Jeremiah Speaks Out Again, to Offer Promise of a New Covenant ‘on Hearts’

JERUSALEM, on a day in the year 597 BCE or so—“The Lord has spoken to me. There is hope for the people of God,” said the prophet Jeremiah as he walked through the desolate streets of Jerusalem early this morning. The people have heard him with mixed emotions.

Jeremiah offered the hope that God would make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. “It will not be a covenant like the one made with their ancestors when they were brought out of the land of Egypt. This covenant will be written on the hearts of the people,” said the prophet.

This prophet, who spoke the word of God from his youth, foretold the great disaster that came upon Jerusalem. He urged the king of Judah to surrender to the king of Babylon so that no harm would come to the city. But the king and the other nobles would not listen, and so the city is now in ruins.

Who is this man, Jeremiah, who predicted the fall of Jerusalem and now offers hope to the people who are left here?

Jeremiah is the son of Hilkiah, the priest in Anathoth (a city in the land of Benjamin, northeast of Jerusalem).

“I was called by God, when I was just a boy,” said Jeremiah. “God touched my mouth, and it is God’s words that I have spoken ever since.”

Baruch Wrote for the Prophet

Baruch, a longtime friend of Jeremiah, shared some events in the colorful life of the prophet:

“I remember how we spent months writing down what the Lord had told Jeremiah. Jeremiah would dictate, and I would write it down word-for-word on a scroll. When we finished, Jeremiah said I was to read it to the people.

“I went to the house of the Lord and stood at the entry of the New Gate. It was a day of fasting, and many people had come to the temple. While I was reading from the scroll, a messenger went to the officials of the city and told them what I was doing.

“The officials insisted that I read it to them as well. After I finished, they questioned me about the scroll and the words

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Jeremiah Speaks Out  
Continued from page 1

written on it. I told them that Jeremiah, the prophet, had dictated the words to me, and I wrote them in ink upon the scroll. They took the scroll, saying the king must hear this. Then they told me to take Jeremiah and go and hide, letting no one know where we were.

"Later we heard that the king burned the scroll in his brazier, section by section, as it was read to him. None of this bothered Jeremiah. He simply began again to dictate a second scroll. In this one, Jeremiah warned King Jehoiakim, who had burned the first scroll, that the king of Babylon would destroy him.

"Another time, Jeremiah went to a potter's shop and bought an earthenware jug. He took the jug to the city gate called the Potsherd Gate. There he smashed the jug! He told the people that just as the jug had been shattered, so would the city of Jerusalem be broken into many pieces.

"Jeremiah went to great lengths to make the people understand what he was saying. To show the people that they must submit to the yoke of Babylon in order to save the city, he walked around with a yoke on his shoulders. Yes, it was a yoke like the ones used to lead oxen.

"When another prophet heard Jeremiah telling what would happen to the city, he took the yoke and broke it. That didn't stop Jeremiah! He then put on a yoke made from iron and continued to speak to the people.

"Of course, Jeremiah was bound to get into trouble with the king for what he was telling everyone. First the king put him in jail, but then let him out. Another time some nobles put him in a well. Through the kindness of one of the king's servants, Jeremiah was freed. Surely he would have died there in that cold, dark, damp place."

So Jeremiah, who preached the destruction of the city, is now the one who is offering hope that the Lord will make a new covenant with the people of Judah and the people of Israel.

Ezekiel Also Predicted a New Covenant

The prophet Ezekiel was a young man who grew up around the temple of Jerusalem, where his father was a priest. Ezekiel was probably in training for the priesthood at the time Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadrezzar. Since he was from an upper-class family, he was led into exile in Babylon with many other captives.

In the year 593 BCE, during a thunderstorm, Ezekiel received his first vision and his call from God. He saw a cloud with great "fire flashing forth," creatures with wings, and a "wheel within a wheel." This vision made him sure he was called to prophesy to the people of God in exile in Babylon.

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, said that God would make a new covenant with the people of Israel. It would be a covenant of peace and be everlasting—for their children's children. Ezekiel said, "David shall be king over them; and they shall have one shepherd."

Ezekiel became known for his ecstatic visions and trance-like experiences. During these times, he saw vivid pictures of seemingly impossible events such as the "valley of the dry bones."

Words from this vision of Ezekiel are used in the refrain of a folk song: "Ezekiel cried, 'Dem dry bones! Oh, hear the word of the Lord.'"
Advent Season Begins New Church Year

Advent is the first season of the Church Year and begins on the Sunday nearest St. Andrew’s Day (November 30)—the fourth Sunday before Christmas.

The word Advent comes from the Latin word adventus, which means “coming.” In Advent we are waiting and preparing for the coming of Christ in two ways:

First, we prepare for the Christ Child to come into our lives again at Christmas. We remember how Jesus was born in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph, and this helps us to understand that Jesus came into the world as a human being.

Second, we remember that we are to wait for the second coming of Christ as predicted in the Scriptures. Christ will fulfill his promise to return in power and glory.

The readings from Scripture during Advent are about both kinds of waiting and preparing. The prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures foretold the coming of a Messiah, “the anointed one” who would be a Savior of the people of God. In Gospel readings, we hear about John the Baptist who also spoke of the coming of Christ. (The word “Christ” is Greek for “Anointed One.”)

The color for Advent is sometimes purple, because during this time we experience a quiet time of reflection and prayer similar to Lent. In fact Advent is often called “a little Lent.” In more recent times, the color Sarum blue is used to distinguish Advent from Lent. This blue is associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

Symbols for the Four Evangelists

The symbol for Matthew the Evangelist or Gospel writer is a golden man with wings, or an angel. This symbol came about because the Gospel of Matthew primarily tells us about Jesus as a human being.

The symbol for Mark the Evangelist is a winged lion. The lion is an ancient symbol for royalty. It is often displayed on the coat of arms for a king and is a Hebrew symbol for David, the great King of the United Kingdom of Israel. The gold lion with wings indicates that Mark told of the royal dignity of Christ.

The symbol for Luke the Evangelist, writer of the third Gospel, is a gold ox with wings. The ox was an animal of sacrifice in ancient times. In the Gospel of Luke, the idea of Jesus’ life as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity is said to be the primary theme.

The fourth Evangelist is John, whose symbol is a winged eagle. The eagle, whose eyes can see tiny specks on the horizon, is said to be able to see into the mysteries of heaven. This Gospel reveals the divinity of Christ and gives the reader a glimpse into the Kingdom of God.

As you read and hear the four Gospels, see if you agree with the symbols created by the Church long ago—and how they interpret the life of Jesus in different ways.
Names for the Messiah

Session 1: "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." — Isaiah 9:6 (NRSV)

Session 2: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." — Jeremiah 31:33b (NRSV)
Isaiah Predicted the Birth of Immanuel
While in Dialogue with Judah’s King

JERUSALEM, around 735 BCE—The prophet Isaiah has made an important announcement. He said that a young woman will bear a son whose name will be Immanuel. The meaning of the name is clear—Immanuel means “God is with us.”

However, the prophet was not specific about the identity of the young woman or when and where the birth would take place.

This word from Isaiah was spoken to King Ahaz, at the time they heard that King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah of Israel had made an alliance. This implied the threat of an attack on Jerusalem. It is said that when the news of the alliance reached the palace, “the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.”

Judah Feels Threatened

The threat to Judah by the northern kings is an attempt to get King Ahaz to join with the northern kingdoms in an alliance against Assyria. Isaiah is opposed to this alliance. He said clearly to Ahaz, “If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.” This echoes the prophet’s belief that faith in God is sufficient for divine protection.

The encounter between Isaiah and King Ahaz occurred at the end of the road leading to the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field. A source present at the meeting said that the Lord spoke to Ahaz, telling him to ask for a sign. Ahaz refused, saying he would not put the Lord to a test.

Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.”

Then came the prophet’s prediction of the birth of the child, Immanuel.

Isaiah’s access to the king has long been a mystery to the citizens of Jerusalem. Known only as the son of Amoz, he may be of noble birth. He seeks to be quite unafraid to confront the king or members of the court with his prophecies. Court records show that Isaiah also had audiences with King Uzziah and King Jotham.

His wife is a prophetess herself. Their two sons have names with meanings: Shear-jashub (“A remnant shall return”) and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (“The spoil speeds, the prey hastes”). His whole family supports Isaiah’s work.
Our Worship Includes Poetry First Written In Hebrew by the Prophets and Psalmists

The Songs of Isaiah are wonderful examples of Hebrew poetry. We use them as Canticles in Morning Prayer. See The Book of Common Prayer, pages 86-87.

The First and Second Songs of Isaiah are poems of thanksgiving and trust. The Third Song is a hymn of praise and adoration. All three are filled with parallelism.

Hebrew poetry is also found in the New Testament, primarily in the Gospel of Luke. Three examples are related to the birth of the Messiah:

- The Song of Zechariah, also known as the Benedictus Dominus Deus. It is found in Luke 1:68-70 and in The Book of Common Prayer, page 92.
- The Song of Mary, also called Magnificat, is in Luke 1:46-55 and in The Book of Common Prayer, page 91.
- The Song of Simeon, also known as Nunc Dimittis, is in Luke 2:29-32 and in The Book of Common Prayer, page 93.

The First Song of Isaiah

Surely, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid.
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior.
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation.
And on that day you shall say,
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;
Make his deeds known among the peoples; see that they remember that his Name is exalted.
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, and this is known in all the world.
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 12:2-6

Prophets like Isaiah were also poets. They used their poetry to speak about God. Psalmists like David, and other Hebrew sages, were also poets.

Almost one-third of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) was written as poetry. Originally, it was heard during religious rites when the community of God’s people would gather.

Four kinds of poems can be found in the Bible: hymns, set to music and sung during worship by choirs or soloists; laments and confessions, often used at funerals; poems of thanksgiving and trust in God; and the royal psalms used on occasions of great ceremony when the king would have been present.

Writing Hebrew poetry was difficult. The rhythm was flexible and marked by the tone rather than by syllable as most English poetry is. There were no rhymes or set forms for lines.

Hebrews liked poetry in which the same beginning sound was repeated. (An example in English would be, “Lucy lived long by the lake.”) They also used repetition of vowel sounds, word plays, and onomatopoeia—words that sound like what they represent, such as buzz, or whirl.

A main element of Hebrew poetry is parallelism. We can see this in translations of the psalms. This occurs when the first line states a thought, and the second line repeats or echoes the same thought. An asterisk (*) often indicates the two separate thoughts:

Give ear to my words, O Lord;* consider my meditation. —Psalm 5:1

Or, the thoughts may be opposites or in contrast to each other, as in:
For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,* but the way of the wicked is doomed. —Psalm 1:6

In still another form of parallelism, the second line advances the thought of the first line, as in:
The Lord is my shepherd;* I shall not be in want. —Psalm 23:1

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Advent hymns in *The Hymnal 1982* reflect the themes of the prophets: The people of God are waiting for the Messiah to come.

One of the best-known Advent hymns is “O come, O come, Emmanuel,” 56. Each stanza begins with a name for the Savior of God’s people. Images used by the Hebrew prophets are shared in the words of this hymn. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, as Micah had said, and he would bring new life to God’s people as predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Two other Advent hymns quote directly from the prophet Isaiah:

- “Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near! Let every hill and valley a level way appear.” (*The Hymnal 1982, 65*).
- “Comfort, comfort ye my people, speak ye peace, thus saith our God; comfort those who sit in darkness mourning ’neath their sorrows’ load.” (*The Hymnal 1982, 67*).

In Advent, our Scripture readings, music, and liturgy all invite us into a time of reflective waiting for the coming of the Christ, the Anointed One.

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**MEMORY CHALLENGE**

**PAST CHALLENGE**

**Gospel Symbols**

- **Matthew**—Winged Man
- **Mark**—Winged Lion
- **Luke**—Winged Ox
- **John**—Rising Eagle

**NEW CHALLENGE**

The following stories in the life of Jesus appear only in the Gospels and the chapters that are cited here. Look them up. Memorize where to find each one.

**Jesus’ Birth and Childhood**

- Jesus’ birth and infancy in Bethlehem
  

  The visit of the Magi
  
  — *Matthew, chapter 2*.

  Jesus in the temple at age twelve
  

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**Puzzle Answers:**

1. **B O R N**
2. **M E S S I A H**
3. **W A I T E D**
4. **M I C A H**
5. **P R O P H E T**
6. **S A V I O R**
7. **J E R E M I A H**
8. **I M M A N U E L**
9. **I S A I A H**
10. **V I S I O N**
11. **H E A R T S**
Session 2

"A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord." —Isaiah 11:1-2 (NRSV)

"Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God." —Isaiah 40:1 (NRSV)
Visitor from Galilee Surprises Elizabeth
And Shares News Delivered by an Angel

A CITY IN JUDAH, about 6 BCE—An older citizen named Elizabeth was surprised yesterday by the arrival of a relative from Galilee. The visitor is a young woman named Mary, who has just learned that she will have a baby. We understand she is planning to stay here about three months. Elizabeth herself has been pregnant for some time.

We talked with Mary who explained the reason for this sudden, unplanned visit.

"I live in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, with my family. I am engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Joseph is a carpenter in Nazareth; we plan to be married soon.

"A few days ago, I was working in the shed near the garden when a wonderful light filled the room. Suddenly there was the angel Gabriel standing in front of me.

"The angel spoke to me and said, ‘Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.’

"I was confused by his words and frightened. I hid my face and considered what this could mean.

"Then the angel spoke to me in a gentle voice, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.’ He then told me many other things that would concern the child.

"But I was still confused. I said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’

"The angel reassured me that this would be the work of the Holy Spirit so that the child who is to be born will be holy, the Son of God.

"He also told me that Elizabeth is going to have a son. I knew then the meaning of the angel’s message that nothing is impossible for God. So I responded with my whole heart, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’

As soon as the angel left, Mary said, she quickly made arrangements to come here to spend some time with Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah.
Angels Appear in the Scriptures As Protectors and Messengers from God

The word "angel" in Hebrew meant "messenger from God." Later, it also came to mean a spiritual being. In the Hebrew Scriptures, angels had four functions: to carry messages from God to God's people, to tell of special events, to protect the people of God, and to serve as instruments of divine displeasure.

The Hebrew Scriptures contain many accounts of angels. They appear in the stories of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, and Gideon.

The names of two archangels are revealed in the Book of Daniel:
- Gabriel was God's messenger who appeared to Daniel to help him interpret a vision. See Daniel 8:16.
- Michael, known as the "guardian of heaven," appeared in a vision—to help Daniel face the prince of Persia and his armies. See Daniel 10:13.

These same two angels are mentioned in the New Testament. Gabriel was the messenger who appeared to Zechariah to foretell the birth of John. By tradition, he is also the angel who came to Mary to announce the coming birth of Jesus. Michael is the leader of the army of good angels that finally overcome the power of evil, in the Revelation of John.

Two other angels are mentioned in the books of the Apocrypha. (Those books are not included in the Old and New Testament but are included with some editions of the Bible.) Raphael, who is associated with healing, is a prominent figure in the story of Tobias, in the Book of Tobit. Uriel, "the angel who is over the lights," is found in the book of Enoch.

Angels have always served as messengers and protectors, but our ideas about their appearance have changed through time. In the New Testament they are robed in white garments, and bathed in radiance. Not only do they announce divine messages such as the births of John and of Jesus, but also they warn of crisis and bring comfort. Angels are intricately involved in the life of Jesus, and the apostle Paul writes of the powers of the angels.

The Book of Common Prayer includes angels in its prayers. In Compline, we pray to the Lord, "give your angels charge over those who sleep." (See page 134.) In four of the Rites for Holy Eucharist, the celebrant says, "Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name: . . ."

The Hymnal 1982 also has many references to angels in the hymns we sing at all times of the year. We expect to hear about angels at Christmas, in carols such as "Angels, from the realms of glory," and "Hark! the herald angels sing." Lots of angels are included in the hymns sung at Easter and Ascension.

Hymn 282 mentions three of the archangels named above. It is meant to be sung at the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, September 29. On this day we celebrate the work of all God's angels.
Ideas for Christmas Kindness at Home

The weeks before Christmas can be a very busy time for everyone. Think of some ways to help the other people who live with you. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Make a cup of hot chocolate for your mother or father, or both.
- Decide not to argue with a brother or sister for a whole day.
- Make a card that says, "I love you," and share it with a parent, grandparent, or neighbor.
- Read a Christmas story to a younger child you know.
- Take a toy you no longer use—in good condition—and give it to a shelter for homeless people.
- Do your chores without being asked.

Talk with your family to decide on a new tradition that will help all of you to focus on Advent as a time of quiet reflection.

One idea might be to spend one evening a week doing something together as a family. You might watch a Christmas movie together, read the Christmas Story aloud, play a game, or listen to recordings of Christmas carols.

Another idea is to say prayers around the Advent wreath before dinner or at bedtime each Sunday in Advent, or each evening the week before Christmas Day.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The following stories in the life of Jesus appear only in the Gospels and the chapters that are cited here. Look them up. Memorize where to find each one.

PAST CHALLENGE

Jesus’ Birth and Childhood

Jesus’ birth and infancy in Bethlehem
—Luke, ch. 2

The visit of the Magi
—Matthew, ch. 2

Jesus in the temple at age twelve—Luke, ch. 2

NEW CHALLENGE

Stories of Jesus’ Early Ministry

John baptizes Jesus
—Matthew, ch. 3;
Mark, ch. 1; Luke, ch. 3

Jesus’ temptations
—Matthew, ch. 4;
Mark, ch. 1; Luke, ch. 4

Jesus chooses disciples
—Matthew, ch. 10;
Mark, ch. 3; Luke, ch. 6

EXTRA CHALLENGE:

Name the twelve disciples of Jesus

Take a toy you no longer use—in good condition—and give it to a shelter for homeless people.
An _ of the Lord appeared to Mary.
2. "... the child to be ___ will be holy . . ."
3. Mary and Joseph lived in a town called ___.
4. "The Holy Spirit will come ___ you."
5. "How can this be, since I am a ___?"
6. "He will reign over the house of ___ forever."
7. The angel ___ was sent by God.
8. The virgin’s name was ___.
9. "The power of the ___ will overshadow you."
10. Nazareth was in ___.
11. Mary was betrothed to ___.
12. Mary’s child will be the ___ of God.

"I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." —Psalm 40:8 (NRSV)

"The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.’" —Luke 1:30 (NRSV)
Newborn Baby Visited by Shepherds Who Received the News from an Angel

A day in BETHLEHEM, about 6 BCE—
A child was born last night on the outskirts of this city, under unique circumstances.

Joseph told us about their long and tiring trip and how difficult it had been for Mary, who was pregnant. He also shared the problems they had in finding a place to spend the night in this overcrowded city.

No Rooms Available

Joseph said, “I must have knocked on the doors of every inn in the town. They were all full. There was just no room for any more guests. I am extremely grateful to the innkeeper who offered us this stable, which turned out to be the place where the child was born.”

Mary then shared with us some of the things that happened after the birth.

She said, “After my son was born, I became aware of a bright but warm light filling the stable. Joseph said it was an

Continued on page 2

Origin of Mary’s Song Revealed

It was learned through a reporter in another city of Judah that Mary, mother of the child born in a stable, visited a relative there for about three months during her pregnancy. Her relative is Elizabeth, wife of Zechariah.

As they greeted each other, Mary sang a song that begins:

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God . . .”

(Continued on page 2)

We visited with the parents earlier today to hear their unusual story firsthand.

Mary and Joseph, the child’s mother and father, are from Nazareth in Galilee. They traveled to Bethlehem in order to register under the census decree of Emperor Augustus. Joseph is a descendant of the house of David.
The city of Bethlehem is located five miles south of Jerusalem in Judah. Its name means "house of bread" because of the city's location in the agricultural area of the Judean desert.

According to Old Testament sources, Bethlehem is the burial place of Rachel, the wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph and Benjamin.

It is also the original home of Naomi and Elimelech, before their move to Moab. Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem after the deaths of Naomi's husband and sons. Ruth then met and married Boaz. Their son Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. David became king of all of Israel. Bethlehem is known as the City of David because of his birth here.

Micah, a prophet, foretold the birth of the Messiah in the City of David.

Mary and Joseph's families no longer lived in Bethlehem but had moved several generations ago to other parts of the country. The census decree of Emperor Augustus is the act that brought Mary and Joseph back to Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth.

"An angel visited me in Nazareth and told me that this child would be born..."
**Song of Mary**

Here is the text of the song Mary sang when she greeted Elizabeth, nine months ago:

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Mary's song reflects her devotion to God and her hope that the covenant with Abraham will be fulfilled.

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**Memory Challenge**

**Past Challenge**

Stories of Jesus' Early Ministry
- John baptizes Jesus — *Matthew, ch. 3; Mark, ch. 1; Luke, ch. 3*
- Jesus' temptations — *Matthew, ch. 4; Mark, ch. 1; Luke, ch. 4*
- Jesus chooses disciples — *Matthew, ch. 10; Mark, ch. 3; Luke, ch. 6*

**New Challenge**

Turn to *Luke 2:1-20* and to *The Hymnal 1982* section, "Christmas" (77-115). Choose a line from Luke or a Christmas hymn stanza, and be prepared to recite from memory.

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**Magnificat** Is a Latin Word

Mary's Song, known as The Magnificat, is included as a Canicle in celebrations of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. The term "Magnificat" comes from the first word of the Song, in the Latin translation. Our English word "magnify" comes from this root.

The Magnificat is also set to music in the Hymnal 1982. The musical settings for the Canticle can be found in the Service Music, S-185 through S-189. Hymn 437 is based on the words of The Song of Mary.

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**Puzzle Answers:**

decree Augustus registered Nazareth
Galilee David Bethlehem
Mary engaged first-born manger room inn
shepherds flocks
angel glory terrified
afraid Savior Messiah
Lord multitude
God heaven earth
Unit II: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1: Isaiah 9:6; Jeremiah 31:33b
Session 2: Isaiah 11:1-2; 40:1
Session 3: Psalm 40:8; Luke 1:30
Session 4: Luke 1:47; 2:11
Session 5: Isaiah 60:1; Matthew 2:11c
Session 6: Isaiah 35:5-6; Mark 10:52a
Session 7: Jeremiah 17:14; Mark 2:12b
Session 8: Luke 17:19; John 11:25-26a
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

THE NATIVITY

Directions: Test your memory. Without looking at the Bible, see how many of the blanks below you can fill in.

A ______ went out from Emperor ______ that all the world should be __________. Joseph went from __________ in ______ to Judea, to the city of ______ called ________. He went with ___________, to whom he was __________. While they were there, she gave birth to her ________ son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a ________. They were staying in a ________ because there was no ________ for them at the __________. There were ________ nearby tending their ________. An ________ appeared to them and the ________ of the Lord shone around them, and they were __________. But the angel said, “Do not be __________. I bring you good news: to you is born in the city of David a __________, who is the __________, the __________. Suddenly there was with the angel a ________ of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to ________ in the highest __________, and on ________ peace among those whom he favors!”

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 4

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Luke 1:47 (NRSV)

“To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” Luke 2:11 (NRSV)
Bethlehem Visited by Eastern Wise Men
Who Claim Mary’s Child Is to Be King

BETHLEHEM—It has been some time since the birth of Jesus in a stable here. All has been quiet until yesterday. Around noon, three men came riding into Bethlehem on camels looking for the child. They were not recognized by any of the local citizens.

We observed the strangers as they entered the house where Mary, Joseph, and the infant are staying. They were dressed in garments of richly-colored silks and velvets, with accents of gold. They appeared to carry gifts with them. Their servants, who waited outside with the camels, were also dressed like members of a wealthy household. We asked their head camel-master to tell us who they were and why they had come.

He said, “We are from the kingdoms of Tarshish, Sheba, and Seba. Our masters set out on this journey many moons ago. We have been traveling from our homes in the east, following a star. We stopped briefly in Jerusalem, at King Herod’s palace, and then came to Bethlehem. We have heard that a king was born here,” he said.

Here to Honor a King

We were able to get an interview with Caspar, the youngest of the three men. He told us their story:

“We are astrologers in our countries. We study the heavens for signs of future events. We read in the scriptures that a king would be born in this country. When the star appeared in the western sky, we knew it was a sign that the birth had taken place. It is our custom to pay homage to such a great king at the time of his birth, so we set out on our journey.

“My companions, Balthazar and Melchior, and I began our journeys separately. We met along the way.

“We were not sure of the exact location of the birth, so we inquired of King Herod in Jerusalem. His priests and scribes told us that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. King Herod gave us directions to this place, and the star has confirmed the fact.

“We brought gifts to the young king, according to the custom of our lands: gold, the symbol of wealth; frankincense, the perfume of the divine; and myrrh, the ointment of death.”

We asked how long they would be staying in Bethlehem. Caspar replied, “We are leaving shortly. King Herod has asked us to return to Jerusalem to bring him news of the child. However, we all feel strange about Herod’s request, and Balthazar has had a dream of warning. We will not be going back to Jerusalem but will return to our homes another way.”

The wise men left just after sunrise this morning. Mary, Joseph, and the child have also left Bethlehem, traveling in the direction of Egypt.
Epiphany Comes After Twelfth Night

In many countries, on the Feast of the Epiphany, gifts are exchanged in remembrance of the gifts given to the Christ Child by the wise men.

In Spain, legend says that the three kings traveled through that land on their way to Bethlehem—and that they continue to do so each year. On their way through the villages and towns, they leave gifts for the children who put out water, hay, and carrots for the camels.

In Italy, the legend of Befana is told. She was an old woman who, as the story goes, did not go with the wise men when they stopped by her house on the way to see the Christ Child. Her excuse was that she had to finish cleaning her house. When her work was done, she set out to follow the wise men but could not find them. She wanders around Italy to this day, searching for the Christ Child and leaving gifts for children who are good.

This legend is also told in Russia, where the old woman's name is Babouschka.

In modern times, many churches celebrate Epiphany with pageants that include the visit of the wise men to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

The word “Epiphany” comes from a Greek word that means “showing forth.” We use the word to speak of Christ’s revelation of God’s glory. The visit of the wise men, who were not Jewish, reveals that Christ came for all peoples of the world.

The celebration of Epiphany began in the Eastern Church much earlier than the celebration of Christmas.

Many Christians around the world continue to observe the birth of Jesus as they have for centuries. Christmas is a time of worship, and Epiphany is the day of festivities and gift-giving.

By tradition, the three kings are said to have arrived in Bethlehem twelve days after the birth of Jesus. So the Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated January 6, at the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas. Twelfth Night is also celebrated as the end of the Christmas season and often includes parades with the three wise men as prominent figures.
Christians Share Epiphany Customs

In many communities, the blessing of a home is a part of the Epiphany tradition. The family and guests begin at the main entrance to the house where a piece of chalk is used to mark the year and the initials C M B on the doorway. The initials stand for the names of the wise men (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar). Since these are legendary names, the initials could also stand for the Latin phrase Christe, Mansiaom Benedica, which means “Christ, Bless this house.”

Another tradition is the baking of a Three Kings cake. Any favorite recipe can be used. Three beans are hidden in the batter and baked in the cake. The individuals who receive pieces of cake with the beans in them receive an “honor.” The honor varies. The three lucky ones might get to wear crowns and become the Three Kings for the rest of the evening. Or the bean-finders could receive promises for the coming year: luck to the first; love to the second; and the privilege of baking the cake for the next year, to the third.

Trinkets are sometimes substituted for the beans, and are said to tell the persons’ futures.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The following stories in the life of Jesus appear only in the Gospels and the chapters that are cited here. Look them up. Memorize where to find each one.

PAST CHALLENGES

Jesus’ Birth and Childhood
Jesus’ birth and infancy in Bethlehem—Luke, ch. 2
The visit of the Magi—Matthew, ch. 2
Jesus in the temple at age twelve—Luke, ch. 2

Stories of Jesus’ Early Ministry
John baptizes Jesus—Matthew, ch. 3; Mark, ch. 1; Luke, ch. 3
Jesus’ temptations—Matthew, ch. 4; Mark, ch. 1; Luke, ch. 4
Jesus chooses disciples—Matthew, ch. 10; Mark, ch. 3; Luke, ch. 6

NEW CHALLENGE

Examples of Jesus’ Teaching
Sermon on the Mount—Matthew, chs. 5, 6, 7
The Lord’s Prayer—Matthew, ch. 6 (in the Sermon on the Mount) and Luke, ch. 11

Parable of the Good Samaritan—Luke, ch. 10
Parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son—Luke, ch. 15

Puzzle Answers:
priests, gold, Israel, Herod, frankincense, scribes, Jerusalem, worship, treasure, Bethlehem, gifts, Christ Child, myrrh, Judea, Judah, wise men
Magi Seek the Christ Child

Bethlehem Visited by Eastern Wise Men
Who Claim Mary’s Child Is to Be King

*BETHELHEM*—It has been some time since the birth of Jesus in a stable here. All has been quiet until yesterday. Around noon, three men came riding into Bethlehem on camels looking for the child. They were not recognized by any of the local citizens.

We observed the strangers as they entered the house where Mary, Joseph, and the infant are staying. They were dressed in garments of richly-colored silks and velvets, with accents of gold. They appeared to carry gifts with them. Their servants, who waited outside with the camels, were also dressed like members of a wealthy household. We asked their head camel-master to tell us who they were and why they had come.

He said, “We are from the kingdoms of Tarshish, Sheba, and Seba. Our masters set out on this journey many moons ago. We have been traveling from our homes in the east, following a star. We stopped briefly in Jerusalem, at King Herod’s palace, and then came to Bethlehem. We have heard that a king was born here,” he said.

**Here to Honor a King**

We were able to get an interview with Caspar, the youngest of the three men. He told us their story:

“We are astrologers in our countries. We study the heavens for signs of future events. We read in the scriptures that a king would be born in this country. When the star appeared in the western sky, we knew it was a sign that the birth had taken place. It is our custom to pay homage to such a great king at the time of his birth, so we set out on our journey.

“My companions, Balthazar and Melchior, and I began our journeys separately. We met along the way.

“We were not sure of the exact location of the birth, so we inquired of King Herod in Jerusalem. His priests and scribes told us that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. King Herod gave us directions to this place, and the star has confirmed the fact.

“We brought gifts to the young king, according to the custom of our lands: gold, the symbol of wealth; frankincense, the perfume of the divine; and myrrh, the ointment of death.”

We asked how long they would be staying in Bethlehem. Caspar replied, “We are leaving shortly. King Herod has asked us to return to Jerusalem to bring him news of the child. However, we all feel strange about Herod’s request, and Balthazar has had a dream of warning. We will not be going back to Jerusalem but will return to our homes another way.”

The wise men left just after sunrise this morning. Mary, Joseph, and the child have also left Bethlehem, traveling in the direction of Egypt.
Words from Matthew

Directions: Several important people, places, and items were mentioned in Matthew 2:1-12. Unscramble the words below, and write the correct answer on each blank.

esstipr _____________ ogdl _____________
alersi _____________ droeh _____________
eennaniskerf _____________ birescs _____________
mejlaersu _____________ owprihs _____________
sterearu _____________ eeehmltb _____________
stifg _____________ irtsc licdh _____________
rhmry _____________ jaued _____________
ujhad _____________ siwe emn _____________

Unit II: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1: Isaiah 9:6; Jeremiah 31:33b
Session 2: Isaiah 11:1-2; 40:1
Session 3: Psalm 40:8; Luke 1:30
Session 4: Luke 1:47; 2:11
Session 5: Isaiah 60:1; Matthew 2:11c
Session 6: Isaiah 35:5-6; Mark 10:52a
Session 7: Jeremiah 17:14; Mark 2:12b
Session 8: Luke 17:19; John 11:25-26a
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

LEARNING
SCRIPTURE

Session 5

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." Isaiah 60:1 (NRSV)

"Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Matthew 2:11c (NRSV)
Crowds Witness Healing of Blind Man By Jesus, a Visitor to City of Jericho

JERICHO, around 25 CE—A blind beggar on the road outside of this city was healed today by Jesus of Nazareth, a traveling rabbi.

According to a city official, Jesus and his followers came to Jericho earlier in the day. Jesus preached to large crowds here, and many people followed him as he headed toward the edge of town.

An eyewitness at the scene gave us the following account of what happened:

"Bartimaeus, the blind man, was sitting by the edge of the road begging for coins as he does every day. I heard someone tell him that Jesus of Nazareth was in Jericho and would soon be passing by on the way out of town. I guess this person thought Bartimaeus would be able to beg for money from the crowd with Jesus.

"Anyway, as Jesus came near, Bartimaeus shouted at him, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Confused by what he was shouting, many of the people standing nearby ordered him to be quiet. That only seemed to make him more determined. Bartimaeus shouted again, even louder, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'

Jesus Hears Bartimaeus’ Shouts

"When Jesus heard Bartimaeus shout, he stood still and called the beggar to him. Some of the people in the crowd said to the blind man, 'Take heart. Get up, he is calling you.'

"When Bartimaeus heard this, he got up, threw off his beggar’s cloak, and ran toward Jesus. I heard Jesus say to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?'

"Well, that blind beggar didn’t ask for money. He asked the impossible! He wanted to be able to see again, and he called Jesus ‘teacher.’ At the moment I thought he had gone crazy as well as blind.

"Jesus spoke quietly to Bartimaeus and said, 'Go. Your faith has made you well.' Suddenly, just like that, Bartimaeus was able to see. Everyone stood there stunned. At first we didn’t believe it, but then Bartimaeus began to speak to us and tell us what he could see. He even recognized some of his old friends. We were all

Continued on page 2
Prayer Book Includes Service of Healing

The laying on of hands and anointing with oil have been traditional ways in which the healing grace of God is shared among God's people.

In the Early Church, these were common practices as Christians prayed for sick people. But in Medieval times, these forms of the healing ministry came to be used only as the last rites before death.

The Book of Common Prayer has a rite entitled "Ministration to the Sick." It offers prayers for healing and the opportunity for anointing for all people.

This service is to be used in case of illness at home or in the hospital and may also be shared at a public celebration of the Eucharist.

Two forms of the prayer for healing, said by the priest, are given. One is a stronger form of prayer directed at "all sickness of body and spirit." The second is more gentle in form and asks that "you may know the healing power of his (Christ's) love."

Everyone may take part in this healing service, regardless of the obvious state of a person's health. It is for inner healing of the mind and spirit as well as for the healing of disease or injury.

As with all of God's work in our lives, we must remember that God's means for healing and God's timetable may not be what we hope for or expect.

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MEMORY CHALLENGE

The following stories in the life of Jesus appear only in the Gospels and the chapters that are cited here. Look them up. Memorize where to find each one.

**PAST CHALLENGE**

Examples of Jesus' Teaching

Sermon on the Mount
--- *Matthew, chs. 5, 6, 7*

The Lord's Prayer
--- *Matthew, ch. 6* (in the Sermon on the Mount) and *Luke, ch. 11*

Parable of the Good Samaritan
--- *Luke, ch. 10*

Parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son
--- *Luke ch. 15*

**NEW CHALLENGE**

Examples of Jesus' Healing

Blind Bartimaeus
--- *Matthew, ch. 20; Mark, ch. 10; Luke, ch. 18*

The Paralytic
--- *Matthew, ch. 9; Mark, ch. 2; Luke, ch. 5*

Ten Lepers--- *Luke, ch. 17*

Peter's Mother-in-law
--- *Matthew, ch. 8*

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Puzzle Answers:

1. **B**LIND
2. **D**AVID
3. **J**ESUS
4. **M**ARK
5. **T**EACHERS
6. **I**NSTRUCTION
7. **D**ISCIPLINES
Blind Bartimaeus, Continued from page 1

amazed. It really was a miracle.

"I asked Bartimaeus what he was going to do with his new vision. He said, 'Why, I am going to follow Jesus, of course!' The last we saw of him he was headed away from Jericho with Jesus and the disciples."

We asked several people about the phrase, "Son of David," that Bartimaeus shouted to gain Jesus' attention. Was there something special about it?

One of the rabbis told us that in stories he had heard about Jesus, only demons and evil spirits had recognized him as the Son of David. Bartimaeus seems to be the first person to use this title—a title for the Messiah. Could Jesus be the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of the Jews?

Jesus Taught, Preached, and Healed

Jesus went all about Galilee teaching, preaching, and healing. He taught in synagogues, the traditional places for people to gather and hear the scriptures. Rabbis often discussed the readings with students and other members of the synagogue.

Jesus' teaching focused on helping people to live their lives as God would want them to. The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew, chs. 5, 6, and 7, is an example of Jesus’ teaching.

As a preacher, Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God and called on people to repent of their sins.

His healing ministry involved the curing of many kinds of diseases of the mind and the body. Sometimes, as in the case of Bartimaeus, all the sick person needed to do was ask Jesus for help. Sometimes people needed to show their faith in order to receive healing. Often, it was enough just to believe that they would be healed if they could touch Jesus’ clothes.

Amazing Grace’ Is a Favorite Hymn

He never stopped thinking of the gift God had given him in the midst of his sinful life.

The hymn, "Amazing Grace!" (The Hymnal 1982, 671), has become one of the most beloved hymns in America. It is sung in mountain villages and small country churches as well as on Hollywood sound stages and large cathedrals.

This hymn, which has come to mean so much to so many people, was written by an Anglican clergyman with a colorful history.

John Newton was born in 1725 to a seafaring family. His mother died when he was a little boy. He did not do very well in school and soon set out to sea. He was a troublemaker and fell in with the wrong people. He eventually became a slave trader and a notorious sinner.

Newton’s business involved taking manufactured items from England to West Africa where he traded them for slaves. He believed that the slaves would do anything to get their freedom, so he treated them as enemies, keeping them in chains.

Newton kept daily journals and letters, which have provided accurate information about this evil business. These also tell us of Newton’s conversion to the Christian faith.

Slave Trader Is Changed

As the story goes, Newton was well known for his terrible curses. In the middle of a violent storm in the Atlantic Ocean, instead of cursing, Newton was heard to exclaim, "If nothing can be done, then the Lord have mercy upon us."

He was astonished by what he had said, since he was not supposed to believe in God. He thought about this and realized that God had spoken to him. Gradually his life changed, and he became a priest in the Church of England.

He never stopped thinking of the gift God had given him in the midst of his sinful life. He wrote “Amazing Grace!” in 1764 while serving a church called Olney Parish in Buckinghamshire, England. It tells of his life and praises God for saving him.

Newton said, in the hymn, “I once was lost but now am found, was blind, but now I see.” For him, it was no less a miracle than what Jesus had done for Bartimaeus.
A Blind Man Sees

**Crossword Clues:**

**ACROSS**
1. A word meaning "cannot see."
2. The town where this event took place.
3. The blind man’s father.
4. The blind man shouted, “Jesus—Son of _______.”
5. Another name the man called Jesus.
6. The blind man got money by being a _______.
7. The healer.
8. A name for the followers of Jesus.

**DOWN**
1. The man who was healed.
2. A word meaning "belief in."
3. The town Jesus was from.
4. A word that means “to be silent.”
5. An organ of the human body.
6. A kind of coat.
7. A word meaning “blessing.”

**Unit II:**

**LEARNING SCRIPTURE**

Session 1: Isaiah 9:6; Jeremiah 31:33b
Session 2: Isaiah 11:1-2; 40:1
Session 3: Psalm 40:8; Luke 1:30
Session 4: Luke 1:47; 2:11
Session 5: Isaiah 60:1; Matthew 2:11c
**Session 6:** Isaiah 35:5-6; Mark 10:52a
Session 7: Jeremiah 17:14; Mark 2:12b
Session 8: Luke 17:19; John 11:25-26a
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

**LEARNING SCRIPTURE**

**Session 6**

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.” Isaiah 35:5-6 (NRSV)

“Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well.’” Mark 10:52a (NRSV)
CAPERNAUM, around 25 CE—Jesus, the Rabbi, has been at home here for several days, and groups have been gathering to hear him. Today he performed a miracle under unusual circumstances.

A crowd was jammed into a local house where Jesus has been staying. He was speaking, and the people were focused on his words. No one noticed when a group of four men carrying a severely crippled man approached the residence.

According to a local citizen, the man had been paralyzed for a long time. He was totally unable to get around except through the kindness of others. They carried him from place to place on a stretcher. When his friends heard that the Rabbi was in Capernaum, they vowed to bring this man to Jesus for healing.

But this morning, when they arrived at the house where Jesus was, they were disappointed to find so many people that no one could even get near the door. They were still determined to bring their friend to Jesus. They climbed up on the roof of the house and raised the paralytic up after them.

Hole Dug in House Roof

By some means the visitors dug a hole in the roof of the house and lowered their friend down to the floor right in front of Jesus.

An eyewitness told us what happened: "We were listening closely to the teacher's words when pieces of dirt began to fall into the room. Suddenly there was a hole in the roof, and a paralyzed man was lowered into the room.

"Jesus, who seemed to be touched by the faith of the cripple's friends, said to him, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"

"Some skeptical scribes had been listening to what Jesus was saying before this event occurred. They were waiting to question him and accuse him of blasphemy, as they have done before in situations like this. They began, at this moment, to talk among themselves and make accusations.

"Jesus sensed the disturbance and asked the scribes, 'Which is easier to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say "Stand up and take your mat and walk"?'

"Jesus told everyone that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Then he turned to the paralytic and said,'I
Life Not Easy for People of Palestine Living in Their Small Mud Brick Homes

Many houses in Palestine during the time of Jesus were made of mud bricks. Straw and other fibrous materials were mixed with mud. The mud was then placed in wooden molds and left to dry in the sun.

The bricks were one cubit by one span in size. (A cubit was a unit of measure approximately the distance from an adult's elbow to the end of the middle finger—about 17.5 inches. A span was based on the distance from the thumb to the end of the fifth finger, when the fingers are spread—about 8.75 inches.)

When enough bricks were completed, they were laid on a foundation of stone. The bricks were then stacked to the height of one story and cemented together with more mud.

Wood beams and branches were laid across the walls to support the roof. The roof was usually more mud and clay on top of the branches.

These houses had small openings for windows, placed high in the walls—for cooling in the summer and warmth in the winter. There was no glass, so windows were covered with lattice or shutters when possible.

Few Furnishings

Such houses were small, cramped, and sparsely furnished. The entire family, plus the domestic animals, lived, slept, and ate inside these four walls.

Wealthier people may have lived in larger houses, with one room above the other. The “upper room” provided a sleeping space apart from the main area. It often served as a dining room and as guest quarters for visitors. The construction of these houses was basically the same as the single room dwelling, although more stone might be used in the walls of the lower level.

Even with the additional space in the more substantial houses, people spent much of their time in the market places and in the streets. People met and carried on the business of shopping for food and other needed items, as well as catching up on the events of the village or town.

Water was drawn from the local well. This often required many trips to meet a family’s needs. A large amount of time was spent in meal preparation, since there was no refrigeration. People had no way to preserve meat and vegetables. Bread was made by grinding wheat into flour and baking it in clay ovens.

Jesus Heals Paralytic, Continued from page 1

say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.’

“The crippled man stood up, picked up the bed he had been lying on, and walked out of the house right before the eyes of everyone there. The crowd just seemed to move out of the way to let him pass through.

“Some of the people there were speechless. Others began praising and glorifying God. Everyone exclaimed, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’”
More Churches Assist the Handicapped

Handicapped people could gather around Jesus to hear his message of hope because often he spoke outdoors. Today, of course, preaching and worship usually take place inside a church.

Many churches are making sure that people who are physically disadvantaged can have easy access to the church. They do this by installing ramps or elevators, so people in wheelchairs or who use crutches can get inside more easily. Some churches have installed speaker systems for those who need assistance for hearing. Others have signers for the deaf. Rest rooms for the handicapped are provided.

Look around your own church. How could you help handicapped people to feel welcome in your congregation? Some things are very simple and inexpensive to do, such as: putting a paper cup dispenser near a water fountain; installing a paper towel holder at a level where someone sitting down could reach it; or setting aside parking spaces for vehicles of the handicapped.

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PAST CHALLENGE
Examples of Jesus’ Healing

Blind Bartimaeus
—Matthew, ch. 20;
Mark, ch. 10; Luke, ch. 18

The Paralytic
—Matthew, ch. 9;
Mark, ch. 2; Luke, ch. 5

Ten Lepers—Luke, ch. 17

Peter’s Mother-in-law
—Matthew, ch. 8

NEW CHALLENGE
Other Miracles of Jesus

Water changed to Wine
—John, ch. 2

Calming the Sea
—Matthew, ch. 8;
Mark, ch. 4; Luke ch. 8

Feeding the Five Thousand
—Matthew, ch. 14;
Mark, ch. 6; Luke, ch. 9;
John, ch. 6
A Lame Man Walks

Find the words from Mark, ch. 2 (below), in the puzzle above. They can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal. Circle each word as you find it. The first one is done.

CAPERNAUM
SINS
PARALYZED
FORGIVEN
SPIRIT

FAITH
BLASPHEMY
PARALYTIC
MAT

HEARTS
STAND
AUTHORITY
WALK

EARTH
AMAZED
GLORIFIED
GOD

Unit II:
LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1: Isaiah 9:6; Jeremiah 31:33b
Session 2: Isaiah 11:1-2; 40:1
Session 3: Psalm 40:8; Luke 1:30
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Session 5: Isaiah 60:1; Matthew 2:11c
Session 6: Isaiah 35:5-6; Mark 10:52a
Session 7: Jeremiah 17:14;
Mark 2:12b
Session 8: Luke 17:19; John 11:25-26a
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 7

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for you are my praise." Jeremiah 17:14 (NRSV)

"(T)hey were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'" Mark 2:12b (NRSV)
Ten Village Lepers Are Miraculously Healed By Jesus As He Traveled Here

Jerusalem, around 25 CE—When Jesus, the Rabbi, arrived in this city yesterday, some of his followers reported a miraculous healing that occurred as they traveled here. Following is the story pieced together by a staff writer:

“Our group was entering a village in the region between Samaria and Galilee when ten lepers approached us. We knew they had the disease because of the way they were dressed. Also, they carried the usual rackets to warn people of their presence.

“As we approached, these lepers should have moved away and shouted, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ This is required by law. Instead, they moved closer but kept a safe distance. They said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’

“When Jesus saw them, he took pity on them, and sent them to the priests. As they hurried away, they were healed! They shouted for joy and ran toward the synagogue even faster.

“That is, everyone ran away except for one man. When he realized that he had been truly healed, he came running back and shouted, ‘Praise be to God! Praise be to God on high!’

“When he reached Jesus, he threw himself down on the ground and declared his thanks.

“No one else returned. Jesus seemed puzzled by this. He asked, ‘Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’” (We learned afterward that the man who returned was a Samaritan.)

One of the Nine Explains

After talking with witnesses to the healing of the lepers, a reporter encountered one of the nine who had left the scene without giving thanks.

When asked why he had left so quickly without turning back, the man replied, “I had been ill for so long and banished from the city. I had not seen my family for many years. When Jesus told us to go to the priest, I simply followed the others.

“I really did not think anything had changed until I was halfway to the synagogue. Then I realized I could feel my feet again.

“When we reached the home of the priest and he declared us clean, I finally believed that a miracle had happened. I fell to my knees then and thanked God. I also realized that I had not thanked the very one who had healed me. I was ashamed.”
Persons who had leprosy were declared unclean and banished from society.

**Disease of Leprosy Is Now Treatable**

Leprosy, in ancient times, referred to many different skin diseases. Some of these were probably rashes, eczema (dry, scaly patches on the skin), or loss of pigmentation (vitiligo).

True leprosy, now called Hansen's disease, was identified in 1871 by a man named Gerhard Hansen. It is a chronic, infectious disease that affects the skin and the nerve endings and is caused by a bacillus.

The symptoms of leprosy are lesions or spots on the skin that have lost their pigment and appear lighter in color. These spots spread and become raised and red. The spots do not produce sweat, and they become insensitive to cold, touch, and pain. Patients often feel a numbness in the hands and feet.

If not treated, Hansen's disease can result in severe disfigurement, such as loss of tissue in the face, hands, and feet.

For many centuries the only means of preventing the spread of the disease was to isolate the victims. Lepers were diagnosed by a priest, who had learned to recognize the symptoms.

Because all skin diseases were initially considered leprosy, rituals were established to allow those who were cured, or whose rash cleared up, to return to the community. The priest could, therefore, declare a person clean or unclean. That is why Jesus said to the lepers he healed, "Go and show yourselves to the priest."

Persons who had leprosy were declared unclean and banished from society. They were required to dress differently and to shake a rattle or call out "unclean" to passersby. Their clothes were usually rags that others discarded. Bandages were wrapped around their feet and hands because of the lesions.

Persons diagnosed as lepers often died from exposure or starvation rather than the disease itself.

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**Catherine of Siena Served the Sick**

Catherine was a young Christian who lived in Italy in the 14th century. The youngest of twenty-four children, she was determined to work for God and became a nun at the age of sixteen.

She belonged to The Third Order of St. Dominic, which meant that she did not live in a convent. Instead, she lived and worked among the people.

Catherine spent many hours working with the poor and in hospitals, taking care of the sick. According to one story, she cared for an old woman who was dying of leprosy, when no one else would go near the sick woman. As a result, Catherine also got leprosy. The legend says her leprosy was miraculously cured at the woman's funeral.
Christians Reach Out to Help Others

Many members of the Episcopal Church give time and energy to helping people who are ill or need physical care. Churches all across the United States have developed ministries to reach out to the homeless and less fortunate, through food pantries and clothes closets. Churches also sponsor homeless shelters, safe houses for women who are abused, and day care centers for low-income families.

Most churches recruit people to visit hospitals and nursing homes, take food to shut-ins, and reach out to people who simply need friendship.

Stephen Ministry is an organization whose members are given training in how to work with anyone facing a crisis—such as a terminal illness or chronic sickness. A Stephen minister visits people on a regular basis and offers prayers for God’s continual care.

Other churches are reaching out to immigrants who may need assistance in finding housing, getting a job, and attaining legal status. The church members do not stop there, however. They continue to offer support to families and individuals as they get used to living in this culture.

Another way in which American churches reach out to others is through the support of congregations in developing nations. By entering into a relationship with a church in Latin America or Africa, for example, a church in the United States is able to provide needed funds and assistance directly to a sister church.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The following stories in the life of Jesus appear only in the Gospels, in the chapters that are cited here. Look up the stories, then memorize where to find them.

PAST CHALLENGE
Other Miracles of Jesus

Water changed to Wine
—John, ch. 2

Calming the Sea
—Matthew, ch. 8; Mark, ch. 4; Luke ch. 8

Feeding the Five Thousand
—Matthew, ch. 14; Mark, ch. 6; Luke, ch. 9; John, ch. 6

NEW CHALLENGE
Holy Week

Palm Sunday
—Matthew, ch.21; Mark, ch. 11; Luke, ch. 19; John, ch. 12

The Last Supper
—Matthew, ch.26; Mark, ch. 14; Luke, ch. 22; John, ch. 13

Good Friday
—Matthew, ch. 27; Mark, ch. 14; Luke, ch. 23; John, ch. 19

Easter
—Matthew, ch. 28; Mark, ch. 16; Luke, ch. 24; John, ch. 20

Puzzle Answer:
“Your faith has made you well.”
THE HEALING OF THE LEPERS

Use the code below to find the hidden message from the story of Jesus' healing of the ten lepers.

A O H O V ↳
B X I P W
C [ J Q X
D K R Y
E O L S Z ↳
F ◆ M T ↳
G ◆ N U ↳

Unit II:
LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1: Isaiah 9:6; Jeremiah 31:33b
Session 2: Isaiah 11:1-2; 40:1
Session 3: Psalm 40:8; Luke 1:30
Session 4: Luke 1:47; 2:11
Session 5: Isaiah 60:1; Matthew 2:11c
Session 6: Isaiah 35:5-6; Mark 10:52a
Session 7: Jeremiah 17:14; Mark 2:12b
Session 8: Luke 17:19; John 11:25-26a
Session 9: Review Sessions 1-8

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 8

"(Jesus) said to him, 'Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.'" Luke 17:19 (NRSV)

"Jesus said . . . 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.'" John 11:25-26a (NRSV)
Lazarus, Brother of Martha and Mary, Is Raised from the Dead by His Friend

VILLAGE OF BETHANY, around 25 CE—A local citizen named Lazarus has just been raised from the dead by his friend, Jesus, the Rabbi whom some call the Messiah. We spoke with several people involved in this miraculous event.

Mary, a sister of Lazarus, said:

"When my brother became ill, we sent for Jesus. He did not come right away and was not here when my brother died. My sister, Martha, and I were upset. We wept at the loss of our brother, but we also knew how much Jesus cared about Lazarus. He would be so sad at the news!

"By the time Jesus and the disciples came near, Lazarus had been dead four days. My sister went out to greet Jesus."

Martha told us about the meeting:

"When I heard that Jesus was coming, I hurried to where he was entering the village. I told Jesus how sad we were that he had not come in time to save my brother's life.

"I knew, even at that point, that Jesus could do something. I implored him to take action. He told me my brother would rise again. He said, 'Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.' He asked me if I believed this. Knowing that Jesus was the Messiah, I assured him that I did indeed believe what he was saying.

"I went back and told Mary that Jesus was calling for her. Mary then went to where Jesus was waiting."

Jesus Goes to Lazarus' Tomb

Mary continued, "When I reached the place where Jesus was, I knelt at his feet and wept. I said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' Jesus began to weep. I knew how much he had loved my brother.

"Jesus then led me to the tomb where my brother lay. Martha and the others had joined us by then. I thought we were going there to mourn according to our custom. But when we arrived, Jesus commanded that the stone be taken away. Martha tried to stop him. The smell would be bad after four days, and it was not proper to touch..."
Burials were in tombs or in natural caves. The tombs were usually carved out of the soft limestone rock in the hillsides around a city or village.

Jewish Burial Customs of Ancient Times Included Spacious Tombs of Limestone

The rituals surrounding the death of a person in ancient times were prescribed by law and by nature. The Hebrew people did not embalm their dead, so burial was usually within twenty-four hours—or before sundown the next day.

When someone died, a loud cry would be heard from the house to indicate that a death had taken place.

The women of the family would gather to wash the body and anoint it with oils and spices. The body was then wrapped in strips of linen cloth, and a napkin was bound around the head.

As soon as the body was prepared, it was placed on a bier (a stretcher) and carried on the shoulders of the mourners to the tomb. Women were often employed to wail and cry loudly as the funeral procession wound its way through the streets.

Burials were in tombs or in natural caves. The tombs were usually carved out of the soft limestone rock in the hillsides around a city or village. Most tombs had a room outside the actual burial chamber, where relatives would mourn. The burial chamber had a small platform on which the body was laid.

Tombs were sealed with large stones, to keep the smell of decay inside and the predator animals outside.

Families mourned for three to seven days. During this time, the house in which the person died was considered unclean. Food could not be prepared until a week had passed. Neighbors and friends would bring food for the family, a custom which is still observed today.

Martha Worked Hard to Please Guests

Jesus was a welcome visitor in the home of his dear friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, at Bethany. When he went there, he would enjoy sharing a meal provided by Martha. She busied herself with the cooking as Jesus talked with people who gathered around him.

Martha's work was difficult, since she did not have the space or facilities for preparing more than one dish at a time.

She would use a hand mill consisting of two stones to grind the grain for bread. While the bread was rising and baking, the other dishes would be prepared. There would be vegetables, a meat or fish stew, fruit—and wine to drink.

On most days, Martha's sister Mary would assist with the food. But on the day of Jesus' visit, Mary chose to sit and listen to what the Teacher was saying.

Mary's choice was unusual, for women in those days were expected to do "women's work" and not participate in discussions with men.

Martha, who needed her sister's help and resented her absence, appealed to Jesus, "Tell her to help me!"

Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Jesus was telling Martha that all her hard work was not as important as the things he was teaching. He would have been glad to have Martha listening along with Mary and the others. Jesus wanted everyone—men and women, young and old—to learn about the kingdom of God.

Lazarus, Continued from page 1

...the dead. But Jesus insisted—and the stone was taken away. "Jesus prayed to his father in heaven. When he was finished, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' "My brother came out of the tomb and was alive! We rejoiced and celebrated as we praised God for this miracle."

Jesus and his disciples left Bethany shortly after this miracle occurred, and they have not been seen in the last few days.
Directions: Use the clues to find words to solve the word puzzle. If you get stuck, look at John 11:1-44.

Clues:
1. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived near this major city.
2. Jesus traveled to this village after the death of his friend.
3. They went with Jesus to the home of Lazarus.
4. Jesus raised this man from the dead.
5. This woman was the first to greet Jesus.
6. She was a sister of Lazarus.
7. A word for crying.
8. Another name for the smell of decay.
9. This covered the entrance to the tomb.
10. Strips of this were around Lazarus’ feet and hands.
11. Jesus did this deed to demonstrate God’s _____.
12. A title used for Jesus in this story.
MEMORY CHALLENGE

The following stories in the life of Jesus appear only in the Gospels, in the chapters that are cited here. Look up the stories, then memorize where to find them.

PAST CHALLENGES:
Jesus’ Birth and Childhood
Jesus’ birth and infancy in
Bethlehem—Luke, ch. 2
The visit of the Magi—Matthew, ch. 2
Jesus in the temple at age twelve
—Luke, ch. 2

Stories of Jesus’ Early Ministry
John baptizes Jesus—Matthew, ch. 3;
Mark, ch. 1; Luke, ch. 3
Jesus’ temptations—Matthew, ch. 4;
Mark, ch. 1; Luke, ch. 4
Jesus chooses disciples
—Matthew, ch. 10; Mark, ch. 3;
Luke, ch. 6

Examples of Jesus’ Teaching
Sermon on the Mount
—Matthew, chs. 5, 6, 7
The Lord’s Prayer—Matthew, ch. 6
(in the Sermon on the Mount) and
Luke, ch. 11
Parable of the Good Samaritan
—Luke, ch. 10
Parables of the lost sheep, lost coin,
and lost son—Luke ch. 15

Examples of Jesus’ Healing
Blind Bartimaeus—Matthew, ch. 20;
Mark, ch. 10; Luke, ch. 18
The Paralytic—Matthew, ch. 9;
Mark, ch. 2; Luke, ch. 5
Ten Lepers—Luke, ch. 17
Peter’s Mother-in-law
—Matthew, ch. 8

Other Miracles of Jesus
Water changed to Wine
—John, ch. 2
Calming the Sea—Matthew, ch. 8;
Mark, ch. 4; Luke ch. 8
Feeding the Five Thousand
—Matthew, ch. 14; Mark, ch. 6;
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Holy Week
Palm Sunday—Matthew, ch. 21;
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Mark, ch. 14; Luke, ch. 22;
John, ch. 13
Good Friday—Matthew, ch. 27;
Mark, ch. 14; Luke, ch. 23;
John, ch. 19
Easter—Matthew, ch. 28;
Mark, ch. 16; Luke, ch. 24;
John, ch. 20

NEW CHALLENGE:
Events After Easter
Jesus’ “Great Commission” to his
disciples—Matthew, ch. 28
(last paragraph of this Gospel)
Jesus’ ascension into heaven
—Luke, ch. 24 (last paragraph of
this Gospel)

Unit II: Learning Scripture

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