

April 26, 2020 Sunday School Lesson

Good morning, I hope you are well and blessed.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in the daily round from sunrise to sunset, remind us again of your holy presence near us and in us. Help us to see you in the moment-by-moment possibilities to live honestly, to act courageously, and to seek your wisdom. *We praise you for your great strength, and love. We confess our need for you and we ask that you renew our hearts, minds, and lives, for the days ahead. God, keep us focused on what is pure and right and give us the power to be obedient to your word. Lord, we ask that you bring healing mercies to our church families, our friends and neighbors that are going through sickness and battling ailments. You know our burdens and we pray for help so we can overcome them. We ask for your mercy and strength, for the families that have lost love ones. Lord we pray that you, will protect all personnel in the medical community as they continue to care for the sick. We pray for our national, state, and civic leaders asking that you, will give them the wisdom to know what to do as they lead our country.*

God we ask that you forgive us of our sins and open our hearts and minds as we seek to understand your words. We ask these things in our Lord and Savior's name, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lesson for April 26, 2020 is "The Lord Loves Justice" Scripture is from Isaiah chapter 61:8-62:12.

Sources used for this lesson: The Bible, The Bible Knowledge Commentary by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, Rev. James Temples', from Early County, Sunday School Lesson, StudyLight.org and The Present Word Adult Bible Lessons.

The Book of Isaiah is perhaps the best known of the prophetic books. Isaiah is mentioned by name 22 times in the New Testament, more than any other Old Testament prophet. Isaiah's primary purpose was to remind his readers of the special relationship they had with God as members of the nation of Israel, His special covenant community. The theme of "comfort" is dominant in Isaiah chapters 40-66.

From Stepping Into the Word: "God entered a covenantal relationship with Israel and sought an obedient people who would live in the ways God desires, both corporately and personally. God vows to be our God forever. What does God expect from us?" Remember Micah 6:8, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

We often make a distinction between righteousness and justice. Righteousness has to do more with personal morality, with acting rightly according to some standard. Justice is a matter of legality or societal structures. God is both righteous and just and God loves both personal righteousness and societal justice. Justice is important to God. It's so important that what's right, what's wrong, and how to live justly are consistent themes throughout the Bible. Here are some verses where the Bible speaks about justice.

Psalm 11:7 explains God's relationship to justice. "For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face".

"When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers" (Proverbs 21:15).

"For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them" (Isaiah 61:8).

"Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right." – (Psalm 106:3)

"The Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!" (Isaiah 30:18)

"Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24)

"To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice" (Proverbs 21:3).

"This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another'" (Zechariah 7:9).

“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow” ([Isaiah 1:17](#)).

“Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd” ([Exodus 23:2](#)).

“Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you” ([Deuteronomy 16:20](#)).

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed’” ([Isaiah 56:1](#)).

“And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” ([Luke 18:7-8](#))

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations...In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope” ([Isaiah 42:1-4](#)).

By 520 BCE, the people who had returned from the Babylonian exile had been in Jerusalem for 18 years. They had come with high expectations of all that Yahweh would do. But life in Jerusalem was nothing like the prophets had envisioned (see Isaiah 42). Instead of expected prosperity, the returning exiles suffered scarcities of food and drink. They endured poverty generated by inflation.

Isaiah 61:8 describes the character of the LORD. The Lord is the one who will bring forth a new creation is also one who loves justice, who hates wrongdoing. He will give recompense, that is, give compensation or promise something different, something better, than has been before: an eternal covenant.

Verses 10-11 follow a typical form for a hymn of praise in which works of God are enumerated and then praised. The operative metaphor here is that

of clothing, here representing an outward sign of inner emotion or outlook. The exchange of ashes and a mantle of faintness, outward signs of mourning, for a garland and a mantle of praise, signifies a change within Zion. Here, as in Psalm 132:16, the LORD provides the clothing. The garments provided are not those of war or suffering but of salvation and righteousness, joyous as on a wedding day. Their joy, a divine gift, shall show outwardly.

Much of this song continues to be "futuristic." There will come a time when Israel will become the leading nation of the world. The city of Jerusalem will be the "hub" of all political and economic activity. This coming period is known, scripturally, as the "Kingdom Age." This future epoch will cover a span of one thousand years. This time will begin at the end of the Battle of Armageddon. Jesus Christ, Himself, will reign this world as the "King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Revelation 17:14; 19:16)

The word to them pointed to their fall under the mighty hand of the Babylonians. The Chosen Nation would go into captivity for seventy years. The group would be allowed to return to their homeland but would never know the glories of their past.

The voices of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ proclaimed, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). The message of Isaiah could have been fulfilled at that point in time, if the religious leaders, and the whole population, had accepted that which was offered. The religious leaders declared, "We have no king, but Caesar." (John 19:15c). That declaration sealed the doom of that generation, and the nation "until the times of the gentiles (non-Jews) be fulfilled (completed)." (Luke 21:24).

During this coming period, Israel will "set the example" for all nations. "And their (Israel's) seed (children) shall be known among the Gentiles (non-Jews), and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." (Isaiah 61:9)

The response of the nation to this divine promise is quite clear. This scene is taken from the traditional Jewish wedding of that day. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with garments of salvation (deliverance), he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth (dresses) herself with jewels." (Isaiah 61:10)

The land of Israel belongs to our Heavenly Father, the creator of the universe. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Psalm 24:1. This divine ownership of the geography that we know as Israel is stated in a direct manner, "for the land is mine." (Leviticus 25:23b) Even today, this ownership has not changed.

In the future, the land of Israel is expected to be the "hotbed" of agriculture and of spiritual life. "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations." (Isaiah 61:11)

The Bible is the only book that outlines the future, with any degree of accuracy. As we read the Old Testament, we find many prophecies regarding events, centuries before their fulfilment. The accuracy can only be attributed to the fact of our God as the One "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient time the things that are yet done." Isaiah 42:10. These words were given to "holy men of God as they were moved (to be borne along) by the Holy Ghost (Spirit)." 2 Peter 1:21. Since the prophecies of the past have been fulfilled, we can expect the other declarations to come to pass as well.

I hope you will read Isaiah chapter 62. Here are the first 5 verses, because I do not feel the translation used in The Present Word provided enough information. 62:1-5 "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch.

The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

In these verses the Lord announced that he will continue to work on Jerusalem's behalf until her righteousness.. salvation, and glory are observed by the rest of the world and the city is called by a new name. That name is not stated here, but several names are given later in chapter 62.

The Lord has a special affinity for justice, and God pays special attention to those who are on the underside of oppressive forces. The Lord is committed

to rescuing God's people, not primarily because they are chosen, but because the Lord takes up for those who are robbed and mistreated. The Lord is a fan of the underdog, and those connected to the Lord cannot remain silent when they see others victimized. Not only should the Lord's eyes see the vulnerable, so should those of us who profess to have a relationship with the Lord. If we truly love the Lord, then we should love what the Lord loves, and the Lord loves justice.

From Stepping into the World: If we learn anything from Isaiah, we'll acknowledge that the past, for all its glory, sets the stage for a host of injustices. As Isaiah and the other prophets attest, when the people turned their backs on those who were vulnerable, God turned God's back on Israel. We worship the same God and are called to serve the same God in spirit and in truth. Disciples of Jesus are to stand in solidarity with those pushed to the margins so that all "may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Covenant expresses our relationship to God and God's to us. To get human life right, we must understand ourselves rightly in relation to God.

We are challenged to put love into action, especially for "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40), to "learn to do good" (Isaiah 1:17), and to "strive first for the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33), even as we anticipate God creating "new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17: Revelation 21:1).

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.

Next week's lesson May 3, 2020 "A Vision of Restoration" from Zephaniah chapter 3:14-26.