**Gleaners Sunday School Lesson at First Baptist Church**

November 22, 2020 Good Morning Gleaners,

**Unit of Study: All-In: A LIfe of Commitment.**  During the 3 years of Jesus’ earthly ministry, He made it clear commitment was a key part of being a follower of Him.  This study digs into what that commitment entails, and in the process, we discover there is no greater place to be than “all in” for Christ.

**Topic: Session #6: Committed to His Worship**

**Scripture and Primary Source:** Bible studies for Life, Sr. Adult Personal Study Guide **p. 142.** If you do not have the study guide, open your Bible to  **Psalm 99:1-9**

**Prayer:** Father God, we praise your Holy Name and thank you for your loving care that is new to us every morning. How thankful we are to be able to come to you with our burdens and cares and find renewed strength and peace during times that remain uncertain. Please continue to bless and protect our families, friends, college students, teachers, healthcare and essential workers, as well as our pastors and missionaries around the world.  During this season of Thanksgiving, may we focus on Your infinite goodness and love for us. And may we never take the blessings of your grace, mercy and forgiveness for granted.  It is in  Jesus’ Holy Name I pray.

**Question #1:(page 142) When have you been swept up in a moment of excitement?** Our author talks about the screams and cheers from football fans (fanatics?) when their team scores. Most of us have been there!.  Perhaps you’ve been swept up with excitement by Virtual Reality just as the woman in the photo is experiencing. Might she be visualizing  herself skiing down the slopes? This technology is even used to simulate and teach medical procedures, and that is praiseworthy.  Each of us has a desire to give praise and adulation to something we love-- and nothing and no one deserves all our worship and praise more than God, the One who provides every good thing  in our lives.

**Point: God deserves our worship and praise.**

**Setting:** Many refer to Psalms 95-99 as  Enthronement or “royal psalms” because they may have been used in annual worship festivals celebrating and acknowledging the Lord as King.   This section is devoted to God’s reign and emphasizes His role as Creator. It also  lifts up the Lord as supreme above all other gods, and stresses God’s activity among the nations and His people. Another division, Book Four, includes Psalms 90-106 that draw attention to the majesty of the Lord.  For that reason, the “royal psalms”  provide insight into the limitless reach of God’s power and authority.  Reading them in public worship enables us to honor Him as sovereign Lord and to bow before Him in humility.  As you study today’s session, consider God’s greatness and power. He is infinitely beyond us, yet has fellowship with us. Indeed believers who are “all in” are committed to worshiping Him.   Psalm 99 should help us understand why He truly deserves all our praise and worship.

**Read Psalm 99:1-3 (page 144) These verses lead us to focus on God’s holiness and great power.**

**Verse1:** The psalmist began by proclaiming -**-the Lord reigns!** He alone reigns. Earthly kings ruled only their respective domains, but the Lord ruled over all.  His kingship as God far surpasses any power idols claim. **Let the peoples tremble** was fitting in view of God’s greatness. Trembling represented fear, but also recognition of subjection to the King. **He is enthroned between the cherubim** referenced the ark of the covenant, as well as the fact God alone sits on His throne surrounded by angelic attendants. The ark of the covenant was a sacred box God ordered Moses to construct as part of the tabernacle furnishings.  Gold covered it, and two cherubim--angelic beings--at the top of the ark spread their wings toward each other.  In light of God’s amazing majesty, the psalmist commanded **let the earth quake,** or move with awe and excitement.

**Verse 2:** The psalmist highlighted the Lord’s special relationship with His people: **the Lord is great in Zion.** We do not know the original meaning of **Zion**, but the term refers to a fortified hill or the temple area  in Jerusalem. In the New Testament, **Zion** refers to heaven.  Biblical writers often affirmed how God ruled the universe but extended special favor to Jerusalem and His people there. The related comment, **he is exalted above all the peoples** again stressed God’s sovereignty over the whole world.

**Verse 3:** In light of the truths listed,  the psalmist gives an appropriate response: **Let them praise your great and awe-inspiring name.** Praise is the only reasonable response when we witness God’s power and majesty.  His name is awe-inspiring; it demands our reverence not our fear.  He is on our side.  The psalmist also proclaimed **He is holy.**  God is separate and distinct from His creation.  He stands apart in holiness, but our Bible affirms God entered human history and interacts with His people.

**Question #2: Which of the attributes of God mentioned in these verses especially resonates with you right now?** God is holy, exalted  and reigns supreme over all the earth.  He deserves my praise and complete submission. God’s power is awe-inspiring.  He created  us to worship Him.  When feeling  powerless in life’s circumstances, I  know He has the power to change anything.  Our help comes from the Lord, and  He is more powerful than any of life’s trials.  With Him, I am not without hope. A heart full of joy and peace moves me to praise Him. All creation should give God praise. These are the attributes of God that resonate with me.

**Read Psalm 99:4-5 (p. 146) Next we discover that God is a God of justice. These verses focus on God’s characteristics that enable Him to rule His people well.**

**Verse 4:** The psalmist described God as **the mighty King** recalling the theme that God  reigns. He then listed  three  attributes of God  that ought to motivate us to praise Him: (1) God **loves justice.** God places a high priority on justice and expects His people to treat others the same way He would treat them.   Many have experienced injustice in our fallen world. In His righteousness, God will see that justice is served, but His justice is not always on our timetable.  (2) God set **fairness** in motion in our world. This involved settling it into the spiritual and moral foundation of His people.  Because of God’s work, they would be known for the equitable way they treated each other. (3) God’s **righteousness** served as the companion to His justice, a quality His people should emulate. Then the psalmist linked these concepts to God’s people by referring  to Israel as **Jacob.**

**Verse 5:** Our response to our justice-loving, justice-executing God is to **exalt** Him. When we exalt God we lift Him up, extol Him, honor Him in our praise. Exalting Him above everyone and everything else serves as our spiritual response to His presence in our lives. We are to **bow** before the Lord **in worship at his footstool.**   His absolute greatness brings us to our knees when we’re given a glimpse into His authority over us.  We fall down before Him in worship that comes from wholehearted devotion, sincere love, and humble reverence. The **footstool** is a symbol of complete authority that is identified with God’s sovereignty over the earth as well as the eternal reign of Christ. Indeed **God is** absolutely **holy.**  He is set completely apart, totally distinct from His creation, and worthy of our praise and worship.

**Question #3:  How can knowing God is always fair and just help you face injustice and unfair situations?** Even in the midst of injustice, in the middle of difficult circumstances in our lives, we can praise God and worship Him. Why?  Because He is trustworthy, and He will always and inevitably make things right!

**Read Psalm 99:6-9 (p. 149) Next we see examples of those who prayed on behalf of God’s people.**

**Verse  6:** The psalmist used the examples of **Moses, Aaron, and Samuel,** priests who **called on the name of the Lord** in their distress **and He answered them.**  When trials and tribulations came, they didn’t shrink away in despair, but cried out to their Father-- the Lord. The Exodus account provides example after example of times that Moses and Aaron appealed to the Lord on behalf of the needs of the people and interceded on their behalf during periods of rebelliousness.  Later biblical history records incidents in which Samuel acted similarly.  The Lord is attentive to the cries of His people, even if at times we may think He doesn’t hear.  In response to the intercessory appeals of these faithful servants, **He answered them.**

**Verse 7:** The psalmist cited one specific way the Lord answered Moses and Aaron.  He **spoke to them in a pillar of cloud,** likely a reference to the pillar of fire described in Exodus, both of which were signs of His presence in their midst.  He provided them with the **decrees and statutes** He expected them to honor.  These formed the written law given to Moses.  The people had God’s Word in their hands to guide them as they grew to be His people in the land given them. God originally inscribed the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone given to Moses.  Today he wants to inscribe His statutes on our hearts.

**Verse 8:** Even in our times of weakness, God shows Himself faithful.  The psalmist’s affirmation, **Lord our God, you answered them,** tells us that God answered His leaders’ as well as His peoples’  cries.  We should pray regularly for the responsibilities of those who lead. God’s response to His people in the wilderness is then highlighted by the psalmist, **you were a forgiving God to them.**  The people often complained but God forgave them and continued to lead them.  He was patient in His dealing with Old Testament people just as He deals with us today.  Sin in our lives hinders our fellowship with God, but if we confess our sins, He will forgive us (1 John 1:9).  Then the psalmist affirmed **God was an avenger of their sinful actions.**  He dispensed discipline when necessary.  He forgave the people for their sin of unbelief, but they still had the consequence of wandering until the unbelieving generation died.  God’s forgiveness does not mean we escape all of our sin’s consequences.

**Verse 9:** The psalmist’s command, **exalt the Lord our God** echoed earlier commands, but now he called on God’s people to exalt Him for answering their cries.  His second command, **bow in worship at his holy mountain,** designates mount Zion, the site of the temple in Jerusalem, thus giving the city a special spiritual significance.  The mountain was holy because of the holiness of the One who chose to place His name there.  **The Lord our God is holy** reiterates earlier shorter expressions.

**Question #4: What are some answers to prayer that have moved you to praise God?**

**Question #5: Why is our worship and praise the appropriate response to God’s holiness and power?** ( Both questions to be answered in class or at home)

**Summary:**  (1) We are to praise God for His holiness and great power. (2) God has established justice, fairness, and righteousness as His desire on earth. (3) We should exalt our Lord’s name at every opportunity. (4) God answers His people when they call on Him.  (5) As we look back on Jesus’ life and ministry, we see how God’s holiness and love came together at the cross.  God’s holiness demanded He punish sin, but God’s love called for fellowship with a sinful people.  Through His death, Christ secured the salvation of all who place their faith in Him.  Because of who He is and what He has done, the Lord is indeed worthy of our worship and praise.

**Engage Activity (p. 147)** List 2-3 areas of injustice in our world. How would you explain your willingness to praise God even in the face of these injustices?

**Live it Out (p. 151)** How will you live out your commitment to God through worship and praise? **1. Evaluate** the things you focus on during the week and the ways you spend your time.  Ask God to lead you to make Him first in your worship.  **2. Trust.** If  you are currently in a situation marked by injustice, lift the matter to God in prayer and trust Him to respond.  Praise Him for His love and justice.  **3. Worship**.  Set aside a day for extended worship.  Let that focus lead you into worship and a closer walk with Christ.

**Prayer:** Father, we exalt You and bow down before You.  We praise You for Your goodness to us.  During this Thanksgiving season, we thank you especially for Your grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

**Watchword:**  May the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another. Continue to pray for Edmee as she prepares for a time of rehabilitation at Brooks Rehab Hospital in Jacksonville. Stay healthy, well, and have a great week!