

SPECIAL
SUNDAY

PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY

SERMON STARTER



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The people of The United Methodist Church®

PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY SERMON STARTER



This sermon starter is part of the Peace with Justice pastor and leader kit and connects with the theme “God’s Promise of Peace.” It can be adapted for your context and integrated into your worship service. It is based on 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 and Matthew 28:16-20.

We read in today’s Gospel lesson, which is often referred to as the Great Commission, the final account of Jesus’s ministry in the Gospel of Matthew. We learn that the eleven disciples traveled from Jerusalem to Galilee to meet the risen Jesus on a mountain.

Jesus shares with them that he had been given full authority. He is the restorer between the realm of heaven and the brokenness of creation. He instructs them to continue his teachings, to disciple people in every country and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The disciples are reminded that they are not doing it alone; Jesus will be with them always. He calls them to be in co-mission with him.

The mission statement of The United Methodist Church echoes the scripture reading: “Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” For so many centuries, today’s Gospel lesson has been twisted to justify colonization and other injustices done in the name of Jesus. The word “discipleship” has been confused with converting people to Christianity.

But what Jesus instructs in this passage is to “teach them to obey everything I have commanded of you.”

**“TEACH THEM
TO OBEY
EVERYTHING
I HAVE
COMMANDED
OF YOU.”**

—MATTHEW 28:20



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The Gospel reading is often referred to as the Great Commission, but Jesus did not call it that. What he does call “great” earlier in Matthew is the Great Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets,” Jesus instructed in Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV).

In 2 Corinthians 13:11-13, Paul reminds us that true peace and justice can only be achieved when we strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind and live in right relationship with God and our neighbors. As Christians, we are called to not only seek peace in our own hearts and relationships but also to actively work toward peace and justice in our communities and the world.

“No justice, no peace” is a chant often lifted up at justice rallies. The United Methodist Book of Resolutions reminds us “the peace that is *shalom* is not negative or one-dimensional. It

is much more than the absence of war. *Shalom* is positive peace: harmony, wholeness, health, and well-being in all human relationships. It is the natural state of humanity as birthed by God.”

True peace requires the presence of justice, reflecting our baptismal vows to “accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil,

**“ACCEPT THE FREEDOM AND
POWER GOD GIVES YOU TO RESIST
EVIL, INJUSTICE, AND OPPRESSION
IN WHATEVER FORMS THEY
PRESENT THEMSELVES.”**

—THE UNITED METHODIST BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.” True peace can only be achieved when there is justice for all.

Jesus gives us the Great Commission to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations. This includes sharing the message of peace and



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justice with those who have created barriers to God's grace and working to bring about peace and justice in the world.

This invitation to be on a co-mission with Jesus is not only for disciples 2,000 years ago. It is not only for missionaries around the world. It is for you and me.

We are invited to teach others how to follow the teachings of Jesus.

We are invited to model what it means to love God and love our neighbor.

We are invited to be part of God's transformation of the world by building up peace with justice in the name of Jesus.

When we pray with a friend or stranger in need, we are living out our faith with authentic love.

When we serve in the community (lift up some local ministries or peace with justice projects from your annual conference) in the name of Jesus as United Methodist Christians, we offer a restorative invitation to our neighbors.

When we share the story of our faith journey, we engage in God's mission, discipling others into a life that restores peace through Jesus Christ.

The Great Commission is a Spirit-led co-mission from God with Jesus Christ and with one another. I invite you to celebrate the places where you see the Spirit at work and where peace with justice is being restored. It's all around us and we are invited to participate in it. Thanks be to God.

NO

JUSTICE

NO

PEACE



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