**Gleaner’s Sunday School Lesson**

**First Baptist Church January 16, 2022**

**Special Focus: Seeking Justice in an Unjust World** Few people would deny that injustices exist in our society and that many are victims of oppression.  How are we to respond to the tragic, unjust violence against the unborn, the aged, the disabled, and people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds?  This is a question that many Christians struggle to answer.  We know that God sees the plight of the oppressed and acts on their behalf.  He always has, and calls us to do the same. Join us today as we  try to better understand the opportunity and responsibility of joining God in pursuing justice in our world.

**Scripture:** Primary Source:  *Bible Studies for Life, the Senior Adult Personal Study Guide* beginning on **p. 84** or open your Bible to **(Obadiah 1-4, 10-17 )**

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, We praise Your name  as the God of our strength in whom we put our trust.  How thankful we are that we can come to you in prayer with burdens and cares and find peace.  Thank you for the assurance that You hear our prayers and know our needs.  We pray for healing within our families and friends. We pray also for the health and safety of teachers, youth, and college students as they begin new semesters. As we study Your Word, open our eyes to injustices in our world and our responsibilities.  Forgive our failures. I pray in Jesus’ holy name. Amen.

**Question #1 (p. 84) Who are some heroes we admire because of their stand for justice?** Our author describes the civil rights movement in 1963 and the role Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. played in boldly challenging white church leaders.. Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela were also social justice heroes. Sins of passivity, indifference, and self-preservation have plagued humans for centuries.  These were the central topics the prophet Obadiah addressed. His message is painful, but has application for us today.

**Point: Join God in pursuing justice in the face of indifference and oppression.**

**Author/Setting:** Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, was written by the prophet Obadiah.   We know little about the man since no biographical data is written. His name means “servant or worshiper of the Lord.” The Old Testament identifies about a dozen men with this worthy name. Obadiah’s message is directed toward the Edomites, the descendants of Esau and all the nations.  During the invasion of Judah by the Babylonians, Edom used God's act of judgment to get revenge on the Israelites.  In response, God rebuked and pronounced judgment on Edom and other nations.

**Background:**  We need to go back to Genesis to the marriage of Isaac and Rachel who gave birth to twin boys.  Jacob, the younger, would rule over the older twin Esau.  They had a contentious relationship that began when Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup (Gen  25:27-34). Years later, they seemed to reconcile, but didn’t like each other, and neither fought for the other.  Jacob’s descendants became the nation of Israel (which split into the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah). Esau’s descendants became the nation of Edom. (See map) Throughout history Judah and Edom were neighboring countries who at times needed, but mostly hated each other struggling to maintain or gain power. The tension or clashes between Edom and Israel were rooted in family dissension involving Esau from whom Edomites descended and Jacob from whom the Israelites descended. .

**Read Obadiah 1-4 (p. 86) The dangers of arrogance…**

**Verse 1:** In the 6th century BC after Judah was invaded by an enemy, the prophet Obadiah came on the scene. His vision foretold judgment that would come upon Edom because of its arrogance and opposition to the Israelites. The Lord’s message among  the nations said, **“Rise up, and let’s go to war against her.”** God was forming a coalition against the Edomites since Edom was part of an alliance against the Israelites. The nation violated God’s Word and should have dreaded His judgment:

**Verse 2:** The Lord warned: **“Look, I will make you insignificant among the nations; you will be deeply despised.”** The Edomites developed a false sense of security because their homes were in the mountains of Seir.  They thought they were invincible.

**Verse 3: Your arrogant heart has deceived you, you who live in clefts of the rock in your home…who say to yourself, “Who can bring me down to the ground?”** The Edomites were arrogantly in opposition to God’s people. An inflated sense of pride creates spiritual blindness and disrespect for others. This can lead to God’s judgment.

**Verse 4:** Obadiah characterized the arrogance of the people:  They were soaring **“like an eagle”** and made their “**nest among the stars”** ready to swoop  down to take its prey. Edom was stronger than the Israelites and poised to take advantage of them.  Therefore, the Lord declared He would **bring them down** from their exalted position  and sinful self-preservation. The issue here wasn’t what Edom possessed.  The issue was their stewardship.  Each of us have things we haven’t earned or deserved.  The sin is how we steward what we’ve been given that can fall into **3 categories:**

1. **Sins of omission**  These are things God commands us to do that we simply don’t do.  This is passive disobedience.
2. **Sins of commission.**  This is the sin of active rebellion, actions we take that are unloving and against God’s desires.
3. **Sins of self-preservation.**  This is a sin when we only look out for what’s best for us.  It can easily look harmless, but is a worldly mindset when we place ourselves first.  Jesus commanded us to seek His kingdom first (Matt. 6:33).

**Question #2 (p.88):  What types of injustices are largely ignored in our culture?**

**Read Obadiah 10-14 (p. 88) Next we learn about God’s judgment on Edom.**

**Verse 10, 11:** **You will be covered with shame and destroyed forever…**In addition to the sin of arrogance, Edom faced passive betrayal that Obadiah described as **violence done to Jacob, his brother.**  On the day Jerusalem was seized, the Edomites just stood aloof, indifferent to Israel’s suffering. **God told the Edomites …you were just like one of** theforeigners that **entered his city gate and cast lots for Jerusalem.**

**Verse 12:** Edom would be covered with shame.  This humiliation would be brought about by God who would see to their ultimate destruction. God issued a series of “do nots.”  **Do not gloat over your brother in the day of his calamity; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in** **their destruction… do not mock in the day of distress.**

**Verse 13:**  After the Babyloniaons left the city, the Edomites went into the gates of Jerusalem. **Do not enter my people’s city gate in the day of their disaster.  Yes, you–do not gloat over their misery…, and do not appropriate their possessions in the day of their disaster.** The gates were torn down and the city had no defenses, but God’s humbling of His people did not give Edom license to confiscate what was left.  God was concerned with how the Israelites were being treated.  He cares for the downtrodden then and now.

**Verse 14:**The Lord also forbade the capturing and mistreatment of fugitives and survivors.  He warned: **“Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off their fugitives.**” God made a way for some to survive, but Edom was trying to prevent them from doing so.  Edom had joined the ranks of the wicked. God didn’t destroy Edom  because they invaded Israel or stole land.  God destroyed Edom because they did nothing to stop it!

**Question #3 (p.90):  How do these attitudes of indifference to tragedy and injustice show up today?**

**Read Obadiah 15-17 (p. 90) Here we will see that the day of judgment will come**

**Verse 15:**.In response to the flagrant actions of the Edomites, the prophet said, **“For the day of the Lord is near,”** and the Lord will judge **“all the nations “** that act like Edom acted toward Judah.God will bring judgment on Edom, but will also restore Judah. **As you have done, it will be done to you; what you deserve will return on your own head.**  The expression was used to announce God’s deliverance of His people from their oppressors.  It can be used to refer to God’s judgment on foreign nations or  to specify the nation that God is going to judge.  As God’s children, we are called to lives of reconciliation. We are to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8)

**Verse 16:** Using figurative language, Obadiah described the judgment of God on the nations in terms of drinking in judgment upon themselves. God pours out the cup of His judgment upon the unrighteous.  God will keep serving His wrath to the wicked nations causing them to fall.  As followers of Christ, we can rest assured God will do what is right.  His judgment is always just.

**Verse 17:** The enemy came in and crushed God’s people turning Jerusalem into a war zone, but God would restore His people.  He proclaimed that **there will be a deliverance on Mount Zion** (originally the City of David, but  later designated the nation of Israel; also used by prophets to signify God’s presence and promises)  Jerusalem would again **be holy.**  **The house of Jacob will dispossess those who dispossessed them.** (*house of Jacob* is the nation of Israel).  (the Lord changed Jacob’s name to Israel; his descendants a part of his house). The Israelites would take back possession of Jerusalem.

**Question #4 (p. 91): What are some practical ways we can speak up for the oppressed?**

**Question #5 p. 92): What are some practical ways we can work to overcome injustice in our culture?**

**Summary:** Yes, God will fight for the oppressed and bring perfect justice to all, but you and I also have a part to play.  We are ambassadors of the kingdom of God.  It is our duty, our responsibility, and highest privilege to proclaim the kingdom of God here on earth.  We live in a sinful world, and God’s kingdom will not grow through passivity and indifference.  We must use what we have been given for the sake of the kingdom, our neighbors, the forgotten, and the unborn.  We must fight indifference and passivity and press into the work of doing justice and loving through mercy.  Only then, can we follow in the footsteps of our Savior who made it clear to us what He came to do.

**Engage Activity (p. 92)** What is one step you can take in standing for justice in the following situations?  (1) abortion (2) racial injustice or (3) oppressed people groups.

**Live it Out Applications (p. 93):** (1) Pray for those facing injustice.  (2) Use your passion and gifts to bring justice to the world.  (3) Seek community by reaching out to discover ways to get involved with justice issues.

**Prayer:** “Father, remind us of our responsibility to speak up for those who have no voice.”

**Watchword:** May the Lord watch between thee and me while we are absent one from another.