

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

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SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:

Exodus 17:1-7

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/
BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:

¶160 Stewardship of Creation, C; Book of Resolutions #1211 “*Protection of Water*,” #2100 “*The United Methodist Church, Food, Justice, and World Hunger*”

OBJECTIVE:

To deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ and follow God’s will in our lives. On the third Sunday of Lent, Christians begin a spiritual journey of following Jesus toward God, even when the path leads through dry deserts or steep, challenging mountains.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

Copies of the Book of Resolutions #1211 and ¶160 Stewardship of Creation, C per student.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say: Sit comfortably, plant your feet on the ground, and close your eyes if you feel comfortable. Take a deep breath in... and let it out slowly. Again, breathe in, feeling the air fill your lungs... and exhale all the stress or noise you brought in with you.

Say: Imagine that with every breath, God is renewing you, just like cool, fresh water in a dry place.

(Breathe in and breathe out as many times as needed.)

(Offer a short prayer.)

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Today we're going to look at a story from Exodus 17:1-7. It's a moment when the Israelites were traveling through the wilderness, following God's lead, but found themselves without something we all need to survive, water. Listen to what happened.

(Read Exodus 17:1-7 aloud, or invite a student to read it.)

Say: Let's talk about what's happening in this passage.

Ask: Is there a conflict or challenge in this story? What's going on?

(Pause. Allow students to respond.)

(If needed, summarize: The Israelites are upset because there's no water. They quarrel with Moses and basically say, 'Why did you bring us out here just to die of thirst?' Their anger is aimed at Moses, but underneath that, they're actually questioning whether God will provide for them.)

Say: This story isn't just about being thirsty. It's also about trust. What do you think this situation shows us about the Israelites' trust in God?

(Pause for students to share.)

Say: The people had seen God do huge miracles, freeing them from Egypt, parting the Red Sea, guiding them through the wilderness, but in this moment, fear took over. They questioned whether God was still with them."

Ask: How do you think Moses felt? What does this story show about leadership?

(Pause for sharing.)

Say: Moses was overwhelmed. The people were so frustrated and angry at him. But instead of giving up, Moses cried out to God for help. And God responded with clear instructions- stand on the rock, strike it with the staff, and water will flow.

Say: This story reminds us that even when circumstances look impossible, God is still present. God doesn't abandon the people- God provides exactly what they need, even in the most barren place.

NOTES

The Israelites arrived at Rephidim after leaving Egypt and traveling through the wilderness. When they camped there, they found no water, and the people grew thirsty. Their desperation led them to grumble and argue with Moses. Fearing for their safety and unsure what to do, Moses cried out to God for help. God responded by providing water, causing it to flow from the rock Moses struck. However, the Israelites' lack of trust and their testing of God displeased God, and this moment became part of the larger pattern that eventually kept that generation from entering the promised land.

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Reflection Questions:

- Have you ever felt like the Israelites? Frustrated, worried, or unsure whether God was really with you?
- What does this story teach us about trusting God even when life feels dry or challenging?
- What are some 'rocks' in your life? Places where you need God to bring life, hope, or relief?
- How can we support one another, the way Moses and the elders supported their community?

Say: Exodus 17 shows us that God is present even in our hardest moments. The Israelites tested God, asking, *'Is the Lord among us or not?'* And God answered with water in the wilderness. As we go through Lent and our own journeys of faith, let's remember that God walks with us, through deserts, doubts, and everything in between.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Ask: Where does your water come from?

(Pause for responses.)

Say: Most of us have water so easily that we rarely think about it. But not every community has the same experience.

Say: The United Methodist Church believes that water is a God-given gift meant for all people. Paragraph 160 of the Social Principles reminds us that we have a responsibility to protect the natural world. The Book of Resolutions #1211 "Protection of Water" says that water is essential for life and must be safe, clean, and accessible to all.

(Provide copies of Paragraph 160 of the Social Principles and #1211 Protection of Water from the Book of Resolutions for the students. Break up the group into groups and assign them to read the Social Principles and #1211.)

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Bring everyone back to the large group.

Say: So why does the Church have a stance on water?

(Let students offer thoughts.)

Say: Let's broaden our perspective. We know where we get our water. But where do other communities get water?

Instructions:

- Divide the group into 3-4 groups
- Give each group a blank sheet of paper or a whiteboard area.
- Ask them to brainstorm ways people in other parts of the world access water. (Examples: wells, rivers, rainwater collection, water trucks, desalination plants, community pumps.)
- Group work for 5 minutes

Say: Let's hear what your groups came up with.

(Pause for sharing)

Say: As we can see, access to water looks very different depending on where you live.

Say: Let's look at real examples of communities that struggle with clean and safe water. These aren't just stories, they are real people.

Say: In Flint, Michigan, a decision to change the city's water source led to dangerous lead contamination. Families used bottled water for cooking, bathing, and drinking because tap water wasn't safe. Children suffered the most.

(Pause.)

Say: Cape Town, South Africa went through a severe drought and nearly hit 'Day Zero' the day when the city would run out of water. Climate change made rainfall unpredictable, and reservoirs were almost empty.

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(Pause.)

Say: In Yemen, the ongoing civil war since 2015 destroyed much of the water infrastructure. Millions of people rely on trucked water or contaminated sources. Scarcity has contributed to cholera outbreaks and has deeply affected families already living through conflict.

Say: Let's talk about what these examples show us.

Discussion Questions:

- What do all these situations have in common?
- How do you think it would feel to not trust the water coming from your faucet?
- What surprised you the most about these examples?
- Why do you think poorer communities are often the ones most affected by unsafe or unavailable water?

Say: As United Methodists, we believe faith isn't just about belief, it's about action. Protecting water is a matter of justice because – everyone is created in God's image, everyone deserves access to life-sustaining water, and Jesus taught us to care for the least and the vulnerable.

Say: When we talk about water justice, we are talking about making sure everyone, every family, every child, has what they need to live the life God intends.

Say: Let's brainstorm ways we can help protect water or support communities with water access.

(Possible responses: reducing water waste at home, supporting organizations working for safe water, learning more about water justice, participating in clean-up days, advocating for environmental protections, raising awareness in church or school, using less plastic, writing to members of Congress.)

Say: Great ideas! Even small actions matter.

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CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: Water is God's gift. Protecting water is part of our call to justice, compassion, and stewardship. As we leave today, I want you to remember: Caring about water is caring about people. And caring about people is what Jesus calls us to do. Let's close with a short prayer.

(Offer a short closing prayer.)