

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2026

May 3, 2026

May 3 Christian Expectation of Grace
Printed Text: Jonah 3:1-5; 4:6-11
Devotional Text: Revelation 5:1-5
Background Text: Jonah 1-4; Galatians 3:1-13
Key Text: Jonah 4:10-11

May 10, 2026

Work as Christian Duty
Printed Text: Genesis 2:15; Exodus 20:9, John 5:17; 9:4; Acts 20:33-35;
2 Thessalonians 3:6-12
Devotional Text: Ecclesiastes 9:4-10
Background Text: Genesis 2:15-25; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12
Key Text: Acts 20:35

May 17, 2026

Christian Manner of Justice
Printed Text: Deuteronomy 24:14-21; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Timothy 6:17-19
Devotional Text: Luke 3:7-14
Background Text: Exodus 1:8-14; Amos 5:6-15; Zechariah 8:16-17;
1 Timothy 6:17-19
Key Text: Deuteronomy 24:19

May 24, 2026

Christian Rhythms of Life
Printed Text: Mark 2:18-28
Devotional Text: Ecclesiastes 2:20-25
Background Text: Jeremiah 31:12-13; Mark 2:18-28; 6:30-32; Jonah 2:1-11
Key Text: Mark 2:27-28

May 31, 2026

Living in Christian Community
Printed Text: Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 10:22-25
Devotional Text: Hebrews 1:1-6
Background Text: Nehemiah 8:1-12; Psalm 122:1-9; Hebrews 10:19-25
Key Text: Hebrews 10:23

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 3 May 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

Pass Code: 669872

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Christian Expectation of Grace

Printed Text: Jonah 3:1-5; 4:6-11

Devotional Text: Revelation 5:1-5

Background Text: Jonah 1-4; Galatians 3:1-13

Key Text: Jonah 4:10-11

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: Seek the Welfare of the City - Jeremiah 29:3-7

Tuesday: God's Own People - 1 Peter 2:4-12

Wednesday: Pray for Those in Authority - 1 Timothy 2:1-8

Thursday: 30 God Is Sovereign Over the Nations - Psalm 33:10-22

Friday: Our Citizenship is in Heaven - Philippians 3: 17-21

Saturday: A Season of National Repentance – Jonah 3:1-5

Sunday: God's Compassion for All - Jonah 4:6-11

KEEP IN MIND:

“Then the LORD said, “You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?” (Jonah 4:10-11, NRSV)

LESSON AIM:

EXPLORE how repentance is related to God’s love faith;

SENSE the joy that comes when we are forgiven a wrong; and

SHARE examples of times when wholeness and peace are the results of God’s intervening love.

BACKGROUND:

Jonah is the only prophet recorded to have traveled on the Mediterranean Sea. Jonah is the only prophet recorded to have outright refused to undertake a mission from God. Other prophets revealed doubt from time to time (example: 1 Kings 19:3, 14), but Jonah stands alone in his flagrant rebellion.

When Nicodemus attempted to defend Jesus during a discussion, he was rebuked with the observation that “a prophet does not come out of Galilee.” (John 7:52, NIV). This overlooked the fact that Jonah was from Gath Hopher (2 Kings 14:25), which was less than three miles northwest of Nazareth.

The book of Jonah, being primarily a narrative about the man, records just one predictive prophecy—a prophecy of only five words in Hebrew (Jonah 3:4). The book of Jonah is the only prophetic book with miracles by God that involved the prophet personally—from the storm and the fish to the worm and the wind.

The traditional view of authorship for the book of Jonah is that Jonah himself wrote it. As he came to the end of it, he must have been greatly embarrassed about the prejudice and anger he had displayed so blatantly. Our lesson begins just after the point where God saw the repentance of the Ninevites and decided not to destroy the city.

Jonah disobeyed God, attempted to run away from His service, and finally was ready to die rather than submit to God’s will. Despite all this, when Jonah’s situation appeared hopeless, God prepared a great fish to rescue him.

Jonah was saved from death by grace. God not only saved his life, but He also restored him to his position as prophet. Jonah failed God, but God did not give up on Jonah. God had a job that He wanted Jonah to do, and his failure did not disqualify him for the mission.

God’s ultimate purpose was to rid Nineveh of evil. Jonah was sent to warn the people of Nineveh of their impending destruction. God would end the evil of Nineveh through an act of divine judgment or, if they repented, through divine mercy.

LESSON COMMENTARY:

Jonah’s Repentance (Jonah 3:1-5)

¹The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying,

²“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.”

³So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across.

⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

After his experience on the boat and in the belly of the great fish, Jonah was finally ready to submit to God’s will. And God gave the reluctant prophet a second chance. Once again God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh and announce His judgment against the city. This time Jonah readily obeyed God and made the 500-mile journey to Nineveh. When the prophet arrived in the city, he immediately began to proclaim the message of God’s judgment to the inhabitants.

The city of Nineveh itself was about eight miles in circumference. A pace straight through the city would not have taken three days, even starting outside the city itself, but Jonah was expected to spend three days in the city. Jonah walked through the city shouting out God's message, "In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed." The people of Nineveh heard Jonah's words, believed his report, and repented of their sins.

1. How does Jonah's experience of receiving God's word a second time encourage you in your own walk with God?
2. How does Jonah's initial reluctance to go to Nineveh reflect our own hesitations in following God's commands, and how can we overcome them?
3. What does Jonah's change of heart in Jonah 3:3 teach us about repentance and second chances in our own lives?

Jonah's Gourd (Jonah 4:6-8)

⁶The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush.

⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered.

⁸When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

Jonah, fuming in anger, walks outside the city. As he sits in his makeshift shelter, God causes a large, leafy plant to provide shade for Jonah. At this act of kindness, Jonah is thankful to God. The plant provides shade to ease his discomfort. Then God causes the leafy plant to dry up and wither.

Jonah is outraged. He expresses the same kind of anger and frustration as he did when he realized the grace the people of Nineveh experienced. God spared the people of Nineveh, but He wouldn't spare this pane. Jonah actually wants to die after he experiences the heat without the plant's shade.

1. How does Jonah's reaction to the plant reveal his heart attitude, and what can we learn from it about our own responses to God's provisions?
2. In what ways do we, like Jonah, sometimes prioritize our comfort over compassion for others, and how can we realign our priorities to reflect God's heart?

Jonah's Rebuke (Jonah 4:9-11)

⁹But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die."

¹⁰Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night."

¹¹And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

God drives the point home with Jonah. First, He questions Jonah's right to be angry. He provokes Jonah to express emotions over a small thing such as having shade. Jonah retorts that he is right to be angry about this plant. After all, it provided him with shade and allowed him to be comfortable in the heat.

Next, the Lord rebukes Jonah. Jonah feels sorry about the plant but he did nothing to cause it to grow. This plant had a short life span, and Jonah is upset about it. God allows Jonah to see a large picture when he declares that there are 120,000 Nineveh who don't know their left from their right. God wants to show mercy to His creation. He has compassion, and His love ranges wide over humanity.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. In what ways does Jonah's anger mirror the attitudes we might have towards God's mercy towards others, and how can we align our hearts with God's compassion?
 2. In what ways does God's compassion for Nineveh challenge our attitudes towards those we might consider enemies or undeserving?
 3. What are some practical steps we can take to overcome personal prejudices and align our attitudes with God's inclusive love?
 4. What are some temporary comforts in our lives that might distract us from focusing on eternal matters, and how can we shift our focus?
 5. How can we apply the principle of stewardship seen in God's concern for Nineveh's cattle to our daily lives and interactions with the environment?
3. How does the account of the plant in Jonah 4:9 illustrate the transient nature of earthly comforts, and what steps can we take to focus on eternal values?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

Opportunities to confront wrong beliefs, in ourselves and in others, present themselves to us daily. Jonah's callous heart prevented him from caring for others. Like Jonah, we may need a fresh love for God's truth to genuinely care for others too. When offended, we can challenge others in love. God's loving challenge is often in the form of blunt questions. For instance, God challenged Jonah to repent by providing for him while pressing him to examine his motives.

Many people find it hard to stop doing something they know is wrong. Whether they are addicted or just stubborn, some people continue to persist in heading in the wrong direction. God's call to repentance is a call to head in the right direction. It is not intended to stop all enjoyment and fun, but to help people experience God's love. This can only happen when we turn from our evil ways.

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 10 May 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

Pass Code: 669872

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Work as Christian Duty

**Printed Text: Genesis 2:15; Exodus 20:9, John 5:17; 9:4; Acts 20:33-35;
2 Thessalonians 3:6-12**

Devotional Text: Ecclesiastes 9:4-10

Background Text: Genesis 2:15-25; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

Key Text: Acts 20:35

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: God Ordains Productive Work - Genesis 2:4-10, 15

Tuesday: Commit Your work to the Lord - Proverbs 16:1-3, 8-9

Wednesday: Caring for the Work of God's Hands - Psalm 8

Thursday: The Sabbath Is a Perpetual Covenant - Exodus 31:12-17

Friday: Working on The Sabbath - John 5:8-11, 16-17

Saturday: Supporting Oneself and Others - Acts 20:31-35

Sunday: Work Quietly and Diligently - 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

KEEP IN MIND:

"In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35, NRSV)

LESSON AIM:

LIVE a disciplined life reflecting Christian maturity and obedience to God's commands.

AVOID idleness which can lead to disorder and meddling in others' affairs and promote disharmony.

WORK as an act of worship with integrity and diligence, reflecting God's character.

BACKGROUND:

Paul penned his second letter to the church in Thessalonica about six months after the first letter in A.D. 51. In addition to their trials and persecutions, they were "shaken in mind" and "troubled" by deceivers who forged a letter, supposedly written by Paul, making the young Christians believe they were already experiencing the great tribulation and that "the day of Christ is at hand [has already come]" (2 Thessalonians

2:1-2). They began to believe that they did not have anything to worry about since their conversion meant they were going to heaven. They stopped working, sat around, minded other people's business, and depended on the church for support. The believers even stopped seeking God and studying the Word.

Paul was very concerned about clearing up all the misconceptions about the Second Coming. The Thessalonians misinterpreted Paul's first letter to mean Christ's return would be at any moment (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11). In addition, the continued persecution of the church made them believe this must be the "day of the Lord." Now while waiting for the return of the Lord, they had become idle and disorderly.

This second letter was to instruct the Thessalonians that "our gathering together unto [Christ]" would precede the day of the Lord—Christ's second coming (2 Thessalonians 2:1). Meanwhile, they had to continue working and growing spiritually in spite of the persecution.

LESSON COMMENTARY:

Stewardship and Responsibility (Genesis 2:15, NRSV)

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

God entrusts us with His creation, calling us to be responsible stewards of the environment and resources He provides. Our daily tasks and vocations are opportunities to serve God and reflect His character, turning work into an act of worship. Just as God placed Adam in the Garden, He places us in specific contexts and roles for His purposes, inviting us to seek His guidance in fulfilling our roles. We are invited to partner with God in His creative and redemptive work, aligning our efforts with His will and purposes. The call to "keep" the garden extends to protecting and nurturing our spiritual lives, relationships, and communities.

1. How does understanding the role of stewardship in Genesis 2:15 influence your view of environmental responsibility today?

The Divine Pattern of Work and Rest (Exodus 20:9, NRSV)

⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

God established a rhythm of work and rest from the beginning of creation where God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. This pattern is not only a command but a gift, allowing us to reflect God's order in our lives. Work is not a curse but a calling. It is an opportunity to serve God and others, fulfilling our purpose and contributing to the common good. While work is important, rest is equally vital. Observing a day of rest helps us to recharge physically, mentally, and spiritually, and to refocus on our relationship with God. Our daily labor can be an act of worship when done with the right heart and attitude. By working diligently and ethically, we honor God and reflect His character.

Observing a day of rest requires faith that God will provide for our needs. It is a reminder that our ultimate security and provision come from Him, not our efforts alone. This commandment highlights the dignity of work and the divine order established by God. It also foreshadows the ultimate rest found in Christ, who invites believers to find rest in Him (Matthew 11:28-30).

1. How can the principle of Sabbath rest be applied in today's fast-paced world, and what challenges might you face in doing so?

Sabbath and Rest in Christ (John 5:17; 9:4, NRSV)

^{5:17}But Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working."

^{9:4}We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

Jesus emphasizes that God's work is continuous, even on the Sabbath. This challenges us to recognize that God's care and provision are constant and not limited by human constraints. By equating His work with the Father's, Jesus asserts His divine authority. As believers, we are called to trust in Jesus' sovereignty and His power to act beyond human limitations. The Sabbath is a shadow of the rest we find in Christ.

Christians are encouraged to find their ultimate rest and peace in Jesus, rather than in legalistic observance. Jesus' response to the Jewish leaders teaches us to prioritize compassion and the spirit of the law over rigid adherence to rules. We should seek to understand the heart of God's commands. Just as God is always at work, believers are encouraged to continually grow in their faith and service, reflecting God's ongoing work in the world.

Jesus emphasizes the limited time available to accomplish God's work. As believers are called to recognize the urgency of their mission in the world. Jesus invites His followers to join Him in His work. Christians are co-laborers with Christ. Understanding the "day" as a metaphor for the present opportunity to serve God, believers must discern the times and act accordingly. The coming "night" serves as a reminder of the finite nature of earthly life and the importance of focusing on eternal matters. Just as Jesus healed the blind man, believers are called to manifest God's works through acts of compassion and service.

1. What are some practical ways we can find rest in Christ amidst our busy lives?
2. How can the concept of working while it is "day" shape your perspective on evangelism and discipleship?

Guarding Against Materialism (Acts 20:33-35, NRSV)

³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing.

³⁴You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions.

³⁵In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Paul's statement highlights the importance of integrity and transparency in ministry. Leaders should serve without seeking personal gain. Paul's lack of covetousness reflects a heart content with God's provision. Believers are encouraged to trust in God's sufficiency rather than seeking material wealth. Paul's example serves as a model for Christians to follow, demonstrating a life focused on serving others rather than accumulating wealth. The verse serves as a reminder to guard against the temptation of materialism, which can distract from spiritual priorities.

Paul exemplifies the value of hard work and self-sufficiency, showing that ministry and manual labor can coexist. By providing for his own needs, Paul demonstrates a selfless approach to ministry, prioritizing the well-being of others. Paul's actions reinforce the importance of integrity and transparency in leadership, avoiding any appearance of exploiting the church. Believers are encouraged to serve others, using their skills and resources to support the community and the work of the Gospel. While Paul worked with his hands, he ultimately relied on God's provision and strength, a reminder for believers to trust in God's faithfulness.

Giving is not just a duty but a source of blessing. It aligns us with the heart of Christ, who gave Himself for us. Paul emphasizes the importance of diligent labor, not for personal gain, but to support those in need. This reflects a Christ-like attitude of service. Although not directly quoted in the Gospels, this teaching of Jesus is preserved through Paul's message, reminding us of the oral tradition and the importance of remembering and living out Christ's teachings. Our work and resources should be directed towards uplifting those who are weak, whether in faith, health, or circumstances, demonstrating the love of Christ. The Christian life is communal, and our actions should reflect a commitment to the well-being of others, fostering a supportive and loving community.

1. How does Paul's example of working with his hands challenge our modern understanding of ministry and work?
2. In what ways can you practically apply the principle "It is more blessed to give than to receive" in your daily life?

Paul's Warning Against Idleness (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12, NRSV)

⁶Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us.

⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were

with you,

⁸and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you.

⁹This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate.

¹⁰For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat.

¹¹For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work.

¹²Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

Some of the believers in Thessalonica had decided that since Christ was coming back, there was no need to work or plan for the future. They sat back and waited for the Lord to appear. It is easy to take our salvation for granted. Notice what another of God's servants wrote: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). Idleness can lead to sin. The believers were causing problems in the Thessalonian church as busybodies and financial burdens.

Paul warned the church not to support these idle, meddling, and lazy persons. He sets forth himself as an example to follow. Paul, by trade, was a tentmaker before he entered the ministry. While traveling on his missionary journeys, he made tents to support himself (Acts 18:3). He did not want to be financially dependent on those he ministered to. Paul put forth the premise, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). If persons are capable of working, they should not rely on the generosity of others to support them. This puts an unjust burden on the church.

Today, there are some people in the church who are constantly seeking financial support instead of working. They come month after month with stories why they need temporary help. Yet they have not gone job hunting in months or years. Moreover, some folks pry into everybody else's business but cannot take care of their own. Paul told us a reasonable way to handle them: We have to stop associating with them and cut off their resources. Only then will they be forced to take proactive steps in being responsible, seeking employment, and minding their own business. As Christians, we have to warn them of the error of their ways in hopes that they will change. The purpose is for them to be restored back into the fellowship. God has given us all gifts and talents we can use to do something useful.

Near the end of today's passage Paul encouraged the faithful believers, "Be not weary in well doing" (v. 13). We have to stay committed in the face of adverse circumstances. There may be those among the believers who have stopped following the commands of God, but we must remain faithful. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). The Lord will bestow upon us great rewards at His second coming.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. In what ways can we ensure that we are not a burden to others in our community, both in the church and in society?
2. In what ways can the church support individuals who are struggling with finding work, while still upholding the principle that those unwilling to work should not eat?
3. How does Paul's example of working hard relate to our modern understanding of work and ministry balance?
4. What are some practical steps we can take to ensure that our work is done as unto the Lord, as encouraged in Colossians 3:23?
5. How does the authority of Jesus Christ influence the way we approach church discipline today?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

Every day we go to our jobs as computer technicians, dishwashers, doctors, nurses, electricians, administrators, etc. However, if we are honest with ourselves, it is very easy to get lazy and stop giving 100 percent to our employers. Our lunches are extended beyond the allotted time. We play games and send personal e-mail messages on the computer. We engage in hours of gossip. Slacking off on the job or not giving all of our time and efforts is seen by some as okay. Yet, we want a full day's pay on our paycheck for each day we clocked in. We can become frustrated over being faithful to our responsibilities while everyone else is getting away with goofing off or making up their own schedules.

God does not desire for us to act like the world. We have to set an example for others, just as Paul did for the Thessalonians. We have to faithfully work to take care of our commitments. It is not easy to remain faithful when so much negativity is surrounding us. Yet, if we try to remain faithful God will give us the strength to continue on each day. Our actions will be a witness for God to others.

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 17 May 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

Pass Code: 669872

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84894230612?pwd=Zk1ESitzbGZwTIJyV21UZXY5aTVPZz09>

Christian Manner of Justice

Printed Text: Deuteronomy 24:14-21; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Devotional Text: Luke 3:7-14

Background Text: Exodus 1:8-14; Amos 5:6-15; Zechariah 8:16-17;

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Key Text: Deuteronomy 24:19

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: Work Diligently Before God - Proverbs 10:1-5,15-16

Tuesday: The workers and Their wages - Matthew 20: 1-16

Wednesday: God Demands Justice for All - Amos 5:6-15

Thursday: Wait Patiently for God's Justice - James 5:1-11

Friday: Serving with Enthusiasm - Colossians 3: 12-17

Saturday: Justice for the Worker - Deuteronomy 24: 14-21

Sunday: Contentment, Humility, and Generosity - 1 Timothy 6:6-8, 17-19

KEEP IN MIND:

“When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertaking.” (Deuteronomy 24:19, NRSV)

LESSON AIM:

CONTRAST God’s justice and impartiality with societal tendencies toward justice.

DEVELOP ways to care for others in and through your work; and

IDENTIFY themes of justice in each passage.

BACKGROUND:

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Law (Pentateuch) written by Moses. It was written for the new generation of Israelites who had come out of the wilderness and were looking forward to occupying the Promised Land (Canaan). It was Moses’s farewell address before he transferred leadership to Joshua. Moses wanted to partially restate and explain the importance of the laws before he died. Moses was speaking to a new generation of Israelites because the previous generation died off in the wilderness. As a result of their rebellion against God, the Israelites were forced to wander through the wilderness for forty years (Deuteronomy 1:26-2:1). Additionally, God barred Moses himself from entering into the Promised Land because of his own rebellion (Numbers 20:12). So, on the plains of Moab, Moses was delivering a restatement of what God expected of this new generation of Israelites as they entered the Promised Land. Canaan was a land "flowing with milk and honey" (v. 3). It was also a land flowing with many different pagan gods.

The book of Timothy can rightly be divided into two intersecting themes: right faith and right action. Timothy’s main mission in Ephesus was to stop certain people from teaching false doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3-4). Some people believe that they had superior

knowledge and thus a superior faith. This type of faith had little to do with living righteously in everyday life. The false teachers were spreading this message throughout the churches. There is little doubt that Timothy would have preferred to be elsewhere, as this assignment was a daunting task for a young man of his age. To ensure success, Timothy needed to serve the Lord in the power of the Spirit and remember the example Paul had left him.

LESSON COMMENTARY:

Justice and Generosity (Deuteronomy 24:14-15, NRSV)

¹⁴You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns.

¹⁵You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise, they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

God commands His people to act justly, especially towards those who are vulnerable, such as the poor and foreigners. This reflects God's character and His concern for all people. The instruction is given to the entire community, indicating that social justice is a collective responsibility. Each person is accountable for ensuring fair treatment of others. The inclusion of both "brother" and "foreigner" highlights the equality of all people before God. Our actions should reflect this divine perspective. This command encourages believers to live with compassion and empathy, recognizing the struggles of others and responding with kindness and fairness. The verse underscores the importance of integrity in economic dealings, reminding us that our business practices should honor God and respect others.

God commands His people to act justly, especially towards those who are vulnerable. Paying wages promptly is a matter of justice. The worker's dependence on daily wages reflects our dependence on God for daily provision. We are reminded to trust in God's provision and to be instruments of His provision for others. Failing to pay wages on time is not just a social injustice but a sin against God. Our actions towards others have spiritual implications. Understanding the plight of the poor should lead to compassionate action. We are called to empathize with those in need and act accordingly. The passage reminds us that God hears the cries of the oppressed and holds us accountable for our actions towards them.

1. What are some practical steps we can take to ensure fairness and justice in our workplaces and communities?
2. What are some practical steps we can take to ensure we are acting justly and compassionately towards those who work for us or with us?

Responsibility For Guilt Within the Family (Deuteronomy 24:16-17, NRSV)

¹⁶Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.

¹⁷You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge.

Each person is accountable for their own actions and sins. This principle encourages personal integrity and responsibility. God's law is just and fair, ensuring that punishment is not transferred unjustly from one generation to another. This reflects God's character as a righteous judge. While each person is responsible for their own sin, our actions can still impact future generations. We should strive to live righteously to set a positive example. Although we are accountable for our sins, through Christ, we have the opportunity for forgiveness and redemption, highlighting God's mercy alongside His justice. In a community, while each person is responsible for their own sin, believers are called to support and hold each other accountable in love.

God commands His people to ensure justice for those who are most vulnerable in society, such as foreigners, orphans, and widows. This reflects His character as a just and compassionate God. The community of believers is called to be a place of refuge and support for those in need. This involves active engagement in providing for and protecting the vulnerable. Taking a widow's cloak as security is a metaphor for exploiting those who are already disadvantaged. Believers are called to act with integrity and fairness in all dealings. By caring for the marginalized, believers reflect God's heart and His kingdom values, serving as a witness to the world. Justice is not just a legal concept but a practical outworking of faith. It involves tangible actions to support and uplift those who are marginalized.

Living as Redeemed People (Deuteronomy 24:18-21, NRSV)

¹⁸Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore, I command you to do this.

¹⁹When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings.

²⁰When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

²¹When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

Remembering past deliverance is crucial for maintaining faith and obedience. Just as the Israelites were to remember their slavery and redemption, Christians are called to remember their salvation through Christ. God's commands are rooted in His past

actions and character. Our obedience is a response to His faithfulness and redemption. The Israelites' identity was shaped by their redemption from Egypt. Similarly, Christians' identity is shaped by their redemption through Christ. The command in Deuteronomy 24:18 is linked to treating others with compassion and justice, reflecting God's character and our own experience of His grace. Our daily lives should reflect the reality of our redemption. This includes how we treat others, make decisions, and prioritize our values.

This verse reveals God's compassion and justice, emphasizing His desire for His people to care for those who are marginalized. The promise of blessing for obedience highlights the principle that God rewards those who follow His commands with a sincere heart. The law encourages a communal approach to welfare, where everyone plays a part in supporting the needy. Leaving behind a portion of the harvest is an act of worship, acknowledging God's provision and sovereignty. This commandment is a practical expression of love and faith, demonstrating that true faith is active and visible in our actions.

God consistently shows His concern for the marginalized, urging His people to reflect His compassion through their actions. The command to leave some of the harvest for others teaches us to practice generosity and not to hoard resources. By not going over the branches again, the Israelites were to trust that God would provide for their needs, even as they provided for others. This law highlights the responsibility of the community to care for its members, especially those who cannot care for themselves. The command is a call to put love into action, demonstrating faith through tangible acts of kindness and support.

God commands His people to care for the marginalized, reflecting His compassionate nature. The law encourages a communal approach to welfare, where everyone plays a part in supporting those in need. By not going over the vines again, the Israelites were to trust in God's provision and practice generosity. This command is a call to action, showing love through tangible support for those who are less fortunate. The Israelites were reminded that their resources were ultimately God's, and they were to use them to bless others.

1. How does the command to remember their slavery in Egypt shape the Israelites' identity and actions?
2. How does the account of Ruth and Boaz illustrate the practical application of this law, and what can we learn from their example?

Christ as the Ultimate Master (Ephesians 6:5-9, NRSV)

⁵Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ;

⁶not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

⁷Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women,

⁸knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free.

⁹And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality.

Believers are called to obey earthly authorities as an expression of their obedience to Christ. This reflects a heart attitude that prioritizes serving God above all. The call to obey with "respect and fear and sincerity of heart" emphasizes the importance of genuine respect and integrity in all relationships, not just superficial compliance. Understanding the historical context of slavery in the Roman Empire helps us apply these principles to modern employer-employee relationships, focusing on mutual respect and service. Our ultimate allegiance is to Christ, and our earthly roles should reflect His lordship in our lives. This perspective transforms how we approach work and authority. By living out these principles, believers can be a powerful witness to the transformative power of the Gospel in all areas of life.

Paul calls believers to serve as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart." These verses emphasize the importance of genuine service, not just outward compliance. Our ultimate service is to Christ, not to human masters. This perspective transforms our work and daily tasks into acts of worship. Our obedience should be heartfelt and sincere, reflecting an inner commitment to God's will. Believers are called to maintain integrity and consistency in their actions, regardless of who is watching, reflecting a life lived before God. Our motivation should be rooted in our relationship with Christ, not in seeking approval or recognition from others.

Our service should be sincere, reflecting our love for God. When serving, our primary focus should be on pleasing God rather than seeking approval from people. This perspective transforms mundane tasks into acts of worship. Serving with good will brings joy and fulfillment, as it aligns our actions with God's purposes and reflects His character. Our attitude in service can be a powerful witness to others, demonstrating the transformative power of the Gospel in our lives.

The promise of reward from the Lord is not based on social status but on the goodness of one's actions. Every act of service, whether in a position of authority or submission, is an opportunity to worship God. Our work should be done with the mindset of serving Christ. The verse emphasizes the equality of all believers before God, regardless of earthly status. Recognize that all people, regardless of social status, are equal in the eyes of God. Love and respect transcend social hierarchies. Believers are encouraged to do good not for human recognition but with the assurance that God sees and rewards all good deeds. Understanding that our actions have eternal

significance helps us to live with a focus on pleasing God rather than seeking temporary rewards from people.

1. In what ways can we demonstrate "respect and fear and sincerity of heart" in our current roles, whether at work, home, or in the community?
2. How does the concept of serving Christ through our earthly roles challenge or change your perspective on your daily responsibilities?
3. How does the concept of equality before God challenge societal norms and hierarchies?
3. How does understanding that we are "slaves of Christ" change our perspective on daily tasks and responsibilities?

Instructions for the Rich (1 Timothy 6:17-19, NRSV)

¹⁷As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share,

¹⁹thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

The problems in the Ephesian church were multifaceted. All of them, however, stemmed from some wrong attitude and doctrine. Just as Timothy had to correct and rebuke the false teachers, he also had to rebuke and correct those who had misguided beliefs about money (verses 17-19). Timothy was warned of prosperity and was commanded to flee from it (verses 10-11). He was to instruct the wealthy to trust in God instead of money and to invest in the life to come (verses 18-19).

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. In what ways can we ensure that our service is done "from the heart" and not just for outward appearances?
2. How does understanding that we serve "as to the Lord" change your perspective on daily tasks and responsibilities?
3. How does the concept of serving God rather than men influence your interactions in the workplace or community?
4. How does understanding God's impartiality influence the way we treat others in positions of authority or subordination?
5. How does understanding God's provision and ownership of resources change our perspective on generosity and stewardship?
6. What are some modern-day equivalents to the "foreigner, fatherless, and widow" that we are called to support, and how can we do so effectively?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

We live in exciting times. Many African American pastors are seeking additional resources and sharing teachings to help their congregations take advantage of the wealth of information and opportunities available in their communities. They are also teaching to keep true to faith in Jesus Christ in a complex world. This is not just for the sake of head knowledge. We need leaders who can encourage us to stay on course when it comes to aligning our faith with action. We need leaders who can not only recite Greek and Hebrew but also make the Word practical in our lives. This will give us a vibrant faith that can transform our lives and communities,

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 24 May 2026, 09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

Pass Code: 669872

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84894230612?pwd=Zk1ESitzbGZwTIJyV21UZXY5aTVPZz09>

Christian Rhythms of Life

Printed Text: Mark 2:18-28

Devotional Text: Ecclesiastes 2:20-25

Background Text: Jeremiah 31:12-13; Mark 2:18-28; 6:30-32; Jonah 2:1-11

Key Text: Mark 2:27-28

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: A Feast of Finest Wine - John 2:1-11

Tuesday: Celebrate God's Blessings - Genesis 21:1-8

Wednesday: Playing Children Signal God's Grace - Zechariah 8:1-5

Thursday: Release From Human Rules - Colossians 2:16-23

Friday: A Time for Feasting and Joy - Matthew 11:7-11,16-19

Saturday: Rejoice and Be Glad - Jeremiah 31:10-14

Sunday: The Lord of the Sabbath - Mark 2:18-28

KEEP IN MIND:

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” 1 Timothy 6:12

LESSON AIM:

EXPLORE the Attitudes and actions Paul charged Timothy to embrace and avoid;
VALUE personally the attitudes and actions Paul charged Timothy to embrace; and

IDENTIFY personal actions and actions that need to be changed and commit to doing so.

BACKGROUND:

Fasting was a common religious practice in Jewish culture, often associated with repentance, mourning, or seeking God's favor. John the Baptist's disciples likely fasted as part of their commitment to his message of repentance and preparation for the coming Messiah. The Pharisees, a religious sect known for their strict adherence to the Law and traditions, also practiced fasting regularly, often twice a week, as a demonstration of piety. This practice is rooted in the Old Testament, where fasting is seen during times of national crisis or personal penitence (e.g., Leviticus 16:29-31, Joel 2:12). The mention of both groups highlights the religious diversity and expectations of the time.

The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, a day of rest and worship as commanded in Exodus 20:8-11. It was a sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Exodus 31:16-17). By the time of Jesus, the Pharisees had added numerous regulations to the Sabbath, making it a burden rather than a blessing. Understanding the Sabbath's original intent is crucial for interpreting this passage.

This setting indicates a rural area, likely in Galilee, where agriculture was common. The grainfields would have been fields of wheat or barley, staple crops in ancient Israel. Jesus' movement through these fields symbolizes His ministry's itinerant nature, as He traveled to teach and heal. According to Deuteronomy 23:25, it was permissible to pluck grain by hand from a neighbor's field to satisfy hunger, but not to use a sickle. The disciples' actions were lawful under Mosaic Law but were scrutinized by the Pharisees due to their interpretation of Sabbath laws.

LESSON COMMENTARY:

No Fasting with the Bridegroom Present (Mark 2:18-20, NRSV)

¹⁸Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

¹⁹Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

²⁰The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

They were under the Law, but under the Law there was no instruction given for fasting. God had given seven feasts for His people, not fast days.

What He is saying to them is that it is more important to be related to Him and to have fellowship with Him than it is to fast. It is the same today, friend. It is one thing to

be religious and to put up a front, but it's another thing to enjoy fellowship with the Lord Jesus and to love Him.

1. How does the practice of fasting in the Old Testament differ from the understanding of fasting in the New Testament, particularly in the context of Jesus' ministry?
2. In what ways can we ensure that our spiritual disciplines, such as fasting, are focused on the heart and not just external rituals?

New Cloth on Old Garment -- New Wine in Old Bottles (Mark 2:21-22, NRSV)

²¹"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made.

²²And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

The Lord is giving two illustrations about this new life of love and fellowship with Him. He is saying that He did not come to polish up the Law. He didn't come to add to the Mosaic system. He didn't come to add a refinement or a development to it. He came to do something new. He didn't come to patch up an old garment but to give us a new garment.

Under the Law men worked, and their works were like an old moth-eaten garment. Our Lord came to provide a new robe of righteousness that comes down onto a sinner who will trust Christ. This will enable him to stand before Almighty God. This is the glorious, wonderful thing that He is saying here, friend. Our Lord didn't come to extend or project the Law of the Old Testament system or of religion. He came to introduce something new. And that which is new will be the fact that He will die for the sins of the world. New wine goes into new wine skins. A new garment goes onto a new man. That robe of righteousness comes down on one who through faith has become a son of God. This is a tremendous thing!

1. In what ways might we be tempted to "patch" our old ways with new teachings of Christ rather than fully embracing transformation?
2. How can understanding the incompatibility of old and new help us in our daily walk with Christ?
3. What are some traditions or practices in your life that might need reevaluation in light of the new covenant?

The Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28, NRSV)

²³One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

²⁴The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?"

²⁵And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food?"

²⁶He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions."

²⁷Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath;

²⁸so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

In the last part of this chapter we come to a Sabbath Day in the fields. Then, in chapter 3, it begins with the Sabbath Day inside the synagogue. We see these two incidents in Matthew and in Luke. It is very important because it was on this question of the Sabbath Day that He broke with the religious rulers. From this time on, they sought His death.

He claims in this incident that He is the Lord of the Sabbath Day. In the synagogue, He does good on the Sabbath Day. The question, of course, arises: Did He really break the Sabbath in either instance? When He healed the poor man with the withered hand, did He break the Sabbath law? Absolutely He did not. He came to fulfill the Law. But here we find that He is giving an interpretation of this. He reveals that He is the Lord of the Sabbath Day, and that doing good was the thing that was all important.

The disciples were plucking the grain and eating, which the Pharisees interpreted as harvesting grain and threshing it on the Sabbath. We read in Deuteronomy 23:24-25 (NRSV): "If you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in a container. If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain." Actually, they were following the Law. If they had put in a sickle, they would have been harvesting. But the Pharisees had put their own interpretation to it and would, therefore, interpret the action as breaking the Law.

He did not insist that they had not broken the Sabbath. Actually, He refused to argue the issue with them. Now, He goes into the life of David, their king, and He cites an incident in the life of David where he had definitely broken the Mosaic Law and was justified. You see, the letter of the Law was not to be imposed when it wrought hardship upon one of God's servants who was attempting to serve Him. And that, of course, is the story concerning David, and our Lord uses that illustration. This is a great principle in respect to the Sabbath Day and its meaning. The Law was really made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. How does understanding the original purpose of the Sabbath help us apply it in our lives today?

2. In what ways can we ensure that our observance of religious practices does not become legalistic?
3. How does Jesus' authority over the Sabbath challenge our understanding of His role in our lives?
4. What are some practical ways we can demonstrate compassion over legalism in our daily interactions?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

Jesus didn't come with a message to patch up the old system. He came with a message to replace it all together. He brought a new internal gospel of repentance and forgiveness by grace that cannot be mixed with the old Judaism of tradition and self-righteous works, or with any other religion. The old garment, by the way, is not God's Law, God's holy Law, it's not the Old Testament. It is the religion of Judaism and the pieces of the gospel can't be stitched into it.

Jesus said this, essentially, in the parables of Matthew 13 verses 44 – 44 and 45, when He said there was a man who found a treasure in a field and sold everything and bought the treasure, and a man who found a pearl of great price and sold everything to buy the pearl. Once you discover the gospel which is the treasure and the pearl, you can only purchase it if you sell everything. There's no hanging on to any other form of religion.

Now, what is the message in all of this? It's simply this, I don't know where you are in your life, my friend, but don't think you can add Jesus to your religion. You can't, it's a total replacement. The whole system has to go. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by Me. There's no salvation in any name than the name of Christ. Christianity is not compatible with Judaism. It's not even compatible with false forms of Christianity, to say nothing of all the religions that are non-Christian. The religion of the Pharisees and the scribes, the religion of the disciples of John, that was old skin, couldn't contain the gospel.

Zoom Sunday School Classes – 31 May 2026 3:09:00 AM EST

Meeting ID: 848-9423-0612

Pass Code: 669872

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84894230612?pwd=Zk1ESitzbGZwTIJyV21UZXY5aTVPZz09>

Living in Christian Community

Printed Text: Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 10:22-25

Devotional Text: Hebrews 1:1-6

Background Text: Nehemiah 8:1-12; Psalm 122:1-9; Hebrews 10:19-25

Key Text: Hebrews 10:23

Daily Bible Readings

Monday: Let Us Sing to the Lord - Psalm 95

Tuesday: Gladness In the House of The Lord - Psalm 122

Wednesday: Members of the Body of Christ - Romans 12:1-8

Thursday: A Holy Day of Rejoicing - Nehemiah 8:9-12

Friday: Restoring Healthy Relationships - Matthew 18:15-20

Saturday: Fellowship Through Common Property - Acts 4:32-37

Sunday: Inspiring Love and Good Deeds - Hebrews 10:19-25

KEEP IN MIND:

“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful”. (Hebrews 10:23, NRSV)

LESSON AIM:

COMPARE Jesus' commission in Matthew to His commission in Acts;
AFFIRM that Jesus is with us in our commission; and
ACCEPT our commission to make disciples of all nations.

AIM FOR CHANGE:

KNOW Jesus' sacrificial death opens the way to the presence of God;
FEEL the importance of holding on to faith in Jesus; and
SHARE our faith with others.

BACKGROUND:

Sacrifices were practiced from the earliest of times in the Old Testament. Sacrifices from the produce of the land and firstborn of the flock were offered by Cain and Abel; Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices after he left the ark. The Mosaic sacrifices were prior to Christ's ultimate sacrifice on the Cross. Animals were imperfect sacrifices that could not completely purify and atone for the sins of the people. If they could, they would have ceased. The annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was a visible reminder of the sins of humanity.

The writer expressed the importance and superiority of Christ's priesthood and the New Covenant to the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic covenant. Levitical high priest could only enter the Holy of Holies, which was the most holy place (inner sanctuary of the temple) one day a year, the Day of Atonement, the 10th day of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar (September-October). On the Day of Atonement, the high priest made reconciling sacrifices for the sins of the entire nation. The images

that the writer revealed about the Day of Atonement emphasize the superiority of the priesthood of Christ.

In Chapter 9 of Hebrews, the writer explained that the *diatheke*-the Greek word for agreement, covenant, or arrangement-was placed into effect when Christ died (Hebrews 9: 11 -12, 24-28). The new covenant, which was initiated when Christ died, frees believers from the bondage of the first covenant. God took away the Levitical sacrificial system, which was the first arrangement, when He established the perfect sacrifice-Jesus Christ.

LESSON COMMENTARY:

Doubt to Disciple Nations (Matthew 28:18-20, NRSV)

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus tells His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (verse 18). This means when God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand, He was given power and dominion over all things in Heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1:20-23). The disciples were under His authority and called to make more disciples (verse 19). The disciples understood what Jesus meant by "making disciples." He had just done this with them for the past three years and a half years. He was telling them to go and do what He had done with them so that other people could also become disciples of Jesus. He told them to teach the new disciples everything He had taught them. This is how disciples are made—through teaching them what Jesus says and what it means for our daily lives. And this command to make disciples goes to every follower of Jesus. Disciples have to make other disciples until the nations learn the teachings of Christ and how to live accordingly. We are to go teach any person who will listen, regardless of race or nationality, about Jesus. When they accept Him as Lord and Savior, they are to be baptized as a sign of their union and commitment to Christ. And we are to teach them to be devoted to the Word of God (verses 19-20).

Jesus ended His great Commission with the promise that He will always be with us (verse 20). The disciples may have been puzzled how Jesus would remain with them. But Jesus promised to send His Holy Spirit to be present with them—and us—forever (John 14:16, 26).

1. Why is baptizing and teaching the Word to new believers so important?

2. How does understanding Jesus' authority in heaven and on earth impact your daily life and decisions?
3. How does the practice of baptism in your church reflect the command given in this verse, and how can it be improved?
4. What role does the Holy Spirit play in your efforts to make disciples, and how can you be more reliant on Him?

The Priesthood of Christ and Our Profession of Faith (Hebrews 10:22-25, NRSV)

²²Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

²³Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.

²⁴And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds,

²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Through Christ, we can freely enter into the presence of God. Through faith in Christ's work on our behalf, we have "full assurance," or certainty, that our sins are forgiven. There is an allusion to Christian baptism when the writer refers to "our hearts sprinkled" and "bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). Because of the eternal efficiency of the blood of Christ, our consciences are cleansed. When the high priest entered the "holy place . . . He shall put on the holy linen coat . . . the linen breeches . . . a linen girdle . . . these are holy garments" and he must be cleansed; therefore "shall he wash his flesh in water" (Leviticus 16:3-4). Likewise, the believer must be cleansed before he or she can come before the Holy One. While we are declared "not guilty" because of the work of Christ, we need to cleanse ourselves daily by turning away from sin and turning to God to experience the fullness of relationship with Him. We must give ourselves completely to God and maintain a personal relationship with Jesus. The writer encourages believers to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (Hebrews 10:23). God reveals His promises and truths through His Word; thus, we must embrace God's Word and resist temptation and opposition. His promises are our treasures that we believe with a confident expectation. The foundation of our faith, therefore, is based upon the integrity and righteousness of Christ. We have hope because "God is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9). Although the Jewish Christians were experiencing persecution, the writer urges the believers to resist the temptation to apostasy. He wants to reassure the believers by calling them to remember, "He (God) is faithful that promised"; God will do what He has promised (Hebrews 10:23).

The writer instructs the believers to "consider"-which means to observe or contemplate-each other (Hebrews 10:24). Believers must provoke or stir up the qualities of love and good works toward each other (Hebrews 10:24). The writer knew

believers could have an impact on one another by loving and doing good deeds for each other.

Because of the fear of persecution, some of the believers had stopped attending worship services; therefore, the writer encourages believers to pull together to stir up loving and active faith. The fellowship of believers is a source of encouragement; it is an opportunity to share faith and grow stronger. The writer urged the believers to get involved in encouraging or "exhorting one another" with the truth (Hebrews 10:25). The fellowship of believers promotes accountability; it is the opportunity to worship and pray with others. As you fellowship with the body of believers, encourage someone today!

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

1. How can we draw near and remain in the presence of God each day? How can we truly experience God's presence?
2. When we accept Christ, He responds, "henceforth, I call you not servants...I have called you friends" (John 15:15). What should be our response to Christ as believers? Does your relationship with Christ reveal that He is your friend?
3. How can you encourage others in your community to remain steadfast in their faith during challenging times?
4. In what ways does the anticipation of Christ's return influence your daily life and interactions with others?
5. What does it mean to have a "sincere heart" when approaching God, and how can we cultivate this in our daily lives?

LESSON IN OUR SOCIETY:

Faith is effective when we depend on God and rest in what Christ has done on the cross. The writer of Hebrews urged believers to recognize the superiority of our faith and live in obedience to God each day. Through Christ, we have an eternal reward and significant privileges that we can experience through our new life in Christ. Through Christ, we can experience God's presence and develop a relationship with Him. We can grow in faith and experience a deeper relationship with God when we trust and believe without doubts and concerns that the world presents. The world is temporary, but our life with God is eternal. Each day we must trust God and hold on to our faith and then share our faith with others. When we share our love for God, we can encourage others and introduce them to a new life through Christ.

As we respond to the Jesus' call to follow Him, we also respond to His call for us to make disciples for Him. Embracing one without the other is not possible if we are to be true followers. As we become disciples, we must endeavor to disciple others. We are part of a disciple-making movement in which real disciples make other disciples. We disciple others not only by

teaching them the words of Jesus but also by letting them see the witness of our lifestyles. What is holding you back from answering the call to be a missionary for Christ? We do not need to be fearful because God is with us. He will guide and protect His people. May our congregations spend more energy making disciples and not making members.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: 7 June 2026

Deborah, the Dutiful Judge
Printed Text: Judges 4:4-10, 14, 21-22
Devotional Reading: Matthew 20:20-28
Background Scripture: Judges 4-5

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