

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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JUSTICE ISSUE: FOOD JUSTICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:	Matthew 14:13-21
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:	¶160 Stewardship of Creation
OBJECTIVE:	Connect the feeding of the multitude with other sacred stories around food and food sovereignty.
SUPPLIES NEEDED:	local, seasonal, sustainable snacks; map of Mexico, posterboard, markers

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say: Today we are focusing on food justice, how food connects to faith, community, and fairness. Let’s start by thinking about something simple but meaningful: prayers we say before meals.

Ask: Do you or your family have a prayer or tradition before eating? Are there prayers you used at camp or even here at church?

(Pause for sharing.)

Ask: These prayers remind us that food is a gift and that not everyone has equal access to it. Let’s take a moment to give thanks. Anyone want to volunteer to pray one of these prayers?

(Pause for prayer. If no volunteers, prepare to share one yourself.)

Say: Now let’s share a snack together as a reminder of God’s provision and our shared community.

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Ask: If you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?

(Pause for responses.)

Ask: Think about a really memorable meal you've had. What made it special? Who was there?

(Allow for a few responses.)

Say: Meals are important in the Bible too. Today we are looking at a well-known story where Jesus feeds a crowd. As we read, pay attention to details: Where does it take place? Who is there? What does Jesus say? How do the disciples respond?

(Read Matthew 14:13-21)

Ask: What stood out to you?

(Pause for responses)

Ask: Were there any details you didn't expect?

(Pause for responses.)

Say: The bible is full of stories about food and feeding. Let's explore a few.

(Assign small groups or individuals)

Passages assigned:

- Exodus 16
- 2 Kings 4:42-44
- Isaiah 55:1-3
- Matthew 8:11
- Matthew 26:26-30
- John 2:1-11

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- Acts 2:42
- Revelation 19:6-9

Say: Read your passage and be ready to share what is happening with food in this story.

(Allow time then briefly share.)

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Step 1: Build a Community (Small Groups of 4)

Say: “You are creating a new community in a place full of natural resources like water, forests, and minerals. Much of the land in your community is shared — no one person owns it all.”

Instructions:

- Draw a map of their community
- Choose which natural resources are there
- Show where the shared land is

(Give 5-7 minutes)

Say: Now, present your community.

(Pause for sharing).

Step 2: Create a State

2. Create a State Together

Place all group maps together to make one big map, this is the state where all their communities live.

Say: Now we are putting all your communities together into one big map. This is your state.

NOTES

Give each group paper and markers.

Supplies: Map of Mexico

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Step 3: Law Change

Say: Now the government has changed the law. Shared land can now be bought and sold. This happened because of a new trade deal with a powerful neighboring country.

Ask: How would losing communal land change your community?

Step 4: Water Crisis

Say: A big soda company from the neighboring country is coming in. It needs a lot of water to make its drinks and is buying up your state's water wells.

Ask: What happens to your community when someone else owns the water?

Step 5: Resource Extraction

Say: More companies are moving in to take your natural resources.

Ask: How will losing your resources affect your community? If people in your community don't like what's happening, what can they do?

Discussion & Reflection: The Zapatistas

Say: On January 1, 1994, the same day the NAFTA trade deal began, a group of Indigenous people in Chiapas, Mexico, known as the Zapatistas, stood up to say: "No more!" (Find Chiapas on the map)

They were upset that Mexico's government ended protections for communal land and made trade deals that hurt the poor. The Zapatistas wanted land, freedom, and dignity.

After fighting briefly, they agreed to peace talks. But when the government broke its promises, the Zapatistas stopped trusting politicians. Instead of fighting for power, they built their own way of living — autonomous communities.

These communities don't take money from the government. They run their own schools, clinics, and farms. They say, "We don't want to take over the government. We want good government. Until that happens, we'll be our own good government."

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Reflection Questions

- What were the Zapatistas protecting?
- How did they resist injustice?
- What does it mean to build something new instead of trying to fix something broken?
- Read the following from the Food Justice section of the Social Principles: ¶160. Stewardship of Creation. C) We also affirm food sovereignty, which promotes the rights of all people to healthy, culturally appropriate food, produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. We support local control of food production, which entails providing opportunities for local communities to participate meaningfully in decisions about the kinds of livestock to be raised and crops to be grown. We reject agricultural policies and practices that make food inaccessible to agricultural workers and the communities in which the food is produced. We advocate for strong protections of the land, food, and water rights of indigenous peoples.
- What lessons can we learn from the Zapatistas for protecting people and the earth today?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: Let's name groups of people who work for food justice.

(Allow youth to respond. Add if needed: Farm workers, food pantry volunteers, aid workers, local food sovereignty groups, indigenous groups, Future Farmers of America, United Farm Workers Union, community gardeners, the hospitality group that serves refreshments at church, family members).

Say: Let's pray.

Pray:

God of abundance,

NOTES

Identify local groups that are working for food sovereignty.

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We thank you for the gift of food and the communities that share it.

We pray for all who work for food justice

Those who grow food, distribute it, and fight for fairness.

Help us to care about where our food comes from and who has access to it.

Guide us to be part of your work

So that all people may eat, live, and thrive with dignity.

Amen.

Say: Go this week paying attention to food, where it comes from, who has enough, and how you might be part of creating a more just and caring world.