



**CELEBRATING**  
**GOD**

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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

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## 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 AME 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.

*AME Discipline*



LESSON 1

SEPTEMBER 5, 2021

# Moses and Miriam Praise God

Background Scripture: Exodus 14:1 – 15:21

Print: Exodus 15:11 - 21

**KEY VERSE:** *“In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.”*  
*Exodus 15:13*

## WORDS TO KNOW

**MAJESTIC** – showing great dignity and grandeur

**SPLENDOR** – the condition of being magnificent, impressive, or brilliant

**STEADFAST** – firm and unwavering in purpose, loyalty, or resolve

**ABODE** – home

**TRIUMPHED** – to overcome

**PHILISTIA** – pronounced: fih-LIHS-tih-uh

**EDOM** – pronounced: EE-duhm

**MOAB** – pronounced: MO-ab

***FOCUS SCRIPTURE: EXODUS 15:11-21***

- 11** "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?"
- 12** You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.
- 13** In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.
- 14** The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
- 15** Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.
- 16** Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O Lord, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by.
- 17** You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O Lord, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established.
- 18** The Lord will reign forever and ever."
- 19** When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.
- 20** Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.
- 21** And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

## INTRODUCTION

The Israelites were slaves for 430 years. The king of Egypt, Pharaoh, cruelly oppressed them. The Israelites prayed and asked God to deliver them. God raised up a leader named Moses (Ex. 3 – 4). Moses was used by God to rescue the Israelites. God’s mighty miracles also contributed to their release. The Passover celebration was initiated to remind the Israelites of God’s act of delivering them from slavery. It is still celebrated every year by the Jews.

God sent ten plagues on Egypt to force Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. It was not until the tenth plague, when God killed all the firstborn and livestock did Pharaoh tell Moses to take the Israelites and go (12:29 – 36). However, after they escaped from Egypt, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. He pursued them along with six hundred men on chariots plus many others. Pharaoh’s army approached the Israelites, who were estimated to be two million in number, at the Red Sea. God had Moses raise his staff and all the people crossed over the Red Sea on dry ground. All of Pharaoh’s army perished when they pursued the Israelites into the Red Sea (14:26 – 31).

For the next four weeks, we will be investigating examples of God’s people who celebrated Him. In today’s lesson, we shall explore why and how Moses and Miriam praised God.

## BIBLE STORY

Chapter 15, verses 1 through 18, is the song of Moses and Miriam. It is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to celebrate God’s spectacular victory over Pharaoh and his army. The whole Israelite community praised God together. The hymn of praise details God’s mighty acts in delivering and rescuing them from slavery. God’s name, “the Lord”, appears ten times. Verse 11 declares that the Lord, who tolerates no rivals, has defeated all the gods of Egypt and their worshippers. It also is used in various statements of belief today regarding the nature of God.

In verses 14 and 15, the hymn mentions Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Canaan. These are places the Israelites would have to pass by on the way to the Promised Land when they leave Mount Sinai. The Israelites did not have to worry about being attacked by their enemies. Their enemies have heard about God’s powerful intervention on Israel’s behalf. The Israelites were redeemed by God, who caused their

enemies to be still while they passed by on the way to the Promised Land (15:17). Verse 19 summarizes God's deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea. Moses song is considered by some as the oldest song ever recorded.

Miriam, who was Aaron and Moses' sister, used a tambourine while dancing along with the other women who joined her in praising God (15:20). Miriam also sang as they celebrated what God had done. They celebrated with great joy. Such a celebration was common after a victory in battle. Music played an important role in Israel's worship and celebrations.

*What type of music do you listen to? Does the music have a purpose or message for the listeners? How does it make you feel?*

*What role does music have in your church's worship services and other special occasions? How would it feel to have no music during the worship services?*

## **SANKOFA**

### *Hugh Ramopolo Masekela (1939-2018)*

As one of the most popular and influential jazz musicians from Africa, Hugh Masekela's life reflected the creative ways of using music to confront injustices and generate change in his homeland. Born in the coal-mining town of Witbank (near Johannesburg), South Africa on April 4, 1939, Masekela attended mission schools. During a visit to Masekela's high school, anti-apartheid activist and British Anglican priest Father Trevor Huddleston gave him a trumpet. Shortly thereafter, Masekela began to take his first trumpet lessons from the band leader of the Johannesburg Native Municipal Band and later from saxophonist Kippie Moeketsi. While receiving lessons from Moeketsi, he met trombonist Jonas Gwanga and Dollar Brand, whose musical combination of church music, African popular music, and American jazz captivated Masekela. After listening to Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Charlie Parker, and others, Masekela chose to blend these styles with the traditional African rhythms and melodies he knew. Together with Gwanga and Brand, they formed the Jazz Epistles and in 1959 became the first black band in South Africa to record a jazz LP. Their success was compromised by the South African political situation; gatherings of black Africans larger than 10 people were banned, effectively prohibiting African musical

performances, creating a prohibition of musical performances.

In 1960, Masekela went to London to attend the Guildhall School of Music for a few months. From there, he traveled to New York to attend the Manhattan School of Music to study classical trumpet for four years. For a brief period he lived in California to record. He also started his own label, Chisa Records. Masekela returned to New York City in 1966 and recorded his first hit, “Grazing in the Grass,” in 1968. “Grazing” was nominated for a Grammy Award that same year. Although he was successful in the United States, Masekela felt that playing “American” jazz removed him from his African musical roots. In the late 1970s, he moved to London to record *Home is Where the Music Is* (1978) with Makhaya Ntshoko, Larry Willis, Eddie Gomez, and fellow South African emigrant Dudu Pukwana. In 1980, Masekela returned to Africa, settling first in Zimbabwe for two years before moving to Botswana in 1982. He played with his wife, Miriam Makeba, at the “Going Home” concert in Botswana, which was attended by 35,000 people. Masekela joined Paul Simon’s worldwide *Graceland* tour in 1987 which celebrated South African music. He finally returned to South Africa in the early 1990s to encourage young South Africans to revive their musical roots. In 1995, he was selected to serve as the co-director of the State Theatre in Pretoria and a year later performed for the Queen of England at a gala in Johannesburg. His autobiography *Grazing* (2004), named after his first hit in the United States, gives a detailed account of his confrontations with apartheid as well as his personal struggles against alcoholism. Living in South Africa, Hugh Masekela continued to express his love for his homeland through music.

Hugh Masekela passed away in Johannesburg on January 23, 2018, due to complications from prostate cancer. He was 78 years old. He is survived by his daughter Pula Twala, son Selema (“Sal”) Masekela, and two sisters, Elaine and Barbara Masekela.

Source: Sullivan, E. (2010, August 20) *Hugh Ramopolo Masekela (1939-2018)*. Retrieved from <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/masekela-hugh-ramopolo-1939/>

*Hugh Masekela used his music as the means to confront the oppression of apartheid he and others lived under in South Africa. When you think about contemporary musicians, can you identify anyone who uses their musical talents to speak out against systemic racism, injustices, and oppression?*

## REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

In the AME Church, music is an integral part of worship. The liturgy gives us many opportunities to praise and worship God through music. The last stanza of the Call to Worship states, “O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth, sing praises!” Read that twice and then dissect each sentence’s meaning. What is it urging us to do? Does “joyful noise” mean only sing and/or play the piano? What musical instrument did Miriam use as she celebrated God’s faithfulness in song?

Read Exodus 15:1 – 18. What are five reasons Moses and Miriam praised God? What are some of the reasons you can praise God?

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## SUMMARY

People compose songs and poems for different celebrations. Songs and poems can express thankfulness to God and joy for personal victories. After the Israelites’ deliverance from Egyptian slavery, Moses and Miriam composed songs and led the people in praising God. There is always a reason we can offer praises to God. What hymn or song reflects your relationship with God? This week share the hymn or song on social media and tell others why you like it. It is the perfect opportunity to witness about the faithfulness of God.

## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

*Prayer: “God, we thank you for always being faithful. Every day we will celebrate your faithfulness with praise and thanksgiving. God you are worthy to be praised. Amen.”*

*Closing Hymn: “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”  
(AME Church Hymnal #84)*

LESSON 2

SEPTEMBER 12, 2021

# David Dances Before the Ark

Background Scripture: 2 Samuel 6

Print: 2 Samuel 6:1 - 5, 14 - 19

**KEY VERSE:** *David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. 2 Samuel 6:5.*

## WORDS TO KNOW

**ARK OF GOD** – *the chest Moses placed the two stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments*

**CHERUBIM** – *an angel depicted as a chubby-faced child with wings which symbolized God's presence in the midst of the people*

**EPHOD** – *the official garment of the high priest, which was later worn by the ordinary priests*

**BAALE-JUDAH** – *pronounced: BAY-uhle-DZHOU-duh*

**ABINADAB** – *pronounced: uh-BIHN-uh-dab*

**UZZAH** – *pronounced: yoo-ZA-uh*

**AHIO** – *pronounced: uh-HI-o*

**MICHAL** – *pronounced: MAI-kul*

***FOCUS SCRIPTURE: 2 SAMUEL 6:1-5, 14-19***

- 1** David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.
  - 2** David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim.
  - 3** They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart
  - 4** with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark.
  - 5** David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.
- 
- 14** David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod.
  - 15** So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.
  - 16** As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.
  - 17** They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord.
  - 18** When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts,
  - 19** and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

## INTRODUCTION

The book of 2 Samuel was written to record the history of David's reign. And to depict David as an ideal leader of an imperfect kingdom and to foreshadow Christ, who will be the ideal leader of a new and perfect kingdom. David was anointed king of Judah (2:1 – 4). The nation of Israel was split after the death of Saul. Ten tribes followed one of Saul's surviving sons, Ishbaal, and the commander of Saul's army, Abner. Two tribes, Judah and Simeon, followed David. Ishbaal and Abner continued to remain faithful to Saul, even after his death, which caused a civil war. Eventually, Abner negotiated a peace agreement with David and wanted to unify Israel (3:6 – 21). But Joab wanted revenge against Abner for killing his brother. Abner had killed his brother in self-defense. Joab murdered Abner. Later, Ishbaal was murdered in his home by two men (4:1 – 8). David was eventually anointed as king of all Israel (5:1 – 5). In today's lesson, King David expressed his joy and celebration of God by leading God's people in music and dance.

## BIBLE STORY

David and his army conquered Jerusalem and defeated the Philistines in battle (5:6 – 25). But David was still concerned because the Ark of God (Covenant) was not in Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of Yahweh. It was usually kept in the tabernacle. Since the Philistines had captured the ark and destroyed Shiloh, the ark had no permanent resting place (1 Sam. 4 – 7). David decided to take thirty thousand men with him to transport the ark on a new cart to Jerusalem from the home of Abinadab (6:3). It had been at Abinadab's house for 20 years. Abinadab's sons, Uzzah and Ahio, carried the ark but Ahio decided to move in front of it. David and all the people rejoiced with dancing, singing and instruments before the Lord (6:5). But David had not consulted the Lord about moving the Ark of the Covenant so his attempt failed (6:6 – 11).

Only the Levites (priests) were commissioned to transport (touch) the ark (Ex. 25:12 – 14; Num. 4:15; 1 Chron.13:9, 15:13 - 15). David realized the error of his ways, and placed the Ark of the Covenant in Obed-Edom's house because he was a Levite. Obed-Edom's household was blessed the three months the ark was present. This encouraged David to go transport it to Jerusalem according to God's commands. David wore a linen ephod, the priest's apron, because it was a religious celebration. David and the Israelites rejoiced with shouts, dancing, and blasting the trumpet in celebration of the occasion (6:14 – 15). The ark was placed

in a tent David had set up in Jerusalem and he (and a priest) offered sacrifices to God. Afterwards, David blessed the all the people spiritually and physically (food) (6:18 – 19).

*How did David and the people celebrate God's presence? What musical instruments were used?*

## **SANFOKA**

Rev. Dr. Mojola Agbebi, born April 10, 1860 as David Brown Vincent in Western Nigeria, was a leading proponent of “Ethiopianism,” which advocated an African-centered Christianity. In the 1880s, as an indication of his embrace of African culture he changed his name to Mojola Agbebi. In 1888 Agbebi was a founder of the Native Baptist Church (now the First Baptist Church), in Lagos, Nigeria. Later that year he helped establish the Ebenezer Baptist Church in that city. Agbebi was one of the first Africans to hold a degree in civil engineering from a British university but he was primarily known for his missionary work in southern Nigeria and the Cameroons between 1890 and 1910. His belief in Ethiopianism is outlined in the 1902 “Inaugural Sermon” which he gave in Lagos. Some components of that sermon are summarized below which discuss music and singing:

“Hymn-books are non-essentials to the preaching of Jesus Christ. The hymns of one nation may not necessarily be those of another nation, and they may not be put in a book. The Christians of England may sing hymns different from the Christians of Armenia, of France, or of Africa, and one tribe may sing differently from another tribe. The grave Old Hundred, which may induce solemnity in Saint Paul’s Cathedral, and the grand ‘Hallelujah Chorus,’ which has just been triumphantly rendered by your estimable choir, may both excite ridicule or disgust in a church among the Kroo. Tastes differ. English tunes and metres, English songs and hymns, some of them most unsuited to African aspiration and intelligence; have proved effective in weakening the talent for hymnology among African Christians. In one of the churches planted up-country, I have found it necessary to advise that for seven years, at least, no hymn-books but original hymns should be used at worship.”

“African Christians dance to foreign music in their social festivities, they sing to foreign music in their churches, they march to foreign music in their funerals, and use foreign instruments to cultivate their musical aspirations. Throughout the entire scriptures there was not a case in which Christians

sing foreign hymns or an instance where prayers were unanswered or worship unaccepted because hymns were not sung. We are come to the times when religious developments demand original songs and original tunes from the African Christian. There are almost as many hymn-books as there are churches in the world, and the collections in the various hymn-books, whether of Kirk, Church, Chapel, Tabernacle or Temple are made up not only of hymns written by orthodox or Episcopalians, but by men of various denominations and sects, by Unitarians, Roman Catholics, etc. There is most presumably no book in the Christian propaganda more unsectarian or pan-denominational than the hymn-books of the churches. 'Nearer my God to Thee,' which has inspired and breathed consolation to saints of diverse climes and races, was written by a Unitarian believer, one who scorns the Divinity and discredits the sonship of the Lord Jesus; and 'Lead, Kindly Light' was written by a convert to the Roman Catholic Faith. These two would suffice for the present, out of several that could be cited. But, besides the authorship of songs and hymns, we have to deal with the character of tunes. This also is a large field for thought. No one race or nation can fix the particular kind of tunes which will be universally conducive to worship. Tunes and songs depend on the frame of mind, the breadth of soul, the experience of life, the altitude of faith, and the latitude of love of the individual."

"In the carrying out of the function of singing, therefore, let us always remember that we are Africans, and that we ought to sing African songs, and that in African style and fashion. The innumerable multitude in Heaven, which the Seer of Patmos saw, were of 'all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues,' African, Briton, French, Icelander, and consequently were making their ascriptions each in his own tongue, only the theme of their ascriptions was one, and this idea found expression in the effusion of Dr. Watts: 'Come let us sing our cheerful songs, With angels round the throne, Ten thousand are their tongues, But all their joys are one.' The joys are one, Redemption is one, Christ is one, God is one, but our tongues are various and our styles innumerable."

*What is the purpose of Rev. Agbebi's sermon? How do ethnic and cultural differences influence our worship styles? Are worship styles in the connectional AME Church here and abroad the same?*

Source: (Full sermon) BlackPast, B. (2009, July 24) (1902) Rev. Mojola Agbebi, "Inaugural Sermon." Retrieved from <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/1902-rev-mojola-agbebi-inaugural-sermon/>

## REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

David was rejoicing before God as he leaped, danced and sang. Michal, Saul's daughter and David's wife, peered out the window and detested his behavior (6:16, 20 – 23). Apparently Michal thought this behavior was not appropriate for a king. She was caught up in appearances. But David expressed the inner joy he had before God. The return of the ark to Jerusalem was cause for celebration. David became angry and reminded Michal that God had chosen him to replace her father on the throne so he rejoiced and danced (2 Samuel 6:21).

Worship and praise of God embodies many forms and styles based on the ethnic and cultural environment. If you attend an AME Church in India, the worship service and style of music will be different from an AME Church in London. Just because we worship and praise God differently does not mean that one's right and the other wrong. However you celebrate God and special events is fine. But we should never look down on others who do it differently. We live in a very diverse world. The gifts we each have been given are welcome and needed in communal worship.

## SUMMARY

David and the Israelites used different instruments while rejoicing and praising God. They also sang and danced. This week, if possible, speak with your Pastor about having a praise and worship service. It can incorporate those who play instruments, singers, praise dancers, artists, spoken word, etc. Those who want to participate, in your church or from other churches, invite them to come and share their talent. The worship service will reflect we are one in Christ, with various gifts, who want to praise God for His love, mercy, and grace.

## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

*Prayer: "God, we praise you. We're grateful for living in a diverse world with people that honor and celebrate you with their gifts. Help us to appreciate each other and uplift your name in the world. Amen."*

*Closing Hymn: "Let All the People Praise Thee"  
(AME Church Hymnal #58)*

LESSON 3

SEPTEMBER 19, 2021

# Glorifying God

Background Scripture: Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43  
Print: Mark 10:46-52

**KEY VERSE:** *Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Mark 10:51.*

## WORDS TO KNOW

**MERCY** – to demonstrate compassion or kindness

**STERNLY** – to speak to someone harshly and strictly

**CLOAK** – an outer garment

**FAITH** – to believe and trust in God

**NAZARETH** – pronounced: NAZ-uh-rehth

**JERICHO** – pronounced: DZHEHR-ih-ko

**BARTIMAEUS** – pronounced: bar-tih-MEE-uhs

**TIMAEUS** – pronounced: tai-MEE-uhs

***FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MARK 10:46-52***

- 46** They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside.
- 47** When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
- 48** Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"
- 49** Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you."
- 50** So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.
- 51** Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again."
- 52** Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

## INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark. He was not one of the twelve disciples. Mark was Paul's companion on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13). Mark wanted to present the person, work, and teachings of Jesus. Mark records more miracles than does any other Gospel. He encouraged Roman Christians and wanted to prove beyond a doubt that Jesus is the Messiah. Mark shows Jesus in action which reveals his true identity by what he does. Jesus fulfills all the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

In today's lesson, we explore how Jesus' demonstrated compassion towards Bartimaeus, who by faith was healed.

## BIBLE STORY

Chapter ten opens with Jesus teaching about marriage and divorce. He held up God's ideal for marriage and told his disciples to live by it (10:6 – 12). Jesus then blesses the little children. He also had an encounter with a rich man who desired to know how to obtain eternal life (10:17 – 22). Jesus commanded him to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor, then follow Him. The rich man grieves as he left knowing he would never inherit eternal life because of his love of money. On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus predicts his death for the third time (10: 32 – 34). James and John asked Jesus to seat them in honored places in His kingdom (10:35 – 40).

As Jesus, the disciples, and the crowds were leaving Jericho, they encountered Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, on the side of the road (10:46). It was a common sight for beggars to sit on the road pilgrims used to travel to Jerusalem. When the blind beggar heard Jesus of Nazareth, he began to holler. He needed to get Jesus' attention. Jesus was his only hope for healing. Bartimaeus called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" (10:47). "Son of David" is a Messianic title (Isa. 11:1 – 3; Jer. 23:5 – 6). Bartimaeus believed Jesus was the Messiah.

Many people commanded Bartimaeus to be quiet. But that did not deter Bartimaeus. He hollered louder. It worked in getting Jesus' attention. When we face struggles, we have to persistently seek Jesus no matter what others say or think. Jesus told them to tell Bartimaeus to come to Him (6:49). Bartimaeus threw his cloak off and jumped up. Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he desired for Him to do. Bartimaeus asked the teacher (Rabbi) to restore his sight (6:51). Jesus told him,

“Go; your faith has made you well.” Instantaneously Bartimaeus was able to see. Faith makes the impossible, possible. He praised God and followed Jesus from that moment on (6:52; Luke 18:35 – 43).

*Why do we have to be persistent in our faith when others try to deter us? How did Bartimaeus’ faith help him overcome his challenges? Do you recall an occasion God helped you through a challenging time?*

## SANFOKA

### *Healed and Rejoicing*

In 2020, COVID-19 hit Iran hard. Then millions of locusts invaded the land, and an earthquake hit Tehran, the capital city. Recently, Todd Nettleton of VOM Radio interviewed Brother Ali, a Christian who shares the Good News of Jesus in Iran, even in hard times. “What is the attitude of the Iranians?” Todd asked Ali. “Do they feel like it is one thing after another, after another, after another?”

Ali replied, “The average person on the street feels like they are cursed.” Most Iranians are Muslim, and the government tries to keep Christians from sharing their faith with non-Christians. But more and more Iranians are finding hope in following Christ, and no longer feel “cursed.”

Ali told Todd the story of two Iranians who did not know Jesus. Both had a serious case of COVID-19, but they were in different hospitals. “They were feeling really bad,” Ali said. “The crazy part of this story is, both of them received the same dream. Both of them saw Jesus, and Jesus came and gave them living water. He said to them, ‘Get up, you are healed.’

“They both came to my house, just hours apart. They were completely healed of COVID, like, no signs of COVID. They went and got a test the next day, and they were negative. “Their families had already come to Christ, so everyone was happy and singing and dancing. Iran has a lot of people dying because we have no medicine for COVID, and we can’t even get vitamins. So they were very happy [that the men were alive].

“The men left the next day and started going to smaller towns and villages and serving [the Lord]. They were like, ‘We are fine, we got healed, and we are out of here.’ Pray that in the chaos [in Iran], the Lord will move.”

*How did Jesus both physically and spiritually heal the two Iranian Muslims? How did they and their families react?*

Source: <https://www.kidsofcourage.com/?paged=5>(VOM Radio Interview - published 1/13/2021)

**REAL TALK, FAITH WALK**

Jesus was accompanied by the twelve disciples as He ministered for three years. There were also crowds who followed Jesus wherever He traveled. Just because they may have witnessed Jesus ministering to the people, does not mean they believed He was the Son of David and promised Messiah. Some people can be spiritually blind. Even though they witnessed the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in the life and ministry of Jesus, they still did not believe He was the Messiah. Today many do not believe Jesus is the Messiah who came to save the world from sin. We live in a world where people can be both physically and spiritually blind. What about you?

Bartimaeus was blind but had heard about Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David. Jesus’ ministry of healing, delivering, and teaching the people was well-known. And since Bartimaeus sat begging outside on the road most people took as they traveled to Jerusalem, he may have heard about Jesus through others conversations as they passed by. Nevertheless, he had faith the Son of David could heal him. Because of his faith, Bartimaeus was both physically and spiritually transformed.

Think about what it means to be spiritually and physically broken. Write down the characteristics that demonstrate spiritual or physical brokenness. Do you know anybody who is in need of healing? For two minutes after you finish, pray for those who need to know Jesus to be transformed and made whole.

SPIRITUAL BROKENNESS:	PHYSICAL BROKENNESS:

## SUMMARY

Blind Bartimaeus was an outcast of society. He had to rely on the goodness of others to survive. So when he heard Jesus was present, Bartimaeus sought Jesus out to help him. He refused to let others hinder him from reaching out to Jesus and being made whole. His faith was instrumental in his transformation. Bartimaeus offered praise to God and immediately followed Jesus. People respond to life challenges and victories differently. We can lend a helping hand to those in need. We also can encourage ourselves and others by giving honor and glory to God at all times.

## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

*Prayer: God you are our healer. We need you to intervene in the lives of those who are spiritually and physically broken. We have faith that you can make them whole. They will overcome all challenges and be victorious. Amen.*

Closing Hymn: “When the Storms of Life are Raging (Stand By Me)” (AME Church Hymnal #420)

LESSON 4

SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

# Believers Praise God

Background Scripture: Acts 2:32-33, 37-47

Print: Acts 2:32-33, 37-47

**KEY VERSE:** *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42*

## WORDS TO KNOW

**EXALTED** – to lift up; to elevate

**REPENT** – to feel regret about your sins or past actions and ask God to forgive you and commit to change

**EXHORTED** – an appeal

**DEVOTED** – to show great love and commitment over a long period of time

**AWE** – reverential fear

***FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:32-33, 37-47***

- 32** This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.
- 33** Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.
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- 37** Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"
- 38** Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- 39** For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."
- 40** And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."
- 41** So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.
- 42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
- 43** Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.
- 44** All who believed were together and had all things in common;
- 45** they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.
- 46** Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,
- 47** praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## INTRODUCTION

The books of Luke and Acts are a two-volume work written by Luke, the Gentile physician. In Acts, Luke wanted to give an accurate account of the birth and growth of the Christian church. Acts is the connecting link between Christ's life and the life of the church. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He promised that the Holy Spirit would come and empower the disciples to be His witnesses (1:8).

In today's lesson, we discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in unifying the community of believers.

## BIBLE STORY

On the day of Pentecost, held fifty days after Passover, the Holy Spirit came like a violent wind from heaven and filled all those in the Upper Room (2:1 - 4). They felt a blazing fire on their tongues which allowed them to speak in other languages, as the Holy Spirit enabled them.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit with fire was the fulfillment of John the Baptist's words (Lk. 3:16). As well as the prophet Joel's words about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28 - 29). Peter, the disciple who denied Jesus, had been restored by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to others. Peter was now known as an apostle, which meant "messenger" or "missionary." Peter shared a sermon with the Jews gathered declaring the messiahship and lordship of Christ (2:14 - 47). He urged the people to repent and get baptized.

Because of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the boldness of Peter, three thousand people were converted and became recipients of the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:37 - 41). It brought power and unity to the newly formed community of believers. The new believers in the Christian church devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and worship services in the temple, and prayed together regularly. They celebrated communion ("breaking of bread") in remembrance of Jesus. Some Christians voluntarily shared with others who did not have the basic living essentials (2:44 - 45). They were committed to coming together sharing meals in their homes with others. The Christians were jubilant and praised God. The church sustained growth from the increased numbers of those who were saved.

*After the people were saved, what steps did they take to grow in their faith? How have you grown in your faith?*

## SANKOFA

### *The Jungle Bible*

Rolo is a Christian in Colombia. He used to belong to a guerrilla group that committed violent acts against the government and others. (Guerrillas are people who carry out acts of war, even though they are not part of a regular army.) Happily, Rolo became a Christian and left the guerrillas. He wanted to share the Good News of Jesus with people who were still trapped in unbiblical beliefs. So he returned many times to take Bibles to people in the war zones of Colombia.

The work was dangerous, and Rolo had problems getting Bibles up rivers to reach jungle areas. “The Bibles got wet,” he said. “They are also damaged by rough conditions and mud in the jungle.”

A Christian from Brazil showed Rolo a special Bible printed on a type of plastic that feels almost like paper. “When we put the Bible in the sink and turned the water on, Rolo’s face fell. He thought we had ruined it,” said a VOM worker. “Then we held it up dripping wet, with water beading off the plastic paper. Rolo was delighted.” Rolo has distributed jungle Bibles in Spanish where they are needed.

*What community has Rolo united with? What transformation can you identify in Rolo’s life since he repented and accepted Christ?*

Source: [www.Kidsofcourage.com](http://www.Kidsofcourage.com) (The Jungle Bible published on January 18, 2021 in Spotlight)

## REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

*What steps are necessary for someone to become a Christian (2:38-39)?*

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*How could the Christians be identified by others (2:37 - 47)? What behaviors did they model?* \_\_\_\_\_

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As a part of the Christian community, we are obligated by God to help others whenever possible. For a moment, think about those in need of help or encouragement. Using the construction paper and colored markers given to you, write a note of encouragement to them. After you share the note, ask can you pray for them. If possible, you can give them a small gift with the note.

## **SUMMARY**

In our church community, we can learn, pray, worship, and share with one another. We can actively engage in our local church's witness and mission. Partner with the missionaries to join any outreach projects they are engaged in. The Holy Spirit will empower us as we seek to show others the love of God in action.

## **CLOSING DEVOTIONS**

*Prayer: Jesus, thank you for saving us from sin. We welcome your Holy Spirit to abide in us. Holy Spirit, empower each of us to do the will of God. Amen.*

*Closing Hymn: "Down at the Cross"  
(AME Church Hymnal #243)*