

Adult Teaching Resources

February 7, 2016



Transfiguration Sunday

Who Needs a King? — Psalm 99

Season of Lent (February 10-March 26)

Who Needs a Rescuer? — Psalm 91 (RCL 91:1-2, 9-16)

Who Needs a Light? — Psalm 27

Who Needs God? — Psalm 63 (RCL 63:1-8)

www.baptiststoday.org

Subscribe to *Baptists Today* to access the core Bible content for this lesson.

www.nurturingfaith.net

Find links and videos related to this lesson.

Who Needs a King?

Psalm 99

FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Before the Lesson: Make copies of the handout “Prayer of the Farm Worker’s Struggle,” and print pages 15-16 from http://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/2015/The_Determinants_of_Equity_Report.ashx?la=en for the Transformational Exercise.

Fellowship Question

Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

Who is your favorite artist — or, what style of art is your favorite?

If you are employed, how many steps removed are you from your boss?

Information

God, we believe, is the Creator. God is Creator, and not the created. That makes God different from you and me, different from the earth and sky, different from our noblest thoughts and deepest feelings. God is ... God. The psalmist in Psalm 99 puts this in a political picture. God is king. God rules. God rules what God has created.

Today’s text is a psalm to be used in congregational worship. We can imagine what it must have been like to worship God in the Temple. Here is one description:

“The typical liturgy of a great feast began with a procession into the Temple. The Ark of the Covenant was carried in this procession. In a very profound sense this Ark was understood as God’s throne, just as the Temple itself was understood as his dwelling place. Both the Ark and the Temple were sacraments of God’s presence. The procession was followed by the revealing of the divine name at which time the congregation bowed down in homage before the Lord of Hosts. While the people were bowed down, sacrifices were made; and the Levitical choirs sang psalms which acclaimed the Lord of Hosts as King, celebrated his mighty acts, and meditated on his perfections. It was not... that God was enthroned so much as that he entered into his house and thereby dwelt among his people. ... it is clear that the worship service from which these hymns came had a profound sense of God’s presence. Praise was understood as a rejoicing in this presence.” (Hughes Oliphant Old. *Interpretation*. Vol 39 no 1 Jan 1985, p 21.)

[Have a class member read Psalm 99:1-3.]

Information *continued*

God is *holy*. What does that mean?

THE BIBLE LESSON writer notes, “The Hebrew concept of holiness was not so much one of purity or sinlessness as it was of separateness or distinctiveness...Yahweh was unique, apart from all others, not just at the top of the created order but above it and responsible for it.”

The psalmist is describing the majesty of God. God is so big, so powerful, so awesome that the people tremble and the earth quakes. God visits the people in the Temple. But God wants more than fear. God has a dream for the world.

[Have a class member read Psalm 99:4.]

God wants *justice* and *equity*. How would you define those words?

[Jot answers on board. Here is one definition: “Equity has to do with everyone having access to fair and equal treatment under the law, regardless of race, social class or gender. Social Justice extends the concept of equity to include human rights as part of the social contract.” <http://www.shoreline.edu/esj/>]

We might say that this is God’s dream. This is God’s will. Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Dorothee Soelle wrote, “‘On Earth as in Heaven’ is a prayer not a statement. It claims our hope for this world and for ourselves; there will be a time when God’s will or dream will be done not only in God’s realm among cherubim and seraphim but on earth among principalities and powers as well.” (Dorothee Soelle. *On Earth as in Heaven: A Liberation Spirituality of Sharing*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press. 1993. p. ix.)

This psalm is spoken or sung in the context of *worship*. Why do you think that is important? (As we grow closer to God, we want what God wants. God wants recognition as being God, king, separate from us, but God also wants equity and justice. Worship is a place for us to acknowledge that we are not God and a place to pray that God’s dream will become a reality soon. Etc.)

Jesus came as God in the flesh. We might remember that Jesus’ sermon in his hometown was based on God’s dream.

[Have a class member read Luke 4:16-21.]

Jesus came to incarnate God’s passion for justice and equity.

Let’s hear the rest of this psalm.

[Have a class member read Psalm 99:4-9.]

God is holy. Unique. In charge. The king who wants justice and equity. And God does not work on this alone. Who helps God in this passage? (Moses, Aaron, Samuel)

So, does God only use perfect people? Were Moses, Aaron, and Samuel perfect vessels of

Information *continued*

God's dream?

We continue to pray, "thy will be done," but that does not mean, "we'll sit back as you do your will." Listen to this quote:

"To pray does not mean to ask someone else to fulfill, instead of us, what we cannot bring forward. It means to cooperate with God, it asks that we might be empowered and commissioned. We may say God has a dream about us humans; in prayer we end letting God dream alone, we participate in God's dream, we join." (Soelle, ix.)

How do you feel about that last sentence: "in prayer we end letting God dream alone, we participate in God's dream, we join"?

Transformational Exercise

How can we define justice for our world and for our community? We have given some broad definitions, but what are some specifics that could be done?

[Distribute the handout: Preliminary Measures of Equity]

King County, Washington, studied this issue for over a year. They created a report that summarizes, "People of color, those who have limited English proficiency and who are low-income persistently face inequities in key educational, economic, and health outcomes." They sought to determine solid ways of measuring justice and equity in their county. This handout picks thirteen areas called "determinants of equity" and 67 "indicators of equity."

Let's take a minute to read through this.

[After some time to read through, ask:]

What are your impressions? Do we have the same needs in our community? Is there one area that grabs your attention that another? Is there one area that you could give energy to, to work for justice and equity? What organizations and people are God using to bring justice and equity to our community?

[Distribute the handout, "Prayer of the Farm Worker's Struggle."]

We will close today's lesson with a prayer written by Cesar E. Chavez, an American farm worker, labor leader and civil rights activist of the 1960s-70s. Read it though silently, then I will lead us in reading the prayer aloud.

Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan? You may send comments to the lesson plan author at rjordan@cbfnc.org. Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Popular Psalms — Want to know other popular biblical books? A study based on the most frequently read books at biblegateway.com (<http://overviewbible.com/popular-books-bible-infographic/>) shows that Psalms comes out on top as the most popular book of the Bible, followed by Matthew, John, Romans, Proverbs, Genesis, Luke, 1 Corinthians, Isaiah, and Acts. How do these match up with your favorites?

Facets — In speaking of the six psalms that celebrate the single theme of God’s kingship, John Durham writes “But despite this similarity, each of the poems of God’s kingship has its own emphasis. They are like facets of a unique diamond, each flashing the same fire in its own distinct hue” (“Psalms,” in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 4 [Broadman Press, 1971], 371).

Yahweh reigns — The Hebrew word *mlk* can mean “king” when punctuated as a noun (*melek*), or “rule as king” when punctuated as a verb (*malak*). The text was originally written with consonants only: based on oral tradition of how the text should be pronounced, a group of Jewish scribes known as the Masoretes later added vowels in the form of dots and dashes around the consonantal letters. While “The LORD is king” (NRSV), is an accurate enough translation, it lacks the active connotation of “The LORD reigns” (NET, NIV11, HCSB).

On the cherubim — While the Hebrews typically thought of Yahweh as being enthroned above the cherubim in the temple, they recognized that God could hardly rule the world if limited to that place. In Israel’s imagination, cherubim often remained in God’s company, however. Ezekiel’s vision of Ezek. 1:22-28 suggest that a group of four winged cherubim surrounded God’s throne, carrying it through the air as a sort flying vehicle.

Social justice — Old Testament texts calling for just care of widows, orphans, and immigrants can be found in Exod. 22:22; Deut. 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17-21; 26:12-13; and 27:19, among others.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

In what way was God an “avenger” to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel?

In v. 8, the psalmist says that God was forgiving in response to the prayers of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, but was also “an avenger of their wrongdoings.” What does that mean?

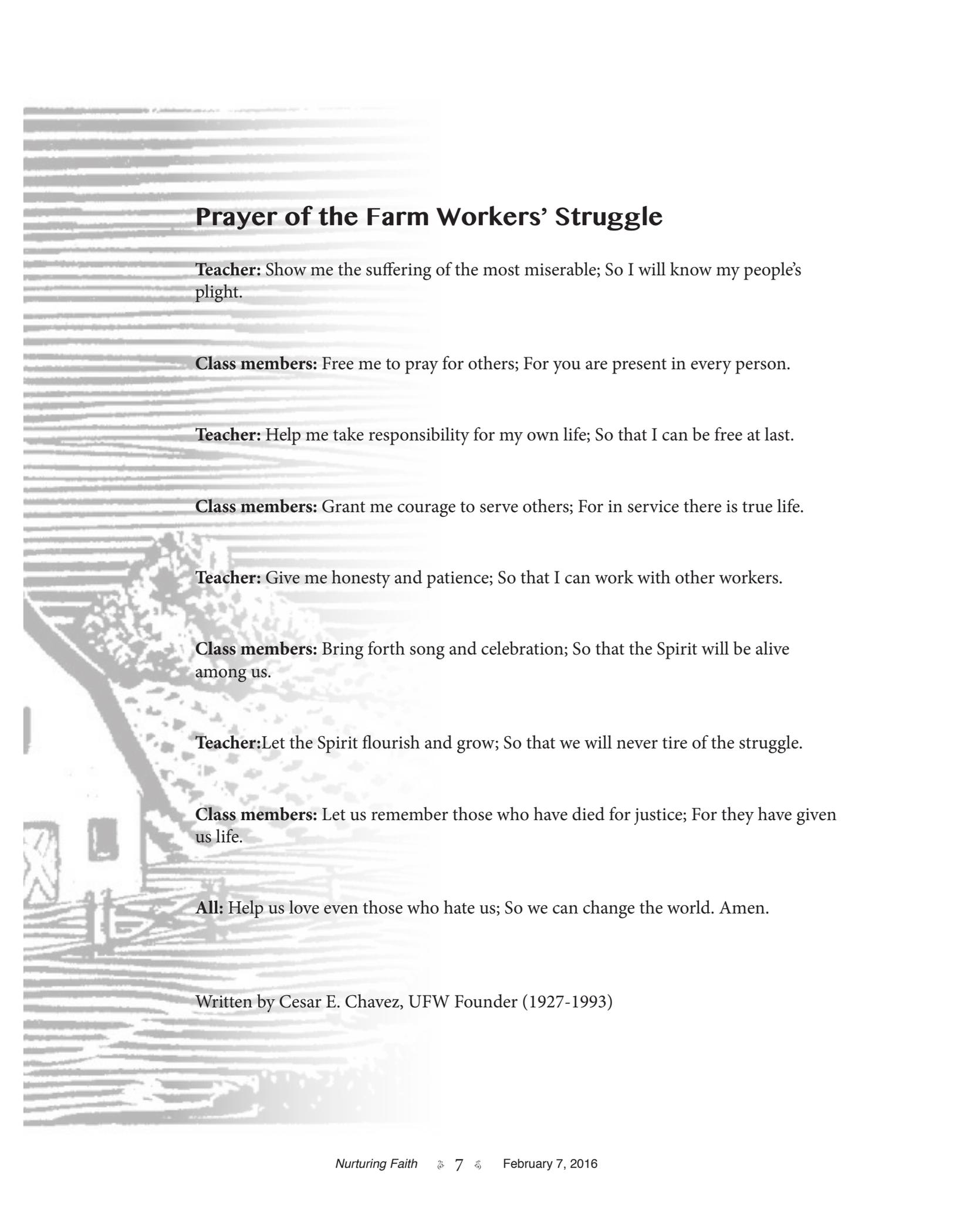
The NRSV translation (above) follows a traditional interpretation that the psalmist believed God was forgiving toward Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, but also punished them for their sins when they fell short of divine expectations.

Some scholars follow another option, assuming that the avenging reference is directed toward those who had turned against Israel’s leaders, so that God took vengeance on those who attacked or opposed them. When Korah gathered followers and challenged Moses and Aaron’s leadership during the wilderness wandering, for example, both the rebels and their households met the ugly fate of being swallowed up by the earth (Numbers 16).

Other interpreters choose yet a third option. A small change in the vowel pointing of the word that means “an avenger” could change it to a rare participial form of another word that means “to purify.” If that were the correct reading, it could mean “one who purified them from their wrongdoings.”

If we assume the traditional interpretation is correct, what wrongdoings and punishments did the psalmist have in mind? We don’t normally think of Moses, Aaron, or Samuel as bad examples, but they also had shortcomings. Aaron, we recall, gave in to the demands of the people in constructing a golden calf while Moses was away for 40 days, receiving the law (Exodus 32). Surprisingly, Aaron survived that incident unscathed. Years later, however, both Moses and Aaron were complicit in failing to follow God’s explicit instructions when calling forth water from a rock, and as a result were not allowed to enter the promised land (Num. 20:1-13).

Samuel’s sin and punishment are not spelled out as clearly, but are implicit in his failure to reign in his two corrupt sons, whom he had appointed as judges (1 Sam. 8:1-3). Immediately after describing how Samuel’s sons “took bribes and perverted justice,” the narrator tells the story of how the elders of Israel rejected Samuel’s leadership, demanding a king instead (1 Sam. 8:4-22). Told by God to give the people what they wanted, Samuel appeared to have few happy days from that point on.



Prayer of the Farm Workers' Struggle

Teacher: Show me the suffering of the most miserable; So I will know my people's plight.

Class members: Free me to pray for others; For you are present in every person.

Teacher: Help me take responsibility for my own life; So that I can be free at last.

Class members: Grant me courage to serve others; For in service there is true life.

Teacher: Give me honesty and patience; So that I can work with other workers.

Class members: Bring forth song and celebration; So that the Spirit will be alive among us.

Teacher: Let the Spirit flourish and grow; So that we will never tire of the struggle.

Class members: Let us remember those who have died for justice; For they have given us life.

All: Help us love even those who hate us; So we can change the world. Amen.

Written by Cesar E. Chavez, UFW Founder (1927-1993)