



LIBERATING
FAITH STUDIES

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Enduring Beliefs
of the
Christian Faith

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

Vol. 63

DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY

No. 1

Winter Quarter 2025/26

Price \$5.50

Ages 18-Up

Roderick D. Belin, President/Publisher

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

Tiffany Gregory, Chief of Operations

O. Dotson, Layout and Design

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LIBERATING FAITH STUDIES SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY – USPS 006 – 820

Volume 63, No. 1, December, January, February 2025/26. An official quarterly of the African Methodist Episcopal Church prepared by the AMEC Sunday School Union. Published quarterly by the AMEC Sunday School Union, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37212. Periodicals postage paid at Nashville, Tennessee. Copyright © 2025 by AMEC Sunday School Union.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Liberating Faith Studies Sunday School Quarterly, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37212.

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Entered as Periodicals Postage Paid Matter, March 20, 1942, at the Post Office at Nashville, Tennessee, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

The Order of Service

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

The Lesson

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

The Closing

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

Editorial Staff

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

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

— Lessons —

Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce

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!

Don't 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.

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

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

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

And, always remember, I am praying for you.

Roderick D. Belin
President/Publisher

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 1-7

Monday	2 Kings 22:1-10 (God's Word Reclaimed)
Tuesday	2 Kings 22:11-20 (God's Word Leads to Repentance)
Wednesday	Luke 24:25-32 (God's Word Touches the Heart)
Thursday	Nehemiah 8:1-8 (God's Word Interpreted)
Friday	John 5:37-47 (God's Word Testifies of Jesus)
Saturday	John 17:14-19 (God's Word Is Truth)
Sunday	Psalms 19:7-13 (God's Word Is Perfect)

The Holy Scriptures

(Second Sunday of Advent)

Lesson Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 1:8-9; 2 Kings 22:8-20; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Psalm 19:7-14; Luke 24:25-32; Acts 17:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Focus Scripture: Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:14-15

Key Verses: All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

PSALM 19:7-11; 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-15(NRSV UE)

Psalm 19:7-11

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;

8 the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes;

9 the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

2 Timothy 3:14-15

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it

15 and how from childhood you have known sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

PSALM 19:7-11; 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-15(KJV)

Psalm 19:7-11

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

2 Timothy 3:14-15

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

KEY TERMS

- **Scripture (skrip-chər)** – The sacred writings of the Bible, divinely inspired and authoritative for faith and life.
- **Inspired (in-spīrd)** – Breathed by God; conveying divine guidance through human authors.
- **Righteousness (rīt-chəs-nəs)** – Living in right relationship with God and neighbor; moral integrity.
- **Meditate (med-i-tāt)** – To thoughtfully reflect on God's Word, internalizing its meaning for daily life.
- **Conduit (kän-dōōt)** – A channel through which something flows; here, scripture is the conduit of God's voice.

From the stories of Moses freeing the Israelites, to enslaved Africans reading the Word in secret, God's Word has been a map for freedom, courage, and moral clarity.

the coming of God's perfect gift to the world, Jesus, the Word made flesh.

Have you ever felt lost when making a major life decision? Many people are searching for a framework to shape a life of meaning and purpose. The Bible, as Psalm 19 and Paul's letter to Timothy highlight, offers that framework. Scripture guides, corrects, and equips us to live faithfully.

Psalm 19 celebrates God's Word as more trustworthy than human wisdom, more radiant than the sun, and sweeter than honey. Meanwhile, 2 Timothy 3:14-17 reminds us that scripture is a lifelong companion – helping believers know God, live uprightly, and remain steadfast in faith.

INTRODUCTION

The first unit of this quarter is a study highlighting the holy nature of our God and God's instrument and gift to us to aid us in our search and path toward holiness, God's holy Word, the scriptures. It is appropriate that this study comes during this Advent season, as we await

For African American Christians, scripture has historically been more than guidance – it has been a source of liberation and hope. From the stories of Moses freeing the Israelites, to enslaved Africans reading the Word in secret, God's Word has been a map for freedom, courage, and moral clarity.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

From the hymnal of the Bible, our study passage from Psalms takes on a more poetic form as it describes the value and virtues of scripture.

Psalm 19:7-11

Verse 7: The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. Here, “law” refers to God’s instructions, which renew our hearts and provide direction.

Verse 8: God’s statutes give wisdom, making simple people discerning. Scripture shapes not only our understanding but our character.

Verse 9: God’s commandments are sure, enlightening the eyes. Spiritual insight comes from attentiveness to God’s Word.

Verses 10-11: Scripture is more desirable than gold and warns us from hidden faults, protecting us and offering great reward.

The psalmist invites us to see scripture not just as a set of rules but as life-giving


guidance that restores, enlightens, and delights the soul.

For this lesson, Psalm 19 is paired with a passage from Paul’s second epistle addressed to Timothy, where he also teaches about the value and virtues of scripture.

2 Timothy 3:14-15...

Verses 14-15: Paul reminds Timothy to remain in the teachings he has learned. Scripture nurtures wisdom and equips believers from childhood to maturity.

Verses 16-17: All scripture is inspired and practical for teaching, correcting, and training in righteousness, equipping us for every good work.



Scripture is both protective and empowering – it forms moral and spiritual competence, guiding believers in all areas of life.

Scripture is both protective and empowering – it forms moral and spiritual competence, guiding believers in all areas of life.

- *Compare what Psalm 19 teaches about God through the law with what we can see in creation (Psalm 19:1-6).*

How does each channel – Word and world – help you understand God’s character?

SANKOFA

The study scriptures for this quarter (focus and lesson) are grouped in a way that they were grouped and studied by many Christians following the Uniformed Lesson outlines in 1929-1930. As we continue to follow the Uniformed Lesson outlines in our studies in church school, these particular 1929-1930 outlines are relevant just as God’s Word, while ancient, remains relevant and necessary. Africans and African Americans have historically turned to scripture for guidance and liberation. In the

late 1920s and early 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance celebrated African American literary and cultural achievements, often using biblical themes to explore identity, justice, and purpose. Leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois and writers such as Langston Hughes drew upon biblical imagery to challenge societal oppression and to

inspire moral courage. For example, Hughes’ poems echo the prophetic calls for freedom and hope found in scripture, inspiring people to imagine a more just society. Du Bois similarly drew on ideas like “the burden of the cross” to encourage moral courage and perseverance in the face of oppression.

Psalm 19 and 2 Timothy remind us that

God’s Word is a source of resilience, enabling believers to navigate unjust systems while maintaining integrity and hope.

Psalm 19 and 2 Timothy remind us that God’s Word is a source of resilience, enabling believers to navigate unjust systems while maintaining integrity and hope.

*Let America be
America Again,*
Langston Hughes



CASE STUDY

Consider the story of Harriet Tubman, who relied on scripture as both comfort and guidance while leading enslaved people to freedom. Tubman (c. 1822–

1913) was born into slavery in Maryland and escaped to freedom in 1849. She became a fearless conductor on the Underground Railroad, leading hundreds of enslaved people to liberty and relying on her Methodist faith and knowledge of scripture for courage. Tubman also served as a spy and nurse for the Union Army during the Civil War, demonstrating how devotion to God's Word can guide a life of service and liberation. The words of Psalm 19 and the teachings of Timothy remind us that God equips ordinary people for extraordinary service. Scripture provided Tubman with moral clarity, courage, and a "life map" for decisions that risked her life for others' liberation.

Today, African American communities and communities of African descent still face systemic challenges. Scripture remains a vital guide for ethical decision-making, resilience, and service to others.

Harriet Tubman



Today, African American communities and communities of African descent still face systemic challenges. Scripture remains a vital guide for ethical decision-making, resilience, and service to others.



LIFE APPLICATION

God's Word is not only meant to be read or studied, but to be lived, shaping the choices we make, the relationships we nurture, and the ways we serve others.

As we reflect on Psalm 19:7-11 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17, we see that scripture equips us to act with wisdom, integrity, and faithfulness in our daily lives

Identify ways scripture reveals God's character in your daily life. Reflect on

Psalm 19:7-11; consider what the law, statutes, and commandments teach about God's desires.

Meditate on the text daily this week. Invite God's Word to shape your thoughts, attitudes, and relationships. Imagine scripture as a "conversation" with God.

Share meaningful scriptures with someone this week. Use scripture to guide a decision you face. Consider volunteering in your local community as an expression of scripture's teaching in action.

QUESTIONS

1. How does scripture serve as a guide in your personal and professional life?
2. God appeared suddenly in the lives of Noah, Moses, and Mary, mother of Jesus. How did they respond? Would you respond in the same way? Why or why not?
3. Think of a time when scripture helped you make a difficult choice. What

passage did you rely on, and what did it teach you?

4. In what ways can your understanding of scripture strengthen your community and the AME Church globally?

SUMMARY

God's Word is perfect, trustworthy, and full of wisdom, guiding us in every

Consider volunteering
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action.

part of life (Psalm 19:7-11). By holding fast to scripture, we are equipped for teaching, correcting, and living faithfully (2 Timothy 3:14-17). The examples of faithful believers show us how to apply God's Word in real-life decisions and challenges. As we study and reflect

on scripture, we learn to let it shape our actions, choices, and hearts each day.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Hymn: "Break Thou the Bread of Life," AMECH #209

Prayer: Almighty God, we thank you

for the gift of your Word. May it guide our decisions, strengthen our faith, and inspire us to serve others. Help us to meditate on your Word day and night, to hear your voice in scripture, and to be transformed into Christ's likeness. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**December 8-14**

Monday	Isaiah 49:13-17 (The Father's Motherly Compassion)
Tuesday	John 4:20-24 (The Father Seeks Authentic Worshipers)
Wednesday	Isaiah 40:27-31 (The Father Strengthens the Powerless)
Thursday	Isaiah 64:1-8 (The Father Exacts Discipline)
Friday	Psalms 103:1-5, 10-14 (The Father Blesses and Forgives)
Saturday	James 1:13-18 (The Father Gives Perfect Gifts)
Sunday	Matthew 6:24-34 (The Father Cares for Our Needs)

Our Heavenly Father

(Third Sunday of Advent)

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 34:4-7; Psalm 103:1-5, 10-14; Isaiah 40:27-31; Matthew 6:24-34; John 3:3-6; 4:20-24; 8:40-47; Romans 2:2-11; 8:14-17; 1 John 4:7-16

Focus Scripture: Matthew 6:24-34

Key Verse: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." Matthew 6:34

MATTHEW 6:24-34(NRSV UE)

24 "No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

25 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?

28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin,

29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'

32 For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

MATTHEW 6:24-34(KJV)

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Where-withal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

KEY TERMS

- **Mammon** – Wealth or material possessions; often personified as a competing master.
- **Anxious/Worry** – Mental unrest or preoccupation over what may happen, especially regarding daily needs.
- **Kingdom of God** – God's reign manifested in justice, love, mercy, and daily life.
- **Materialism** – The value placed on acquiring wealth or possessions rather than seeking God.
- **Provision** – God's faithful care to meet human needs.
- **Capitalism (as referenced in case study)** – An economic system emphasizing private ownership and profit, sometimes linked to materialistic greed.

INTRODUCTION

Advent is a season of preparation and hope. During this time, Christians reflect on God's faithfulness and the promise of Christ's coming. Yet, even in hope, worry often creeps in – about bills, jobs, health, or family. In Matthew 6:24-34, Jesus teaches that God knows our

needs and calls us to trust God rather than be enslaved by anxiety or materialism. This passage reminds us that worry does not add a single hour to our lives, but faith in God provides peace, guidance, and perspective. As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, we are invited to lay

down the burdens that weigh us down and embrace the freedom God offers.

In today's fast-paced world, many people live under the constant tension between scarcity and abundance. We often worry about our daily needs, striving

Jesus teaches that God knows our needs and calls us to trust God rather than be enslaved by anxiety or materialism.

to secure enough for ourselves and our families, while simultaneously being tempted by consumer culture to pursue more than we truly need. Matthew 6:24-34 speaks directly to this tension, inviting us to trust God rather than money.

The passage reminds believers that “no one can serve two masters,” highlighting the impossibility of serving both God and wealth. By teaching us to prioritize the kingdom of God and to rely on divine providence for our daily needs, Jesus challenges a culture dominated by materialism and anxiety. This lesson not only addresses individual worry but also encourages communities to foster generosity, resilience, and mutual support.

“
Matthew 6:24-34
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tension, inviting us to
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money.”

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Matthew 6:24-34 is part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Jesus begins by stating a truth that challenges every believer: no one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and wealth (mammon). Loyalty divided

between God and material things leads to spiritual unrest. Jesus goes on with a second lesson: we should not worry excessively about our daily needs. He illustrates this with examples from nature: birds of the air and lilies of the field, which do not toil or spin yet are cared for by God. Jesus’ teaching is practical as well as spiritual; it calls us to notice God’s everyday provision and to live one day at

a time. By comparing God’s care for the smallest creatures to God’s care for us, Jesus assures us that nothing is too small or too large for God’s attention.

This story underscores the principle that **faith entails trust and surrender**. By observing God’s care for creation, believers

learn that their own needs will not be neglected if they prioritize God’s kingdom. In teaching these lessons, Jesus addresses both **spiritual priorities and practical human anxieties**, showing that reliance on God transforms how we view material resources.

SANKOFA

The AME Church has a history of trusting God amid struggle. During slavery and Reconstruction, African Americans faced systemic poverty and oppression. Yet, black churches nurtured faith in God's provision, emphasizing education, mutual aid, and stewardship.

In the modern era, our communities still wrestle with financial insecurity, health disparities, and social injustice. Jesus' teaching calls us to trust God while actively engaging in our communities, using the resources and gifts God has given to build God's kingdom.

Looking back through a **Sankofa** lens, we see that our ancestors relied on faith to survive and thrive. By remembering their resilience, we gain courage to face today's challenges with hope, knowing that God's care transcends generations.

CASE STUDY

Faith, Poverty, and the Temptation of Greed

In the United States, economic inequality has reached historically high levels. Research from the Pew Research Center (2020) indicates that the wealthiest 10% of Americans control 70% of the nation's wealth, while nearly 40 million people live below the poverty line (Semega et al., 2020). In such a climate, two dangers arise: first, desperation due to scarcity, which can fuel anxiety and hopelessness; second, the lure of

Jesus' teaching calls us to trust God while actively engaging in our communities, using the resources and gifts God has given to build God's kingdom.

excessive accumulation, encouraged by consumer culture and capitalist pressures.

Matthew 6:24-34 addresses both dangers. By calling believers to trust God for daily needs and to "seek first the kingdom of God," the passage resists both fear-driven scarcity behaviors and greed-

driven overconsumption. Sociological research supports this approach: communities with strong religious participation report higher levels of charitable giving, mutual aid, and financial resilience, even in low-income populations (Regnerus, 2003; Krause, 2006).

For example, a study by Krause (2006) found that regular churchgoers in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods were more likely to engage in cooperative economic practices, share resources, and experience lower levels of anxiety about finances. These practices align with Jesus' teaching: rather than hoarding wealth or succumbing to worry, faith fosters trust, generosity, and community-oriented problem-solving.

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LIFE APPLICATION

The message of Matthew 6:24-34 remains deeply relevant today. In a culture dominated by advertising, debt, and wealth inequality, individuals are constantly pressured to pursue more – whether money, possessions, or status. Faith challenges these pressures by encouraging trust in God's provision **and** focus on kingdom-oriented priorities, rather than accumulation for its

own sake.

Practically, believers can apply this passage by cultivating daily gratitude, reducing unnecessary consumption, and engaging in community support systems. Churches and faith communities can foster financial literacy programs,

These practices align with Jesus' teaching: rather than hoarding wealth or succumbing to worry, faith fosters trust, generosity, and community-oriented problem-solving.

cooperative ventures, and charitable giving, emphasizing that life's fulfillment comes from relationship, purpose, and service, not wealth alone.

QUESTIONS

1. How does trusting God for daily needs help individuals and communities resist the anxiety of poverty? Please share some personal examples.
2. How can the church model a healthy response to wealth and consumption in a capitalist society?
3. What practical steps can faith communities take to reduce inequality and build mutual support systems?

SUMMARY

Faith in God should take priority

over wealth and worry. Faith can foster resilience against poverty and resist the greed encouraged by contemporary capitalism. Gratitude, generosity, and community support are encouraged for every believer, demonstrating that trust in God leads to both personal peace and collective well-being.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Hymn: "I Trust in God," AMECH #453

Prayer: Gracious God, we release our worries into your hands. Teach us to seek your kingdom first, to trust your provision, and to live faithfully in every moment. Strengthen our hearts with peace, and help us support one another in love. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 15-21

Monday	Psalms 110 (The Messiah Sits at God's Side)
Tuesday	Romans 5:1-11 (Christ Died for the Ungodly)
Wednesday	John 3:14-21 (Christ Offers Eternal Life)
Thursday	John 10:9-16 (Christ Cares for the Sheep)
Friday	Isaiah 9:3-7 (Welcome the Davidic Heir)
Saturday	Psalms 2 (The Messiah Reigns Victoriously)
Sunday	Luke 15:1-7 (Christ Rejoices When Sinners Repent)

Christ the Savior

(Fourth Sunday of Advent)

Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:11, 30-32; 15:3-7; John 3:14-17; 10:9-11, 14-16, 27-28; Acts 3:1-18; Romans 5:1-11; Philippians 2:5-11; 2 Timothy 1:9-10

Focus Scripture: Luke 15:3-7; Romans 5:6-10

Key Verse: If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. Romans 5:10

LUKE 15:3-7; ROMANS 5:6-10 (NRSV UE)

Luke 15:3-7

3 So he told them this parable:

4 “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.

6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.’

7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Romans 5:6-10

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die.

8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

9 Much more surely, therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

LUKE 15:3-7; ROMANS 5:6-10(KJV)

Luke 15:3-7

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Romans 5:6-10

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

KEY TERMS

- **Paradox (PAH-ruh-doks)** – A statement that appears contradictory but reveals a deeper truth.
- **Reconciliation (ree-KON-sil-ee-AY-shun)** – Restoration of relationship between God and humanity.
- **Sacrificial Lamb (sak-RIH-fih-shuhl lam)** – Image of Jesus' atoning death for humanity's sins.
- **Shepherd (SHEP-erd)** – One who guides, protects, and seeks the lost (primarily sheep).
- **Justification (juhs-tih-fih-KAY-shun)** – Being made right with God through faith.
- **Salvation (sal-VAY-shun)** – Deliverance from sin and its consequences through Jesus Christ.
- **Incarnation (in-kar-NAY-shun)** – God becoming human in the person of Jesus Christ, fully divine and fully human, to accomplish salvation for humanity.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine wandering through a crowded city at night, feeling invisible, unseen, and unknown. You search for a friend, a familiar face, a sign that someone cares. Many people today experience this feeling of being lost – not merely geographically, but emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

In Luke 15:3-7, Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep. A shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep to seek the one that is lost. In Romans 5:6-10, Paul explains that God's love reaches even the helpless and enemies of God.

In Luke 15:3-7, Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep. A shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep to seek the one that is lost. In Romans 5:6-10, Paul explains that God's love reaches even the helpless and enemies of God. Together, these texts reveal God's persistent pursuit of the lost. Christ's incarnation, life, death, and resurrection exemplify a paradox:

he is both the shepherd who seeks the lost and the lamb who offers himself for their salvation.

In African American history, this duality resonates deeply: enslaved and oppressed peoples looked to God as both

protector and redeemer. God's love was seen as relentless, even amid injustice. This lesson invites learners to see Christ as both the rescuer and the sacrificed, offering a personal and communal experience of reconciliation.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 15:3-7 – The Lost Sheep

Verse 3: Jesus' teaching arises from criticism that he associates with "sinners." Here, the stage is set for radical inclusion; it is a moment when societal norms of exclusion meet God's expansive grace.

Verse 4: The shepherd leaves ninety-nine to seek the one lost. Picture a rugged landscape at dusk, the shepherd scanning hillsides, calling out through the evening silence until he finds the wandering sheep. This mirrors God's relentless pursuit of each soul.

Verses 5-6: When the lost sheep is recovered, there is rejoicing – a communal celebration of restoration. It's

not merely the return, but the relational joy that matters. Just as a parent might dance with delight when a missing child is found, God rejoices over restoration, emphasizing God's active love.

Verse 7: Jesus concludes with a theological claim: heaven rejoices over one sinner restored. This parallels Paul's

discussion of God's love and reconciliation in Romans, showing that even one life reclaimed carries universal significance.

Romans 5:6-10 – Reconciled Through Christ

Verse 6: Christ died for the ungodly – his love is proactive, not reactive. God does not wait for humanity to reach perfection before extending grace; the

pursuit comes first.

Verse 8: Paul underscores that Christ's death proves divine love. Even while enemies, humans are reconciled. Imagine the enormity of this: enemies reconciled not because they earned it, but because love chooses to act.

This lesson invites learners to see Christ as both the rescuer and the sacrificed, offering a personal and communal experience of reconciliation.

Verse 10: Reconciliation in Christ transforms lives, linking justification to liberation and personal responsibility. One cannot merely be “found”; living in this new reality requires engagement in God’s mission of restoration.

Luke’s shepherd imagery emphasizes relational pursuit and personal care; Paul’s letter stresses cosmic reconciliation. Both affirm that God’s love is active, extravagant, and inclusive – a theological cornerstone of the AME Church’s liberating message.

SANKOFA

Fannie Lou Hamer, a civil rights activist and leader in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, tirelessly advocated for disenfranchised black citizens, facing arrests and violence, yet never gave up on those “lost” in fear and oppression. Her work reflects the parable of the lost sheep: she sought out those marginalized, empowered them, and celebrated every victory toward justice. Hamer’s courage mirrors Christ as shepherd and sacrificial lamb, showing


God’s persistent love manifested through human action. She organized voter registration drives, gave powerful testimonies before Congress, and created spaces where black voices could be heard in systems designed to silence them. Hamer’s life demonstrates that pursuing justice and lifting up the marginalized is not only an act of courage but also a spiritual calling rooted in God’s love. Her

legacy reminds us that the pursuit of the lost often requires personal sacrifice, resilience, and unwavering faith in the transformative power of community.

CASE STUDY

In Cape Town, South Africa, community leaders have developed programs to reconcile

youth involved in rival gangs. Leaders like Father Joseph Daniels have initiated dialogue circles, mentorship programs, and cultural activities to bridge divides, restore trust, and provide alternative pathways (Burke, 2020). These efforts reflect Luke 15: the pursuit of the lost, celebrating restoration rather than condemning failure.



Reconciliation in
Christ transforms lives,
linking justification to
liberation and personal
responsibility.

Father Daniels works closely with former gang members, helping them identify personal goals and connect with educational and employment opportunities. He also trains local volunteers to act as mediators, creating safe spaces where youth can express grievances and learn conflict-resolution skills. Through ongoing mentorship and community events, he fosters a sense of belonging and purpose, illustrating the shepherding love described in Luke 15.

Reference: Burke, J. (2020). "Cape Town's gang reconciliation programs: Transforming communities through mentorship and dialogue." *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 15(3), 45-57.

Christ, as both shepherd and sacrificial lamb, comes seeking the lost, calling us into relationship even when we feel unworthy or far from God.

word from a friend, a timely prayer, or a sudden sense of peace amid chaos. Recognizing these moments helps us see that God's love is relentless and personal, inviting us into reconciliation not only with him but also with ourselves and others.

Consider a family or community conflict you've witnessed or experienced. Picture the hurt, the misunderstandings,

and the fear of reaching out. Christ's love asks us to step into these spaces with courage and humility, offering grace and seeking reconciliation. Just as the shepherd rejoices over the return of one lost sheep, we are called to celebrate restored relationships, no matter how small the step. *Reflect on the*

LIFE APPLICATION

Christ, as both shepherd and sacrificial lamb, comes seeking the lost, calling us into relationship even when we feel unworthy or far from God. Reflect on moments in your own life when God pursued you – times of doubt, fear, or isolation. Perhaps it was a comforting

ways you have been reconciled with others – through forgiveness, understanding, or simple acts of kindness – and give thanks for God's hand in those reconciliations.

Ultimately, life in Christ invites us to live as both recipients and conduits of God's love. We are called to be found

when lost, yet also to help others find their way. By embracing our own need for reconciliation, we become instruments of healing, hope, and joy in a world longing for both guidance and redemption.

QUESTIONS

1. How have you experienced God's pursuit in your own life, times when you felt "lost" emotionally, spiritually, or socially, and how did that experience transform your understanding of God's love?
2. Seeing Christ as both shepherd and sacrificial lamb, how does this dual role challenge or inspire you in the ways you pursue reconciliation in your relationships, community, or church?

By embracing our own need for reconciliation, we become instruments of healing, hope, and joy in a world longing for both guidance and redemption.

3. Reflecting on the examples of Fannie Lou Hamer, Father Joseph Daniels, and the AME Church's outreach, what practical steps can you take to embody God's extravagant love for those who feel marginalized or forgotten?

SUMMARY

Today's lesson illuminates God's relentless pursuit of those who are lost and marginalized. Christ embodies both the shepherd who seeks and the lamb who sacrifices, offering reconciliation to all. Our challenge is to embrace God's extravagant love, participate in restoration, and celebrate the recovery of every lost soul. In the Advent and

Christmas seasons, we are called to celebrate this love epitomized in Immanuel, *God with us*. Christ's mission calls us to live reconciled, restorative, and courageously loving lives.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Hymn: "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us,"

AMECH #379

Prayer: Gracious and Loving God, we thank you for pursuing us even when we feel lost, unseen, or far from your heart. Thank you for sending Christ, our shepherd and sacrificial lamb, who guides, protects, and rescues us while

offering himself for our salvation. Help us to recognize your extravagant love in our daily lives and to mirror that love in our relationships, our communities, and the world around us. Teach us to seek reconciliation where there is division, to bring hope where there is despair, and

to celebrate the return of the lost, just as you rejoice over each one restored. May our hearts be filled with courage, our hands with service, and our lives with the joy of being both loved and called to love in your name. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 22-28

Monday	Zechariah 4:1-7 (The Spirit Accomplishes God's Will)
Tuesday	1 Corinthians 12:1-13 (The Spirit Bestows Gifts)
Wednesday	Isaiah 11:1-9 (The Spirit Gives Wisdom and Understanding)
Thursday	Matthew 1:18-25 (The Spirit Works in Jesus' Birth)
Friday	Acts 7:51-60 (The Spirit Reveals God's Glory)
Saturday	Psalms 104:24, 29-35 (The Spirit Creates and Renews)
Sunday	Romans 8:12-17, 26-27 (The Spirit Affirms Our Adoption)

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DECALOGUE

Superintendent—And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord hath made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

My soul be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise:
And hosts of sins are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.

Superintendent—Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not kill.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not commit adultery.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not steal.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

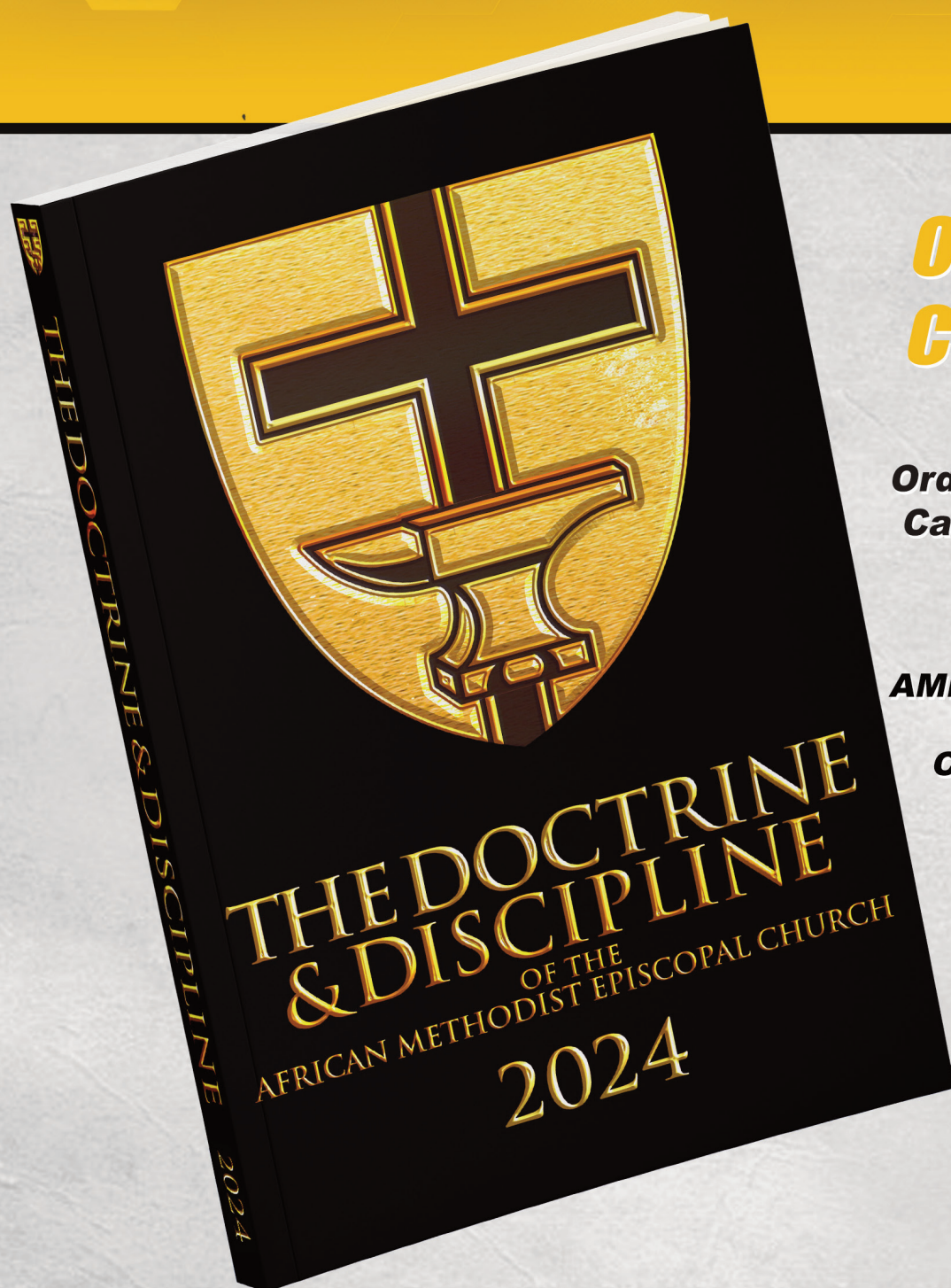
School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts.

Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee!
Nearer to thee!

Superintendent—Hear what Christ, our Savior, saith: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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