



JUSTICE
and the
PROPHETS

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

- **Rev. Roderick Belin**, Publisher
- **Rev. Garland F. Pierce**, Editor
- **Dr. Karma Bowen-Johnson**, Lessons
- **A.L. Stanfield**, Copy Editor
- **Orlando Dotson**, Graphic Designer

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.

VOCABULARY

- **Day of the Lord** – The day of God’s judgment.
- **Despise** – Hold deep contempt.
- **Solemn** – Not cheerful, gloomy.
- **Remnant** – Whatever is left.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history we have seen advances and movements that were birthed in order to give people of color, and women, more leverage when it comes to rights, pay, opportunities, and equality at all levels. Even though many have sacrificed so much, including their lives, so that we can experience a better life, there is still a lot of work to do for justice to be equal among genders and ethnicity. In other words, life is still not fair.

Even though there are systems in place that keep us separated and not equal, society would say we have advanced by leaps and bounds in the last ten to fifteen years. We are doing more now for justice and equality than in any other time in our history. But, there is still a lot of work to do. God would prefer that we work towards justice rather than stand quietly in the face of injustice, and that we seek truth rather than accept lies, and seek God’s righteousness over the world’s rewards.

Activity #1: Stop, Look, and Listen. Discussion

1. How does it make you feel to know that there is still a lot in injustice around you?
2. Name some things that you know are unfair in your school.
3. Who in your community do you feel is trustworthy on issues of injustice?

4. How does it make you feel when you see someone mistreated?

THE BIBLE STORY

Israel has experienced blessing after blessing as God's chosen people. The benefit of being "God's chosen" means they were able to have great houses and wealth. However, the Israelites took it all for granted, began worshipping other gods and living unjustly, and turning a blind eye to others being treated unjustly. That is not what God intended. Now- as explained to them through the prophet Amos- the time is coming where God is going to call to accountability everything that has happened. The people longing for the "Day of the Lord" to come thought it would be better. But that day will be justice in action because God will be in the judgment seat; and, they will not be able to take advantage of what God has given to them.

It was going to be rough...imagine running from a lion and running into a bear; bracing against the wall to get away from the bear and getting bitten by a snake. On the "Day of the Lord" for the people, there will be no joy or happiness. Times will be hard. No one will be catching a break here. The "Day of the Lord" will not be what the Israelites expect it to be. The "Day of the Lord" is a day of judgment and there will be nothing that anyone can do about it. By this time, God will no longer accept their worship, their sacrifices, nor their praise. When the "Day of the Lord" comes, God will be vocal about the injustices committed against the poor and disadvantaged and won't want to hear anything about it, nor will anything done... be accepted.

LIFE APPLICATION

“I just can’t wait”...is a phrase that is heard repeatedly. *I can’t wait until I’m in high school, I can’t wait until I can drive, I can’t wait until Christmas comes.* Whenever we say things like that, we really don’t understand what we are asking for. Actually, when we look forward to something good to happen, we are also looking forward to all the hardships and worry that may come along with the good we are anticipating. That is what was happening in this scripture. The people were dropping hints of longing for the “Day of the Lord.” Well, that day is not at all what the people expected. God’s coming meant the day of judgment will come.

Even if it seems that we can get away with some things without God saying anything, it does not mean that God doesn’t see it. God sees everything! So, treat others fairly, and seek justice for *all*, not just one group of people. Look out for those who are the most vulnerable and know that God cares about everyone. Be aware that just because it looks like you’re going to get away with something, does not mean that you will. God sees and will react to everything you do, say, and think. You will also be accountable for the things that you don’t do. So, where you see things that are wrong, speak up, take action, and do something!

Activity #2: Intentional Living. YouTube: “Intentional” by Travis Greene (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VH3f0eIIv8>) In two groups, draw a plan for how to practice righteous living (Being Good) and generous living (Doing Good). Come back

together and share your plans. Develop a plan for the entire groups by combining your plans. Post it in your youth area and on index cards to carry with you

SUMMARY

Injustices are all over. It is up to us to do something about it. We can start at home, in a church group, and by going out into the community. It is up to us to do no harm, and to help those who have been harmed. In that way, we show ourselves to be the hands and feet of God. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers; and, God's expectation for us to live in his grace and mercy is to pay it forward and show grace and mercy to others. We are also called to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, often the elderly and the young. When we live according to God's standards, we become instruments for justice.

Activity #3: With Liberty and Justice for All. The pledge of allegiance includes these words, "With liberty and justice for all." This has had many meanings throughout time. What does that mean to you in the 21st century?

CLOSING DEVOTION

God, as we stand here today, we ask you to strengthen us to be your hands and feet. Give us boldness to stand for what is right, faith to stand alone, compassion to expand our embrace and grace, just as you have shown us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR JUSTICE

LESSON SCRIPTURE: HABAKKUK 1

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: HABAKKUK 1:1-4, 12-14

Key Verse: *Your eyes are too pure to behold evil, and you cannot look on wrongdoing. Habakkuk 1:13a*

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 12-14 (NRSV)

Habakkuk 1:1-4

1 The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw.

2 O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?

3 Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

4 So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous—therefore judgment comes forth perverted.

12-14

12 Are you not from of old, O Lord my God, my Holy One? You shall not die. O Lord, you have marked them for judgment; and you, O Rock, have established them for punishment.

13 Your eyes are too pure to behold evil, and you cannot look on wrongdoing; why do you look on the treacherous, and are silent when the wicked swallow those more righteous than they?

14 You have made people like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler.

VOCABULARY

- **Oracle** – A response or message or the person who gives such a message.
- **Contention** – Heated disagreement.
- **Treacherous** – Guilty of being disloyal or unfaithful.
- **Perverted** – Corrupt in all ways.

INTRODUCTION



There are many injustices that plague our country. One of the most prevalent issues for our time is **Gun Violence and Gun Control**. Gun violence has plagued this country with mass shootings at malls, theaters, concerts, in the streets, in the church, and in the schools. Since the turn of the century there have been more than 240 school shootings in the United States. It doesn't matter the grade level, neighborhood, race, or economic status of the majority of students or the levels of security already in place at any given school, guns have penetrated our educational centers and have left students,

faculty, and parents frustrated and wondering when the next incident will happen.

In 2018 a group of students from Parkland High School in Florida decided after a deadly shooting took place at their school, that they were not going to wait for the government to take charge. Instead, they took things into their own hands. They didn't want the memory of the shooting that took place in Feb. 2018 to be forgotten, or overshadowed by the next large issue that came along. The students were frustrated with the government and pushed to get the gun control laws changed. To do this, they staged a ***National School Walkout*** and an advocacy tour called the ***March for Our Lives*** where thousands of youth took to the streets in protest to make the government hear their voices and to activate change.

Activity #1: Start Something. Watch the news clip, "March for Our Lives" (<https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2018/06/16/march-for-our-lives-tour-road-to-change-gallagher-dnt.cnn>). ***Develop a petition you would send to God on this issue.***

THE BIBLE STORY

The problem as God gave Habakkuk to see it:

God, how long do I have to c___ out for help before you
I _____?

How many times do I have to yell,
"Help! M_____! Police!"

before you come to the r_____?

Why do you force me to look at evil,

stare t_____ in the face day after day?

Anarchy and violence b_____ out,

quarrels and fights all over the place.

Law and order fall to pieces.

J_____ is a joke.

The wicked have the r _____ hamstrung

and stand justice on its head.

God says, "Look!"

God, you're from e_____, aren't you?

Holy God, we aren't going to die, are we?

God, you chose B_____ for your judgment work?

Rock-solid God, you gave them the job of

d_____?

But you can't be s_____!

You can't condone evil!

So why don't you d_____ something about this?

Why are you s_____ now?

This outrage! Evil men s_____ up the righteous

and you stand around

and watch!

You're treating men and women

as so many fish in the ocean,

S_____ without direction,

swimming but not getting anywhere.

Activity #2: Why Is God Silent Now! Use this list of words to fill in the blanks of **the Bible Story above**. Once the puzzle is

solved, discuss the magnitude of what the prophet is asking.

Word List: cry, eternity, swimming, righteous, listen, Babylonians, swallow, justice, murder, discipline, silent, break, rescue, serious, do, trouble.

LIFE APPLICATION

The prophet Habakkuk has two complaints as he goes before God on behalf of the people: one, he complains about injustice going on in the land, and two, he complains about how long God is taking to come to their defense. This is a familiar commentary. We all see injustices happen in our society and we talk about it, flood social media with it, in some cases we take a stand, fully committed until the next thing comes along and the cycle continues. The first thing gets overshadowed by the new thing. Then, we complain that no one is doing anything, and that the church is silent, the politicians aren't working, and the government is too slow in responding (if it responds at all).

Habakkuk goes directly to God giving us the example of God's sovereignty and capacity, as well as giving us an example of how we too can go to God to express our frustrations, knowing that God hears our hearts. God is never taken by surprise whenever things happen, nor is God unconcerned. As we pray for those who are mistreated or caught in the midst of the sins of others, God hears and is just to act in God's time in God's way. Sometimes, it isn't for us to understand God's methods, it is for us to intercede on behalf of others. When we do, and see results from our actions even in the smallest ways, we know that

most of all God sees and is concerned about everyone.

Activity #3: Project Injustice/Justice. Divide into two groups. Group one will design a poster board about injustices that concern them in their community, and group two will design a vision board of how they would like to see the world. Once completed, your teacher will post your project on a bulletin board to display in the church. This may take a couple of weeks to complete.

SUMMARY

There are several things that we can do as we wait on God to move on our behalf:

We can pray. Our prayers have volume in the face of injustice. God is aware of every situation and will move in God's time.

We can extend a hand. Helping others who are in need is how we become the hands and feet of God. Remember, though, we are NOT God, but if we can decrease someone's discomfort by any measure, we are showing compassion. This may require you to leave your comfort zone.

We can continue to tell the story. The one thing we cannot afford to do is to forget that injustice exists, and we must insist that our story gets told...CORRECTLY...And finally... ***Never give up hope.***

CLOSING DEVOTION

God, as we stand here today, we ask you to strengthen us to be your hands and feet. Give us boldness to stand for what is right, faith to stand alone, compassion to expand our embrace, and grace just as you have shown us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Parkland Survivors Turned Into Activists and Inspired a Wave of New Gun Safety Laws

by Dakin Andone, CNN, Mon., February 11, 2019

One year ago, police converged on a high school. Teenagers held their hands aloft while they were escorted outside. Distraught parents mourned their dead children and officials condemned the violence and offered their “thoughts and prayers.” But that was soon drowned out by survivors and families of the victims of the February 14, 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Together, they called for changes that would prevent a similar tragedy from happening to anyone else.

They confronted their lawmakers. They rallied others to their cause. And then they took to the streets of Washington, DC, to put on the *March for Our Lives*, make impassioned pleas for reform and declare, “Never Again.” Gun safety advocates say their success is perhaps best illustrated by legislation passed in different states across the country last year: 67 new gun laws were enacted by both Republican and Democratic legislators in 26 states and Washington, DC, according to a year-end report

by the Gifford's Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. "2018 was a momentous year in terms of gun safety legislation," said Allison Anderman, the group's managing attorney. "The sheer number of the significant pieces of legislation that were enacted, the fact that very consequential bills were signed by Republican governors, as well as the very few gains made by the gun lobby really combined to make it kind of an earth-shattering year."

For years, gun violence prevention advocates worked to lay a foundation for gun control policies by building an infrastructure and introducing bills, even if they were going to fail, Anderman said, and that helped the "tremendous success" advocates saw in 2018. But the impact of the Parkland shooting, its survivors and the families of the victims was certainly a factor. "They never backed down," Anderman said of the Parkland activists. "And they were incredibly eloquent and motivated and organized. And the *March for Our Lives* campaign that they created was tremendously effective at amplifying the message and bringing people into the fold."

It took less than a month after the Parkland shooting for Florida's Republican legislature to pass the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, that covered a wide range of policies. Some of them were championed by gun control advocates, like allowing law enforcement to ask for an "extreme risk protection order," which temporarily prohibits someone from possessing firearms if they pose a threat to themselves or others.

Those approaches aren't favored by many gun control

advocates and weren't championed by most of the Parkland students. But they were supported by Andrew Pollack, whose daughter Meadow, a senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, was killed. Galvano said, "Parkland very clearly reminded us that we had to do so much more, that what we had done in the past was not enough. The survivors and the victims' families who got involved very early were key to the bill's success," Galvano said. "Certainly, it definitely helped," he said, adding that the tragedy of Parkland was one that he believes "echoed throughout the nation."

"In some way," he said, "I have to believe that the courageous way we addressed the myriad issues within this bill had to encourage others elsewhere." But it wasn't just state legislators who passed new gun control measures.

"I was inspired by the response of the high school students from Parkland," said Paul Kramer, the initiative's citizen sponsor, "and the way that they responded following that shooting, speaking out. And it seemed to me that people were listening in new ways." Kramer became intimately familiar with the consequences of gun violence after his son was shot at a party among high school friends in 2016. He survived, but three others were killed.

Since then, Kramer has been dedicated to advancing gun safety initiatives, and when at least two recent bills aimed at curbing the gun violence epidemic failed to get a floor vote in the last two legislative sessions, he was disappointed, particularly after Parkland. "That was an even bigger disappointment when

the legislature failed to take action after Marjory Stoneman Douglas,” he said. But that changed when nearly 60% of voters passed I-1639, under which gun owners could be held criminally liable if someone who’s not allowed to access a firearm, like a child or a felon, uses it in a crime – unless the gun owner was found to keep the gun secured in a safe or lockbox.

Kramer believes many voters were weary of gun violence, and the shooting in Parkland and the subsequent calls for change left an impression on them. He recalled how local teenagers in his hometown of Mukilteo followed the footsteps of Marjory Stoneman Douglas students and put on their own student-led rally against gun violence last spring. “People were still very much aware of that and that informed their decision when casting their vote on the ballot in November,” he said. “The *March for Our Lives* movement made an impact in Washington state.”

It seems like nothing could diminish the resolve of the Parkland students who stood up and found themselves at the center of the gun control debate. “I think we moved the needle. Not enough, but we did,” Jaclyn Corin, one of the founding members of *March for Our Lives* and a senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas, told CNN’s Dianne Gallagher of the initial rush of activism that came out of the Parkland shooting. But there’s always more room to make change, she said. And so, the students who put on the *March for Our Lives* focused their energy on encouraging young people to vote for candidates whose policies aligned with theirs. They toured the country,

meeting and talking with local activists to build a decentralized coalition to tackle gun violence in their communities.

“We are actively creating a grassroots army of young people that are focused not only on Congress, but on their state legislatures, on their city councils and school boards because that’s where the real work gets done,” Corin said. “And that’s where people need to be putting focus on because, sure, things are going to change on a federal level,” she added, “but only if you make noise in your communities.”

CNN’s Fredreka Schouten, Dianne Gallagher, and Meridith Edwards contributed to this report