SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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JUSTICE ISSUE: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:	Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:	¶162 The Social Community
OBJECTIVE:	Youth will explore how Jesus intentionally included those who are left out or marginalized and ho w his ministry of healing sought justice and created community.
SUPPLIES NEEDED:	Bible or printed scripture passage, a small stone (or tactile object to pass around), a large poster board or whiteboard, markers, post it notes, optional: an image or video of an overlooked or unseen population

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say: Let's begin by sitting in a circle. I'm going to pass around this stone. When you are holding it, you are invited to prayer, either out loud or silently. 'God, open our eyes to see...' and then name a person or group you think is often unseen or left out. Some examples might be people experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, immigrants, or people who feel left out at school, but you can name whoever comes to mind. Everyone will have a chance to hold the stone, but you don't have to speak out loud if you don't want to.

(Pass the tone around the circle. Allow space and silence.)

When the stone returns to the leader, say the following:

Say: Jesus saw people that others ignored. Today, we ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes so we can see with compassion just like Jesus did.

NOTES

This activity helps youth become aware of who is often left out or unseen in their own communities.

Any object to pass around will do, though a small stone is suggested.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Let's turn to Matthew 9:9-13. Can I have one or two volunteers read this out loud?

(Allow reading.)

Ask: What do you notice about the people Jesus chooses to spend time with?

(Pause. If needed, prompt: "were they popular or respected? Or more on the outside?")

Ask: In this passage, Jesus says, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice." What do you think that means?

(After responses, if needed, say: "It can mean that God cares more about compassion and mercy than just going through religious motions."

Ask: Do you think we sometimes do good things more to feel good about ourselves or because we truly care about others?

(Pause for response.)

Ask: Our Social Principles says, "As United Methodists, we affirm that human beings are made for God and for one another... We live out our lives, grow in the faith, and engage in acts of discipleship and witness in the context of a variety of interconnected communities..." What are some communities that help you grow in your faith or feel supported?

(Pause for response.)

Ask: What communities might be missing or unseen? Who might we be overlooking?"

(If needed, gently prompt the following: race, poverty, disability, sexuality, etc., as it connects to your local community.)

Ask: How does this passage challenge us to act as followers of Jesus today?

(Allow discussion. Affirm thoughtful responses. You can reference the Social Principles and Book of Resolutions, such as the Rights of Children, ¶ 162.C)

NOTES

After the passage is read aloud you may want to summarize the details:

- Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector.
- Jesus eats dinner with tax collectors and sinners (which upsets the Pharisees).
- Jesus says, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."
- Jesus goes with a leader whose child has died and heals her.
- Jesus is touched by a woman who needs healing.

Note: the sick child and woman may have been "unseen" due to gender or illness

Optional: show a short video clip or image with information about an overlooked or unseen population in your context near the end of the discussion.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say: Not we are going to think about our own community.

(Write "Our Community" on a board or poster.)

Say: I'm giving each of you some postin notes. On each one, write one issue of injustice you see around you; ways people are left out, unseen or treated unfairly. You can think about bullying, racism, hunger, loneliness, or anything else you notice."

(Give time to write.)

Say: Now come up and place your notes around the poster.

(Let them build the visual.)

Ask: What do you notice when you look at this?

(Pause for responses.)

Ask: Which groups of people seem to be most affected or excluded?

(Pause for responses.)

Ask: What do you think Jesus would do in response to these?

(Encourage concrete imagination.)

Say: Now let's think about what we can do. What are some actions we could take to make a difference?

(Write responses visibly.)

If needed, a few prompts:

- We could write letters...
- Collect food or supplies...
- Spend time listening or visiting people...
- Create care kits...

NOTES

Community mapping activity – this activity helps youth to name justice issues in their own community and brainstorm how they can model their response to those issues in a way that is like Jesus.

If the group decides to take action be sure to note who will be responsible for steps toward accomplishing the action.

You can use the book of resolutions to find examples of ideas that have been adopted by the UMC as ways to make a difference in the lives of others.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

Say: What is one action we want to commit to this week or this month?

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: Let's form a circle again.

(Pass the stone.)

Say: As you hold the stone, say one word about how you feel after today. Perhaps, hopeful, challenged, confused, or anything else.

Read together or leader reads from the Social Creed (section).

Social Creed (section):

We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community...We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing...We believe in the present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world. Amen.

Ask: Does anyone have any prayer requests?

(Pause and receive.)

Closing Prayer:

God of Compassion, thank you for showing us how Jesus sees people, especially those who are often overlooked. Open our eyes, our hearts, and our lives so that we may act with mercy and love. Guide us as we take action this week, and help us to reflect your justice and grace in the world. Amen.