

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2026

March 1, 2026

Loving God, Loving Others

Printed Text: Mark 12:28-34; James 2:14-17

Devotional Text: Proverbs 28:18-22

Background Text: Romans 15:1-7; Philippians 2:1-8; Colossians 3:12; 4:1

Key Text: Mark 12:33

March 8, 2026

Watching Our Consumption

Printed Text: Daniel 1:8-17; 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Devotional Text: Titus 1:5-9

Background Text; Daniel 1:8-20; 1 Corinthians 9:19-27;

1 Timothy 4:7-12

Key Text: 1 Timothy 4:7b-8

March 15, 2026

Giving to the Community

Printed Text: Deuteronomy 15:4-11; Matthew 25:42-45

Devotional Text: Exodus 20:12-17

Background Text: Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Matthew 25:31-46;

Luke 10:25-37; James 1:27; 2:14-17

Key Text: Deuteronomy 1:11

March 22, 2026

Welcoming Others in Christ

Printed Text: Acts 10:9-15, 30-35; Galatians 3:28-29

Devotional Text: Colossians 3:1-11

Background Text: Ruth 1:1-18; John 4:5-10; Acts 10:1-11:18

Key Text: Galatians 3:28

March 29, 2026

Waiting for God's Peace

Printed Text: Isaiah 2:2-4; Acts 17:26-28

Devotional Text: Revelation 5:8-14

Background Text: Isaiah 11:6-10; John 18:28-38:

Ephesians 4:4-6, 13-19

Key Text: Isaiah 2:3

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 1 March 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

Pass Code: 669872

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Loving God, Loving Others

Printed Text: Mark 12:28-34; James 2:14-17

Devotional Text: Proverbs 28:18-22

Background Text: Romans 15:1-7; Philippians 2:1-8; Colossians 3:12; 4:1

Key Text: Mark 12:33

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: Work Toward Common Good- Nehemiah 4:15-23

Tuesday: Welcome One Another in Christ - Romans 15:1-17

Wednesday: Do Good Whenever You can - Proverbs 3 :27-32

Thursday: Fulfill Your Vows - Ecclesiastes 5:4-7

Friday: Bear One Another's Debts - Philemon 8-21

Saturday: Provide for Others and Demonstrate Faith - James 2:14-26

Sunday: Love God and Love Your Neighbor - Mark 12:28-34

KEEP IN MIND:

"To love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." (Mark 12:33, NRSV).

LESSON AIM:

LIVE a life understanding and exemplifying the law of love as God commands

LOVE God and love your neighbor as yourself.

DECIDE to demonstrate faith with tangible works.

BACKGROUND:

The scribes often argued with Jesus about the correct way to interpret the law. Jesus was questioned on a topic that was currently debated by many rabbis, priest and Israel, which commandment was the greatest. At the time, rabbis, such as Hillel, did not think that all the commandments held equal importance. The idea was to find the “parent” commandment from which all the other commands could be reduced. Jesus responded with two passages familiar to his audience, defining his understanding of the law and what it means to truly follow God's command.

The command to love was prominent in the Jewish Scriptures and in the religious life of Israel. Love was given first to God. Deuteronomy 6:4–9 states the loyalty that the Israelites were to give to God and God alone by loving or desiring him with all their hearts, minds, and strength. This passage is called the Shema. The words of the

Shema were to be worn on the hands and head and placed on the doorpost in order to remind faithful Jews of its obligations. Jesus stated that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord all of our being.

The next passage that Jesus cited has to do with love on a social and relational level. This command first appears in Leviticus 19:18. In this verse, the Israelites were commanded against holding grudges or taking revenge on each other, but instead to love their neighbors as themselves. This command was given in the context of fostering love between fellow Israelites. Later on, it was widened to include others outside of the nation of Israel. Jesus made this command the second greatest command of the whole Bible. Together, both of these commands constitute what it means to express and experience the kingdom of God.

LESSON COMMENTARY:

The Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:28-30, NRSV)

²⁸One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"

²⁹Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;

³⁰you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The scribe in this passage presented Jesus was a very significant question: "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" (v. 28). This was already on the minds of the religious leaders at the time, and it was expected that Jesus would have an opinion on such a popular question. Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment is to love God and quoted the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4–9. This means that loving God has to do with acknowledging God above all other allegiances. He then fleshed this out, explaining it as a command to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. Loving God encompasses the whole of our existence.

The command to love God with all our heart, mind, and strength is the commandment that holds up all others. It is loyalty to God that causes us to follow his other commands. Without this loyalty, we can rationalize and avoid certain commands because our loyalty would then be only to our selfish desires. In contrast, the Shema says that our desire for God must surpass all others. This desire includes our heart, which is the seat of our will and emotions. It also includes our soul, or our entire life. It includes our mind, the center of our intellect and intelligence. Finally, it includes our strength, or all of our physical and material resources and effort.

My Neighbor As Myself (Mark 12:31)

³¹The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

The second commandment in order of priority importance is to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). This love is the same as the Jesus mentioned and Mark

12:30. The same desire for God and his interest must be shown on the social and relational level. First, we desire God and his interest, and He is interested in the well-being of his creation, especially humankind. In the context of Leviticus 19:18, love is defined as the avoidance of keeping a grudge or seeking revenge. Not only was it directed at outward actions but also an inward attitude and thoughts of the heart. Love is to result in practical actions and generous thoughts toward our neighbor; it's not a mushy, sentimental idea.

The object of our love should be our neighbor. In the Jewish context, the neighbor was the fellow Israelite or foreigner living in Israel, the other person who was near you. Love is not to be directed toward only some; it should be given to all who were in our site. This leaves out exclusion and favoritism. It makes love a normal part of our daily existence, not just reserved for a few people or a special time.

The measure of our love is to be the love we have for ourselves. The same thoughts and actions we have for ourselves are now to be directed toward our neighbor. This sets the bar high. We do not hold a grudge against ourselves or take revenge on ourselves, so this must not be the way we treat others. We look out for and seek the best for ourselves; now we are called to look out for others and seek the best for them.

1. In what ways can you practice attentiveness to God's Word in your daily life, as suggested by the command to "Hear, O Israel"?
2. In what ways can we practically demonstrate love to our neighbors in our daily lives, and how does this reflect our love for God?
3. How does loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength influence your relationships with others, as seen in the connection to loving your neighbor?

Loving God and Loving Others is Greater than Any Religious Ceremony (Mark 12:32-33)

³² Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other';

³³ and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

The scribe agreed with Jesus and showed the greatness of these two commands in his reply. He affirmed that God is one and there is no other (v. 32), and he also affirmed that loving God with all of one's heart, understanding, soul, and strength is the first sign of loyalty to God. The word "understanding" (v. 33) is added and speaks of the reasonableness of worshiping and loving God once you know His greatness. The scribe also included loving your neighbor as yourself as the second side of loyalty to him.

The next thing the scribe says is that doing these things is greater than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices (v. 33). This echoes the words of the prophet Samuel, who told a disobedient King Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). The prophet Amos said that the

Lord would not accept the burnt offerings and sacrifices of Israel and instead want to see “justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24). This is an amazing statement by the scribe because burnt offerings and sacrifices historically symbolized religious devotion in Israel and was given at a huge cost to the worshiper. The scribe understood that these religious ceremonies only symbolized the posture of one's heart toward God and the lifestyle of love that should be practiced in real life. This shows that to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves is what God really cares about, not just religious ceremony.

Loving God and Loving Others is a Sign of the Kingdom of God (Mark 12:34)

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Jesus commended the scribe for answering “discreetly” (v. 34), or with wisdom and understanding. He said that the scribe was not far from the kingdom of God. In first century Palestine, the phrase “kingdom of God” brought up images of conquering and banishing the Gentiles from the land. It stirred up the Jewish desire for freedom and political and military might. Jesus turned this concept upside and said that loving God and loving others is the true sign of kingdom.

The kingdom of God is founded on and grounded in love because God is love. It is a kingdom that exhibits and displays the nature and qualities of its King. Jesus knew that allegiance to the kingdom of God is not shown in religious ceremony but in loving God and others. The scribe's answer showed that he understood what in reality meant to be someone who lived in the kingdom of God.

1. What does it mean to be "not far from the kingdom of God," and how can we move closer to fully entering it?

Dead Works (James 2:14-17)

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?

¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food,

¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?

¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

James explains that people can claim to have faith, but if they do not accompany their words by action, that faith is worth nothing. Even Jesus warned that only those who do the Father's will would enter the kingdom of heaven, not those who say, “Lord, Lord!” (Matthew 7:21).

Similarly, James underscores the relationship between faith and works. Works, or being good and doing good deeds, cannot earn salvation; faith of believing in Jesus is the only way to eternal life (Ephesians 2:8-9). Once a person is saved—truly saved—

change occurs and good works, or actions, result. The evidence of salvation is an obedient lifestyle conforming with God's Word. James gives the example of a brother or sister who needs food and shelter in verses 15-16. He argued it is no good to say, "I'm praying that you'll be warm and get something to eat!" and then walk away without providing what that brother or sister needs—it's empty words. James uses a rhetorical question to underscore that a person who truly cares will do something to help.

Having faith is the heart of James' practical letter. If a person shows no evidence of a changed lifestyle, James says that faith, no matter how loudly expressed, is dead and worthless (James 2:17). True faith always results in a transformed life. As the old folks used to sing, "The Things I used to do, I don't do no more."

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. How can we make loving God and others a priority in our lives?
2. Do we need to be academic scholars to love God with all of our mind? Why or why not?
3. How can believers demonstrate their faith in a society where a tight budget governs spending?
4. How much more can be accomplished for the glory Of God if we put faith into action with works as well as with words?
5. How does James 2:14 challenge the common understanding of faith in your own life?
6. How does James 2:15 challenge your understanding of what it means to have faith?
7. In what ways can you actively demonstrate love and care for those in need within your community?
8. Consider the connection between James 2:16 and Mark 12:28-34. How does serving others reflect your relationship with Christ?
9. How does James 2:17 challenge the notion of faith as merely intellectual assent? Reflect on how this impacts your understanding of faith.

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

For those who read the Bible, following all the commandments can be overwhelming. It is good to know that loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves are the greatest commandments. By obeying these commandments, we obey all the others. This is what it means to live in the kingdom of God. It is simple but difficult. Our challenge is to truly love God with all with all our being and everything that we have. This can only be done with a deep understanding of the love that God has for us. When we know that God gave His life for us, then loving Him and others is less of a chore and more a privilege. In our everyday life, we have the opportunity to love God and show that He is the highest priority, as well as love our neighbor as ourselves. This is the test of loyalty to God and displays whether we truly love Him. To love our neighbor as ourselves is a sign that God is truly working in us.

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 8 March 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

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Watching Our Consumption

Printed Text: Daniel 1:8-17; 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Devotional Text: Titus 1:5-9

**Background Text; Daniel 1:8-20; 1 Corinthians 9:19-27;
1 Timothy 4:7-12**

Key Text: 1 Timothy 4:7b-8

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: Work and Discipline - Proverbs 12:1-2,10-14

Tuesday: The Temple of the Body - 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Wednesday: The Discipline of Right choices - 1 Corinthians 9: 19-27

Thursday: God Is Always with Me - Psalm 139:1-12

Friday: Fearfully and wonderfully Made - Psalm 139:13-24

Saturday: The superior Training in Godliness - 1 Timothy 4:7-12

Sunday: Pure in Mind and Spirit - Daniel 1:8-17

KEEP IN MIND:

"Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:7b-8, NRSV).

LESSON AIM:

ANALYZE the choice that Daniel and his friends faced and that choice's outcome.

ASPIRE to have the faith of Daniel when confronted with contradictory directives from authorities; and

IDENTIFY spiritual situations that call for the exercise of faith.

BACKGROUND:

The book of Daniel opens with the statement that God delivered His people into captivity. Other prophets issued warnings of this captivity and Daniel experienced and keeps a journal of this exile firsthand. While captivity is never the ideal, God's promise not to leave or forsake His people is evident in these writings. Although Daniel's companions would be memorialized by their Babylonian names (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), Daniel retained his identity and reputation throughout history for the courageous stand he took for God. Mishael, Azariah, and Hananiah were also faithful. They chose to be thrown into a fiery furnace rather than bow down to the king's golden idol.

The apostle Paul spent more than two years in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19). Timothy was later stationed there as an apostolic representative, giving assistance to local church leaders. Timothy was one of Paul's most active coworkers, having traveled extensively with him (Acts 16:1-3; 19:22; 20:4; 2 Corinthians 1:1, 19) and as his representative on numerous missions (1 Corinthians 16:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:6). He was greatly trusted and beloved by Paul (Philippians 2:19-22).

LESSON COMMENTARY:

Purpose Over Pressure (Daniel 1:8-14, NRSV)

⁸But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself.

⁹Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master.

¹⁰The palace master said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king; he has appointed your food and your drink. If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of your own age, you would endanger my head with the king."

¹¹Then Daniel asked the guard whom the palace master had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

¹²"Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.

¹³You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe."

¹⁴So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days.

Daniel maintained an important element of his identity. His purpose in refusing to eat the particular food that the king had provided was much less about ingesting food, and more about maintaining faithfulness to God's Law (Leviticus 17:7-16). While Daniel was in the king's control, he had to obey certain rules, but he still maintained control over his own body.

This type of commitment should also reside within us and resonate with our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. More than a simple protest, Daniel asked permission to follow an alternative diet, and also offered a test run so that they could be monitored and protected from others who might be jealous of their special treatment. Often, our purposes can be thwarted by pressure from our peers and the powers that be.

Devising a plan of action might be the best tool to employ, considering that temptations and threats will indeed come. Daniel's purpose to obey God was exemplified by his statement of refusal, and his willingness to operate under certain conditions that would satisfy both sides.

1. What does it mean to be faithful?
2. Sometimes God places us in situations where our faith will be tested. Have you ever been tempted to compromise the standards of your faith to be accepted by others?

3. When we face temptations to compromise or disobey God, what should we do to resist?

Faith Over Fear (Daniel 1:15-17, NRSV)

¹⁵At the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations.

¹⁶So the guard continued to withdraw their royal rations and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷To these four young men God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom; Daniel also had insight into all visions and dreams.

Daniel asked to be fed a vegetarian diet in order to avoid eating meat sacrificed to idols, and to avoid other trappings of Gentile royalty that might have compromised his dietary restrictions. We may at times be questioned as to why we refrain from certain activities even though they can seem harmless and pose no visible threat.

As Daniel and his companions ate a diet of pulse (vegetables), rather than consuming the king's meat and drink, others expected them to wither away. However, as they feasted on vegetables and stood on their faith in God, they were blessed with even healthier appearances than all those in the royal household.

Likewise, our faith should literally show in our lives, because God's presence is impossible to ignore. Their pressured situation helped them operate less out of fear and more through faith in God. They were confident that they would not only survive but thrive in God's care.

1. How can our faith support us in triumphing over our fears?

Qualities of an Excellent Minister (1 Timothy 4:7-8 (NRSV))

⁷Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives' tales. Train yourself in godliness, ⁸for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

In the context of the early church, false teachings and myths were prevalent, often rooted in pagan traditions or Jewish folklore. The apostle Paul warns Timothy to avoid these distractions, which can lead believers away from the truth of the Gospel. This echoes the warnings found in other scriptures, such as 2 Timothy 4:4, where people turn away from the truth to myths. The term "irreverent" suggests a lack of respect for the sacred, while "silly" implies foolishness or lack of substance. This instruction is relevant today as believers are encouraged to focus on sound doctrine and avoid teachings that do not align with biblical truth.

The call to "train" oneself suggests a disciplined, intentional effort, akin to physical training. The focus on "godliness," involves living a life that reflects the character and holiness of God. This training requires dedication to prayer, study of Scripture, and the

practice of spiritual disciplines. The concept of godliness is central to the Christian faith, as it embodies the transformation that occurs through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This transformation is a fulfillment of the call to be holy, as God is holy, found in Leviticus 11:44 and reiterated in 1 Peter 1:16.

In the Greco-Roman world, physical fitness was highly valued, with gymnasiums being central to many cities. However, the emphasis here is on the limitations of physical exercise in terms of spiritual and eternal significance. The Apostle Paul often used athletic metaphors to illustrate spiritual truths, highlighting the temporary nature of physical training compared to spiritual growth.

Godliness or living a life that reflects the character and teachings of God, is presented as having comprehensive value. This aligns with the biblical theme that spiritual disciplines and moral integrity have far-reaching effects. In the context of the pastoral epistles, Paul emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine and righteous living as essential for church leaders and believers. Godliness is not just a private matter but impacts community and witness.

The benefits of godliness are not only reserved for the afterlife but also manifest in the present. This reflects the biblical principle that obedience to God's commands leads to a fulfilling and purposeful life (Proverbs 3:1-2). The teachings of Jesus, such as the Sermon on the Mount, illustrate how godly living results in peace, joy, and relational harmony, which are immediate blessings.

This phrase underscores the eternal perspective of Christian faith. The promise of eternal life is a central tenet of Christianity, as seen in passages like John 3:16 and Romans 6:23. The assurance of a future with God provides hope and motivation for believers to pursue godliness. This eternal promise is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which guarantees believers' future resurrection and eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. How does Daniel's response to the official's fear reflect his trust in God, and how can we apply this trust in our own lives?
2. In what ways can the fear of man be a snare in our daily decisions, and how can we overcome it with a fear of God?
3. How does Daniel's example of not conforming to the Babylonian culture challenge us to live distinctively as Christians in today's world?
4. How can we apply the principle of "not conforming to the world" in our daily lives, as seen in Daniel's example?
5. What are some modern examples of "irreverent, silly myths" that Christians should reject, and how can we discern them?
6. Reflect on a time when you focused more on physical or worldly pursuits than on spiritual growth. What changes can you make to align more closely with Paul's teaching?

7. In what ways can Scripture help us in our pursuit of godliness, and how can we ensure we are using it effectively?
8. How can we develop discernment to recognize false teachings, and what role does the Holy Spirit play in this process?
9. In what ways can you encourage others in your community or church to value godliness and spiritual growth over temporary achievements?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

Those whom society designates as role models are not guaranteed to be examples worth following. Our culture celebrates celebrities for the sake of fame and seems to worship money at any cost, regardless of the true price in terms of morals and decency. How then can we demonstrate principles and cherish faith in God when the very opposite is what receives all of the attention?

The church must be willing to speak the truth, identify both the good and the questionable, and try every spirit against the Spirit of God. A simple act of discernment can prevent disaster and may well save a soul.

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Giving to the Community

Printed Text: Deuteronomy 15:4-11; Matthew 25:42-45

Devotional Text: Exodus 20:12-17

Background Text: Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Matthew 25:31-46;

Luke 10:25-37; James 1:27; 2:14-17

Key Text: Deuteronomy 1:11

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: God will Defend the Needy - Psalm 12

Tuesday: Do Not Be Afraid to Give - Luke 12:13-21, 33-34

Wednesday: Treat the Neighbor with Justice - Leviticus 19:11-18

Thursday: The Royal Law of Love - James 2:8-13

Friday: Everyone Is our Neighbor - Luke 10:25-37

Saturday: Compassion for Those in Need - Deuteronomy 15:4-11

Sunday: Seeing Christ in Those Around us - Matthew 25:41-45

KEEP IN MIND:

"May the LORD, the God of your ancestors, increase you a thousand times more and bless you, as he has promised you!" (Deuteronomy 1:11, NRSV).

LESSON AIM:

ANALYZE the parable of the sheep and the goats;

AFFIRM the call to treat those in need as we would treat Christ; and

ASSESS how to care for the poor and outcast in our own lives.

BACKGROUND:

There are four key participants in this parable, all of whom play a role in the Last Judgment: the Son of Man who appears with all His angels (verse 31); the nations, or Gentiles, who are divided into those who have and those who have not joined with God (verse 32); the King (Jesus) (verse 34); and brethren, or those who were once judged by man and now judge those who judged them (verse 40). The King is sitting on the throne, and the Gentiles (nations) are standing before the Judge.

The judgement of the sheep and goats occurs at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation to determine who may enter the kingdom of God. The basis of the judgment is the relationship of men to Christ as demonstrated by their treatment of those in need (Matthew 25:34-36). Those who are saved (sheep) enter the kingdom prepared for them (verse 34), while the lost (goats) go away into eternal punishment (verse 46). In the end, the kingdom consists of the saved.

Lesson Commentary:

God's Provision and Blessing (Deuteronomy 15:4-6, NRSV)

⁴There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the LORD is sure to bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession to occupy,

⁵if only you will obey the LORD your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today.

⁶When the LORD your God has blessed you, as he promised you, you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.

There will be no poor among you. The Mosaic Law included provisions to prevent poverty, such as the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) and the cancellation of debts every seven years (Deuteronomy 15:1-2). These laws were designed to ensure economic balance and social justice. The absence of poverty was contingent upon Israel's obedience to God's commandments (Deuteronomy 15:5). This ideal foreshadows the ultimate fulfillment in the Kingdom of God, where there will be no lack (Revelation 21:4).

Trust in God's promise of provision. The assurance of no poverty is rooted in God's blessing and faithfulness. The community of believers is called to care for one another, ensuring that no one is in need, reflecting God's heart for justice and equity. Obedience to God's commands is linked to experiencing His blessings. Faithful stewardship and adherence to God's laws lead to a flourishing community. As believers, we are to cultivate a spirit of generosity. As God blesses, believers are called to share and

support those in need, embodying the love of Christ. So, hold onto the hope of God's promises. Even when circumstances seem dire, God's word assures us of His ultimate provision and care.

Obedience is a condition for blessing. This principle is timeless and applies to believers today. Obedience is not selective but encompasses all of God's commandments. As believers we are encouraged to embrace the entirety of God's word. Following God's commandments is an act of worship and reverence, reflecting a heart aligned with God's will. How can we view our obedience to God's commandments as an act of worship in our modern context?

We must endeavor to trust in God's promises as He is faithful to provide for His people, just as He promised to bless Israel. As faithful stewards of God, we must embrace the principle of lending rather than borrowing, reflecting wise stewardship and reliance on God's provision. Recognize that God's blessings are not just material but also include spiritual authority and influence over others. We are encouraged to understand that blessings are tied to obedience and relationship with God, as seen in the covenant context of Deuteronomy. Using the blessings and influence God provides allows believers to be a testimony to others, pointing them to God's goodness and sovereignty.

1. How does the promise of "no poor among you" challenge our understanding of community and economic responsibility today?
2. In what ways can we be "careful to follow" God's commandments in our daily lives?
3. In what ways can we apply the principle of being lenders rather than borrowers in our personal financial practices today?

A Compassionate Heart (Deuteronomy 15:7-10, NRSV)

⁷If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor.

⁸You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be.

⁹Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, "The seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

¹⁰Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

God calls us to have a heart of compassion, not hardening our hearts against those in need. This requires a conscious decision to be open and generous. The instruction to not "shut your hand" implies active generosity. We are to be willing to give and support those who are struggling. These verses emphasize the communal aspect of caring for the poor, suggesting that it is a collective responsibility of God's people. By caring for the poor, we reflect God's character of mercy and justice, demonstrating His

love to the world. Our actions towards the poor have eternal significance, as they are seen and rewarded by God.

God commands His people to be generous, reflecting His own nature. This is not optional but a directive to live out His love. The phrase "open your hand" suggests a posture of readiness to give, challenging believers to live with open hearts and hands. By giving freely, believers demonstrate trust in God's provision, knowing He will supply their needs as they care for others. The command to help the needy emphasizes the responsibility of the community to care for its members, fostering unity and support. As followers of Christ, believers are called to reflect His love through acts of kindness and generosity, serving as His hands and feet in the world.

Guarding your heart against selfishness warns against harboring wicked thoughts that prioritize self-interest over obedience to God's commands. Believers are called to examine their hearts and motives, ensuring they align with God's will. God's command to release debts in the seventh year reflects His mercy and provision. Christians are encouraged to mirror this generosity, trusting in God's provision rather than clinging to material wealth. Ignoring the needs of others, especially when motivated by selfishness, is considered sin. Believers are reminded that God sees and judges the intentions of the heart, and they are accountable to Him. Christians are called to build a community that reflects God's love and care for all its members. The possibility of the poor appealing to the LORD serves as a reminder of God's justice. Believers are encouraged to trust in God's provision and justice, rather than relying solely on their own understanding and resources.

Deuteronomy 15:10 instructs believers to give generously without a grudging heart, reflecting God's desire for His people to mirror His own generosity and compassion. God is concerned not just with the act of giving, but with the heart behind it. When we give generously, God will bless the work of our hands, reflecting a principle of divine reciprocity, where God honors those who honor Him through their actions. Generosity is a tangible expression of faith. By trusting God to provide for our needs, we can freely give to others, knowing that He will take care of us.

1. How does the command in Deuteronomy 15:7 challenge our current attitudes towards the poor in our communities?

Command of Benevolence (Deuteronomy 15:11, NRSV)

¹¹Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."

In the context of ancient Israel, poverty was often due to factors like drought, war, or social injustice. The command to "open wide your hand" emphasizes generosity and willingness to help those in need. The open hand symbolizes readiness to give freely and abundantly, contrasting with a closed fist, which would signify selfishness or reluctance. This command is part of the broader Mosaic Law, which included provisions for the poor, such as the Year of Jubilee and the gleaning laws (Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 24:19-21).

The inclusion of "the poor and needy" expands this responsibility beyond immediate family to all within the community, emphasizing social justice and care for the marginalized. This principle is echoed in the New Testament, where believers are encouraged to do good to all, especially to those in the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). The land, being a gift from God, was to be a place where His justice and mercy were evident through the actions of His people.

1. How does the presence of poverty in our communities provide opportunities for us to demonstrate our faith in action?
2. What are some practical steps we can take to ensure that our generosity is consistent and not just occasional?
3. How do the teachings of Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament reinforce the command found in Deuteronomy 15:11?

Giving to the Lord (Matthew 25:42-45, NRSV)

⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

⁴⁴Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?'

⁴⁵Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

Compare verse 34 with verse 41. He will say to those on the left, which are referred to as goats, "depart from me." This command to the group that first rejected Him has a ring of finality to it. When he came near to them, they chased Him away. Now He will chase them away. Those who refuse to participate in His nature, who will not become related to Him, will hear "depart from me."

Those who the King pronounces as blessed are defined by their actions of outreach. Some were so caught up with their own survival that they did not give to others. But we place ourselves under divine judgment when we excuse ourselves from feeding the hungry because we claim not to have enough for ourselves. When we hoard resources and call it being thrifty while others suffer, we are not showing the character of Jesus.

What distinguishes people who have the nature of Jesus from the world is their propensity to care for others. The "sheep" and the "goats" are separated by their attitude for caring. No doubt the goats would have cared for those around them if it was clear that those in need were indeed Christ clothed as the beggar. But the difference is this: those who had Jesus' nature were naturally drawn to caring for others, even without knowing it was Jesus whom they were serving. The key here is that we must treat everyone in need as we would treat the Lord. What will separate us from those who are perishing is not how much we love the lovely but how we treat the undesirable.

This is a warning to us as we walk in the Lord. Jesus comes to us in ways that we do not readily recognize Him. We are called to care for the least of these. Jesus is very clear that He represents them and that our treatment of them reflects our treatment of

Him. Our giving and our caring must grow out of the fact that we are His sheep. His sheep will reflect the nature of the caring Jesus. He shows in this parable that service to the poor is service to Him. To reach out is to be blessed and have the honor of entering Christ's rest; but to be selfish and create discord is to be put on His left and to go away into eternal punishment (verses 45-46).

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. Have you ever been approached by someone in the street asking for food and ignored the request? Why did you decide to give or not give them food or money?
2. For Thanksgiving or Christmas, have you ever volunteered to serve food or spend time with people who do not have a home or family? Have you ever volunteered at any time when there was no holiday?
3. Have you ever visited anyone you knew was in prison or in the hospital? Did you go to see them because you felt obligated or because you really cared about them?
4. How does the command in Deuteronomy 15:11 challenge our modern understanding of wealth and poverty?
5. In what ways can we, as individuals and as a church community, "open wide our hand" to the poor and needy today?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

There are people in our communities who need our help, but we don't see them because we view them as part of the landscape. We wish they would go away, but Jesus taught us that "Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Matthew 25:45). The way we treat those in need is how we treat our Father in heaven. If we have no regard for others, we have no regard for our Father in heaven.

Christ did not say, "Let me check your references, your resume, and your ability to pay me back." He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Jesus opens His heart for us to pour in all our pain and despair; and He promises us joy, peace, and relief. We make and set conditions, but God pardons us when we fail to glorify Him. If we really trusted in God, we would not set conditions before we care for others. God loves and takes care of us unconditionally and blesses us continually, God expects us to show His love and care to the poor, outcasts, widows, orphans, the incarcerated, the sick, and the least of these in our midst.

Join Our ZOOM Sunday School Classes - 22 March 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

Pass Code: 669872

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84894230612?pwd=Zk1ESitzbGZwTlJyV21UZXY5aTVPZz09>

Welcoming Others in Christ
Printed Text: Acts 10:9-15, 30-35; Galatians 3:28-29
Devotional Text: Colossians 3:1-11
Background Text: Ruth 1:1-18; John 4:5-10; Acts 10:1-11:18
Key Text: Galatians 3:28

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: Souls Bound Together - 1 Samuel 18:1-5
Tuesday: Abide in God's Love - 1 John 4:7-16
Wednesday: Loving God and Each other - 1 John 4:17-21
Thursday: All peoples will worship God - Isaiah 56:3-8
Friday: Living Together in unity - Psalms 133-134
Saturday: Children of God Through Faith - Galatians 3:25-29
Sunday: God Accepts us All - Acts 10:9-15, 30-35

KEEP IN MIND:

“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28, NRSV).

LESSON AIM:

UNDERSTAND how God prepared Peter to share the Gospel with Cornelius, a Gentile; **VALUE** leadership of Peter in the early church and his relationship with Christ, and **DECIDE** to adopt Peter’s transformed attitude when it comes to sharing the Gospel with others.

BACKGROUND:

Today’s passage is an excerpt from a longer story that extends from Acts 10:1 to 11:18. The length of this episode, about 6.2 percent of the book of Acts, reflects its significance as a major turning point in spiritual—even world—history.

Just before His ascension, Jesus declared that the apostles would be His witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The apostles didn’t seem to comprehend this to mean extension of the gospel to Gentiles, given the surprise expressed in Acts 10:45; 11:18. As observant Jews, the apostles had been brought up to view Gentiles as unclean pagans, who might endanger the apostles’ own religious and moral purity.

God used Cornelius to minister to Peter, one of Jesus' disciples. Peter was surrounded by the cultural divisions between the Jews and Gentiles. Although he had heard Jesus preach salvation to all nations, Peter struggled to think outside the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. The contrast between Jew and Gentile was great and supported by many barriers, culture, language, prejudicial hatred, and geography.

Through a vision and instructions to join Cornelius's entourage, the Lord helps Peter understand that His gift of salvation is available to the Jews, the Greeks, and all who

believe. From this revelation, Peter vows never again to call any man common, unclean, or unworthy of the Gospel.

Lesson Commentary:

God's Revelation to a Praying Heart (Acts 10:9-15, NRSV)

⁹About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.

¹⁰He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

¹¹He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners.

¹²In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air.

¹³Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat."

¹⁴But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean."

¹⁵The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane."

The next day as the men from Caesarea approached Joppa (at about noon, or "the sixth hour"), Peter went to the rooftop of Simon's house to pray. Noon was not one of the official times for prayer among the Jews, yet devout Jews (based on Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10) regularly prayed at noon.

Peter grew hungry, and while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. In the trance, Peter saw what looked like a sheet lowered from heaven. The sheet contained three categories of living creatures: animals, creatures that moved along the ground, and birds. These categories mirror the three divisions of animal life given in Genesis 6:20. Peter was offended by the presence of unclean animals among the clean ones. His offense was aggravated when he was commanded to "kill, and eat" with no distinction made between clean and unclean animals. Even though the command came from the Lord, Peter was determined not to defile himself by violating basic dietary restrictions of Leviticus 11.

The voice told Peter, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (v. 15, NIV). Peter would soon learn that the vision had a much wider application regarding Jewish-Gentile unity in the body of Christ. Because this message was repeated three times, it made a deep impression on Peter.

Food was one of the factors that adversely affected relationships between the Jews and the Gentiles. Eating was the center of social life, but Jews felt they risked defilement by eating at the home of a Gentile. A Jew could not be certain that the food being served in a Gentile home was clean and that it had been prepared according to the requirements of the Law. Therefore, Jews avoided this type of fellowship and dealings with Gentiles. Three times Peter was told to eat, and three times he refused, even though he had been assured that God had cleansed the animals.

1. Peter was told three times to eat, yet he refused. Why do you think Peter repeatedly refused?
2. Clearly, God uses clean and unclean food to make Peter aware of His plan for the inclusion of the Gentiles into the body of Christ. What do you think are some of the barriers to inclusion that exist in today's world? Are dietary restrictions still an issue? Are there others?
3. When have you ever felt separated from people because of cultural or racial differences?

Cornelius' Story (Acts 10:30-35, NRSV)

³⁰Cornelius replied, "Four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me.

³¹He said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

³²Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.'

³³Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say."

³⁴Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality,

³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

It is now Cornelius's turn to explain why he has called for Peter. He describes the visit he received from the angel. Earlier in the chapter, Cornelius is described as being a "devout man" who "feared God" (verses 1-2). The fact that he was fasting and praying when the Lord sent him the message is proof of this. His generosity to the poor has been noticed by God as well. Rather than explaining God's acceptance of Gentiles directly, the angel directs him to find Peter. In his obedience, Cornelius is used by God to help orchestrate His will for his family and Peter. God intends to minister to both parties in this experience. Cornelius now explains that they have been waiting to speak to them through Peter.

At this point, it all becomes clear to Peter what God was doing and what he was to preach to Cornelius' people. Gentile uncleanness would no longer be a barrier to fellowship between Gentile and Jewish believers. God does not view Gentiles as unclean nor withhold fellowship from Gentiles on account of their racial and religious heritage, and neither should the Jewish people. They only need fear God and do what is right. Again, consider the impact of hearing Peter speak these words to the Gentile audience in Cornelius' home.

Peter acknowledges that his audience has most likely heard of Jesus' ministry and the Good News preached to the Jewish people. However, he now preaches the Gospel message to Gentile believers who have been informed of their full acceptance by God. They now know that their Christian faith and identity is considered the same as Jewish believers.

Peter declares that God shows no partiality but accepts all people who revere Him and do what is right (w. 34-35). The same Peter who considered non-Jews, and

especially Greeks, as unclean now stands preaching the Gospel to a Greek congregation. He confesses the truth that God does not play cultural favorites, but that He favors people from any nation who reverence Him in righteousness.

Peter preaches the Good News of Christ to the people gathered with Cornelius (w. 36-39). He tells them of the Gospel, John's water baptism, Jesus' anointing of the Holy Spirit and of the good works, healings, and crucifixion which would follow.

1. How does the account of Cornelius challenge our understanding of who can be accepted by God?
2. In what ways can we demonstrate the fear of the Lord in our daily lives?
3. How does Acts 10:35 encourage us to view people from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds?

(Galatians 3:28-29, NRSV)

²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Paul contended that before faith came, the law was like a "tutor" (custodian or guardian) over the Jewish people, who were as children in need of moral supervision and discipline. Now that faith had come, the people were no longer charges of the law but had matured to the point when they were no longer in need of a custodian. They were now children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and full heirs of the promise, not by birth, but by faith expressed through baptism. Baptism into Christ clothed the Gentile with Christ and afforded him or her the status of Abraham's offspring (3:27). Baptism, unlike circumcision, was a sign of inclusion into God's covenant family for women, as well as men. Social, economic, racial, and gender discrimination was erased as a part of acceptance into God's family. Native born versus non-native born was no longer an issue. They were all one in Christ Jesus, and if they were in Christ, they were Abraham's offspring and heirs to the promise.

Our union and identification with Christ, symbolized in our baptism, makes possible the blended family of God where we are one in Christ Jesus. It is true that our differences remain. Our racial identities will continue to distinguish us. We will continue to disagree on some issues. But in Christ, the differences that were formerly occasions for division lose their power to divide us. Racial barriers have no place in God's blended family, for there is neither Jew nor Greek. Classism has no place in God's blended family, for there is neither bond nor free. Sexism and chauvinism have no place in God's blended family, for there is neither male nor female. Denominationalism has no place in God's blended family because if we are in Christ, then we are all "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (v. 29).

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. People care a lot about whether they are truly loved and accepted by others. It is innately human to seek out fellowship with a community. How do you think Gentile believers thought of themselves after hearing Peter speak to them?
2. How do you think Peter considered Gentile believers before this experience? How might his views have changed afterward?
3. What lesson do you learn from Cornelius' life?
4. What would have been the consequences if Peter and Cornelius had not obeyed God? What is the consequence when we do not obey God?
5. In what ways do you need to grow in relating to people of other cultures and races?
6. In what ways are our social, economic, racial, and gender differences significant to the church? In what ways are they not?
7. The pedagogue functioned as a custodian of minor children until they came of age. What does it mean to no longer be under a "schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24-25)?
8. What does Paul mean when he said, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (v. 28)?
9. Compare and contrast what it means to be naturally born or adopted into the family of God.

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY

Today, despite having freely received the acceptance and love of God through Jesus Christ, it is easy for us to slip into thinking that we have somehow done (or can continue doing) things that warrant God's approval. This quickly results in judging others based on how well they live up to a human standard of righteousness. However, when we remember that we are only accepted by God's grace through Jesus Christ, we can extend grace, love, and acceptance to those around us (Romans 5:15-17).

Most Christians would agree that Acts 10 marks the outreach of the Gospel to the Gentiles and the start of the modern missionary movement. While we would agree, most of us still view evangelism and missions as the work of the preacher and the missionary. We are content to attend church services, fellowship with other Christians, and go about our business. None of us, knowing that the elevator was broken, would stand idly by and allow a stranger to enter it. Yet we are often silent in the face of the unsaved. Our refusal to witness is a refusal to heed the call of the Great Commission. Christ instructed us to go and preach to every creature because whoever believes will be saved (Mark 16:15-16).

Refusal to heed the Great Commission is a dangerous position for any Christian to take. The Great Commission is not a suggestion; it is a direct order. God loved us enough to send Jesus to save us. The Christian is obligated to love God enough to obey and to assist in the salvation of others.

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 29 March 2026, 09:00 AM EST
Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612
Pass Code: 669872

Waiting for God's Peace
Printed Text: Isaiah 2:2-4; Acts 17:26-28
Devotional Text: Revelation 5:8-14
Background Text: Isaiah 11:6-10; John 18:28-38;
Ephesians 4:4-6, 13-19
Key Text: Isaiah 2:3

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: A Kingdom Not Of This World - John 18:28-38
Tuesday: The Lord's Peace - Numbers 6:22-26
Wednesday: God Is Exalted Among the Nations - Psalm 46
Thursday: God Guides the Destiny of Nations - Amos 9:7-12
Friday: Glory and Honor of the Nations - Revelation 21:21-27
Saturday: The Nations Shall Gather to God - Isaiah 2:1-5
Sunday: All Peoples Are Kin - Acts 17:22-28

KEEP IN MIND:

"Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:3 NRSV).

LESSON AIM:

EXPLAIN how God's peace is already present in the world but not yet fully manifest until Jesus returns.

SUMMERIZE the main points of Isaiah's prophesy; and

DEVELOP a plan to foster peace where unresolved conflicts exist.

BACKGROUND:

The world is not now as it was when God created it. The Fall of man, and God's resultant curse on the earth and its environment, toppled it from its spiritual axis. Fallen man is now trapped in an evil world system that is hostile to God. Ours is truly a world turned upside down.

The universe, however, will not remain that way forever. Ultimately, the Lord of glory will return (Rev. 19:11-21), take back the earth (Rev. 5), and establish His sovereign rule over all of it (Ps. 2:6-8). The curse will be lifted, and the earth will be restored to something of its original character. Finally, after the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth, the whole universe will be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-4).

That does not mean God is standing idly by until then. Throughout redemptive history He has sent His messengers to proclaim the light of His truth to the lost, sin-darkened world. Such people upset the system and disturb the comfort of sinners, thus

incurring their wrath. They turn things right side up from God's perspective, but upside down from the world's perspective.

LESSON COMMENTARY:

The Future House of God (Isaiah 2:2-4, NRSV)

²In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.

³Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Scriptures, such as Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17, use the term "*In the last days, or the days to come*" to describe a time of divine intervention and fulfillment of prophecy. This phrase refers to a future period often associated with the Messianic age or the end times. The "house of the LORD" signifies the temple, a central place of worship and God's dwelling among His people. In ancient Near Eastern culture, mountains were seen as sacred and powerful. The prophecy suggests that God's kingdom, represented by the temple mount, will be exalted above all other religious and political systems.

God's kingdom is established above all earthly powers, reminding us of His ultimate authority and sovereignty. The prophecy highlights the inclusion of all nations, encouraging us to embrace diversity within the body of Christ and participate in global missions. The exaltation of the mountain signifies the importance of worship and seeking God's presence, urging us to prioritize our spiritual lives. We have hope in God's promises, the vision of the last days provides hope and assurance that God's promises will be fulfilled, motivating us to live with an eternal perspective. As nations stream to God's house, we are reminded of the unity we have in Christ, transcending cultural and national boundaries.

Isaiah 2:3 envisions a time when all nations will seek the Lord. This calls us to participate in God's mission by sharing the gospel with all peoples. The passage emphasizes the importance of God's law and word. As believers, we should prioritize studying and living according to Scripture. Learning God's ways is not just for knowledge but for transformation. We are called to walk in His paths, reflecting His character in our daily lives. Just as Jerusalem was the center of worship, the church today is called to be a beacon of truth and a place where God's word is taught and lived out. Isaiah 2:3 points to a future where God's peace and justice reign. This hope should inspire us to live faithfully and work towards God's kingdom on earth.

God is the Ultimate Judge. Trust in God's sovereignty and justice, knowing that He will ultimately bring peace and settle disputes. As we embrace the call to be peacemakers in our own lives, we find ourselves turning away from conflict and towards

reconciliation. We must hold onto the hope of a future where God's peace reigns, motivating us to work towards peace in our communities today.

In the context of Isaiah, this prophecy points to a future time of peace and divine justice. The imagery of God judging and arbitrating suggests a time when disputes will be settled by divine wisdom rather than human conflict. This reflects the messianic hope found throughout the Old Testament, where the coming of the Messiah would bring about a reign of peace and justice. The concept of God as judge is also seen in Psalm 96:10 and Joel 3:12, where God is depicted as ruling with fairness and equity.

Paul leaves us with this imagery symbolizing a transformation from war to peace, where instruments of violence are repurposed for agriculture and productivity. The transformation of swords and spears into tools for farming indicates a shift from destruction to creation, from conflict to cultivation.

1. How does the imagery of the mountain being exalted above the hills challenge our understanding of God's authority in our lives?
2. In what ways can we actively participate in God's inclusive plan for all nations as described in Isaiah 2:2?
3. In what ways can we, as individuals and as a church, ensure that God's word is central in our lives and communities?
4. What are some practical steps we can take to be peacemakers, as encouraged in Matthew 5:9, in our daily interactions?

Divine Origin of nations (Acts 17:26-28, NRSV)

²⁶From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live,

²⁷so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us.

²⁸For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

All people, regardless of race or ethnicity, share a common ancestry. This concept is foundational to the understanding of human equality and dignity, as all are made in the image of God. The unity of humanity is a recurring theme in Scripture, seen in the genealogies of Genesis and the universal offer of salvation through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:12-19).

The fall of man introduced a separation from God, but throughout Scripture, God consistently calls His people to return to Him. This seeking is not merely a passive acknowledgment but an active pursuit, as seen in Deuteronomy 4:29, where it is stated that if you seek the Lord with all your heart and soul, you will find Him. The intention of God is that all nations and peoples would come to know Him, as reflected in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

God has made Himself known through His creation (Romans 1:20) and through His Word. The use of "perhaps" indicates human free will and the possibility of rejection, yet it also underscores God's grace in making Himself accessible. This reaching out is an act of faith, as seen in Hebrews 11:6, which states that God rewards those who

earnestly seek Him. Finding God is the culmination of the seeking and reaching out process. This is not merely an intellectual discovery but a relational encounter with the living God. Jeremiah 29:13 promises that those who seek God with all their heart will find Him. The assurance of finding God is rooted in His faithfulness and desire for relationship with His creation. This finding is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Through Christ, believers have direct access to God, as emphasized in Ephesians 2:18.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. How does the vision of the last days in Isaiah 2:2 inspire hope and influence our daily decisions and priorities?
2. What practical steps can we take to ensure that worship remains central in our personal and communal lives?
3. How can the unity of nations streaming to God's house inform our approach to fostering unity within the church today?
4. How does the vision of "many peoples" coming to the mountain of the Lord challenge our current understanding of God's mission for the church?
5. How can the church today serve as a "Zion" or "Jerusalem," a place where God's word goes forth to the nations?
6. Considering the hope for a future where all nations seek the Lord, how can this vision influence our prayers and actions in the present?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

As believers, we must understand our identity in Christ. As believers, we must recognize that our true identity is found in being God's offspring. This understanding should shape how we view ourselves and others. Like Paul, we should be aware of the culture around us and find ways to connect it to the truth of the Gospel, using familiar concepts to introduce biblical truths. Acknowledge that our very existence—our life, movement, and being—is dependent on God. This should lead us to a posture of humility and gratitude. God's presence is not confined to temples or specific locations. He is near to all who seek Him, as Paul explains to the Athenians. Understanding that we live and move in God should inspire us to live purposefully, seeking to glorify Him in all aspects of our lives.

NEXT WEEKS LESSON: 5 April

Resurrection: The Future Hope

Printed Text: 1 Corinthians 15:13-20, 51-58

Devotional Text: Luke 24:1-12

**Background Text: Luke 24:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:3-20, 50-58;
Revelation 22:1-5**

Sources:

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