

LIBERATING
FAITH STUDIES

**GOD'S LAW
IS LOVE**

LIBERATING FAITH STUDIES SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The Order of Service

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary
as a signal for silence
- II. Singing
- III. The Apostles' Creed
- IV. Prayer, closing with the
Lord's Prayer in concert
- V. Singing
- VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
- VII. Responsive reading
of the lesson text by school
- VIII. The Decalogue

The Lesson

- I. Organ interlude while
the classes are being arranged
- II. Class study of the lesson
- III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
- IV. Closing bell — silence

The Closing

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application
of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

Editorial Staff

Publisher • **Rev. Dr. Roderick D. Belin**

Editor • **Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce**

— Lessons —

Rev. Dr. Linda E. Mouzon

The Apostles' Creed

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

The Church School Creed

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

A.M.E. Discipline

Hello, AME Church School Member!

The Home Daily Bible Readings will continue to appear at the end of each Sunday's lesson but they will be the readings for the following week. We made this change in response to your requests. The readings for the first week are on the following page.

For over a year we have used Zoom and Facebook to facilitate our weekly Connectional Church School with teachers (lay and clergy) from around the AME Connection. They generously share their knowledge, talents, and expertise with a weekly average of 500 participants viewing via Zoom and 1500 on Facebook.

This virtual AME Connectional Church School was birthed due to the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The blessings from the teachings have been immeasurable. We will continue this Connectional Church School on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. EST. Join us! Zoom Meeting ID: 829 9325 1894. Visit our website- www.iamame.org- to find worship and study resources to empower you and enhance the life of the church.

Like our Facebook page so you will be informed about programming and important announcements from the Publishing House and *The Christian Recorder*: www.facebook.com/amecpublishing.

Join our Facebook Group to continue conversations after Church School and share ideas, thoughts, and best practices with other AME Church School members and teachers: www.facebook.com/groups/amechurchschool.

Thank you for purchasing *Liberating Faith Studies*. We are working every day to fulfill our mission to provide high quality resources to empower us to spread Jesus Christ's liberating gospel, pursue justice, and enhance the social development of all people.

And, always remember, I am praying for you.

Roderick D. Belin
President/Publisher

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 28–September 3

Monday	Mark 7:1-8 (Follow God, Not Human Traditions)
Tuesday	1 Samuel 1:19-23 (Obedience, Not Sacrifice)
Wednesday	Psalm 6 (Be Gracious to Me, O Lord)
Thursday	Luke 7:24-34 (Jesus, a Friend of Sinners)
Friday	Luke 14:7-14 (Humility Before God and Others)
Saturday	Exodus 30:17-21 (Come to God in Cleanliness and Holiness)
Sunday	Luke 11:37-44 (Be Cleansed Inside and Out)

Jesus Eats With a Pharisee

Lesson Scripture: Luke 11:37-44

Focus Scripture: Luke 11:37-44

Key Verse: The Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness." Luke 11:39 (NRSV)

LUKE 11:37-44 (NRSV)

37 While he was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine with him; so he went in and took his place at the table.

38 The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not first wash before dinner.

39 Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

40 You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?

41 So give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you.

42 But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others.

43 Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces.

44 Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it."

LUKE 11:37-44 (KJV)

37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.

38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?

41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

43 Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

KEY TERMS

- **Pharisee** – A Jewish religious leader that served on the Sanhedrin that believed in the resurrection of people after death, angels as messengers, and that Jewish law (Torah) consisted of written law (Moses' commands) and oral law (teaching of the prophets, Levites, and priests).
- **Torah** – Pentateuch; first five Bible books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).
- **Katharizō** – (Greek) To free from defilement of sin and faults, to purify.
- **Harpagē** – (Greek) Plundering, robbery.
- **Aphrōn (Greek)** – Without reason or intelligence.
- **Ma'aser** – Giving one tenth.

How do we love and how do we apply the law? As Christians, we must ensure that *our actions, words, and thoughts welcome people into God's kingdom.*

child needed a specific medication, or the child would die. The parent went to the store and stole the medicine. What should happen to the parent? What would happen to the child if the parent had not taken the medicine? Over these series of lessons, we will be asked these questions several ways in various situations: How do we love and how do we apply the law? As Christians, we must ensure that ***our actions, words, and thoughts welcome people into God's kingdom.*** Perhaps these lessons will challenge and

help us examine whether we are open to having whosoever will (John 3:16) join our churches or are we looking for people who conform to certain standards and rules.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 11:37-38

A Pharisee invites Jesus to eat at his home.

This invitation may seem

ironic. The Pharisees criticized Jesus, doubted Jesus was the Messiah, and/or asked questions designed to entrap Jesus. However, in ancient Israel, according to their customs, inviting guests to one's home, especially the poor, was

INTRODUCTION

Where is the dividing line between following the law and having mercy? A classic example comes from a story about a thief. A parent had no money, and their

a great kindness. Some believe the hospitality custom derived from Israel's nomadic experience. Through their wilderness times, they learned the importance of having food and water. All guests were expected to follow washing rituals. These rituals dated from Moses' commands. Initially, only the priest had to perform ritual washing. Over time ritual washing practice prior to eating was extended to include all Jews. And so this Pharisee was amazed that Jesus, considered a great teacher by many, did not wash.

1. What practices do you have before eating? How did you learn these practices?

Luke 11:39-41

Cleanliness was considered essential to holiness. Priests had to wash in the basin before performing their temple duties (Lev. 16:14). By Torah law, ritual bath purification was required for skin disease (Lev. 14:8-9), after sexual intercourse (Lev. 15:13), and after touching the dead (Num. 19:11), among other circumstances. Cleansing extended to pots and storage jars. Water washing

indicated physical and spiritual purity. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that physical washing does not make one holy. Ritual bathing, according to Jesus (*katharizō*), intended to free from defilement of sin and faults. Just because the Pharisees had washed their hands did not mean their inner self had changed. Instead, they were clean on the outside but not on the inside. They lacked compassion. and God saw their inner and outer selves.



**Cleanliness
was considered
essential to
holiness.**

1. How should baptism make an inner change?

Luke 11:42-44

After admonishing the Pharisees, Jesus gives three woes (i.e., impending doom or condemnation). First woe, Pharisees gave the *ma'aser* of their crops, but they lacked mercy and equal justice.

Though in keeping with ancient Israel tithing law, the Pharisees gave a tenth of something that had monetary value. Loving others was more important. Jesus likened their giving since it lacked love as *harpagē* (plundering, robbery). Second, the Pharisees wanted to be seen. They, unlike Jesus, lacked humility (Phil. 2:5-

7). Their great prophet Moses (Numbers 12:3) and the patriarch Abraham exhibited humility. While they often quoted Moses and claimed to be Abraham's heir, they did not model either's humility. Third, like unmarked graves, the Pharisees could make people ceremonially unclean (Numbers 19:16). In other words, they were like graves containing rot and dead people's bones. Their teaching could lead people away from God and toward sin.

SANKOFA

Althea Gibson (1927 - 2003) was a great American 1950's tennis player. She was the first black player to win three grand slam singles championship tennis events: the French Open (1956), Wimbledon (1957–58), and the U.S. Open (1957–58).

Gibson did this during an era in which black people were fighting for civil rights and freedom from colonization. Sportsmanship highly valued in most societies did not extend to the tennis court. Tennis, long considered a "white man's" game, historically engaged racial disparities. Recent research by the International Tennis Foundation reports that Africa accounts

for 2.2%, Central America and Caribbean 1.4%, Asia 14.9%, and South America 7.6% of professional ranked players. One barrier for tennis professionals is cost. Without sponsors to cover shoes, travel, coaches, court time, and athletic wear, players with less wealth can be excluded. Woe to those who fail to help tennis players with lesser resources.

CASE STUDY



Can we, like Jesus
and Bell, enter people's
homes who we know
despise us?

W. Kamau Bell on his CNN show, *United Shades of America*, entered the world of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The KKK is a terrorist organization that purports to represent Christian values, yet demeans and often killed blacks, Jews, and anyone that promotes equality. On one episode Bell visit-

ed and interviewed several KKK members. He even attended a cross burning. Because of the show, Bell received mail from KKK members. This show created an opportunity to reach people that espouse hatred. Can we, like Jesus and Bell, enter people's homes who we know despise us?

LIFE APPLICATION

Hospitality affords you the opportunity to introduce people to the gospel. Every household, country, or culture have rites and traditions before sharing a meal. In this world that has people from all cultures visiting or living with one another, you should recognize there will be differences. Because of the freedom Jesus gives you, by your words and behaviors invite everyone to become a Christian. Or because of self-righteousness, you can exclude some people from experiencing God's gift of love – Jesus, our redeemer.

Questions

1. How do you respond when people do not meet your expectations for proper behavior in church?
2. How do some church rules prevent people from feeling welcomed?

SUMMARY

Baptism, communion, Bible study, and prayer meetings are forms of worship.

Anyone who wants to attend can learn the true meaning of Christianity dependent upon how you treat them. Are you a fault finder or a come to Jesus' inviter?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

"Give Me a Clean Heart": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_3HEScberw

Lyrics for Meditation:

Jesus loves the little children

All the children of the
world

Red and yellow, black
and white

They are precious in his
sight

Jesus loves the little
children of the world

Jesus died for all the
children


All the children of the
world

Red and yellow, black
and white

They are precious in his
sight

Jesus died for all the children of the world

Prayer: Lord, help me to open my heart to everyone. May I examine myself in your light and eliminate anything that sees rules as more important than freely loving everyone. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Because of the
freedom Jesus gives
you, by your words
and behaviors invite
everyone to become a
Christian.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**September 4-September 10**

Monday	Psalm 103:1-12 (Bless the Lord Who Heals)
Tuesday	Psalm 103:13-22 (Bless the Lord of Compassion)
Wednesday	Exodus 20:8-11 (Remember the Sabbath Day)
Thursday	Hebrews 4:1-10 (Rest for God's People)
Friday	Hebrews 4:11-16 (Enter God's Rest)
Saturday	Deuteronomy 22:1-4 (God's People Must Care for Others)
Sunday	Luke 14:1-6 (The Sabbath Is for Doing Good)

Is It Lawful to Heal on the Sabbath?

Lesson Scripture: Luke 14:1-6

Focus Scripture: Luke 14:1-6

Key Verses: Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, "Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?" But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away. Luke 14:3-4 (NRSV)

LUKE 14:1-6 (NRSV)

1 On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

2 Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy.

3 And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, "Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?"

4 But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away.

5 Then he said to them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?"

6 And they could not reply to this.

LUKE 14:1-6 (KJV)

1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;

5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

KEY TERMS

- **Melachah** – Certain type of work or labor that by Jewish law (Torah and oral traditions) are forbidden on *Shabbat*.
- **Rapha** – To heal is closely related to spiritual and physical wholeness.
- **S'mikhah** – A person in Jewish society who has the authority to make new interpretations of the Torah.
- **Dropsy** – Body stores water internally that leads to swelling.
- **Remez** – Used during Jesus' time, it is a discussion of a portion of scripture passage with those who have Bible knowledge that leads them to determine the fuller meaning of the teaching.

“Television commercials strongly recommend that you self-diagnosis and, based upon symptoms, go to the doctor and ask for a particular prescription.”

comes, what do you do first? Reach for medicines, go to the doctor, tell family members or friends? Television commercials strongly recommend that you self-diagnosis and, based upon symptoms, go to the doctor and ask for a particular prescription. Perhaps when feeling under the weather, the first thing to do is pray and listen to God's instructions on how

to proceed. In today's lesson, a man with dropsy (excess body water) encounters Jesus. However, this man does not ask that Jesus heal him. Jesus, whose stripes heal, reaches, touches, and heals the man even though he did not ask.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 14:1-2

Doctor Luke, this gospel's writer, records Jesus' interactions with a man afflicted with dropsy. Dropsy, a disease the Bible only mentions once, resulted in disfigurement because water retention resulted in swollen body parts. Although not stated, it seems the Pharisees had plotted in advance. Their plan, if successful,

INTRODUCTION

Illness, something that everyone experiences, has choices. When sickness

would show that Jesus dishonored the Sabbath. Because Jesus was viewed as a *s'miklah*, i.e., a person in Jewish society having authority to make new interpretations of the Torah, the Pharisees wanted to discredit Jesus. The Pharisees were so intent on discrediting Jesus that they willingly broke a Torah command. Sick people were considered unclean and had to stay away from other Israelites. However, on this occasion, a man with dropsy not only attended the feast but was seated next to Jesus. Instead of being repulsed, Jesus notices the man's swollen body.

1. How do you react when you see someone whose body appears distorted by disease?

Luke 14:3-4

Aware that the Pharisees were watching, Jesus, before doing the unthinkable (touching an unclean person) and the unlawful (healing on the Sabbath), poses an easy question. He asks the Pharisees, who are respected law teachers, *Does the*

law prohibit or allow healing on the Sabbath? These law teachers should have had an answer; after all, they were familiar with *melachah*, a list of which types of work were prohibited on the Sabbath. Instead, the Pharisees are silent. Even though the man did not ask for healing, Jesus reaches out, heals the man, and sends him away. While Luke does not


share the Pharisees' reactions, it seems that their plan fizzled.

1. Which kind of work should Christians not do on the Sabbath? (Why or why not?)

Luke 14:5-6

Jesus, also familiar with the *melachah*, reminds the Pharisees that there are exceptions to the Sabbath work rule. Jesus uses

a technique known as *remez*. *Remez* involved discussion between those familiar with scripture. The parties would then engage in a teaching wherein the scripture discussion could result in new deductions by the learners. Jesus reminds them that if an animal falls into a pit on the Sabbath, by law the animal could be rescued


The Pharisees
were so intent on
discrediting Jesus that
they willingly broke a
Torah command.

that same day. So, what does this law say about humans, who are more valuable than animals? Unable to give an opposing response, the Pharisees say nothing. Once again, Jesus' wisdom offers new judgments.

where that evangelism can take place. Maybe people who do not come to church could see these sacraments and ask the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Today's lesson invites us to rethink what and how we do Sabbath work.

SANKOFA

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) recognizes two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. According to *The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church*, baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized, it is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth. (And) The Supper of the

Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather it is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death. By custom, these sacraments are held in the sanctuary. Perhaps these sacraments could be held in the park, at a lake, an eatery, a public space. Some-

CASE STUDY

Historically, laws prohibited certain activities on Sunday. These laws, known as blue laws, were very restrictive. Over time the laws were lessened, making more activities permissible on Sundays. A case filed by some employees in 1961 who were fined for selling merchandise, including floor wax and toys, on Sunday in violation of Maryland law changed the blue law restrictions. An appeal



**Jesus' wisdom
offers new judgments**

to the United States Supreme Court determined that blue laws were legal. With restrictions being made only on Sunday activities, the Supreme Court ruled that Sunday blue laws favored Christianity over other religions that did not worship on Sunday. The ruling left the scope and administration of blue laws to state gov-

ernments. While many states overturned the prohibition of liquor sales, 28 states still place restrictions on liquor sales. Outstanding constitutional issues remain including Sunday work requirements. Blue laws have implications for employees, families, churches, businesses, medical services. Today's lessons give the opportunity to think about blue laws. What work is necessary on the Sabbath?

LIFE APPLICATION

This post-Covid era may be an opportune time to revisit many Christian customs. Having worship only on Sunday, Bible study on Tuesday or Wednesday, prayer calls in the morning, and Thursday choir rehearsals are seemingly standard.

What can the church do on other days – Monday, Friday, Saturday evening? Today's lesson invites you to look at our traditions and ask, are these lawful? Or would it prove beneficial to have Tuesday testimony and healing service, evangelism Wednesday, visit the sick Thursday, feed the homeless Friday, prison ministry

Saturday? Jesus reminds you that every day belongs to God and your actions should too.

Questions

1. What does today's lesson teach you about Jesus' healing power?
2. How many people do you think watch your behavior to see how Christians act? What do your actions teach them?



What work is
necessary on the
Sabbath?

SUMMARY

Jesus made healing humans an appropriate Sabbath event. The Pharisees' view of work was inconsistent with God's plan. Animals were not better than people. Jesus demonstrated through

his healing touch that God's power is not limited to a certain day of the week.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Meditate on the words from the hymn, "He Touched Me" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPhvujMOh1A>)

Shackled by a heavy burden

'Neath a load of guilt and shame
Then the hand of Jesus touched me
And now I am no longer the same.

He touched me, oh, He touched me
And oh, the joy that floods my soul
Something happened, and now I know
He touched me, and made me whole

Since I've met this blessed Savior
Since He's cleansed and made me whole
Oh, I will never cease to praise Him (to
praise Him) I'll shout it while eternity rolls

Oh, He touched me, oh He touched me,

He touched me And oh, the joy that floods
my soul.

Something happened and now I know
He touched me and made me whole

Prayer: Lord, thank you your healing
power. May I remember that, whenever
and wherever I encounter sickness, to
seek your healing power first. Our bodies
are yours, and they are perishable. May
we rejoice knowing that while we are on
earth you will care for us as you prepare
us for our eternal home. In Jesus' name.
Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 11-September 17

Monday	Isaiah 58:6-14 (God Demands Justice and Promises Healing)
Tuesday	John 5:1-9 (Do You Want to Be Well?)
Wednesday	John 5:10-16 (God's Work Faces Resistance)
Thursday	John 5:17-21 (The Father Works on the Sabbath)
Friday	Deuteronomy 4:1-14 (Obedience Shows Wisdom and Discernment)
Saturday	Psalms 119:113-128 (God, Teach Us Your Statutes)
Sunday	John 7:14-24 (Jesus Speaks to Glorify the Father)

Jesus Gives God Glory

Lesson Scripture: John 7:14-24

Focus Scripture: John 7:14-24

Key Verse: "Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him." John 7:18 (NRSV)

JOHN 7:14-24 (NRSV)

14 About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach.

15 The Jews were astonished at it, saying, "How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?"

16 Then Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine but his who sent me.

17 Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own.

18 Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?"

20 The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?"

21 Jesus answered them, "I performed one work, and all of you are astonished.

22 Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the sabbath.

23 If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man's whole body on the sabbath?

24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

JOHN 7:14-24 (KJV)

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

KEY TERMS

- **Sukkot Feast of Tabernacles** – The third great annual Jewish pilgrimage festival where the Jews gathered together in Jerusalem for two reasons: To remember God’s provision in the wilderness and to look toward the future promised Messianic age when all nations will go to worship the Lord in Jerusalem.
- **Daimonion** – Evil spirits commonly believed to be the devil’s messengers and/or ministers.
- **Circumcision** – Hebrew verb is *peritemno*, “a cutting round, circumcision,” was a rite enjoined by God upon Abraham and his male descendants and dependents, as a sign of the covenant made with him, Gen. 17.
- **Catechism** – A summary of the principles of Christian religion in the form of questions and answers, used for the instruction of Christians.

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes it may seem that a matter

has been settled, only to discover later that it’s not finished. On several occasions, Jesus has an ongoing disagreement with the Pharisees and scribes about Sabbath healing (Matthew 12:10; Luke 13:10-17; John 5:15-18). Once people have made up their minds about lawful behavior, it can be difficult to change their minds. They may see that good happened; however, ingrained beliefs can

distort thinking. In today’s lesson, although reports about Jesus’ healing had spread, many were dismayed. They failed to recognize God’s love seen through healing was not bound by arbitrary law interpretations.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

John 7:14-15

Jesus observed the Jewish festivals, God gave to Moses in the Torah (first five Bible books). One of these festivals, the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-34), a seven-day celebration, reminded Israelites of God’s care during their wilderness journey from Egypt to the promised land (Canaan). Jews were expected to travel to



They may see that good happened; however, ingrained beliefs can distort thinking.

Jerusalem, where the priest would offer sacrifices on their behalf. Not unexpectedly, when Jesus arrived, a large Jewish contingent was already present. Rumors about Jesus' teachings had spread and caused speculation about Jesus' background. They wondered where Jesus got his wisdom.


1. What annual celebrations does the church have to commemorate God's deliverance?
2. How do you believe Jesus obtained his wisdom?

John 7:16-19

Moses and Joshua instructed parents to teach their children (Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7-9; 11:19; Joshua 4:21-23). Jewish children's education included covenantal prescribed behavior and visible

evidence of God's provision, the stones, the temple, the land. Initially, parents taught their children at home. Teachings were also provided by the priest (Ezra 7:10). During the latter B.C. era, schools for Jewish boys were established. This free education focused on scripture as well as reading, writing, history, science,

and mathematics. Jesus was talking with teachers when Jesus' parents found him "in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 46:2b). From Jesus' first encounter with the teachers up to this time, people were amazed and marveled at his learning. What they failed to perceive was that Jesus' learning came directly from God and not from any human

 Rumors about Jesus' teachings had spread and caused speculation about Jesus' background. They wondered where Jesus got his wisdom.

source. As Luke states, "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Jesus taught in a manner that would bring glory to God and not to him. Because Jesus' wisdom came from God, he asks a logical question: Why are you trying to kill me? After all, since they were unable to keep Moses'

law, why wouldn't they want to hear Jesus teach about God's way?

1. What lessons should children learn about God?
2. Should teaching children from the Catechism – see Appendix for link – be emphasized? (Why or why not?)

John 7:20-24

SANKOFA

Why and exactly who made this accusation that Jesus is of *daimonion* possession is not clear. Unaware that a plot was already in the making to kill Jesus, many assumed he had an evil spirit or devil. Because Jesus' accusation that they were trying to kill him seemed unrealistic, some believed adopted demon possession caused his "irrational" belief. After all, it was "known" by first century Jewish society that demons could control a person's behavior and speech (Mark 1:23, 26; 9:17-29). Jesus does not dwell on the murderous plot; instead, once again he challenges how they apply the law. Pharisees and Jewish religious leaders declared circumcision could be performed on the Sab-

bath if it was the eighth day of the infant's life. Again, Jesus uses logic to teach that Sabbath laws should reflect God's love for all regardless of age. If circumcision on the eighth day keeps the law, how much more so does holistic healing?

Jonathan Jasper Wright, whose parents were enslaved, was a Pennsylvania attorney employed by the Freedmen's Bureau. Sworn into his seat on the South Carolina bench in 1870, he became the first black state Supreme Court Justice. Wright's controversial tenure included some rulings that narrowed the rights of recently freed black South Carolinians.



Jesus uses logic to teach that Sabbath laws should reflect God's love for all regardless of age.

For example, he ruled that formerly enslaved people did not have the right to sue for previous grievances, i.e., before the Civil War. Wright believed that allowing litigation on pre-Civil War matters could lead to numerous cases. Under the leadership of newly elected Democrats in 1877, a resolution called for an investigation and

impeachment of Wright. Although he resigned before the investigation was completed, defamatory statements followed him to his grave. According to an article written by the Brennan Center, an announcement about Wright read, "it is scarcely necessary to say that his published opinions do not give evidence of

much legal learning or ability.” Animosity concerning Wright’s opinions remind us of accusations hurled at Jesus.

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/jonathan-jasper-wright-americas-first-black-state-supreme-court-justice>

CASE STUDY

In 2007 Alexander McLean founded African Prisons Project, now known as Justice Defenders. This nonprofit seeks to bring legal training and information to prisoners in three African countries: Uganda, Kenya, Gambia. McLean founded this nonprofit after witnessing a man arrested by the police die five days after his imprisonment. McLean had cared for the man over the five-day period as he laid on the urine-stained floor. He also saw other prisoners receive no help from the community or government and die after their arrest. This gave birth to McClean’s desire to help. Offering much-needed legal services to many who were imprisoned for years without

being aware of their rights, McClean acted. There are over 350 volunteers and 71,600 have received free legal advice. McLean’s goal is to bring justice to one million and to train 446 legal assistants and lawyers. Like Jesus, McLean loved people more than the law.

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus continually teaches the same lessons about the law. God’s love supersedes following rules. Healing, of paramount importance during Jesus’ ministry, could not be limited by written law or oral tradition. Just as Jesus helps open Jewish society’s eyes, churches today must show that God’s love extends to every weekday. Whenever and wherever God puts you in contact with some-

one needing healing is an opportune time to, like Jesus, give God’s love right then.

Question

1. How can you distinguish between the Holy Spirit and demons?



Like Jesus, McLean
loved people more than
the law.

SUMMARY

Once again, Jesus finds the crowd questioning his authority. The law, designed to draw people closer, is being used to prevent people from being made whole. Jesus reminds you that the Sabbath is made for doing good and that good extends beyond commandment following. That good is exhibited in good works motivated by God's mercy.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Meditate on the "Order My Steps" lyrics as you think about what it means to honor the Sabbath.

Order my steps in Your word dear Lord
Lead me, guide me everyday
Send Your anointing, Father I pray
Order my steps in Your word
Please, order my steps in Your word.

Humbly, I ask Thee to teach me Your will
While You are working, help me be still
Though Satan is busy, God is real
Order my steps in Your word
Please, order my steps in Your word.

Bridle my tongue, let my words edify
Let the words of my mouth
be acceptable in Thy sight
Take charge of my thoughts
both day and night
Please, order my steps in Your word
Please order my steps in Your word

Prayer: Lord, may we, like Jesus, repeat the lesson of love over and over again. May we do this boldly and fearlessly as we bring healing to those in need. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 18-September 24

Monday	Ephesians 4:17-32 (Forgive as God in Christ Has Forgiven You)
Tuesday	Psalm 130 (God Forgives)
Wednesday	Matthew 5:27-32 (Adultery in the Heart)
Thursday	Matthew 7:1-5 (You Get the Judgment You Give)
Friday	Psalm 32 (Rejoice in God's Forgiveness)
Saturday	Isaiah 55:6-13 (Let the Wicked Forsake Their Way)
Sunday	John 8:1-11 (Neither Do I Condemn You)