



PSST: Are climate change, wars, political strife, poverty... punishments?

Monday, April 25th, 2022

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Possible Sunday School Topics (PSSTs) for *The Christian Science Quarterly* Bible Lesson:

“Everlasting Punishment”

for April 25 – May 1, 2022

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P.S.S.T. Introduction

When observing our world, one might be tempted to ask what have we done, or how have we sinned that we seem to be affected with punishment? Whether it be ***climate change, wars, political strife, economic disenfranchisement, or poverty.***

I found the following passages from *Science & Health*, written by Mary Baker Eddy, of particular interest:

“The eastern empires and nations owe their false government to the misconceptions of Deity there prevalent. Tyranny, intolerance, and bloodshed, wherever found, arise from the belief that the infinite is formed after the pattern of mortal personality, passion, and impulse.” (SH 94:12)

“Love will finally mark the hour of harmony, and spiritualization will follow, for Love is Spirit. Before error is wholly destroyed, there will be interruptions of the general material routine. Earth will become dreary and desolate, but summer and winter, seedtime and harvest (though in changed forms), will continue unto the end, — until the final spiritualization of all things. ‘The darkest hour precedes the dawn.’

“This material world is even now becoming the arena for conflicting forces. On one side there will be discord and dismay; on the other side there will be Science and peace. The breaking up of material beliefs may seem to be famine and pestilence, want and woe, sin, sickness, and death, which assume new phases until their nothingness appears. These disturbances will continue until the end of error, when all discord will be swallowed up in spiritual Truth.” (*Science & Health* 96:4–20)

So, what can we do to aid in the cessation of apparent punishment? See *Science & Health* 249:1:

“Let us accept Science, relinquish all theories based on sense-testimony, give up imperfect models and illusive ideals; and so let us have one God, one Mind, and that one perfect, producing His own models of excellence.”

Now read together **Hymn 82** from the *Christian Science Hymnal* (words printed here):

Hymn 82

God is working His purpose out As year succeeds to year,
God is working His purpose out And the time is drawing near;
Nearer and nearer draws the time, The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God As the waters cover the sea.
What can we do to work God's work, To prosper and increase
The brotherhood of all mankind, The reign of the Prince of Peace?

What can we do to hasten the time, The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God As the waters cover the sea?
March we forth in the strength of God With the banner of Christ unfurled,
That the light of the glorious Gospel of truth May shine throughout the world;
ight we the fight with sorrow and sin, To set their captives free,
That the earth may be filled with the glory of God As the waters cover the sea.

P.S.S.T. Golden Text (GT)/Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

What does it mean to be righteous, to think and act righteously?

Perhaps the Golden Rule is a good place to start. See also Matthew, chapter 5, for part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. How can these statements guide us in our work and prayers to alleviate suffering and seeming punishment?

P.S.S.T. Responsive Reading (RR)/Zechariah 7 & Isaiah 59

Look to the Responsive Reading for guidance on how we are to "execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother."

Read together Hymn 217 from the *Christian Science Hymnal* (words printed here):

Hymn 217

O, he whom Jesus loved has truly spoken, That holier worship, which God deigns to bless,
Restores the lost, and heals the spirit broken, And feeds the widow and the fatherless.

Then, brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother, For where love dwells, the peace of God is there:
To worship rightly is to love each other; Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

Follow with reverent steps the great example Of him whose holy work was doing good; So
shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple, Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.

P.S.S.T. Section 1 – *What is Moses' guidance to the children of Israel, and by extension to us,* found in citations B2/Deut.27:1, B3/Deut.29:10-15, & B4/Deut.6:4,5?

See also John 13:34, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

P.S.S.T. Section 2 – Read together Ecclesiastes citations B8/Eccl.4:1, B9/Eccl.5:8, & B10/Eccl.12:14. *What is the righteous judgment you shall use as you think and pray about our world?* What qualities shall we employ? – self-control, divine mercy, human justice, patterning the divine, doing right toward one another, reformation, pardon, letting peace reign in our thoughts and actions... These qualities are mentioned in the *Science & Health* portion

of this section.

P.S.S.T. Section 3 – Isaiah says in citation B14/Isa.1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together...”

What are the qualities of grace that can aid in our effective reasoning? Citation S16/4:3-5 states, “What we most need is the prayer of fervent desire for growth in grace, expressed in patience, meekness, love, and good deeds.”

We should now be compiling a list of qualities that will support us as we help break through the belief that man is a sinner and deserves punishment.

P.S.S.T. Section 4 – ***How did Jesus show mercy to the man sick of the palsy*** in cit. B19/Matt.9:2-8?

What other examples of mercy do students know of from Jesus’ life?

What are some benefits from reviewing such displays of mercy?

Jesus was demonstrating man’s right to be free and not encumbered with punishment forever. See cit. S22/225:2.

P.S.S.T. Section 5 – ***In Ephesians 4:13 Paul gives us this call to action:***

“...come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

Further on Paul says, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (cit. B22/Ephesians 4:31,32).

This is our call to action.

Mary Baker Eddy tells us that the message in the life and works of Christ Jesus was for all his disciples, past, present, and future, when he said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me [understand me] through their word” (SH 271:17).

Jesus still speaks to us today with action words as powerful as they were over two thousand years ago. See also Mary Baker Eddy’s support and expectation of us in cit. S26/444:13-19:

“Students are advised by the author to be charitable and kind, not only towards differing forms of religion and medicine, but to those who hold these differing opinions. Let us be faithful in pointing the way through Christ, as we understand it, but let us also be careful always to ‘judge righteous judgment,’ and never to condemn rashly.”

P.S.S.T. Section 6 – ***Do you believe there is only One God, One Mind, One Love, One Life?*** Read together cit. S30/340:23. This is your standpoint. God never punishes this stand.

Read also *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, 273:12:

“God bless my enemies, as well as the better part of mankind, and gather all my students, in the bonds of love and perfectness, into one grand family of Christ’s followers.”

