

A Credible Faith

In Jesus Christ

October 23, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – The Year of the Lord’s Favor (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “*the year of the Lord’s favor*” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new possibilities with God this year and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: Philippians 2:5-11 (CEB)

⁵ *Adopt the attitude that was in Christ Jesus:*

⁶ *Though he was in the form of God,*

he did not consider being equal with God something to exploit.

⁷ *But he emptied himself*

by taking the form of a slave

and by becoming like human beings.

When he found himself in the form of a human,

⁸ *he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

⁹ *Therefore, God highly honored him*

and gave him a name above all names,

¹⁰ *so that at the name of Jesus everyone*

in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow

¹¹ *and every tongue confess*

that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Commentary:

Though the descendants of Abraham are called by God to covenant obedience (“thy will be done”), throughout the Scriptures they consistently

digress into cycles of “my will be done” disobedience. Instead of being a blessing to all the families of the earth as a “light to the nations,” Israel is often led into the darkness of idolatry and injustice by the very Kings that were supposed to be instruments of fidelity and justice. The people of God suffer the Babylonian exile as a result. And even when they are allowed to return to the land of promise, the people continue to struggle with the call to covenant obedience. In many ways, their experience of spiritual exile continues.

In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ (or Messiah, “anointed king”), descendant of King David, enters this earthly exile to offer the “Thy will be done” obedience that Israel has been unable to do. In Philippians 2: 5-11, Paul likely cites the words from an early Christian hymn to underscore this message. Though Christ is “in the form of God,” he reveals his identity through his profoundly gracious actions – in his refusal to exploit his rights, in his self-emptying, in his self-humiliation, and in his obedience, even to the point of death. And because he is “in the form of God,” his actions reveal not simply his own character or nature, but what God is like as well. The birth, ministry, and death of Jesus are a consistent whole, and in them all, we see the divine character revealed. Christ’s exaltation by God is the vindication of Christ’s actions, and not their undoing; it is precisely because he is humble and obedient that he also is Lord. His exaltation is God’s triumphant affirmation that in Christ’s actions we have the perfect revelation of the love and compassion of God. To acknowledge this Jesus as universal Lord is to accept as Lord the humble, obedient figure on the cross. And since divine “being” is revealed in divine “action,” we begin to understand why theology and ethics are inseparable. The basic ethical exhortation is to “be like God” which means, in effect, to behave like God. These few verses thus form one of the most profound statements in the Pauline corpus about the nature of God and make it possible for us to follow him out of spiritual exile into “thy will be done” faith and obedience.

- Adapted from the New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, Vol XI , p. 514-515

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Can you relate to the children of Israel and their ongoing “my will be done” struggle? In what area of your life do you find it hardest to live into “Thy will be done.”
2. Have you ever felt like you were in a spiritual exile? What led you to return to God?

3. How was Jesus uniquely qualified to lead God's people out of spiritual exile? How was his self-emptying humility and suffering a necessary part of defeating sin and evil?
4. Why is the resurrection so important to the story of Jesus? How is his resurrection important for your story?
5. If someone were to ask you why you believe in this affirmation from the Apostle's Creed. "I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord?" how would you respond?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Philippians 2:10,11 "*...so that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"
3. Reflect on the words of the Apostle's Creed this week:

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe 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, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic** church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.