



**GOD FREES
AND
REDEEMS**

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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 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.

FREE TO GO HOME

LESSON SCRIPTURE: EZRA 1; 2:64-70

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: EZRA 1:1-8, 11; 2:64-70

Key Verse: "All their neighbors aided them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with animals, and with valuable gifts, besides all that was freely offered." Ezra 1:6

Ezra 1:1-8, 11; 2:64-70 (NRSV)

Ezra 1:1-8

1 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared:

2 "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah.

3 Any of those among you who are of his people—may their God be with them!—are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem;

4 and let all survivors, in whatever place they reside, be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods and with animals, besides freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem."

5 The heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, and the

priests and the Levites—everyone whose spirit God had stirred—got ready to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.

6 All their neighbors aided them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with animals, and with valuable gifts, besides all that was freely offered.

7 King Cyrus himself brought out the vessels of the house of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods.

8 King Cyrus of Persia had them released into the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

11

11 ... the total of the gold and silver vessels was five thousand four hundred. All these Sheshbazzar brought up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

2:64-70

64 The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred sixty,

65 besides their male and

female servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty-seven; and they had two hundred male and female singers.

66 They had seven hundred thirty-six horses, two hundred forty-five mules,

67 four hundred thirty-five camels, and six thousand seven hundred twenty donkeys.

68 As soon as they came to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the heads of families made

freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site.

69 According to their resources they gave to the building fund sixty-one thousand darics of gold, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly robes.

70 The priests, the Levites, and some of the people lived in Jerusalem and its vicinity; and the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all Israel in their towns.

WORD POWER!!!

- **Edict** – A law, command.
- **Permitted** – Formal permission.
- **Aided** – To give help or assistance.

GETTING READY!!!

Have you ever needed help? Who did you reach out to? One of the amazing things about God is that God is always ready to help each of us. Every day God provides us with food, shelter, and clothes to help us in life. God also helps us by protecting us even when we do not recognize it.

Did you know that YOU can help change the world too? God has equipped all of us, no matter how young or old, to aid others. From offering a smile to collecting supplies or money for others who have experienced a disaster, God has given each of us skills to aid others. What is one skill or gift that you have that can be utilized to help someone else?

We not only can give to others, but we also can give back to God. Today is the first Sunday of Lent. Starting this past Wednesday (Ash Wednesday), this is 40 days that lead up to Easter. This time, many Christians take time aside to reflect and “give up” things that they like

as a sacrifice to God. Some may decide to “give up” things so they can spend more time with God. From tv, video games, candy, and more, this time can be used to give back to God however God leads you. What is one thing/activity that you would be willing to give up for 40 days to spend time with God? Take a few moments and share with us by taking a picture of the QR code below.



As you reflect upon your Lenten path today, we will begin our journey with Ezra. He needed God’s help, and God aided him in his time of need. God’s response to Ezra reminds us that though challenging times may occur, God will never leave you in a challenge alone.

INTO GOD’S WORD!!!

“**A**ll their neighbors aided them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with animals, and with valuable gifts, besides all that was freely offered.” *Ezra 1:6*

In Ezra’s time, Persia’s King Cyrus told those exiled from Babylon that they could return home and rebuild their lives. This edict permitted them to try to restart their lives in their homeland. However, due to their exile, they didn’t have a lot of materials or other things to rebuild their homes or the temple.

God recognized that they needed assistance and opened up the hearts of neighbors and friends to give them money and materials to help them rebuild. God’s help and care are still available to us, just like it was in Ezra’s time. The people needed help, and God responded with the resources they needed to rebuild! This reminds us that God cares and provides for us even in the face of challenges.

If you went on a long journey away from home and then returned, what would you need to live? The fact is that God takes care of all

humanity which includes you and me! We do not have to fret or worry because God is watching and taking care of all creation. This reminds us that God cares and provides for us even in the face of challenges.

USING GOD'S WORD!!!

Today's scripture lesson is filled with an amazing reminder of God's faithfulness even in the midst of what seems a mighty challenge. Think about a time when someone helped you with something that seemed impossible. How did it make you feel? What did you do to show your gratitude? Take a couple of moments and share your answers with a peer.

We can trust God that God will come through for us. God can even use people we do not know to help us when in difficult situations. What is one way or one thing that God has provided for you?

A couple of different images to help remind us how specifically God cares for us. From food to clothing, God takes care of all of God's creation. The birds and lilies do not have to worry about living or growing because God is their supplier. God supplies all of our needs too! We do not have to worry about the future. We only need to trust God.

Have you ever thought about where your clothes come from? Have you ever wondered how all of your daily needs of food, water, and shelter are met? As your parent or guardian takes care of you, God takes care of so much more. When we replace our worry with trust in God, we begin to realize just how much God has been caring for us even if we never said thank you. We can be assured and have faith that God will provide for all humanity and give resources to fulfill God's purposes.

REMIX!!!

Let's take a moment and pretend we are architects. An architect is a person who designs buildings, houses, and even is on-site when construction happens. The people in Ezra's day were rebuilding

not only their lives and homes but also the temple. If you were able to rebuild a brand-new home, what would it look like? What room(s) would be important to you? Your activity today will allow you to create your own house out of paper. Think about all the materials you need to create your home and make a list or draw a picture.

Rebuilding externally or internally takes a lot of work and dedication. Though it can sometimes be a challenge, God sends divine help and resources to aid us in getting the job done. Take a moment and thank God for sending you people that care and help you in your time of need.

QUESTIONS

1. How would you feel if you had to help rebuild the temple?
2. What is the name of the main character and the king in this story?
3. Share a time when you helped someone who was in need.

PRAISE GOD!!!

Praise God that God cares for all of creation. God's love for us is so big and wide that nothing we can do would separate us from God's care. However, this does not mean that challenges won't come our way. This just means that we have to remind ourselves that God is and will always take care of us at those times. There is no problem or challenge too big for God! Thank God this week for God's constant faithfulness.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of creation, we give you thanks for all your love. Remind us when we worry or when challenges come our way that you are with us. When we hear the birds or see the flowers grow, let them be reminders of your care for us. Thank you to those who care for us here on earth and the places of shelter where we live. Help us to be more mindful of your gifts to us. Amen.

FREE TO TALK TO GOD

LESSON SCRIPTURE: EZRA 6:1-12

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: EZRA 6:1-12

Key Verse: "Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site." Ezra 6:7b

Ezra 6:1-12 (NRSV)

1 Then King Darius made a decree, and they searched the archives where the documents were stored in Babylon.

2 But it was in Ecbatana, the capital in the province of Media, that a scroll was found on which this was written: "A record.

3 In the first year of his reign, King Cyrus issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices are offered and burnt offerings are brought; its height shall be sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits,

4 with three courses of hewn stones and one course of timber; let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.

5 Moreover, let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple in Jerusalem, each to its place; you shall put them in the house of God.

6 Now you, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and you, their associates, the envoys in the province Beyond the River, keep away;

7 let the work on this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site.

8 Moreover I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God: the cost is to be paid to these people, in full and without delay, from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province Beyond the River.

9 Whatever is needed— young bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests in Jerusalem require— let that be given to them day by day without fail,

10 so that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the

king and his children.

11 Furthermore I decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of the house of the perpetrator, who then shall be impaled on it. The house shall be made a dunghill.

12 May the God who has

established his name there overthrow any king or people that shall put forth a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, make a decree; let it be done with all diligence.”

WORD POWER!!!

- **Decree** – An official order or law.
- **Archives** – Places where important historical documents are kept.
- **Perpetrator** – A person who participates in illegal activity.

GETTING READY!!!

Does your family have a tradition that you do every year? It may be gathering at someone’s home to celebrate a special day or holiday. Or maybe you get a reward when you receive good grades in school or accomplish a chore.

It was Jewish tradition and custom that animals were sacrificed to God as an offering of thanks. However, because of their long journey in exile, they could not make these types of offerings. When it was time for them to resume their sacrificial offerings to God while rebuilding the temple, a decree was given so that the Persians would provide the Jewish people with resources and everything they needed to continue this tradition. In today’s story, pay attention to the details of who gave the resources to rebuild and gifted the animals for sacrifice. The story reminds us that the aid and resources needed to fulfill the task God wants us to do can sometimes come from unlikely places. Take

a moment and imagine you were one of the people asked to provide resources for the Jewish people; how would you respond?

INTO GOD'S WORD!!!

In today's continuation of the story, we see that the new leader, King Darius, supports and continues the efforts of King Cyrus to help the Jews rebuild the temple. King Darius searched for records of a copy of King Cyrus' decree regarding the Jerusalem temple. The king consulted the royal records and made sure that the people followed them.

Specific rules and materials were listed to guide the Jews in the rebuilding project. For this to happen, financial resources and materials would be provided to them free of charge. This particular temple was also to include a place for sacrifices. The Jews had not been making sacrifices while in exile in Babylon.

Persians did not make animal sacrifices as part of their religion, so a special note was made to provide animals for sacrifice to fulfill Jewish religious requirements. The decree also specified the return of the gold and silver taken from the temple by the conquerors. The decree further indicated that "whatever was necessary" was to be provided. Priests would also be paid from the royal treasury.

Isn't it amazing that everything the people needed to rebuild was provided! Even though the Persians and King Darius himself did not believe in God, he still listened and followed God's commands. Having these items provided, King Darius ensured that the Jewish people would pray to Yahweh for him and his family. The king respected God and God's people and was willing to punish anyone who tried to stop or interrupt the Jews' building process.

USING GOD'S WORD!!!

What are some rules at home or school that you must follow? In the story today, we see that King Cyrus' decree gave specific regulations and rules in rebuilding the temple. What would happen to someone who did not follow the rules? What happens to you when you do not follow the rules at home or school?

The consequences for those who broke the rules under King Darius were pretty harsh. This was to ensure that no one would try to mess up the rebuilding of the temple. God's work was important, and nothing or anyone was going to stop the completion of it.

God cares about all of God's people. God makes provisions and protects those who follow God's commands. There are specific and strict rules about sacrifices and offerings given to God to give thanks in the Bible. While we don't sacrifice animals anymore to give our offerings to God, what are some ways you can give to honor God and God's laws? Share them with the class. The Bible constantly reminds us that we can have confidence in God to help us with difficult challenges. The help we need may even come from unexpected places or people!

REMIX!!!

Imagine a new family moving into the neighborhood or a new student coming to your class. What are a couple of things that you can do to make that new family/person feel welcome? Share your thoughts with the class.

Now that you have come up with a plan to welcome the new family/new student, think about some behaviors that would make them feel unwelcome. Share them with the class. How could you share

your faith in action by standing up for the new people?

We are all different, but we should respect all humanity. Even though the Persians and King Darius himself did not believe or understand the ways of the Jewish people, they still helped them. This week, ask God to help you see ways to welcome others who are different from you by extending a kind word.

QUESTIONS

1. Who is the new king of Persia in this passage?
2. The money needed to rebuild the temple would come from the royal treasury. **True or False.**
3. Write three ways you can welcome a new student or neighbor.

PRAISE GOD!!!

We can feel free to talk to God anywhere and anytime! God gives us what we need, whether big (like in this story) or small. Whatever is going on in our lives, God sees us and is concerned about us. We can be assured that God will never leave us or give us too much to handle on our own. Let us thank God for the helpful people God has placed in our lives. Let us also be ready and willing to aid others who need help as well.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of all creation, we give you thanks for your handiwork. God, sometimes we look at the problems around us, and not to you, the giver of solutions. Oh God, help us be reminded that you still rebuild things in our lives that may have collapsed. Help us trust you more and not be afraid of what may come, trusting that you will provide all the resources we need. Thank you, God, for being more powerful and greater than anything or anyone. Amen.

FREE TO CELEBRATE PASSOVER

LESSON SCRIPTURE: EZRA 6:13-22; LEVITICUS 23:4-8

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: EZRA 6:13-22

Key Verse: "With joy they celebrated the festival of unleavened bread seven days; for the Lord had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel." Ezra 6:22

Ezra 6:13-22 (NRSV)

13 Then, according to the word sent by King Darius, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates did with all diligence what King Darius had ordered.

14 So the elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the prophesying of the prophet Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo. They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus, Darius, and King Artaxerxes of Persia;

15 and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

16 The people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

17 They offered at the dedication of this house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, according to the number of

the tribes of Israel.

18 Then they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their courses for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

19 On the fourteenth day of the first month the returned exiles kept the passover.

20 For both the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them were clean. So they killed the passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves.

21 It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by all who had joined them and separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel.

22 With joy they celebrated the festival of unleavened bread seven days; for the Lord had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

WORD POWER!!!

- **Prophecy** – Saying that something will happen in the future.
- **Passover** – A Jewish festival celebrating the liberation of the Israelites from the Egyptians.
- **Unleavened** – Bread made without yeast; it doesn't rise but is flat.

GETTING READY!!!

Imagine your favorite party or celebration. How did you feel at that moment? What made you feel joy? In today's story, we will witness the great celebration of not only the completion of the temple but the excitement of God's faithfulness. The Passover was for those who committed to the God of Israel. They were welcome to worship in the rebuilt temple and to celebrate God in the joyful feast.

The people also rejoiced and celebrated the power of God to change the heart of the king of Assyria that turned into King Cyrus and Darius, helping them complete the work of the temple. The celebration was a reminder of what God had done and an expression of joyful interaction with others praising and thanking God. This celebration became a tradition in Jewish history that is still honored and celebrated today! As you read the story, listen for all the names of the animals that were given as a sacrifice to God in celebration.

INTO GOD'S WORD!!!

After five years of construction, the temple was finally complete! Each king played their role in helping the Jewish people finish this amazing feat. God changed the heart of the king of Assyria: Cyrus commanded the temple to be rebuilt, Darius commanded that the

work no longer be opposed. Finally, Artaxerxes allowed Nehemiah to return to refortify the city.

All celebrated this magnificent accomplishment in the area with a huge festival. Traditionally, the whole community celebrated the Passover, including the “nations of the land,” which likely included non-Jews. Gentile resident aliens in Judah were allowed to participate in the Passover celebration if they were circumcised. However, we see that these chapters seem to favor those who returned from exile over those who never left. *All* are included in the joyful celebration of Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the newly reconstructed temple in Jerusalem.

Dedication and sacrifices were made to God with joyful hearts along with a great feast for the people. While this was not the first time the Passover was celebrated, the significance of the temple being rebuilt gave it another greater meaning! “With joy, they celebrated the festival of unleavened bread seven days; for the Lord had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.”

Once again, God does the impossible and provides for God’s people from unlikely sources and kingdoms. The outcome of everyone working together created a celebratory community moment that is still celebrated today. We can thank and praise God for God’s help and blessings towards us.

USING GOD’S WORD!!!

No matter if you are young or old, your life matters to God. The Bible reminds us that we should “walk by faith and not by sight.” This means that when it looks or feels impossible, we can still believe

that God can do anything but fail. Sometimes when we seek something from God, it may not happen the way we would like it to, but that doesn't mean that God doesn't care about you or the situation. In today's lesson, we are reminded that though it took seventy-two years after the first temple's destruction, the new temple was indeed rebuilt!

We can celebrate and praise God for all of God's blessings to us. What is something that you are thankful for today? Share your joy with your peers and celebrate when they share their moment as well. Let us not forget to rejoice in how God provides for us!

REMIX!!!

Next month we will celebrate a very special holiday. Do you know what holiday it is? Here is a hint, it is the celebration of Jesus' resurrection, Easter. When you think of Easter, what feelings come to mind? Name the people in your life that you celebrate this holiday with, whether at home or church.

As we lead up to Easter in the Lenten season, what are some ways your church prepares for the holiday? Some churches have Easter play practice and have special nightly services leading up to Easter. Share with the class some of the things you do to prepare for Easter.

QUESTIONS

1. Find a calendar and write down when Easter is this year.
2. Think about your favorite celebration; what are some of the favorite traditions or food you have at the party?
3. Write a poem of praise using the word "joy." If time permits, share the poem with the class.

PRAISE GOD!!!

God gives us many reasons to celebrate! We should thank God for all of our blessings, not just during the holiday season but every day. Think of some ways this week that you can celebrate and praise God for the “little things” in your life. Next week, share with the class what/how you celebrated these moments.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask a student to share the poem that they wrote and use it as the closing prayer.