



**LIBERATING
FAITH STUDIES**

**A KING FOREVER
AND EVER**

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Roderick D. Belin, President/Publisher

Garland F. Pierce, Executive Director, Department of Christian Education

Tiffany Gregory, Chief of Operations

Orlando Dotson, Layout and Design

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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. Lionel Merritt

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!

Dont Forget to join us on 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.

The blessings from the teachings of the virtual AME Connectional Church School have been immeasurable. We convene the 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.

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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

The Merciful Son of David

Lesson Scripture: Luke 18:31-43

Focus Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

Key Verse: Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Luke 18:39

LUKE 18:35-43 (NRSV UE)

35 As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

36 When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening.

37 They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

38 Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

39 Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

40 Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him, and when he came near, he asked him,

41 "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again."

42 Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you."

43 Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God, and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

LUKE 18:35-43 (KJV)

35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:

36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him,

41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

KEY TERMS

- **Sacrificial Lamb** – In Judaism, Israel sacrificed lambs in rituals to gain forgiveness for sin. God chose Jesus as the (human) lamb who would die once for all our sins.
- **Contiguous** – The ability or tendency to spread from one person to another.
- **Catalyst** – A person or thing that starts a process or reaction.
- **Insignificant Person** – A person without a recognized name/title/status, or significant resources (money or property).


INTRODUCTION

In all generations, we find people with disabling illnesses and injuries. Naturally, the question arises about God's love for people with serious disabilities. Our Christian love should move us to assist those persons when and where we can. But the set text shows a case where a person with a serious physical disability reached out to Jesus and received the healing he desired. But note in this text two crucial supporting

planks. The beggar was clear and firm on the identity of Jesus and in his response to Jesus' query.

A question to ponder is what would have happened if the blind beggar had not reached out to Jesus. We can only speculate, but we are glad the man made the effort to stop and engage the Lord. Even when others tried to dissuade him, he persisted. Look beyond the usual

superficial reading of the text and see the powerful messages his determined effort still shouts to us. Also, look at the ripple effect that flowed into the community when one insignificant person reached out in faith to the Lord through whom all things are possible.



The set text is rich with profound revelations about Christ and his ministry.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The set text is rich with profound revelations about Christ and his ministry. We take it in two parts: verses 18:31-34 and verses 18:35-43. In the first portion, we find Jesus in a private teaching session with the disciples. He was sharing details with them about the culminating focal point of his ministry. Jesus was known

for his profound spiritual teachings and miracles. However, those activities were peripheral to the main purpose of his physical stay on earth. He came to sacrifice his life to redeem the sin-soaked souls of humanity. The prophets had foretold this for years. Yet not even the experts in religious matters (scribes and Pharisees) could recognize that Jesus was the promised sacrificial lamb. Up to this point, the disciples, the people closest to Jesus in ministry, could not accept the revelation that the teacher they had grown to love was about to be sacrificed.

Verse 34 is challenging. The language suggests that something blocked the disciples' understanding so they could not grasp (or accept) what Jesus explained. One

explanation is that the disciples were still locked on the concept of an earthly kingdom where they would have privileged positions. Their picture certainly did not involve the murder of their (rabbi) master.

Another explanation is that the teachings in Judaism had blocked them. The Jewish rabbis could not enlighten the Jews about

an event that the rabbis themselves did not understand. Whatever the reason, even after Jesus' private teaching, the disciples could not understand his pending death and resurrection.

In the second section (18:35-43), we have two insightful disclosures. The nameless man who was blind recognized Jesus as the Son of David. This man lacked physical sight but had great spiritual

Having received his sight, the man followed Jesus and glorified God. His response to Jesus' gift of healing spurred others to praise God.

insight. He knew that Jesus was the promised Messiah: the God-Man with unlimited authority to heal, resurrect, and save. Sometimes Christians overlook this truth in the rush to make this section a simple story of Jesus healing a man who was blind.

Now focus on verse 43. Having received his sight, the man followed

Jesus and glorified God. His response to Jesus' gift of healing spurred others to praise God. Remember this chain reaction. This is one good reason we cannot keep silent when God does a work in our lives. This is the route that opens the salvation door to others. Evangelists take note.

The healing of the beggar who was blind has greater implications than we normally recognize. In the first century, people saw blindness as a judgment from God for sins committed (for example, John 9:2). Therefore, when the beggar received his sight, onlookers interpreted it as a reversal of God's judgment. That was an occasion for rejoicing.

In verse 42 Jesus noted that the man's faith made him well. What was Jesus saying? It is a statement that Bible students often misunderstand. Jesus meant that the man's belief in Jesus' ability/authority to restore his sight was intact. That declaration must never mean that believers have the power to compel Jesus to do what they want.

Whatever our level of faith, we must respect the sovereignty of God to decide the appropriate answer to each situation. Matthew 8:2 properly expresses this sentiment.

SANKOFA

A posting on the Christianpost.com

website carried a story (August 25, 2023) about a court ruling in northern Nigeria. That court order protected an 18-year-old Christian convert from threats to her life by family members. The significance of this ruling was that it emphasized that Nigerians had a fundamental right to change religions. In that case, the change was from Islam to Christianity.

Whatever our level of faith, we must respect the sovereignty of God to decide the appropriate answer to each situation.

Although this and related stories pointed to the risk of being a Christian in northern Nigeria, they also have relevance to the text in this lesson. Like the disciples in Luke 18, timid believers cannot face the reality of the risk associated with following Christ. Scholars like Raymond Brown suggest the disciples in Luke 18:31-34 could not grasp

Jesus' teaching because they could not embrace what it implied: the dangers of standing firm for faith in Jesus without Jesus' physical presence.

In your own country, you may not face death for following Christ. However, in our modern societies, believers still face serious risks when they try to live

traditional Christian values. The threats range from social ostracizing to physical death. Sadly, the AME Church annals carry heartbreaking evidence of this risk.

Celebrity preachers often try to downplay this risk of following Christ by diverting viewers to the more “pleasant” side of Christianity. One skillful way ministers do this is to preach a sanitized gospel where they peddle only blessings and prosperity. The risks of being a Christian, swimming upstream against popular secular values, they deliberately ignore or deny. Crafty preachers take this course because they think their audience cannot, or do not want, to face the risks of being identified too closely with Jesus and traditional Christianity. This is a suitable time to consider the extent to which we embrace the full Christian message, which includes the risks of rejection and persecution by persons who do not share our Christian perspective.

This is a suitable time to consider the extent to which we embrace the full Christian message, which includes the risks of rejection and persecution by persons who do not share our Christian perspective.

the next time you appreciate someone’s kindness, a job well done, or a positive quality, try to make your mark with praise. That person will receive it in a much more positive way than you think and you can even make his or her day.”

The above quote was an outlier for an article on Psychology.com about praising. We shared the idea at the end of the last sentence. When we praise people, we help them to frame their days in brighter colors.

In the text (Luke 18:43), the healed man’s praises to God sparked a chain reaction of praise. This confirms that praising is contagious. Our praises to God can influence other people to praise God. This is one reason Christians must share with non-Christians their positive testimonies about their experiences with God. Positive praise begets

more positive praise. People in the entertainment world know this and use it effectively to promote secular concerts and shows.

But the reverse is equally true. Complaints and lamenting spur more negative sentiments. And the effects of the

CASE STUDY

“Praise allows us to get out of our self-centeredness to focus on others. So,

negative comments we initiate can last longer and do more damage than we had imagined when we started to complain. What do these observations teach us?

The first lesson is that even when we do not recognize it, our words and actions can influence people around us. We can be the catalysts that spark either joy or gloom in other people's lives. Before he started thanking God for his healing, the nameless blind beggar was a nobody. But his praises to God were enough to turn other people's attention to God. Soberly consider this. Even without a title or a formal position in your church or community, you have in your mouth the power to frame other peoples' days, even their life paths.

LIFE APPLICATION

We have already hinted at this point: despite his physical handicap, the beggar who was blind had a clear and accurate picture of who Jesus was. In the privacy of your meditation, consider your view of Jesus. Based on your firsthand experiences, can you convincingly share with others that you know the Jesus Christ of the scriptures? If you are sure you do, follow the beggar's example, and thank the Lord. If you have doubts, make this a

matter of prayer, and meditation. Also, consult with others who you think may be able to help you to sharpen your image of Jesus Christ.

Apply the story of the beggar's healing to your own life. In real terms, all believers were at the beggarly point of sinful living until Jesus passed by. Walk back to your beggarly point in life. Stop a while to consider the truths you could not see at that point. Then walk forward to where

you are in Christ today. That mental retracing of your spiritual healing should awaken in you the same emotions it stirred in the healed beggar. Your heart should overflow with praise for the savior who lovingly stopped to answer your plea for spiritual sight.

Jesus told the beggar who was blind that it was the beggar's own faith that sparked the

healing. Consider the implications of this for your life. The beggar who was blind saw the impossible being possible. Consider any need or desire in your life which now seems outside the limits of possibility. In thinking about this, remember that the beggar who was blind had no money and no special connections to influential people. He had no name recognition and



We can be the catalysts that spark either joy or gloom in other people's lives.

no title in the church or community. All he had was a faith that recognized Jesus as the Messiah. What about you? Can your faith draw what you desire within the range of reality?

Verses 36 and 37 give a lesson you will miss if you are not wearing your spiritual glasses. The beggar was aware of what was happening around him. There is a school of thought that Christians must shut themselves off from the world. If the beggar had done that, he would have missed Jesus and the opportunity for his healing. Take time to think about your level of awareness about the happenings and trends in your community and the world at large.

QUESTIONS

1. The title Son of David was a powerful personal reference for the beggar. What name or title of God/Jesus is most powerful to you?
2. How do you consider the faithfulness of persons with disabilities who may not experience physical healing?
3. How seriously have you considered the risks of being a Christian?
4. Can you identify times when your praise or complaint spurred others to do the same?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: "Take My Life, and Let It Be," *AMEC Hymnal* #292

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, grant me the wisdom and strength to embrace all aspects of the Christian life. In the good times, remind me to praise you; in the troubled times, remind me to look for you as the blind man did. With your strength and guidance, I know I can be all you have called me to be. Thank you, Lord! Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 30–January 5

Monday	Revelation 11:14-19 (The Kingdom Belongs to the Messiah)
Tuesday	Psalms 9:1-9 (A Heart Full of Thanks)
Wednesday	Psalms 9:10-20 (A Plea to God for Grace)
Thursday	1 Timothy 1:12-17 (Immortal, Invisible)
Friday	1 Timothy 6:11-16 (The Life of Faith)
Saturday	Psalms 10:1-11 (God's Judgments Are True)
Sunday	Psalms 10:12-18 (God Will Arise and Hear Us)

The Lord Is King

Lesson Scripture: Psalms 9, 10

Focus Scripture: Psalm 10:12-18

Key Verse: O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear. Psalm 10:17

PSALM 10:12-18 (NRSV UE)

12 Rise up, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; do not forget the oppressed.

13 Why do the wicked renounce God and say in their hearts, "You will not call us to account"?

14 But you do see! Indeed, you note trouble and grief, that you may take it into your hands; the helpless commit themselves to you; you have been the helper of the orphan.

15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoers; seek out their wickedness until you find none.

16 The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land.

17 O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear

18 to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more.

PSALM 10:12-18 (KJV)

12 Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.

13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.

14 Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none.

16 The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.

17 Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

KEY TERMS

- **Injustice** – The absence or denial of justice, fairness, or equity to certain people in a society or a group of persons.
- **Vulnerable People** – People who may fall into the class of poor, needy, fatherless, handicapped, homeless; people who cannot help themselves in the normal course of life.
- **Acrostic Psalm** – A type of poetic song where each verse or line begins with a successive letter of the alphabet.
- **The Septuagint** – The ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
- **Principality** – Territory or area ruled by a prince or secondary authority.

No person, no power,
and no principality in
heaven or earth can
stand in the way of
God's will.

the vulnerable people in our society.

As individuals, we will face times of distress in our lives. The distressing events can be overwhelming. Because of this reality, the question arises about how believers should deal with these bleak, challenging situations. The standard response to that question is that believers must look to God.

But what does “look to God” look like in reality? What practical steps, if any, should believers take while looking to God, and how should they show their disdain for injustice? The set text guides us in finding meaningful answers to these questions. Still, the first step in dealing with injustice and oppressors is to know, without a doubt, God is king. No person, no power, and no

principality in heaven or earth can stand in the way of God's will. With that outlook, we will find the wisdom and strength to do the right thing against those who practice oppressing vulnerable people.

INTRODUCTION

Until we leave this world for glory, we will encounter incidents of distress and injustice. As followers of Christ, we know that God hates injustice. Accordingly, Christians must take a stance against injustices in society, especially as it affects

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

To get the full impact of the text, try

reading both psalms in one sitting with Psalm 10 as an extension of Psalm 9. In their original use, people read Psalm 9 as a background for Psalm 10 because the two psalms are treated as one acrostic psalm in the Septuagint and share common themes.

The images we see in the background text reflect King David's profile of God. These images came from David's life experiences where he proved God's faithfulness to righteous people and the Lord's hatred of evildoers. The God David experienced was a God who keeps promises and dispenses justice. These characteristics prompted David to trust God.

In the text, we see David calling down God's wrath on evildoers (Psalm 10:12,15). Such righteous anger is a healthy response to injustice. It is fuel that energizes people to resist and fight against evil and injustices. But verses 14, 17, and 18 show we must not be reckless in responding to injustice. Our response must be rooted in godly wisdom, being fully confident that God will be our partner in our struggles against injustice.

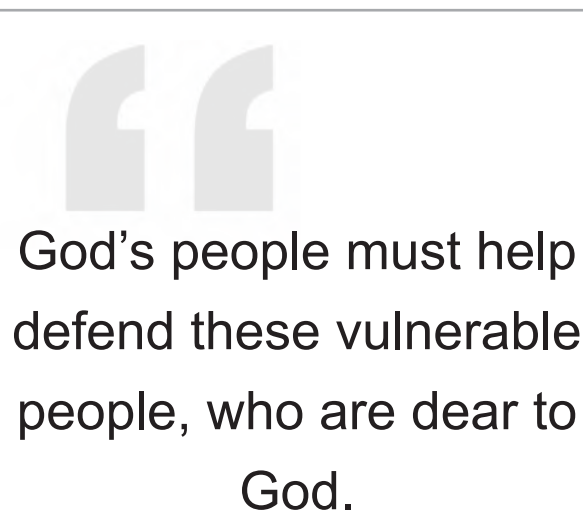
"The nations" David mentioned, in verse 16, scholars take as a reference to the neighboring nations like the Philistines, which had a long history of hostilities against Israel. Verses like 1 Samuel 17 and Judges 13:1 support this. However, we can freely apply the sentiment against any nation or group of people who oppose God's people.

In Psalm 10 David seems to place a special focus on injustices against the vulnerable and powerless: people who cannot defend themselves (Psalm 10:14, 18). This stance is consistent with the Old Testament picture of God acting as a special protector of the poor, widows, and fatherless. God's people must help defend these vulnerable people, who are dear to God. On this issue, Psalms 68:5, 146:9; Exodus 22:21-24; Isaiah 1:17; and

James 1:27 are useful references.

SANKOFA

"Few political leaders who successfully transition from activists to lawmakers do so without losing the fire and focus on the causes that brought them to prominence. But Civil Rights icon and U.S. Rep. John



God's people must help defend these vulnerable people, who are dear to God.

Lewis, the 17-term Georgia Democrat, was that kind of rare leader, never wavering from his original mission, to see that Black people in America were treated justly, equally, and with dignity.”

(“Remembering John Lewis, Civil Rights Icon, and Teller of Truths,” from The Harvard Gazette, July 19, 2020)

In the text, the injustices King David saw meted out to poor and helpless people enraged him. He wanted the evil to stop. He wanted justice and called on God for help in this regard. No doubt all of us want justice. However, only a few – the John Lewis’ of the world – dare to do something to get the desired justice.

In the safety of the church’s sanctuary, and behind a Zoom screen, we shout our commitment to justice. But often our devotion to justice does not move beyond those safe zones. That is the reason people like John Lewis stand out as exemplary beacons of hope for justice. John Lewis, and his colleagues, knew that taking a stance against injustice was

risky. They understood that they would attract the fury of the offenders. They would be at risk of serious harm. Yet, in the spirit of a modern King David, they ignored the risk and pushed forward in their fight for a just society.

CASE STUDY

In the safety of the church’s sanctuary, and behind a Zoom screen, we shout our commitment to justice. But often our devotion to justice does not move beyond those safe zones. That is the reason people like John Lewis stand out as exemplary beacons of hope for justice.

Notwithstanding the fear factor noted in the previous section, as a rule, people hate when vulnerable people suffer injustices. Humans seem to have an innate consciousness that burns hot when evil and injustice are features of a society. Even rulers and their enablers who perpetuate systems of injustice must turn off in themselves the natural conscience that flares up when people dish out evil to the poor, hungry, homeless, and helpless.

Over the centuries, psychologists and other social science researchers attempted to analyze and explain the natural rage that grips people who witness human’s inhumanity to humans. One such study and theory is *The Moral Foundations*

Theory. This was a social psychology theory aimed at explaining “the origins of and variation in human moral reasoning on the basis of innate, modular foundations.” The people leading this inquiry were psychologists Jonathan Haidt, Craig Joseph, and Jesse Graham. Their theory utilized the earlier work of cultural anthropologist Richard Shweder.

Using this theory and related studies, we can conclude that in all people there exist innate moral systems that rise and scream, if only within us, against injustices. Indeed, how and when this innate moral monitor becomes activated varies among individuals. Yet, it is there. Social scientists may explain this moral monitor using social conditioning, customs, and religious influences. However, from a Christian perspective, this monitor is likely an aspect of the image of God ingrained in the human heart. Injustice infuriates believers because it infuriates God, our creator.

LIFE APPLICATION

Occasionally, we hear a view

that believers should not become discouraged, angry, or frustrated. But scripture texts like the one in this lesson show that godly people experience valleys and dark times. Think about your views concerning Christians facing hard or dark times. When considering the lives of godly role models like King David, do you find encouragement and strength to face situations that depress or infuriate you?



Injustice infuriates believers because it infuriates God, our creator.

In your private devotions think about times when you experienced God as a secure refuge in times of trouble, pain, or despair. Reflect on the ways those experiences enhanced your spiritual maturity. If you keep a prayer journal, you may find it useful to make rough notes on this matter. As the opportunities arise,

share your experiences and the related spiritual growth with people in their own life struggles.

In Psalms 9 and 10 we see the raw emotions of King David as he appealed to God to intervene in cases of injustice. David did not use special prayer language or recite set prayers from a liturgy. He poured out his heart with raw

emotion to God. Consider this approach when seeking God’s help in matters that infuriate or depress you. Sincerity, rather than linguistics, is the key consideration in pleas to God.

In Psalm 10, David painted a picture we see too often in our society. It appears that the ways of people who show gross disrespect for God and godliness “are always prospering” (verse 5). The NLT version says these wicked people “succeed in everything they do.” They show no fear of God and his judgments. How do you explain this? David was confident that eventually, God would deal with the evildoers. Consider the extent to which you share his outlook. How can you reconcile to yourself that the wicked seem to prosper while godly people must struggle to live?

QUESTIONS

1. What motivates people like John Lewis to risk their lives to fight for justice for vulnerable people?
2. God seems slow in dealing with the contempt from the wicked. Why is this?
3. Consider two things that currently infuriate you. What steps can you take (individually or collectively) to address these?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: “O God of Every Nation”

Closing Prayer: Dear God, show me the injustices you have equipped me to address. Guide and strengthen me to do my part, as an individual or a part of the body of Christ, to let the perpetrators know your stance against injustice. This is my prayer, in Jesus’ name! Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

January 6-January 12

Monday	Revelation 19:11-21 (Faithful and True)
Tuesday	1 Chronicles 29:10-20 (God Makes Great and Gives Strength)
Wednesday	Isaiah 52:1-12 (Our God Reigns)
Thursday	Psalm 47 (Shout Joyfully to God)
Friday	Philippians 2:1-13 (Exalted Through Obedience)
Saturday	Mark 4:35-41 (The Wind and Sea Obey Jesus)
Sunday	Psalm 93 (Robed in Majesty)