty created by the bond of God's covenant with His people. Though we might expect it to be used for the devotion of God's people to Him, its overwhelming use is as a description of God's devotion to His people. Since God reveals Himself in devotion to His own, there is no stronger term to express the free and faithful grace of His love (34:6, 'abounding in steadfast love'; Ps. 136, 'his steadfast love endures forever'). God's abiding covenant love and mercy find particular illustration in the Book of Hosea (Hos. 2:19)" (ESV Reformation Study Bible).

Exodus 15:14-16: This passage has reference to the various peoples who were amazed by the awesome power of God in leading and guiding God's people at all times, delivering them by His might through every danger that confronted them. What other god had they ever seen come down from a mighty heavenly throne and walk with His people on the earth as an ever-loving companion and protector? Who would dare tamper with a people under such care and protection! The inhabitants of the lands were mesmerized by such a sight.

Exodus 15:17-21: "The purpose [of the Exodus] was the settlement of Israel as God's special people in the Promised Land, the sanctuary of God's dwelling. [The reference to God's mountain suggests] The point of contact between heaven and earth will be here. Deities in the ancient world were thought to inhabit mountains, and Israel took over this concept poetically. Here the whole of Palestine is viewed as the place of revelation (Deut. 3:25; Ps. 78:54; Is. 11:9). [The use of the term sanctuary indicates that] The land would become such by God's indwelling presence, reminding readers that the goal of the Exodus was the worship of God in the land. Apart from God's gracious presence, there was no point in going to the land (33:15)" (Ibid.). "Miriam, the prophetess and sister of Aaron, re-echoes the theme in timbrels and dancing as she sings of the glorious triumph that the Lord has performed for His people against their enemies" (Bible Panorama).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Worship is always a celebration, whether it is at a funeral, baptism, wedding, or anniversary. God is at the center of this celebration, which recalls what God is and what God has done! Break into two groups and share with one another how on various occasions of worship, celebration takes place. How do we strengthen our faith in celebration by recalling ways God has acted in the past? What vital part does singing play in our worship celebration? How do you celebrate God's salvation from both physical and spiritual threats? How are we encouraged through worship celebration in the satisfaction and assurance that God's love for us is sufficient to defeat evil forces wherever we may encounter them?

iTHINK: (5 – 7 min.)

- 1. Open the class with a game of *Name That Tune* during which participants identify four or five songs about periods or events in history (for example: "Marine's Hymn," "Erie Canal," "Buffalo Gals," "Clementine," "When Johnny Comes Marching Home"). Use this activity to introduce songs being used in Scripture to tell about important events in history.
- 2. Discuss why couples might choose a particular song to be "their song." Why might one particular song be especially meaningful to them? Is there a particular hymn or worship song that could be "their song," reflecting their relationship with God?
- 3. Work with the class to create the list, "Top Ten Reasons Moses and Miriam Praised God." Encourage participants to draw connections between items on their list and a verse or verses from today's Scripture reading.
- 4. Make concordances and other Bible references available and aid the class in finding other portions of Scripture that retell the events of the Exodus in poetry and song. Include a few examples such as: Psalms 78; 135; 136; or others.
- 5. Ask participants to recall a few ways God has been faithful to them in recent days. Have them think about those events while the class closes this session by singing the hymn, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

KEY VERSE: "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?" Exodus 15:11



Home Daily Bible Readings

David Prenares to Transport the Ark

Sept. O IVI	Z Sailluel O.1-5	David Frepares to Transport the Ark
Sept. 7 T	Hebrews 9:1-7	The Holiness of the Sanctuary
Sept. 8 W	2 Samuel 6:6-11	Uzzah Disregards the Ark's Holiness
Sept. 9 Th	Psalm 122	The House of the Lord!
Sept. 10 F	Psalm 132:1-12	Go to God's Dwelling Place
Sept. 11 Sa	Revelation 11:15-19	The Ark in the Heavenly Temple
Sept. 12 Su	2 Samuel 6:12-19	David Dances Before the Ark

EXALT!

Sant 6

Invocation - Teacher or Learner

2 Samuel 6:1-5

Celebration - "Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart" - #495 A. M. E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration - 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 14-19 (Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

Affirmation – We appreciate the many ways to celebrate God's presence. (Spoken together by class and teacher).

David again brought together all the able young men of Israel-thirty thousand. ² He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵ David and all Israel were celebrating

with all their might before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

- ⁶ When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. ⁷ The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God.
- ⁸ Then David was angry because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.
- ⁹ David was afraid of the Lord that day and said, "How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?" ¹⁰ He was not willing to take the ark of the Lord to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the Lord blessed him and his entire household.
- ¹² Now King David was told, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. ¹³ When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. ¹⁴ Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, ¹⁵ while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

¹⁶ As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daugh-

ter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart.

¹⁷They brought the ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for



it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord. ¹⁸ After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord Almighty. ¹⁹ Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Celebrations can be diverse in form and include various actions. How do we celebrate great events in our lives? King David expressed his joy and celebration of God by leading God's people in music and dance. We have numerous types of parades and public functions by which we celebrate various occasions, such as the Super Bowl and other victory parades, Christmas parades, St. Patrick's Day parades, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day parades, Mardi Gras celebrations and parades, Hispanic Heritage parades, homecoming parades, and many other such public events in which people delightfully march and dance with bands and colorful costumes, varieties of banners and displays, etc. We also have rules about appropriate and inappropriate behavior at public celebrations. Break into two

or three groups and let each discuss types of Christian celebrations, worship styles, etc. that are appropriate or inappropriate. Who decides and on what bases are decisions made? What types of music are appropriate in church and which types are not? What instruments are appropriate for accompaniment?



EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

2 Samuel 6:1-5: The Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of Yahweh. Although David's desire to bring back the Ark to its central position is commendable, "sadly, he ignores the command of Scripture, that the Ark must be borne by men carrying it on poles, to be located in the rings fixed on the Ark for that purpose" (*Bible Panorama*), which was a reflection God's presence deserved (Exodus 25:12-14). This "new cart" mode of transporting the Ark "recalls the Philistine precedent set in 1 Sam. 6:7, thus neglecting the divine directive" (*ESV Reformation Bible*). The decision to ignore the prescribed procedure for transporting the ark of the covenant in favor of treating God's presence as mere cargo resulted in judgment (2 Samuel 6:3, 6-7; 1 Chronicles 13:5-13). "Uzzah offends God's holiness, clearly taught before, by touching the ark when the oxen, which pull the cart, stumble. The Ark was wrongfully carried on a cart. God slays Uzza. David, in his ignorance, negligence, or forgetfulness,

is angry.... David is also afraid of the Lord and will not take the Ark into the city of David. The Ark stays with the household of Obed-Edom, the Gittite, and God's blessing rests upon his household [vv. 9-11]" (Bible Panorama).

2 Samuel 6:14-16: In the second attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, David assumed a priestly role. He offered sacrifices (2 Samuel 6:13) and wore a linen ephod, a garment usually associated with the priesthood (v. 14; Exodus 20:12; 1 Samuel 2:18; 22:18). "Hearing of the blessing of Obed-Edom, David has the Ark carried by bearers to the City of David. Sacrifices, shouting, and the sound of a trumpet are augmented by David's vigorous leaping, whirling and dancing before the Lord. There is delight at the return of the Ark" (Ibid.). A variety of musical instruments and dance were included in Old Testament worship (1 Chronicles 25:1-8; Psalms 149; 150). While the relationship between David and his wife, Michal seems near its end with this incident, their marriage was filled with intrigue from the beginning. Saul offered Michal to David as part of a plot to have him die in battle (1 Samuel 18:20-25); Michal had to intervene to keep David from being murdered by her father (19:11-17); and at the height of the conflict between David and Saul, Saul gave Michal to another man (25:44). It is little wonder that the incident in our text included David's angry assertion to Michal that God had chosen him to replace her father on the throne (2 Samuel 6:21).

2 Samuel 6:17-19: "Returning to bless his own household, David has a serious domestic dispute with Michal. She accuses him of immodesty in his earlier gyrating. He protests that this was before the Lord, and that he will play music before the Lord also. He protests her opposition and states that he will be held in honor. Michal will never bear children to David. Whether the cause is David's possible abstention from sexual relations with her or simply because God prevented conception, we do not know. Also, opinions are divided as to who is right–David or Michal. Immodesty must never occur in worship, and in the Bible, dancing often accompanies sin. Worship should be conducted 'decently and in order'. But God-honoring, enthusiastic and spontaneous rejoicing should be encouraged" (*Ibid.*).

ELEVATE: (5-10 min.)

Break into groups of threes and discuss with one another and elaborate on the following points:

- Christians celebrate their devotion to God with a variety of musical styles and forms of worship. Consider the various uses of tambourines, drums, guitars, etc.
- 2. Christians want their worship to display the reverence for God that God

- deserves. Consider how such reverence may be displayed.
- 3. Many Christians experience deep emotions in their worship, displayed in many ways such as shouting, dancing, speaking in tongues. How should these be viewed and accepted? Be sensitive to "worship wars" that may be occurring in your own congregation.
- 4. How do Christians experience God's presence with them in worship?
- 5. How do Christians experience unity and oneness in worship regardless of differences in styles? How might we keep differences in worship styles from causing greater cultural, racial, language, and age divisions among us?

iThink (5-7 min.)

- 1. Give each participant an index card and instruct them to list the following: favorite song, favorite vacation spot, favorite holiday. Collect and redistribute cards, and have the group try to match a class member with each list of favorites. How can our varying preferences help/harm our ability to worship together?
- 2. Begin class with a discussion of what each participant would do if a famous person was expected to visit class next week. How would the visit affect the way they would dress, the condition of the room, other preparations, etc.? How should the recognition of God's presence make a difference in our worship?
- In the week before class, assign a participant to prepare a five to ten-minute presentation on the Ark of the Covenant including information about what it represented, what it contained, and how it was to be treated.
- 4. Read 2 Samuel 6:16 aloud and lead a class discussion about why David's worship might have led his wife to despise him. Refer to events in their marriage and backgrounds that would have contributed to that rift.
- 5. Write these headings across the top of the board or a large sheet of paper: Ox Cart Worship (not recognizing God's presence), Despising Worship (not acknowledging the joy of others), Unrestrained Worship (not holding back in praising God). Help the group brainstorm present-day worship attitudes and practices that could fit under one or more of those headings. Allow participants to evaluate their own worship attitudes and practices by considering those headings.

KEY VERSE: David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with songs and Iyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. 2 Samuel 6:5

ADULT UNIT I: God's People Offer Praise

ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Glorifying God ADULT TOPIC: Celebrating Expectantly

LESSON 3

DATE: September 19, 2021

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43 PRINT PASSAGE: Mark 10:46-52

Home Daily Bible Readings

Sept. 13 M	Isaiah 35:1-6	Blind Eyes Shall Be Opened
	(end at "sing for joy")	
Sept. 14 T	Psalm 96	Declare God's Glory Among the Nations
Sept. 15 W	Psalm 115:1-3, 9-18	Glory to God's Name Alone
Sept. 16 Th	Mark 10:17-22	Only God Is Good
Sept. 17 F	Mark 10:42-45	Greatness through Servanthood
Sept. 18 Sa	Psalm 146	Praise the Lord, O My Soul!
Sent 19 Su	Mark 10:46-52	Praise God for Healing!

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or Learner

Celebration - "O, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" - #20 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymn

Declaration - Mark 10:46-52 (Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! God's calling you." ⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." ⁵² "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Affirmation – We appreciate how God is attentive and responds to our needs. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

People respond to life challenges and victories differently. How can we respond in ways that are encouraging for ourselves and others? Bartimaeus's boldness and faith in Jesus gave him the courage to ask for and receive his sight from Jesus. Some people may be reluctant to ask for help when they are in need, preferring to be strong and able to withstand whatever inhibiting conditions in which they may find themselves. What do you think prompts people like Bartimaeus to eagerly cry out for help from those whom they believe have the means and abilities to relieve them of helpless conditions. Break into two groups and let one group discuss and compare what it means to be physically blind with various types of spiritual blindness and how both physical and spiritual blindness may be responded to appropriately. Let the second group discuss the eagerness and faith that play a great part in people overcoming both spiritual and physical conditions that keep them down and prevent healing and wholeness.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Mark 10:46-48: While this account appears in all three Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), only Mark identifies Bartimaeus by name. Luke simply calls him "a blind man" (Luke 18:35-43), and Matthew mentions that there was another blind man begging with him (Matthew 20:29-34). This incident occurred during the last three months of Jesus' ministry—between the Festival of the Dedication (John 10:22-28) and his arrival in Jerusalem for Passover. His reputation had been firmly established by this time (vv. 40-42). Jesus spoke about the persecution that awaited him in Jerusalem during those three months (Mark 10:32-34). His closest followers began to understand that following Jesus into Jerusalem posed a danger to them as well (John 11:7-16). Bartimaeus addressed Jesus with two significant titles. "Son of David" recognized his royal

lineage, qualifying him to rule as Messiah (Matthew 9:27; 12:23; 15:22). "My teacher (Rabbi)" recognized his religious authority, qualifying him to speak for God (Matthew 23:7).

Mark 10:49-52: Restoring sight to the blind was a miracle Jesus performed many times (Matthew 12:22; 15:30; Mark 8:22-26; John 9). Alternative or addition: Physical blindness is often a symbol and sign of spiritual blindness in healing narratives (compare John 9:39-41). Jesus healing the physical blindness of Bartimaeus may foreshadow the healing, over time, of the spiritual blindness of disciples. The way in which Bartimaeus, once healed, immediately follows Jesus (Mark 10:52) stands in stark contrast to the rich man who would not follow (10:22). These imageries are consistent with other depictions of Jesus as a polarizing figure. "Blind Bartimaeus's faith, persistence, and recognition of Jesus' significance provide the foci for this important story of discipleship. At the outset, he is sitting by the roadside (Gk. hodon), but in the end he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road (hodo). This is a clear portrait of the healing power of the merciful King, but this story also functions as a parable of discipleship: To be healed from spiritual blindness is to grasp the true identity of Jesus and join him on the way to the Cross" (Asbury Bible Commentary). Luke's version of this account records that the crowds that once tried to restrain the blind man praised God because Jesus restored his sight (Luke 18:43). People who were once marginalized by society often became powerful witnesses for Jesus after an encounter with him (Mark 1:45; 5:20; John 4:39-42).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

F<u>orm two groups, and let the first group respond to and elaborate on</u> the following three issues:

- 1. Believers come to God for the healing of their spiritual deficiencies as well as for their physical challenges. To what extent is this a true statement or not?
- 2. Believers approach God, confident that God has the power to help them. At what points in their insufficiency do people seek God? Explain
- 3. Believers seek to introduce people with both physical and spiritual challenges to Jesus. Have you witnessed persons doing this?

Have the second group respond to the following issues or questions:

4. Believers are quick to tell others what the Lord has done for them. To what extent is this a true statement or not? What is the impact of this personal testimony?

- 5. Believers are willing to take risks in order to follow Jesus. What risks exist for those who choose to follow Jesus?
- 6. Believers follow Jesus out of gratitude for what He has done rather than merely out of religious obligation. Is this a true statement? Or is it true that people do both? Elaborate.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- Begin class by displaying a website such as HomeAdvisor.com or Angi.com on a computer or mobile device. Ask why one would find personal testimony of someone who used a service more credible or less credible than an advertisement paid for by the one offering a service.
- 2. Some months before healing Bartimaeus, Jesus healed a blind man by the pool of Siloam. This account includes a comparison between physical and spiritual blindness (John 9:35-41). Referring to these verses, explain why healing blindness was a powerful illustration of the purpose of Jesus' ministry.
- 3. Stage a mock interview of Bartimaeus. Have Bartimaeus explain how he had concluded that Jesus deserved the titles "Son of David" and "Rabbi" even before meeting him on the road that day.
- 4. Write the lesson's key verse (Mark 10:51) on the board: "Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again'" To close the session, ask the participants how each would answer Jesus' question. Allow participants to pray silently, voicing that answer.

5. Bring materials from service ministries to class. Allow participants to look through these materials and discuss how they could help bring the phys-



ical/spiritual help of Jesus to marginalized members of society.

KEY VERSE: Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again," Mark 10:51



Home Daily Bible Readings

Sept. 20 M	EXOCUS 19:1-0	A Priestly Kingdom, a Holy Nation
Sept. 21 T	Exodus 20:1-6	Worship God Alone
Sept. 22 W	Psalms 133; 134	When Kindred Live in Unity
Sept. 23 Th	Revelation 4	Praise in the Heavenly Community
Sept. 24 F	Acts 2:1-12	The Day of Pentecost
Sept. 25 Sa	Acts 2:22-36	Jesus Is Lord and Messiah
Sent 26 Su	Acts 2:37-47	A Community of Praise

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or learner

Celebration – "The Church's One Foundation" #304 *A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal*

Declaration– Acts 2:32-33, 37-47 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively)

³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" ³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you, for

your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Affirmation— We appreciate seeing how the love of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit inspire believers of different backgrounds to share a life of worship, care, and witness. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Celebrations bring about unity and a new way of seeing and being in the world. How can our celebrations unify a divided community and world? The first Christian community heard the Gospel, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to see the world differently, and united to live, worship, and evangelize together.

Break into two groups and **let the first group share** with one another how we may experience euphoria through being part of a large celebration, like the Super Bowl or other victory celebration, Christmas and New Year's celebrations, Halloween, etc. Discuss the up and down.

Let the **second group discuss how sharing** with others is a good thing to do, how we may grow closer together when we meet together regularly, how we find unity with those with whom we share common values, such as, maybe joining with others of a variety of backgrounds for the sake of a common cause.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Acts 2:32-33: John the Baptist's assertion that while he baptized in water for remission of sin, Jesus would baptize with the Spirit (John 1:32-34), is fulfilled in the baptisms on Pentecost for forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The Greek words for breath, wind, blowing, and spirit/Spirit are from the same root. Jesus connected wind and Spirit in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:5-8) and illustrated the giving of the Holy Spirit by breathing on the apostles (20:22). On Pentecost, the Spirit was accompanied by a rushing wind. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is clearly animating power of the church. Because Passover and Pentecost were only about seven weeks apart, many Jewish pilgrims would remain in Jerusalem during that time. The communal arrangements described in Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-35 are spoken of nowhere else in the New Testament, leading one to believe that sharing all

things in common in the Jerusalem church was a way to provide for displaced pilgrims as well as others with limited means.

Acts 2:37-42: Repentance and baptism are also linked in Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; Acts 13:24; 19:4. The third-person passive imperative inflection of the verb baptize is difficult to render in English. "The message of the Lord Jesus Christ cuts the hearers to the heart and they ask Peter and the apostles what they must do.... Peter urges them to be saved, to take advantage of God's promise, and to repent of their sins. This repentance and faith in Christ will be manifest in baptism in the name of Christ. This will underline the remission of sins, which is given to all who trust in Him. Those who are saved receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as their birthright. Peter earnestly urges his hearers to be saved. V 41-45: Approximately 3,000 people come to God and are baptized. The evidence of their conversion is a steadfast continuing in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers" (Bible Panorama). "Breaking of bread" can refer both to the ceremonial practice of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-39) and simply sharing a common meal (Acts 27:33-38). The text seems to speak of both-the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42) and sharing all things in common, including food (vv. 44-46).

Acts 2:43-47: "God-honoring fear and open-hearted oneness in sharing demonstrate that God has changed their hearts in saving them through Christ.... Their lifestyle includes daily fellowship and breaking of bread, and praising God. This manifests the simplicity of heart that has become theirs since coming to know Christ. At this stage, their wonderfully changed lives gain favor with the people. Each day, God saves people and adds them to the church" (Ibid.). The unifying practices of the early church described in Acts 2:43-47 continued even after early persecution in the church (4:32-35). The empowering presence of the Holy Spirit is credited with the boldness of the early church in the face of persecution (v. 31). "The people of this new order of being structure themselves along the lines of the old covenant holiness communities (2:42). The holiness movement of the day, the Pharisees, gathered as a 'house' around the scribes who were their teachers. They formed fellowships (chaburim) that supported and reinforced their commitment to live lives of priestly holiness in the world. One of the essentials of these fellowships was their common meals, which assured meticulous observance of the purity laws. Finally, they were characterized by their communal prayers. In the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers, we see the Christian community using the old structures of their lives for the shaping of their life together as a new people of God. The Christian community, like their Pharisaic counterparts, initially had two foci: the **temple** and the **house** (v.46)" (Asbury Bible Commentary).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

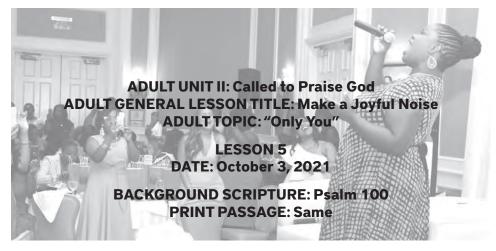
Break into two groups and discuss how we accept fellow Christians because we are all children of God, value people over possessions, experience unity of the church in gathering regularly for prayer, the Lord's Supper, and Bible teaching; and transcend ethnic, national, and socioeconomic barriers in following Jesus. Share your responses with the group as a whole as you come back together.



iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- Play a video clip of a crowd at a political rally, a big concert, or a major sporting event from You-Tube or other video sharing site. Ask the participants to describe the feelings and emotions experienced by people at such times. Do the same feelings occur when believers gather?
- Brainstorm a list of popular charitable organizations. Discuss what motivates people to give to or work for one of these organizations.
- 3. Give each participant a copy of the lesson text and a highlighter. Have each person highlight actions performed by those who experienced the love of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.
- 4. Point out that Acts 2:47 describes the early Christians as "having the goodwill of all the people." Debate whether the same could be said about Christians today and why that might or might not be true.
- 5. Plan a social event as a class designed to welcome others so they can experience the warm fellowship of Jesus' followers.

KEY VERSE: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42



Home Daily Bible Readings

Sept. 27 M	Psalm 95	Praise the Rock of Our Salvation
Sept. 28 T	Luke 19:28, 36-40	Stones Shout Out!
Sept. 29 W	1 Peter 1:3-9	Indescribable and Glorious Joy
Sept. 30 Th	Psalm 98	Sing to God a New Song
Oct. 1 F	Hebrews 13:12-16	A Continuous Sacrifice of Praise
Oct. 2 Sa	Psalm 66:1-7	Rejoice in God's Mighty Rule
Oct. 3 Su	Psalm 100	Enter God's Courts with Praise

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or Leaner

Celebration - "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"-#1 *A.M.E.Z. Bicentennial Hymnal*

Declaration - Psalm 100 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

- ¹ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.
- ² Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing.
- ³ Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
- ⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Affirmation – We appreciate that God is worthy to be praised. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)



Unit II, "Called to Praise God," has five lessons that explore psalms calling God's people to celebrate what God has done. The psalms speak of making joyful noise to praise God, praising God for justice and righteousness, giving thanks for deliverance, the joy of worship, and music as a way to celebrate and praise God.

Life provides us with many opportunities to praise and find delight in people and things. How do we decide what has more value and is more worthy of our praise? Psalm 100 highlights that God is the object of the earth's praise and joy.

Break into groups of threes and discuss what it means to know that one is part of an orderly, supportive family, social group, organization, or not. How do you suppose or know one reacts when he/she feels that no one, anywhere and that there is nowhere to turn for comfort and consolation when needed. On the other hand, how happy might we be when we are satisfied that our lives are under control, that someone somewhere is looking out for us—no matter what happens? What does it mean to sing songs of joy and appreciation to our country, to our alma maters, etc.? What do you feel is the ultimate source of all comfort, joy, and peace in life? Share your findings with the whole group.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Psalm 100:1-3: Psalms 95–100 can be described as "kingship psalms"–songs that focus upon Yahweh as the ultimate reality and ruler of all. Although Israel's demand for "a king to govern . . . like other nations" (1 Samuel 8:5) seemed to be granted with the establishment of a monarchy, it is clear in these

psalms and other portions of Scripture that Yahweh remained the true king. In this series of psalms, Yahweh is declared king because he continues to reign (97:1; 99:1), he has ownership of the world because he created it (95:5; 96:5; 100:3); and he is hailed as sovereign with the joyous shouts of all creation (95:1; 98:4; 100:1). But Psalm 100 adds that the king is, in truth, the shepherd of his people (v. 3). The Hebrew construction of v. 3 seems to have been chosen for its lyrical sound–Hoo Ah-SAN-oo We-LO AH-nan-oo (He accomplishes, not us). The pleasant-sounding phrase is a vague assertion of God's superiority over humankind, leading to the two alternative readings. ("It is he that made us, and we are his" and "It is he that made us, and not we ourselves.")

Psalm 100:4-5: Also distinguishing Yahweh from other kings is his "stead-fast love" (Psalm 100:5; 25:6, 7, 10; 31:7, 16, 21; etc.). The implication is that this is a covenant-based love that endures despite lapses on the part of his people (Psalm 89:30-37). This appears to be a song of entrance to the temple, of sacred access to the Holy place as well as to the court of the king of the universe. "Confidence in Yahweh as King of the universe (29:10; 104:2-4), superior to all other 'gods' (136:2-3; cf. 95:3-5) rests in Israel's awareness that He is Creator. Sometimes the Creator's royalty is plainly claimed as in Ps 29's celebration of Yahweh of the Storm:

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever (29:10).

This explicit link between God as Creator and God as King finds repeated, explicit praise, in several songs, where creation thought is subordinate to other themes, as in Ps 95:2-5:

Other songs draw from the imagery of the heavenly court—the *royal court* in which God sits enthroned—and in this way praise the Creator as King, even when the words 'king' or 'throne' do not appear. This is the assembly of the 'mighty ones' (the 'sons of God') who offer homage in King Yahweh's presence (29:1-2). From this court, God, the King, regally arrayed, sends his messengers and servants to do his royal bidding (104:1-5; cf. 103:19-22)" (Asbury Bible Commentary).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Break into smaller groups and discuss how you and other fellow-Christians feel about acknowledging Yahweh as the ultimate authority in our lives. If you find happiness and joy in knowing God loves you, how might you express the sense of obligation to God for all that God has done for us? Do you experience the love of Yahweh as changeless, unlike the fickleness characterizing human love? Do you recognize God's character as the "measuring stick" of what is

truly good? Explain how one may show such recognition? Share your findings with the group.

iTHINK: (5 – 7 min.)

- 1. Play a pop song about being devoted to another person such as "Only You," "Hopelessly Devoted," or "Dedicated to the One I Love." Discuss the pros and cons of being totally devoted to another human being.
- 2. To begin class, ask for five or six volunteers. On the back of each volunteer, attach a nametag with a type of person one might talk to on any given day. Two or three tags should name someone with whom a person has a deep relationship (best friend, spouse, child, grandchild, etc.). The remaining tags should name someone with whom a person has only a passing relationship (a waitress, a store clerk, a telephone solicitor, etc.). Allow participants to make one statement to or ask one question of each of the volunteers. Then have the volunteers guess what is on their tags. Discuss the difference between deep and superficial relationships. What best describes our relationship with God?
- 3. Write the words WHAT and WHY across the top of the board. Explain that Psalm 100 tells us WHAT we are to do in our relationship with God and WHY God is worthy of such actions. Have a volunteer read Psalm 100 aloud, one phrase at a time. After a phrase is read, ask a volunteer to write it under one of the two headings.
- 4. Explain that Psalm 100 is a song of life under the rule of God as King. On the other hand, 1 Samuel 8:11-18 describes life under a human king. Have a volunteer read both passages. Then ask participants to respond to each with a single word describing the emotions a subject of each king might experience.



5. Create an acrostic praising God, using the words ONLY YOU. Each letter should begin a word or phrase expressing why only God is worthy of absolute devotion.

KEY VERSE: Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Psalm 100:3

ADULT UNIT II: Called to Praise God ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Praise God for Justice and Righteousness ADULT TOPIC: "Ball of Confusion"

LESSON 6 DATE: October 10, 2021

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 9; Ecclesiastes 3:16-22 PRINT PASSAGE: Psalm 9:1-12

Home Daily Bible Readings

Whore le lustice?

OCT. 4	IVI	Ecclesiastes 3: 16-22	where is Justice?
Oct. 5	Τ	Psalm 7:8-17	A Prayer for Justice
Oct. 6	W	Amos 5:21-25	Let Justice Roll Down
Oct. 7	Th	Matthew 12:14-21	God's Servant Proclaims Justice
Oct. 8	F	Psalm 9:13-20	God Has Executed Judgment
Oct. 9	Sa	Luke 4:14-21	Jesus Pronounces Release and Recovery
Oct. 10	Su	Psalm 9:1-12	God Judges with Righteousness

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or Learner

Foologiastas 2:16 22

Celebration - "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" - #57 A. M. E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration - Psalm 9:1-12 (Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

To the leader: according to Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.

- ¹ I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
- ² I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.
- ³ When my enemies turned back, they stumbled and perished before you.
- ⁴ For you have maintained my just cause; you have sat on the throne giving righteous judgement.

- ⁵ You have rebuked the nations, you have destroyed the wicked; you have blotted out their name for ever and ever.
- ⁶ The enemies have vanished in everlasting ruins; their cities you have rooted out; the very memory of them has perished.
- ⁷ But the LORD sits enthroned for ever, he has established his throne for judgement.
- ⁸ He judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with equity.
- ⁹ The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.
- ¹⁰ And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.
- ¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion. Declare his deeds among the peoples.
- ¹² For he who avenges blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

Affirmation – We value how God listens and responds to our needs. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

People choose to praise and have joy in certain things that may not be in their best interest. Why do we choose those things that may harm us or others? Psalm 9 proclaims that God will bring justice, and this is cause for our joyful praise. We are all concerned about the injustices we see in our surroundings, in our homes, in our societies, and the world. But, do we simply accept that this is the way things are and will always be, or do we have hope that things will change for the better? If we have this hope, in whom or in what do we place this hope?

Break into small groups and discuss the types of injustices you are aware of that exist in society, in families, schools, and in the world that need addressing. Talk about how cruel people can often be toward others: our inhumanity toward other humans. Are we powerless to right the injustices in the world? What about leaders we elect or hire who have promised to fight injustices but have failed to do so? What suggestions can you come up with that may be ways we can fight injustices, and what injustices must we seek God to correct and redress?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Psalm 9:1-6: Psalms 9 and 10 are treated as a single song in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Jewish Bible). It is likely that these two psalms were originally a single acrostic poem, with every other line starting with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Indeed, the Septuagint numbers Psalm 10 as part of Psalm 9; this results in enumeration mismatch between the Septuagint and other texts following Psalm 9. Together they answer the complaint that God seems to be silent while evil people persecute the helpless. The instruction, "according to Muth-labben" seems to be directing the leader that it is to be sung to the tune of a song known in that day ("Death of the Son" or "To Die for the Son"). This title may indicate a mournful mood of the psalm. Yet, this psalm opens with the strong assertion of giving thanks and praises to God for acts of righteous judgment and justice-and proceeds to names them outright. Victories in battle, defeat of the enemies, and other great deeds are attributed to God with much praise and adoration. Victory in battle for David is important because he sees it as the way God vindicates his actions and confirms that his cause is just (Psalms 9:4; 17:2; 24:5; 26:1).

Psalm 9:7-12: While it is true that some injustices are not resolved fully in this life, David expresses a faith that God is always active, fighting for those who are oppressed (Psalms 9:7-8; 10:12-14; 12:5-7). The role of "avenger of blood" is one that the law of Moses gives to a kinsman redeemer, a family member of a wronged party who will bring justice (Numbers 35:19-27). David pictures himself in that role, avenging blood on behalf of his brothers and sisters in his nation (Psalm 9:11-12). As the *Bible Panorama* asserts, "God, His justice and His righteous judgement are eternal.... Those who trust in God find that they are not forsaken, but that He is a refuge for them when they are oppressed and in trouble....God's people are encouraged to praise God and declare what He has done. This doubles back to the first, urging praise and glorification of God for all the wondrous acts performed on their behalf.

ELEVATE: (5-10 min.)

We must have an aversion to evil just as God does in that we are His agents in the world who should be ready to do the divine bidding. We must act or be responsible for the success of wickedness. As the famous quotation from Edmund Burke says: "The only thing necessary for the





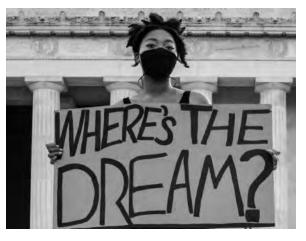
triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Thus, we must desire and anticipate that evil must be judged and work toward that end.

Break into small groups and discuss how we can act to ensure that the powerful do not oppress the weak and innocent; how we can trust that God will be present

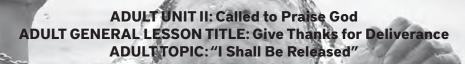
with us when we seek justice for others; believe and witness to God's judgment as an ongoing process—not just as a last-days event; and finally, join with others to respond to the cries of the afflicted.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- 1. Play a pop protest song about injustices in the world such as "Ball of Confusion," "Give Peace a Chance," or "For What It's Worth." Help the class list the greatest injustices they see in the world today.
- 2. Brainstorm a list of leaders from history known for fighting for justice.
- 3. Review some of the criteria of the 'just war theory' (do an Internet search for "just war theory"), and compare those criteria to David's words in Psalm 9:1-12.
- Divide the class into teams to debate the proposition: "God's justice is not accomplished in this present age."
- 5. Help the class make a list of what they consider the five greatest injustices in the world today. For each injustice, help them suggest at least one practical way that they can respond to it.



KEY VERSE: He judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with equity. Psalm 9:8



LESSON 7 DATE: October 17, 2021

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 107 PRINT PASSAGE: Psalm 107:1-9, 39-43

Home Daily Bible Readings

Dolivared from Hungar and Thirst

OCI. II	IVI	FSaiiii 107.1-9	Delivered from Hunger and Thirst
Oct. 12	Τ	Psalm 107:10-22	Delivered from Darkness and Gloom
Oct. 13	W	Psalm 107:23-32	Delivered from Storms
Oct, 14	Th	Ephesians 1:3-14	Delivered through Jesus Christ
Oct. 15	F	Ephesians 2:1-10	Delivered from Sin
Oct. 16	Sa	Ephesians 2:11-22	Delivered and Reconciled
Oct 17	Su	Psalm 107:33-43	Delivered by God's Steadfast Love

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or Learner

Dealm 107.1-0

Celebration - "Marching To Zion" - #648 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymn

Declaration - Psalm 107:1-9, 39-43 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Many Troubles

- ¹ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever.
- ² Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from trouble ³ and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.
- ⁴ Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town;
- ⁵ hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.
- ⁶ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered

them from their distress; ⁷ he led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town.

- ⁸ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.
- ⁹ For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.

- ³⁹ When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, trouble, and sorrow, ⁴⁰ he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes; ⁴¹ but he raises up the needy out of distress, and makes their families like flocks.
- ⁴² The upright see it and are glad; and all wickedness stops its mouth.
- ⁴³ Let those who are wise give heed to these things, and consider the steadfast love of the Lorp.

Affirmation – We place value on the role of giving thanks to God. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

People seek deliverance when they are in trouble. How should we respond when we are delivered? Psalm 107 encourages us to be thankful to God for God's deliverance. Do you wonder why some people wait until they "hit rock bottom" before they reach out to others for help? And many people try to "pull themselves up by their own bootstraps," while others have no "bootstraps." Others just hope that there is "somebody up there" that can help, even when that help is not deserved.

Break into small groups and discuss all that you can recall that you have endured as an individual, as part of a family or other group that you were brought safely through when many times you almost lost hope. Talk about what or who helped you make it through. Talk about happiness people have felt when they experienced freedom from debt, abuse, disease, etc. What do all have to be thankful to God for, in any particular status in life?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Psalm 107:1-9: Psalm 107 opens Book V of the five-book Psalter, the end of each of the five books being marked by a doxology (Psalms 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48; 150). In so doing, it seems to respond to the themes of the immediately preceding psalm. Psalm 107:1 prefaces everything that follows as coming from God's enduring "steadfast love." The implication is that this is a

covenant-based love that delivers, even when troubles being faced are of one's own making. See Psalm 51:1 and Psalm 136. Some scholars see successive books within the Psalter responding to the preceding books as if they were designed to do so. The setting of this Psalm may well be the end of the Babylonian Exile, but it is phrased to deal with general troubles of going through deserted territory, enduring prison and captivity, surviving sickness, and making it through dangerous sea travel. Four times in this psalm, the pattern of those in trouble crying out for help and then thanking God when he answered is repeated (vv. 6 and 8, 13 and 15, 19 and 21, 28 and 31). Different Hebrew words are translated as "deliver" in English and vary in meaning from simply being moved to another place, to being spared, or to being rescued. The verb in verse 6 (natsal) is very strong, signifying forcible stripping away from a powerful captor.

Psalm 107:39-43: "Time and again, God has delivered, blessed, helped, and guided His people who have been in the worst of situations. Tossed about hopelessly on the sea of life, they have cried out to Him and been saved. Four times the psalmist yearns for people to thank God for His goodness and for His wonderful works.Those are blessed whose poverty and low position cause them to rely on God. He sends barrenness as the result of wickedness.... The psalmist deduces that observant, wise people will understand God's lovingkindness" (The Bible Panorama). "The approach changes [here] and the focus of attention is not on the people in trouble but on the Lord. He can turn the garden into a desert and the desert into a garden (Isa. 35; 41:18; Deut. 28:1-5). God can judge the land because of the wickedness of the people who live there (v. 34; see Gen. 19:24-28), and He can also heal the land and bless it because of the faith and obedience of the people. This is a part of His covenant relationship with Israel (Deut. 28:15, 22-24, 58-59, 62-63). If necessary, the Lord can summon foreign armies like Babylon to invade the land and use them to chasten the leaders (vv. 39-40; Job 12:21, 24). However, His purpose is not to destroy but to cleanse, and He will restore the blessing to the land and the people (vv. 41-42). This closing paragraph (vv. 39-42) reminds us of Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55" (Warren Wiersbe BE Bible Study Series).



ELEVATE: (10 min.)

It's testimony time, perhaps, in the old-fashioned way! The song says, "When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done."

Break into small groups and celebrate and thank God in general for his everlasting, unconditional love. Share specific ways God has answered your prayers with your group. This could be mutually helpful in many ways. Talk about seeking God's help during hard times and thanking God when he rescued you. Tell others of being thankful that God can deliver us

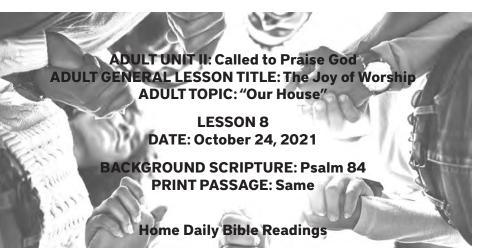


when we and others are powerless to do so ourselves. How fully do we understand that God sent the ultimate Deliverer in the person of Christ Jesus? What are some of His many sayings about asking God in His name and fully receiving what you ask for?

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- 1. Play a pop song about being free such as "I Shall Be Released," "Freedom!" (Pharrell Williams), or "People Get Ready." From what do we need to be freed? Who or what is the source of freedom?
- 2. Debate whether this old saying is true: "God helps those who help themselves."
- 3. Have participants underline the words "steadfast love" each time it appears in Psalm 107. From the context of the psalm, help them create a working definition of the term. How does it differ from some common understandings of what love is?
- 4. Ask volunteers to read Psalm 107 and Luke 1:46-55 aloud. Ask participants to point out similarities about a Deliverer.
- 5. Write the first line of verse 2 on index cards: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Give each participant one of these cards to place in a prominent place in their houses or cars. Remind them to meditate on this command, considering what to tell, whom to tell, and how to tell about their deliverance.
- 6. Pray for those people that participants know who recognize their need for deliverance, but who do not have a relationship with the Deliverer.

KEY VERSE: They cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. Psalm 107:6



Oct. 18	Μ	Psalm 126	God Has Done Great Things
Oct. 19	Τ	John 15:9-17	Joy Fulfilled in Love
Oct. 20	W	Nehemiah 8:9-12	God's Joy Is Your Strength
Oct. 21	Th	Philippians 2:1-11	Joy Fulfilled in Christ's Sacrifice
Oct. 22	F	Philippians 4:4-9	Rejoice in the Lord Always
Oct. 23	Sa	Psalm 16	Fullness of Joy
Oct. 24	Su	Psalm 84	How Lovely Is God's Dwelling Place

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or learner

Celebration - "There Is a Balm in Gilead" #619 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Psalm 84 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively*)

The Joy of Worship in the Temple

- ¹ How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! ² My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. ³ Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. ⁴ Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Selah
- ⁵ Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. ⁶ As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.

- ⁷ They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion.
- 8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah 9 Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed.

¹⁰ For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness. ¹¹ For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favour and honour. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly. ¹² O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.

Affirmation – We appreciate how worship and praise are reflections of who God is. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

There are times when the pressures of life are a heavy burden to carry. Where can people go to find the pressures of life lifted and then enjoy a period of celebration? The psalmist recounts a uniquely joyful experience when worshiping in the temple.

What does it mean to have a home, or not to have a home? How does this square with having or not having a church home? Break into small groups and let each person write down all the things that you associate with home and then compare notes sharing those things with one another. Think also of some of the sayings people have used also, such as "Home is where I hang my hat." Or "Home is where the heart is." Nikki Giovanni said in one of her poems, "Home is where you go and they have to take you in." What songs can you think of that sing about longing for home, a place where one truly belongs? Some people have lived in several places but still have one place they call home. Then some people see home as more than a place, but rather as a part of who they are and their heritage. How important is participating in homecoming celebrations, family reunions, class reunions?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Psalm 84:1-4: Psalm 84 is one of eleven psalms (42; 44–49; 84; 85; 87; 88) credited to the Korahites, a family of temple musicians descended from Levi, son of Jacob. These songs reflect a hunger to be closer to God and repentance for personal and corporate wrongdoing. Korah, the ancestor of these musicians, rebelled against Moses along with 249 co-conspirators. All were punished for their rebellion when God sent fire from heaven to consume them (Numbers 16:1-40). Yet, God spared the descendants of Korah (26:11). They

remained faithful to God, serving him as musicians in the temple. The psalmist recognizes the temple as the home of Yahweh. Therefore, he finds joy in being in the presence of his Heavenly Father. One commentary says, "The temple, being the place of God's appointment on earth, is like heaven on earth. From a New Testament perspective, this verse gives a glimpse of the unending happiness of heaven" (ESV Reformation Study Bible).

Psalm 84:5-9: The sense of safety and security felt by those in the presence of God in the temple is underscored by referring to God as "Lord of hosts," the one with great armies. The law of Moses required that people living outside of Jerusalem go to the temple for the three pilgrimage feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The psalmist recognized that this homecoming trip brings joy to those making it. Psalms 120-134 express similar joy about going to the temple and are called Songs of Ascents. They were sung by pilgrims heading to the temple. "Though he had to remain at home, the psalmist's heart was set on pilgrimage, and the very map to Jerusalem was written on that heart. His love for God and His house helped him make right decisions in life so that he did not go astray. A geographic site named 'the Valley of Baca' is nowhere identified in Scripture. 'Baca' is a Hebrew word meaning 'balsam tree,' and the sap of this tree oozes like tears. The 'Valley of Baca' is a name for any difficult and painful place in life, where everything seems hopeless and you feel helpless, like 'the pit of despair.' The people who love God expect to pass through this valley and not remain there. They get a blessing from the experience, and they leave a blessing behind" (Warren Wiersbe BE Bible Study Series).

Psalm 84:10-12: One summary statement of this psalm declares: "The writer is simply longing to worship God in Zion. He cannot wait to get there to praise his King and God, and even envies the sparrows and swallows that nest near to the altar of God in the temple. As a spiritual pilgrim, he seeks the blessing of communion with God.... He asks God to listen to his prayer and look upon him in view of his special relationship with Him as a child of Israel (Jacob).... One day invested in communing with God is better for Him than a thousand other days, or in time wasted pursuing the pleasures of sin. He concentrates on his Lord as a sun and shield. He rejoices in His grace and glory and in God's generous faithfulness. No wonder he concludes that 'Blessed is the man who trusts in You!' This psalm teaches us the right attitude to God and to worship" (Bible Panorama).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Do we have the sense that we are truly home when we are in the presence of God? If so, where do we experience such presence? Do we experience God's presence as we worship with fellow believers rather than as being attached to a

particular geographical location? For instance, as we have worshipped together on Zoom and other online platforms, have we experienced the presence of God in our midst? Consider the words of this commentary regarding the "songs of Zion" sung by those entering the temple worship in those ancient times: "Christian readers recognize passages of the Songs of Zion from music of the church, classical and modern, appropriating this ancient city [of Jerusalem] as something of the capital of the universal people of God. Their faith can no longer be confined to the chief city of any political state. The final Son of David foresaw the day when persons would worship neither in Jerusalem nor in Samaria (Jn 4:21-24). Worship in the Spirit and according to the truth would not be tied to one place. Further, the people of God themselves, Messiah's people, would be in reality the temple of God, individually (1Co 6:19) and collectively (1Co 3:16; Eph 2:19-22; 1Pe 2:4-5). The vision of history's climax exalts this truth. There the New Jerusalem is no place at all, but the redeemed people of God of all ages and cultures become in reality the eternal dwelling of God and the Lamb (Rev 21). These ancient Songs of Zion seem still capable of expressing much of the truth of that reality, as they are sung now to a theologically different key" (Asbury Bible Commentary).

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- 1. Play a pop song about going or being at home, such as "Our House," "Take Me Home, Country Roads," or "Homeward Bound." What makes being at home different from being anywhere else?
- 2. Find and play the final three minutes from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) from a video sharing website. Why is this such a memorable scene?
- 3. Ask a participant to prepare a brief report on Korah, a Levite who rebelled against Moses. Have that person look for some common themes in the eleven psalms written by his descendants.
- 4. Have participants use Bible research tools to discover the meaning of the title "Lord of Hosts." Why would that title be used to begin and end a song about worship?
- 5. Discuss the idea of homecoming celebrations. What can they do to ensure that every worship celebration contains the excitement of a homecoming celebration?

KEY VERSE: Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Psalm 84:4



LESSON 9 DATE: October 31, 2021

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalms 147; 148; 149; 150 PRINT PASSAGE: Psalms 149:1-5; 150:1-6

Home Daily Bible Readings

Oct. 25	Μ	Psalm 147:1-7	A Song of Praise Is Fitting
Oct. 26	Τ	1 Samuel 16:14-23	David's Music Soothes Saul
Oct. 27	W	Acts 16:23-26	Paul and Silas Sing in Prison
Oct. 28	Th	Psalm 148	Praise the Name of the Lord
Oct. 29	F	Colossians 3:12-17	Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs
Oct. 30	Sa	Psalm 149	Making Melody to God
Oct 21	Su	Pealm 150	Praise God with Musical Instruments

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or learner

Celebration – "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" #11 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration– Psalm 149:1-5; 150:1-6 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively)

Psalm 149

Praise for God's Goodness to Israel ¹ Praise the Lord! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful. ² Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. ³ Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre. ⁴ For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory. ⁵ Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches.

Psalm 150

Praise for God's Surpassing Greatness ¹ Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! ² Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

³ Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! ⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! ⁵ Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! ⁶ Let everything that breathes praise the Lorp! Praise the Lorp!

Affirmation— We are spiritually inspired by various types of praise music and hymns. (Spoken together by class and teacher).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)



People choose different ways to express their emotions. What are some ways that expressions of victory and joy can be shared? Psalms 149 and 150 share great praise for who God is and the joy of praising God with all of who we are.

Break into small groups and discuss different types of celebrations in which we use loud music and dance, noisemakers, a variety of musical instruments, and often shouting at the top of our lungs, creating a festive mood and party atmosphere that is often contagious. Ask one another if, why and when this might be appropriate in worship experiences. How do you think your church would respond to such worship?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Psalm 140:1-5: Musical celebration with dancing was done to commemorate great victories throughout Old Testament history: crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20-21); David's victory over Goliath (1 Samuel 18:6-7); and bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:5). The final psalms are sometimes seen as anticipation of God's ultimate victory over evil. Psalms 146–150 all begin and end with the command "Praise the Lord" (Hallelujah)! These psalms are used in daily morning prayer and are sometimes referred to as the Daily Hallel. The psalms in this section alternate between praises from God's nation of Israel (Psalms 146, 147, 149) and praises from creation as a whole (148, 150). Psalm 149:1 is alluded to in Revelation 5:9; 14:3. "Everything that God's people do in serving and glorifying the Lord must flow out of worship, for without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). The most important activity of the local church is the worship of God, for this is the activity we will continue in heaven for all eternity. This psalm is a primer on worship and gives us the basic instructions we need" (Warren Wiersbe BE Bible Study Series).

Psalm 150:1-6: Psalm 150:2 offers a parallel construction that ties both sources of praise together. Yahweh is to be praised "in his sanctuary" (by his people in worship), but also "in his mighty firmament" (the dome of the sky that covers the whole earth and is inhabited by all people). "The general hymns of praise extol less specifically the exalted, incomparable greatness of the Lord (113:2-6; 150:2), his mighty deeds (150:2), and his marvelous rescue for the needy (113:7-9). Or Yahweh's covenant love and faithfulness (117:2) find praise without elaboration. In Ps 134 the call to praise stands entirely on its own—with no justification, for the praise of God is its own justification and needs no stated reason in the hearts of the saints....As the Psalter stands, the reader concludes this work by entry into a jubilant worship procession of singers and dancers. They do not simply accompany praise to the Lord with their



instruments. Rather, the very playing of their instrument and the very movement of their dance *is* their praise to Yahweh (150:3-5). Not sufficient to refer generally to 'musical instruments' (Am 6:5), this song (Ps 150) calls the pieces of the 'orchestra' by name, enlisting their use in praise: trumpet (the 'shophar' or ram's horn, v.3; cf. 81:3; 98:6), harp (v.3; cf. 57:8; 92:3; 81:2; 98:5; sometimes a 'ten-stringed' harp is specified, 33:1), lyre or harp...." (Asbury Bible Commentary).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

How seriously do we want God to be pleased with our worship? Or, are we worshiping to inspire and enrich our own spirit? Break into small groups and discuss views you are aware of concerning the possible joy, or not, that is found in a variety of music for worship and praise. Do you enjoy exploring praise music from different times and cultures? Why do so many of us find the psalms to be delightful and inspiring sources and examples of worship and praise? Do you find emotional expressions to be enhancing or inhibiting in worship? Why or why not?

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- 1. Play a pop song appropriate for a loud celebration such as "I Just Want to Celebrate" or "Shout!" How do these songs make you feel? When might you play or sing them?
- Familiarize the class with the questions typically asked by reporters: Who?
 What? When? Why? How? Turn with the class to the lesson text and help
 them see how the psalmist answers these questions concerning unrestrained praise to Yahweh.
- 3. Assign one group the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15) and another the golden calf incident (Exodus 32). Each group should use Psalms 149 and 150 as criteria to determine why the music and dancing described in their assigned account was or was not appropriate worship.
- 4. Brainstorm a list of worship service types (building dedication, funeral, holiday service) or portions of a worship service (Lord's Supper, prayer, baptism) that may include music. Have participants mark whether they believe that loud music (L), quiet music (Q), or either (E) is appropriate for the occasion.
- 5. Search a video sharing website for worship songs based on the Psalms. Play one or two to close class.

KEY VERSE: Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Psalm 150:6a

ADULT UNIT III: Visions of Praise ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: All People Praise God ADULT TOPIC: The Rest of the Story

LESSON 10 DATE: November 7, 2021

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Revelation 7:9-17
PRINT PASSAGE: Same

Home Daily Bible Readings

Nov. 1	М	Psalm 67	May God's Ways Be Known		
Nov. 2	T	Isaiah 2:1-5	The Nations Flock to Mount Zion		
Nov. 3	W	Matthew 28:16-20	Make Disciples of All Nations		
Nov. 4	Th	Zechariah 8:18-23	Gentiles Seek the Lord		
Nov. 5	F	Psalm 86:1-11	All the Nations Will Glorify God		
Nov. 6	Sa	Revelation 7:1-8	God's Servants Sealed		
Nov. 7	Su	Revelation 7:9-17	Multitudes Praise God		

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or Leaner

Celebration – "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!"-321 A.M.E.Z. Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration -- Revelation 7:9-17 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

The Multitude from Every Nation

⁹ After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you

are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵ For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. ¹⁶ They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:9-17

Affirmation – We embrace the significance of praising God in unity. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Unit III, "Visions of Praise," has four lessons that share John's visions of celebration for God's ultimate victory in establishing a realm of peace and justice. In Revelation, people from every nation praise God and all heaven rejoices. In the passage from Acts, believers praise God that the good news now includes everyone—as Gentiles receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Celebrations that unite people from all over the world are significant and magnificent. How can we celebrate in spite of persecution in a hostile world? The writer of Revelation proclaims that God will preserve believers from every nation, tribe, people group, and language who remain faithful to Him, despite hardship.

Break into small groups and discuss views we tend to have of our life in this world and our hope and belief in a world and life to come where there will no longer be struggles and hardships, broken dreams and troubles of every kind-no matter who you are and what status you may hold here on this earth. To what extent do you think people believe that there is an afterlife and that it will be ideal? To what extent do you think people believe that there is ultimately someone somewhere who is looking on and cares what they are going through? What makes you think people feel this way or have this hope?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Revelation 7:9-11: Revelation was most likely written during the reign of Domitian, the Roman emperor at the end of the first century who attempted to pressure his subjects to worship him as a god. These verses (9-17) are characterized as the "Interlude of the Martyr's Chorus." "The martyrs sing a song of salvation (7:10). The ministry of the pastoral Lamb foreshadows the promises

eventually available to all saints (21:4-6). As H.B. Swete stated, the purpose of ch. 7 is 'to contrast the preparedness of the church for the coming end with the panic of the unprepared world' (p. 95)" (Asbury Bible Commentary). In this interlude, before impending disasters come in John's vision, "144,000 Jews are transformed into an innumerable multitude from every nation on earth! The great multitude, wearing white robes and . . . holding palm branches in their hands (v. 9), break out in worship of God and the Lamb in a manner recalling chapters 4-5 (v. 10) and are answered by the amen of all the angels . . . standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures (vv. 11-12; compare 5:11-14)" (IVP New Testament Commentary Series).

Revelation 7:12-14: The image of being dressed in a white robe appears often in Revelation, often referring to those who remain morally pure during times of trouble (3:4-5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:8; 22:14). Those who wore white robes after the "great ordeal" refers to believers persecuted for their faith when a conqueror unleashes war, famine, and disease because of his ambitions (Revelation 6:1-11). The Greek word translated "ordeal" in verse 14 refers to being constricted, being in a narrow place that hems one in, making a person feel confined, restricted, and without options. "Many identify the "great tribulation" [great ordeal] with a final period of persecution shortly before the Second Coming. But tribulations for Christians occur throughout the church age, so that the whole age can also be characterized as a time of tribulation (2 Thess. 1:5, 6; 2 Tim. 3:1, 12). The passage was intended to comfort first-century Christians as well as those in the final crisis. See note 11:2" (ESV Reformation Study Bible). "In the real world, blood leaves unsightly stains on white clothing, but in the world of the Revelation blood washes away all other stains and makes the clothing pure and all the whiter. It is important to notice that these martyrs are not cleansed by the shedding of their own blood, but, like all Christian believers, by the blood of the Lamb...." (IVP New Testament Commentary Series).

Revelation 7:15-17: "Martyrdom has no merit in itself, yet John wants to make very clear to the congregations in Asia that martyrdom is likely to be the price of any serious commitment to Jesus Christ. If this is so, it is important to assure the churches of the vindication of those who are (or will be) martyred. So the elder's explanation continues. The martyrs' vindication, he points out, consists partly of what John has just seen—that they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple (v. 15)—and partly of what he has not yet seen (vv. 15-17). The conclusion to the sixth seal provides a glimpse of the final blessedness of God's people. God will spread his tent over them (v. 15). They will never be hungry or thirsty again, and they will be protected from the scorching heat of the sun (v. 16; compare Is 49:10). The Lamb will become their shepherd, leading them to springs of living water (compare 21:6), and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (v. 17; compare 21:4)" (Ibid.).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

As believers, we trust that God is in control, even when situations seem to get out of hand. Scripture and experience, trust, prayer, and undying faith in the promises of God assure us of God's dominion and power over dire circumstances we face and witness. Break into small groups and share your thoughts on: seeking greater faith to overcome our sinful tendencies, our struggles to do right, even when circumstances tempt us to take the easy way out; our faith that God will make all things right in the end; and our sense of identity with people all over the world who face similar problems and challenges.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- 1. Use a graphics program to create a "word cloud," a collage of words and phrases with similar meanings using different colors and fonts. Include these words and phrases: in a bind, cornered, boxed in, feeling squeezed, hemmed in, constricted, jammed up, nowhere to turn, pressured, out of options. Display your word cloud to begin class, and ask how the words and phrases make participants feel. How do we overcome such feelings?
- 2. Start class by singing a song such as "We Shall Overcome" or "I Shall Not Be Moved." Why are those songs so popular during tough times? What do these songs presuppose about a universal giver of justice?
- 3. Display a white robe (perhaps a choir robe or baptismal robe, if handy). What does a white robe mean to them? Using a concordance, have participants look up references to "white robes" in the Book of Revelation (esp. 3:4-5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:8; 22:14). What is the significance of that symbol to believers who are being persecuted by evil?
- 4. Look at the celebratory song in today's lesson text. Have participants point out power and authority words in the song. To whom does the power and authority to make things right belong? How are we tempted to forget that when trouble comes?
- 5. An International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church has been held in November for the past several years. Look for ways that your class can participate in celebrating God's love, goodness, and grace in preserving those around the world who turn to God for justice.

KEY VERSE: "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:14

ADULT UNIT III: Visions of Praise ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Praise for God's Eternal Reign ADULT TOPIC: Who's in Charge Here?

LESSON 11 DATE: November 14, 2021

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Revelation 11 PRINT PASSAGE: Revelation 11:15-19

Home Daily Bible Readings

Nov. 08	M	Psalm 47	Clap Your Hands, All You Peoples
Nov. 09	T	Daniel 4:34-37	An Everlasting Kingdom
Nov. 10	W	Jude 20-25	Glory to God Now and Forever
Nov. 11	Th	Psalm 10:12-18	The Lord Is King Forever
Nov. 12	F	Revelation 11:3-10	God's Faithful Witnesses
Nov. 13	Sa	Psalm 93	The Lord Is Robed in Majesty
Nov. 14	Su	Revelation 11:11-19	A Crescendo of Praise

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or Learner

Celebration - "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord" - #229 A. M. E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration - Revelation 11:15-19 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

The Seventh Trumpet

- ¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,[a] and he will reign forever and ever."
- ¹⁶ Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ singing, "We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.
- ¹⁸ The nations raged, but your wrath has come, and the time for

judging the dead, for rewarding your servants,[b] the prophets and saints and all who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

¹⁹ Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. Revelation 11:15-19

Affirmation – We reflect on how God's eternal reign affects our faith. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Celebrations are ways of culminating a unique event and creating new ways of being in community. How do people celebrate in a hostile world? Revelation helps us to understand that all of the world is moving toward the just, eternal reign of God.

We have many fears about the world being out of control as we observe the political unrest, corruption, and hostility among people in our nations and among the nations of the world, among other things. Certainly, we enjoy good times, but they do not last.

Break into small groups and discuss the things going on in the world that are most concerning to you, such as possibly the powerful oppressing the weak, families suffering from infighting and hostilities that lead to hatred of one another and parents and children even killing each other, gun violence and mass killings constantly plaguing our society, etc. Do you wonder if there is a way that lasting peace can be achieved and hope fulfilled for heroic figures coming among us to fight to right all wrongs? Do you think that there is something we can do to help to bring about a peaceful and ideal world?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Revelation 11:15-17: The Book of Revelation is the drama of the completion of God's plan played out in three separate acts: Act I featuring seals being opened, Act II featuring trumpets heralding the arrival of God's eternal kingdom, and Act III featuring bowls of judgment on those who reject God. Each act contains songs celebrating the action. Revelation 11 describes the action ending Act II, the blowing of the seventh trumpet. The two olive trees that speak the word of God have the characteristics of Moses and Elijah, and therefore seem to stand for the law and the prophets, the standards by which God's people are

to be measured (Revelation 11:1-6). Just as those who testified concerning the word of God could not be silenced by martyrdom (6:9-11; 7:13-14), the law and the prophets cannot be silenced, but will remain alive (11:9-11). The seventh trumpet fulfills the mystery of God (10:7)—the fact that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah" (11:15). Revelation 11:15 is familiar to many from the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah. In summary, in Rev. 8:2-11:19 "Seven angels blow seven trumpets. The trumpets set in motion seven judgments leading up to the Second Coming. The trumpets form the second cycle out of several that depict God's rule over history from various angles.... Like the trumpets used in the battle of Jericho (Josh. 6), these trumpets lead up to the fall of the worldly city... and in the seventh trumpet the complete victory of God arrives. The trumpet plagues are reminiscent of the plagues on Egypt, signifying God's judgments on idolatrous power" (ESV Reformation Study Bible).

Revelation 11:18-19: "The twenty-four elders... prostrate themselves in worship and give thanks for 'the One who was and who is and who is to come', for God's power and righteous judgements, and for His gracious rewards for those who love Him and serve Him. God's heavenly temple is opened, the ark of His covenant is seen, and there are 'lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail" (The Bible Panorama). "The Ark of the Covenant was the most holy object in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:10-22). It was normally concealed from sight behind the tabernacle curtains. The revealing of this innermost object signifies that God has revealed His glory, both the glory of His law (the covenant words) and of His mercy (as signified by the atonement cover)" (Ibid.). One commentary says, "The appearance of the ark of the covenant is God's acknowledgment of the thanksgiving just offered by the twenty-four elders. John's glimpse of the ark is the nearest he comes in all his visions to a glimpse of God" (IVP New Testament Commentary Series). The events following the seventh trumpet will include the birth of the Messiah and the means the great dragon will use to try to destroy him and those who follow him (Revelation 12-15).

ELEVATE: (5-10 min.)

So many have fears of reading and using the Book of Revelation in their Bible studies and biblical references, but, in reality, this Book, when seen in its true light, is one of the most gratifying sources of assurance of God's care, concern, and encouragement of faithful service and patient endurance.

Break into small groups and discuss how we receive affirmation from Revelation that only God through Christ can bring eternal peace for which we yearn. What does it mean to realize that the powers of evil will attempt to subvert the work of God's kingdom and yet, trust that God is still in control, even though some still wage a losing battle against him? How satisfying is it to know that the faithfulness of Christ's followers will be rewarded as we wait expectantly a time at the end of this age when evil will no longer exist and joy will be forevermore?

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- 1. Have the class use headlines from newspapers to create a collage that seems to show that the world is out of control.
- 2. Find and play the classic opening of Superman television shows or cartoons from a video sharing website. Note that the hero fights a "never-ending battle." What will it take for the battle to end?
- 3. Fasten a long section of shelf paper along the length of a classroom wall. Use the paper to create a time line of the events recorded in Revelation 10–14. Using washable markers, have participants plot the events in the headings in their Bibles along this time line. Circle the spot on the line at which the seventh trumpet is blown (the content of today's text). Note that though God's eternal reign begins at the trumpet, battles still rage.
- 4. Have a volunteer read Revelation 10:7, followed by Revelation 11:15. Note that the "mystery of God" spoken of in 10:7 is that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah" (11:15). Have participants use a concordance to find other references to this mystery in the writings of Paul.
- 5. Explain that those becoming citizens of this country take a naturalization oath of allegiance (find a copy of the current oath for the class if you wish). Help participants write an oath in which they renounce being a citizen of the kingdom of this world and proclaim allegiance to the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah.

KEY VERSE: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever." Revelation 11:15

ADULT UNIT III: Visions of Praise ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Rejoicing in Heaven ADULT TOPIC: Family Restored

LESSON 12 DATE: November 21, 2021

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Revelation 19
PRINT PASSAGE: Revelation 19:1-8

Home Daily Bible Readings

Nov. 15 M	Isaiah 6:1-8	A Vision of Praise
Nov. 16 T	1 Chronicles 16:23-34	Let the Heavens Be Glad
Nov. 17 W	Hebrews 1:5-14	Let All God's Angels Worship Him
Nov. 18 Th	Revelation 19:9-16	King of Kings, Lord of Lords
Nov. 19 F	Revelation 19:17-21	God Judges the Wicked
Nov. 20 Sa	Zephaniah 3:14-20	The Lord Rejoices over You
Nov. 21 Su	Revelation 19:1-8	The Lord Almighty Reigns

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or Learner

Celebration - "When We All Get To Heaven" - #560 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymn

Declaration - Revelation 19:1-8 (Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively)

The Rejoicing in Heaven

- ¹ After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God,
- ² for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants."
- ³ Once more they said, "Hallelujah! The smoke goes up from her forever and ever."
- ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down

and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

- ⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great."
- ⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out,
- "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
- Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready;
 to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure"-for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

Affirmation: We believe that God's judgment is inclusive of God's justice and mercy. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

People want to have victory over the wicked people in their lives and in the world. How will they find victory over the wicked? God has the final judgment of the world, and God is worthy of all praise.



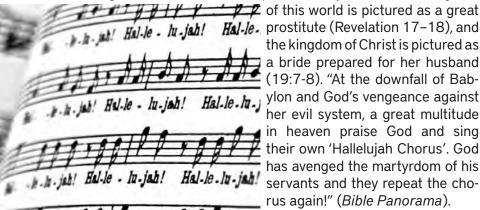
What do we really know about how the world might end? Though we wave glimpses, suggestions, visions, and images of it in scripture, and we sing about how things will be in the next world or afterlife, we do not have exact knowledge of when and how all will take place in the end or what the next life will be like in its entirety. Break into small groups and discuss with those in your group the various ways the end time has been depicted in the

Bible, in literature, in poetry, in songs we have encountered in our surroundings and social settings. Do all these sources satisfy the longing of many of how wrongs will be redressed and the wicked punished and the good rewarded? How well does the image of wedding celebrations and receptions depict our conception of heavenly existence? How about the association of the church

with a bride--suggesting beauty and purity? How about the association of corruption and faithlessness with a prostitute?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Revelation 19:1-5: Like the final five psalms (see Lesson 9), the victory song in Revelation 19:1-8 is punctuated with cries of "Hallelujah!" Both celebrate the defeat of the world's kingdoms and proclaim the Lord's universal reign. The twenty-four elders join in praise as celebration songs are sung throughout the three acts of Revelation (7:9-17; 11:15-19; 19:1-9). The twenty-four are the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles (21:12-14). The kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God are both represented by women. The kingdom



Hal-le- prostitute (Revelation 17-18), and the kingdom of Christ is pictured as a bride prepared for her husband (19:7-8). "At the downfall of Babylon and God's vengeance against her evil system, a great multitude in heaven praise God and sing their own 'Hallelujah Chorus'. God has avenged the martyrdom of his servants and they repeat the chorus again!" (Bible Panorama).



Revelation 19:6-8: When tragedy occurred in a family in Israel, a kinsman redeemer could make things right again. A widow left childless would quickly fall into bankruptcy and possibly servitude. A kinsman redeemer would clear the widow's debt (Leviticus 25:25: 47-49), remove the threat of a harassing enemy by being the avenger of blood (Deuteronomy 19:12), and finally marry the widow back into the family (Deuteron-

omy 25:5-6). Revelation shows Jesus as humankind's redeemer who pays our debt (Revelation 5), takes vengeance upon Satan (Revelation 6-18), and announces His intention to marry us back into God's family (19:7-8). "John leans into the imminent future as he invites faithful conquerors to the marriage feast of the Lamb. John combines the image of the coming of Christ as a feast (cf. Mk 14:25; Lk 14:15) with the symbol of the church as a bride (cf. Eph 5:23-32). He contrasts the clean, bright, linen-clothed bride of the Lamb (19:7-8) with the corrupt harlot, Babylon (v.2). This literary contrast between the harlot and the bride also is a moral distinction between faltering compromises with Babylon/Rome and faithful saints who **hold to the testimony of Jesus.** Revelation calls for holiness in Christians. The morality of the church is to exceed that of the world" (Asbury Bible Commentary).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Break into three groups and share how the Scripture lesson today affirms that God's standard of justice demands that sin must be punished, and God's love and mercy have made a way for sin to be forgiven. Does it appear to you that taken together, both the Old and New Testaments reveal God's plan for human-kind? How do you see the two presenting this revelation?

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- 1. Write the last two lines of T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" on the board. ("This is the way the world ends/Not with a bang but a whimper.") Discuss what the poet might have meant, and discuss other ideas about the end of the world.
- 2. Allow a few volunteers to tell about the most memorable weddings they have attended.
- 3. Challenge participants to write two short haiku (Japanese poems consisting of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables). One should use information from Revelation 18 to describe the Great Prostitute and the other should use information from Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-8 to describe the bride of Christ.
- 4. Have participants underline the words, "his judgments are true and just," found in 19:2. Show how those words are explained by Paul in Romans 3:21-31.
- 5. Call in a special speaker to review your congregation's efforts to reach people around the world with the gospel of Christ.

KEY VERSE: "Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." Revelation 19:7

ADULT UNIT III: Visions of Praise ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Good News for All ADULT TOPIC: No Difference

LESSON 13 DATE: November 28, 2021

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 10:34-47
PRINT PASSAGE: Same

Home Daily Bible Readings

Nov. 22 M	Genesis 20:1-7, 14-16	God Speaks to a Pagan King
Nov. 23 T	Acts 10:1-8	An Angel Speaks to Cornelius
Nov. 24 W	Acts 10:9-22	A Vision of Inclusion
Nov. 25 Th	1 Kings 10:1-9	The Queen of Sheba Blesses God
Nov. 26 F	Luke 7:1-10	A Centurion Comes to Jesus
Nov. 27 Sa	Acts 10:23-33	Peter Enters Cornelius's House
Nov. 28 Su	Acts 10:34-47	God Shows No Partiality

EXALT!

Invocation - Teacher or learner

Celebration – "We Have Heard the Joyful Sound"-#273 A.M.E. Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Acts 10:34-47 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively)

Gentiles Hear the Good News

34 Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ-he is Lord of all. 37 That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40 but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All

the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, ⁴⁶ for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" Acts 10:34-47

Affirmation— We commit to spread the good news that Christ is for all who want to know him. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Barriers often keep people from becoming part of particular groups. How are barriers removed? God reveals to Peter that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all, and the power of the Holy Spirit is God's gift to everyone who accepts Christ.

We have been experiencing barriers among people from time immemorial–cultural barriers, racial barriers, language barriers, socioeconomic barriers, ethnic barriers, sexual barriers etc. We have been struggling with this problem throughout history trying to find ways of uniting rather than dividing peoples. We find it easier to associate with people of different backgrounds etc. when united by a common cause, such as war between our country and another, or any attack from a common enemy, common support of our favorite sports team

etc. Without such, we simply separate into our own groups and seek to defend ourselves from all others.

Break into small groups and discuss your ideas regarding what keeps us separated and divided as human beings when life would be so much better if people did not erect or subscribe to barriers that separate us. What fears do we have



of the *other*, those different from ourselves? What positive accomplishments could we achieve if we were united rather than divided, do you think? Can you think of any ways that we could break down the barriers? Do we need strength from outside human capacities to accomplish such goals? Or, do we just need to make sacrifices for the greater good?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Acts 10:34-43: The term Gentiles referred to anyone who was not Jewish. It literally means "nations" (Greek, ethnos), as in Acts 10:35. Other words used of non-Jews in the New Testament are "Greeks"/Hellenas (Romans 3:9), referring to those in the Greco-Roman world who were not Jewish and "the uncircumcision"/akrobystía (Ephesians 2:11), referring to those who did not enter into a covenant relationship with Yahweh by keeping Jewish law. Paul would explain that Jesus has "broken down the dividing wall" between Jews and Gentiles by giving both groups "access in one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:11-22). In other words, the way to unify warring factions of humankind was to first reunite both to God. Before Gentiles were welcomed into the church, the barrier between Jews and Samaritans was broken down (Acts 8:4-8). Samaritans were the product of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles and were shunned by the Jews (John 4:9). Jesus' promise to His apostles is that they would systematically break down barriers as they were filled with the Holy Spirit, being his "witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Acts 10:44-47: As these divisions were breached, they were accompanied by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 8:14-17; 10:44). Peter was present in each case. The meeting between Cornelius's household and Peter was facilitated by visions given to Cornelius and Peter, even though they were separated by miles (Acts 10:1-16). As is commonly known, Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, having encountered Jesus in his journey on the road to Damascus for the purpose of persecuting the followers of Jesus (Acts 9:1-19); and it was Ananias to whom Jesus spoke in a vision and told him to lay hands on Paul (then named Saul) whom Jesus had chosen to be His messenger to "Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel" (9:15). Yet, it was Peter through whom Jesus's revelation to the Jews was to come asserting that the Gospel was for all people and indicating that the wall of separation was now broken down between them and all other people. As one commentary points out in reference to verse 45, "It was difficult for strict Jews who had not seen Peter's vision to realize that God did not show favoritism in His offer" (ESV Reformation Study Bible).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

We, as disciples in our day, must affirm that Jesus came for the benefit of all peoples, not for one specific group of people. Break into small groups and share how we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth and to shape our character so that we are more like Jesus, feeling a kinship with other believers all over the world, and answering the call to spread the gospel to everyone equally. How do you think Jesus feels about the lack of unity in the church? What "dividing walls" need to be broken down within the Church of Christ today? Explain your answer. Has the Holy Spirit, originally sent to unify, ironically become an issue that separates believers from one another today? How does the Spirit manifest among us today?

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

- 1. Before class, move furniture in your classroom so participants will experience literal barriers in getting to their seats. Use this experience to begin a discussion of figurative barriers people face.
- To begin class, have volunteers complete this statement: "I sometimes feel uncomfortable in a group of people who are different than me in terms of their ______." (examples: wealth, education, nationality, age, religion, etc.)
- Role-play an employment interview for the apostle Peter. The interviewer
 will attempt to find out why Peter is qualified to be on your church staff. Peter will respond by telling of his experiences with Jesus and with the early
 church.
- 4. Read Acts 1:8 aloud. Use it as an outline to trace the history of the church in the first ten chapters of the Book of Acts (origins in Jerusalem, expansion into Judea and Samaria, introduction of the gospel to Gentiles)
- 5. Ask participants to make a list of the characteristics of the most effective Christian leaders they know. Have them mark one or two characteristics on the list that they believe they are lacking. Close with individual silent prayers during which participants ask God to use the Holy Spirit to build those characteristics in their lives.

KEY VERSES: Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." Acts 10:34-35

Notes:		