

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CONTRIBUTOR NAME: ROB GIANNAMORE

JUSTICE ISSUE: GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:	Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20; Psalm 19 Isaiah 5:1-7, Psalm 80:7-15 Philippians 3:4b-14 Matthew 21:33-46
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:	2020/2024 Social Principles ¶162 Other Social Issues F
OBJECTIVE:	Participants will explore how scripture and the UM Social Principles call Christians to recognize the God-given dignity of every person and consider how inclusion, justice, and belonging strengthen the body of Christ.
SUPPLIES NEEDED:	bibles, journal paper, pencils/pens, a bell or a singing bowl (not a jingle bell)

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

(Ring the bell to begin)

Say: We are going to begin with a simple practice called ‘Centering Prayer.’ This is a time to quiet our minds, become aware of God’s presence, and prepare ourselves to listen with open hearts.

Find a comfortable position. Take a show, deep breathe in... and gently breathe out.

If thoughts come into your mind, simply acknowledge them and let them pass. Return your attention to the words you hear.

(Read slowly, allowing silence after each phrase)

Say: Be Here Now

(Pause for 30 seconds)

Say: Be Here

NOTES

Centering Prayer is a contemplative practice that helps us become aware of God’s presence by letting go of distractions and becoming still. During this exercise, participants are invited to focus on a simple sacred phrase and gradually enter a posture of openness and peace.

Sacred Phrase for the prayer, ‘Be here now’

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

(Pause for 30 seconds)

Say: Be

(Pause for 30-60 seconds)

(Ring the bell to close)

Say: As we begin our study, carry this sense of stillness with you. Be open to what God may reveal through scripture, conversation, and one another.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Today we are going to practice a way of reading scripture called Lectio Divina, which means 'divine reading.' Instead of trying to analyze every detail or memorize verses, we will slow down and listen for how God may be speaking to each of us personally. As we read, pay attention to a word, image, or phrase that catches your attention. Trust that God may be inviting you to notice something important.

(Show the Lectio Divina video, if able)

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcERMKqFQvM>

Scripture Passages:

- Exodus 20: 11, 13
- Matthew 21:33-46

(Read the scripture passages aloud. Read Matthew 21:42-46 a second time.)

Invite participants to move through the four movements of Lectio Divina.

Ask:

- What word or phrase stood out?
- What might God be saying to you?
- How do you want to respond?

NOTES

Today's scripture will be explored through Lectio Divina, an ancient Christian practice of praying with scripture. Rather than studying the bible only for information, Lectio invites us to experience God's living word in a personal and transformative way.

The four movements of Lectio Divina are:

- Lectio (Reading): Listen carefully for words or phrases that stand out.
- Meditatio (Reflection): Reflect on why those words captured your attention.
- Oratio (Prayer): Respond to God in prayer.
- Contemplatio (Contemplation): Rest quietly in God's presence.

[Devotion Beyond Borders: Reading Sacred Texts Deeply | Rob Giannamore](#)

Additional Resources:

- [What Defines Our Humanity? | Rob Giannamore](#)
- [Faith, Inclusion, And The LGBTQ+ Journey Toward Belonging | Rob Giannamore](#)
- [Moral Progress: Expanding The Circle Of Moral Concern : 13.7: Cosmos And Culture : NPR](#)

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

- Spend a few moments resting God's presence.

Say: The United Methodist Social Principles remind us that every person is created in God's image and deserves dignity, opportunity, and respect. One section encourages the church to work toward gender equality and gender diversity, recognizing that every person's gifts are valuable in the life of the church.

Read ¶162 Other Social Issues F

Say: Jesus describes a stone that was rejected becoming the cornerstone. A cornerstone or in some traditions, a keystone, is the stone that holds an arch together. Without it, the structure cannot stand. Imagine if God's kingdom is like that arch. Every person brings gifts that help strengthen the community. When people are excluded because of race, gender, sexual orientation. Or another part of who they are, the whole community loses something valuable. God's kingdom is strongest when everyone is welcome and empowered to share their gifts.

Say: Philosopher Peter Singer describes something called the 'circle of moral concern.' It begins with ourselves and gradually expands to include our families, communities, strangers, and eventually all of creation.

Followers of Jesus are continually invited to widen that circle, to see every person as our neighbor and every part of creation as belonging to God.

As we reflect today, consider what it means to help build God's kingdom by recognizing the dignity and gifts of every person.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

(Divide students into groups of two or three)

Say: For the next 15 minutes, you'll discuss these questions together. There are no perfect answers. Listen carefully to one another, ask thoughtful questions, and be respectful even when you disagree.

(Visit each group periodically to encourage conversation without directing it)

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

Discussion Questions:

- Jesus speaks about the cornerstone. Who are the 'cornerstones' in our communities today? What gifts do we miss when people are excluded?
- What part of today's scripture spoke most deeply to you? Why?
- How did practicing Lectio Divina change the way you experienced these passages?
- How can our church better reflect God's kingdom by creating space for the gifts and leadership of all people?

(Bring everyone back together. Invite several groups to share one insight or question that emerged.)

Possible prompts:

- What surprised you?
- Did anyone hear something different the second time the scripture was read?
- What challenged you today?
- What is one idea you'll continue thinking about this week?

(Affirm thoughtful participation without trying to resolve every theological question.)

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

(Ring the bell)

Pray:

Supportive Abba, Nurturing El Shadai, Sustaining Holy Spirit, all Loving Christ;

When we encounter a stranger whom we find different than us or who the adults say we should find different than us, let us instead and call out, Rejoice! Thanks be to God! Let us then ask this stranger for their blessing. May we be porters for the future UMC.

NOTES

Facilitator, here allow around 15 minutes for a breakout group of 15 minutes. Take time to pop into each group to offer guidance but not dominate the conversation with your opinion or theological training. Here, we are letting the youth learn. It is okay to guide towards current church teachings and doctrine, but again allowing for discussion, not instruction.

After the 15 minutes are up, come back as a group and have a whole group discussion around insights learned or gained.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

Open our hearts to the differences that you our loving creator have offered us and let us bow to the Christ presence in each we meet.

Open our minds then to be curious to gifts that each person brings, knowing that talent is not based on the color of one's skin, the gender one feels they belong in or the orientation one feels drawn to live. You are a God of LOVE.

You are a God of infinite possibilities let us as a young church be curious and understand that you used a young girl and a man from a backwater place in Nazareth to bring us our Savior. Help us radically present this to our church and create a UMC that lovingly supports all who seek to do your work.

May it be so.

(Ring the bell)

Say: Go in peace, carrying God's love into the world.

NOTES

Litany written by lesson author

Facilitator reads this again from the lectio perspective. Read it through once then read it through again. Open the reading of this by again ringing the bell, indicating a time of centering, after the final reading, close by ringing the bell.