

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CONTRIBUTOR NAME: AIMEE HONG

## JUSTICE ISSUE: STUDENTS' CHOICE

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:	Isaiah 49:1-7
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/ BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:	All sections
OBJECTIVE:	Students will explore Isaiah 49:1-7 alongside Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision and the Social Principles to understand how God calls us to walk the long road toward justice as lights in the world.
SUPPLIES NEEDED:	butcher paper (or several sheets taped together to make a road/path), markers, crayons, or sticky notes; copies of the Social Principles ( <a href="https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-as-adopted-by-general-conference-charlotte-2024">https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-as-adopted-by-general-conference-charlotte-2024</a> ); Book of Resolutions

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Say:** Hi, everyone! I'm so glad that you are here today. Before we get started, let's take a few minutes to check in with each other. This is our time to share how we are doing and to support one another.

Let's each share two things:

One word that describes how your week went and one highlight (something good or fun) or one challenge (something hard) from your week.

*Pause for sharing.*

**Say:** Thanks for sharing. It's good to know that we are not alone in the ups and downs of the week. God cares about all of it- the good, the hard, and even the in-between.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY CONT'D

**Pray:** Loving God, thank you for bringing us here today. You know the weeks we've had- our joys, our struggles, and everything in between. Help us to feel your presence as we learn, share, and grow together. Amen.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

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**Say:** Our passage for today comes from Isaiah 49, but before we read the passage, I want to give you a little historical context of our passage. Isaiah 49 falls in what scholars often call Second Isaiah or Deutero-Isaiah. It was written during the time when the people of Judah were living in exile in Babylon around the 6th century BCE. By this time, Jerusalem had been destroyed, and many Israelites were living outside of their homeland. In exile, they felt defeated, abandoned, and without hope, and they wondered if God had forgotten them.

*Read Isaiah 49:1-7.*

### Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean that God knew the servant before birth (v.1)? How does that make you think about your own life?
- The servant feels like his work is 'in vain' (v. 4). Have you ever felt like your efforts didn't matter? How does God's response encourage you?
- Verse 6 says the servant will be a 'light to the nations.' What does being a light look like for us today in school? With friends, or in our community?
- Who are people in your life that have been a 'light' for you?

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

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**Say:** Isaiah talks about a servant called by God to bring light to the nations and to never give up, even when it feels like the work is in vain. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. picked up that same theme when he said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Our activity today is to imagine what that long road to justice looks like and how we are part of it.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY CONT'D

As United Methodists, the Social Principles help guide us as a church to live out our faith in real issues like peace, poverty, racism, creation care, and human rights. They help us work towards the vision of the kingdom of God.

*Show the butcher paper with the winding path.*

### Discussion questions:

- What are examples of injustices people have faced in history and still face today?
- What are some moments of progress toward justice?
- What kind of world do you think God wants us to work toward?

*Invite students to write or draw on the road:*

- Along the early part of the road: injustices (slavery, racism, poverty, exclusion, etc..)
- Along the middle of the road: movements and leaders for justice (Civil Rights Movement, voting rights, MLK, youth activists, etc..)
- Along the latter part of the road: their own hopes for justice (inclusion, peace, equality, environmental care, ending hunger, etc..)
- Invite students to write their names/initials somewhere along the road, showing where they feel they are right now in working toward justice.

*Provide copies of the Social Principles. Have the students write along the road where they think the Social Principles belong (ex: racial justice near Civil Rights movement; care for creation near environmental justice.)*

### Discussion Questions:

- What did you notice about how long and winding the road is?
- How do the Social Principles help us as a church keep moving toward justice?
- How does Isaiah 49 encourage us to keep going, even when the work feels unfinished?

### NOTES

On the big paper (butcher paper), draw a winding road/path from one side to the other.

At the top of the paper write, “I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” And at the bottom, the quote from MLK Jr, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”

### Social Principles (text):

<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-as-adopted-by-general-conference-charlotte-2024>

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- Where do you see yourself as a light in this journey toward justice?
- What is one issue in the world you feel called to care about because of your faith?
- What qualities earn someone a spot in your “chosen” family?
- How does it feel to know that God has chosen you to be part of God’s family?
- Think of the people in your chosen family- what role do you see God filling for you? (grandparent, father, mother, sibling, the friend always at your house, etc)

### CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

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**Pray:** “God of light and justice, thank you for calling us to be part of your work in the world. Help us to walk faithfully on the long road to justice, even when it feels hard, and to trust that you are guiding us toward your vision of peace and fairness for all. Amen.”