THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME: KERRY MCSHEA

JUSTICE ISSUE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:	Matthew 9:35-10:8
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:	¶162 The Social Community, Preface
OBJECTIVE:	Youth will examine Jesus' instruction to the disciples to serve freely without conditions, and consider how they can follow that example in their own lives today.
SUPPLIES NEEDED:	Bibles, devices with internet access

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say: We are going to begin with a short practice called Lectio Divina. This is a way of listening for God through Scripture. One verse from today's passage says: 'You received without having to pay.' I'm going to read that again slowly. As you hear it, just notice what stands out to you, what word or idea the Holy Spirit might be bringing to your heart.

(Pause. Read slowly.)

Say: You received without having to pay.

(Pause.)

Say: Take a moment to sit quietly. You can close your eyes if you want. What does this verse make you think about? What does it make you feel?

(Allow 1-2 minutes of silence.)

Say: If you'd like, you can share a word or thought that came to you.

(Pause for those that want to share.)

NOTES

Optional: invite everyone to participate in this breath prayer:

Inhale: I have received without having to pay.

Exhale: And now I serve in response.

The Closing Moment and the Centering Moment content could be reversed.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Let's read a longer passage together. Matthew 9:35-10:8. Can I have a couple volunteers to read it out loud?

(Allow reading.)

Discussion Questions:

- What actions do you see Jesus performing in this passage?
- What emotions does Jesus experience?
- What actions does Jesus give the disciples power to do?
- What 'strings' are attached to the work the disciples are sent to do?
- Remember the verse we started with, 'You received without having to pay.' What might that say about how we are supposed to serve others?

Say: We are going to look at several short verses about compassion. As we read, listen for what they tell us about God and about how we are supposed to treat others.

Assign or read selections from:

- Nehemiah 9:19
- Psalm 145:9
- Isaiah 30:18
- Matthew 14:14
- Mark 6:34
- Luke 15:20
- Colossians 3:12-14

NOTES

Background on Matthew 9:35-10:8

Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience. He does not include a lot of background explanation when he describes Jewish customs and laws, probably because the audience was already very family with them.

Matthew was writing to explain to this Jewish audience that Jesus is the Son of God and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The prior passages describe three of Jesus' miracles, and here we see a broader focus on teaching and healing.

Metaphors of shepherding and harvesting are common in Jesus' teaching. We also have other references to sheep and shepherds in the Bible, as in Psalm 23: "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Jesus is asking the disciples to do work that He has already done: preaching, healing, raising the dead, and casting out demons.

The disciples are modeling their work after His. As the modern-day church, this is our calling, too, in our own context.

Just as God's grace is freely given, so are these actions to be performed freely.

While today we are not raising the physically dead or casting out demons, we are still called to meet needs, show compassion, and serve freely, both locally and globally.

Jesus does not attach "strings" to the work that the disciples will do. They are to give without de-manding payment of any kind (monetary, spiritual, or otherwise).

Read some or all of the additional verses as time permits. Students can make lists or take notes on their findings, as appropriate.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

Discussion Questions:

- What words or ideas are used that are similar to compassion?
- What do these verses tell us about who God is?
- What do these verses tell us about how we are supposed to treat others?

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say: In the Social Principles, we are reminded that faith is active, it doesn't just wait to do good, it acts. Preface to Part III: The Social Community:

"When it comes to faith, what a living, creative, active, powerful thing it is! It cannot do other than good at all times. It never waits to ask whether there is some good which is to be done; rather, before the question is raised, it has done the deed, and keeps on doing it...The church is called to be a distinctive community, marked by the preaching of the gospel, studying of Scripture, breaking of bread, and witnessing to the power of redemption in the midst of a broken world. We respond to God's call in the world by giving witness to the transformative power of the gospel, engaging in acts of mercy, and striving toward the attainment of justice and peace."

Say: I want to share a story a United Methodist pastor shared in a sermon.

When the pastor was a student in seminary, he had to complete a field experience at a local church.

When he met with the pastor of that church for the first time, the pastor showed him around. The pastor took the student to the church's food pantry. The pastor explained that the food pantry is open once a week to those in the community who are experiencing food insecurity and need help feeding themselves and their families. All are welcome to take what they need, as part of the church's service to the community.

NOTES (CONT'D)

The Greek word for "compassion" includes the following ideas:

- Mercy
- To have compassion
- To pity
- To sympathize
- To show compassion
- Sympathetic

These verses illustrate God's compassionate nature, and our requirement to be compassionate as well. We see this same idea in today's lectionary verses as well. We are to model both God's nature and Jesus' actions.

NOTES

This story is a real example from a United Methodist pastor, who felt strongly that community support should be offered freely, without requiring or forcing those who need the food pantry to attend a service first. Just as Jesus did not place conditions for payment on the work that the disciples did, we are to be the hands and feet of Jesus, to show compassion, and to be a part of justice work without attaching strings to those efforts.

In the passage from Matthew, no "terms and conditions" are added to the disciples' work. They are told that, because they received without having to pay, they should not demand payment from others.

Complete activities as time permits.

Optional:

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

The pastor also explained that, before opening the food pantry and allowing community members to receive food, they need to attend a church service. The church offers the service, and then, as soon as it is over, community members are permitted to go into the pantry and take what they need.

Upon hearing this, the student refused to be a part of the food pantry work that the church provided.

Discussion questions (in pairs or as a large group)

- Using the wording from the Social Principles and the passage from Matthew, why might the pastor of the church require community members to attend a church service before opening the doors to the pantry?
- Using the wording from the Social Principles and the passage from Matthew, why might the student refuse to participate in the food pantry work?
- If you were a community member who needed help from the church's food pantry, how might you respond to the requirement to attend a service first?
- Based on the passage from Matthew, what would Jesus say about attaching strings, or conditions, to justice work in a community?

Say: Think about organizations you know. Locally or globally that help people.

Ask: What do they do? Do they have any conditions for helping people?

Say: One of the United Methodist Church's ministries is UMCOR: The United Methodist Committee on Relief. What work does UMCOR do around the world? Are there conditions that a community must meet in order to receive support from UMCOR?

Ask: What is something we as a group or as individuals could do to show compassion to others?

NOTES (CONT'D)

Ask groups or partners to create a hypothetical conversation between the pastor and the student in which they discuss why the church should, or should not, require attendance at a service before accessing the food pantry. Keep the dialogue professional and respectful. Have both the pastor and student articulate their reasoning for their positions.

Consider:

Should students point to "preaching of the gospel" and "giving witness to the transformative power of the gospel," from the Social Principles, as elements that must be completed verbally, perhaps through a sermon, challenge them to consider that "preaching the gospel" can be done in ways that do not require attendance at a church service, or other conditions that must be met before receiving aid. For example, the gospel can be "preached" through serving and helping others through the food pantry itself, or through other community or justice work.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: We are going to close with a prayer that's from the United Methodist Hymnal #456.

Read slowly, (or invite group to read together.)

"O Lord,
open my eyes that I may see the needs of others;
open my ears that I may hear their cries;
open my heart so that they need not be without succor*;

let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong,
Nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich.

Show me where love and hope and faith are needed,
And use me to bring them to those places.

And so open my eyes and my ears
that I may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for thee."

Pray: God, help us to live this out, not just today, but in the way we treat people every day. Teach us to show compassion freely, just as you have given to us. Amen.

NOTES

This could be read by the facilitator, by someone in the group, or in unison.

*Succor: assistance, support

"Thee" could be replaced with "you."

If not completed during the Centering Moment, this breath prayer could be used for the Closing Moment instead.