

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CONTRIBUTOR NAME: AIMEE HONG

JUSTICE ISSUE: EDUCATION REFORM/ EDUCATION EQUITY/ EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:

Isaiah 11:1-10

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/
BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:

¶163, The Political Community, Basic Rights and Freedoms, B. Children and Young People, Book of Resolutions #4213 “Education: The Gift of Hope”, #4214 “The Right of All to Quality Education”

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this lesson is to help youth explore God’s vision of justice and peace in Isaiah 11:1-10 and reflect on how educational equality and reform can be a way we live into that vision today.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

Large poster board or butcher paper (draw a big trunk and branches), markers, and leaf-shaped cutouts- 2 colors (template provided), tape/glue, pen/pencils

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say: Hi, everyone! Let’s do a check-in as we start our time together. If your mood today was a kind of weather, what would it be? For example, sunny and bright, cloudy but calm, stormy with lightning, or maybe a rainbow after the rain.

You can share your weather forecast for today, and if you want, explain why.

Go around and let each student share.

Prayer: God of love and grace, thank you for bringing us together today. You know the things that bring us joy and the things that weigh on our hearts. We ask that you be with us in this time- help us to listen, to learn, and to support one another. May your Spirit guide our conversations, and may we leave here feeling closer to you and to each other. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

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SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Today we are going to study a passage from Isaiah chapter 11, verse 1-10. Before we dive into the scripture, let's get some background so it makes sense.

Isaiah lived around the 8th century BCE, during a really hard time for God's people. The kingdom was divided, wars were happening, and people were worried about the future. Assyria was a powerful empire that threatened to take over. People wondered: Where is God in all of this? Who can we trust to lead us?

Isaiah gives them a vision of hope. He talks about a 'shoot' growing from the stump of Jesse. That's like saying: even though the family line of King David's line looked cut down- like a dead tree stump- God would bring new life from it. That new life points to a future leader.

Isaiah describes this new leader as fair and just. And not only will this leader bring justice, but the whole world will be transformed- wolves lying down with lambs, children playing safely near snakes. It's a picture of peace, not just for people, but for all creation.

When people read this passage today, Christians often connect this passage to Jesus as the one to fulfill Isaiah's vision of God's kingdom. But it's also a call for us to think about what justice, peace, and leadership look like in our world right now.

So as we read Isaiah 11:1-10, I want you to picture a tree stump with new green branches growing out of it.

Have two students read Isaiah 11:1-10

Discussion Questions:

- What words or images stood out to you?
- What does it mean that God cares for the poor and vulnerable first?

NOTES

Highlight: God's kingdom is marked by justice, fairness, and peace- values that should shape how we live, including how we think about schools and education.

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Say: Isaiah imagines a leader who rules with wisdom, fairness, and justice and not just for the powerful, but especially for the poor and those who are usually overlooked. He imagines a world where peace and safety are real- not just for some, but for everyone.

I want us to connect this to something in our world today: education. Think about schools in different communities. Some schools have new books, laptops, science labs, updated buildings, and facilities. Some schools struggle with overcrowded classrooms, broken heating systems, or not enough teachers. Some students have tutors and college counselors, while others don't.

Isaiah's vision reminds us that God cares about justice and fairness. Education is one of the ways people grow and thrive, but it isn't equal; it's like some branches on the tree can grow strong while others are cut short.

God's kingdom is about every child having the chance to learn, to grow, to flourish. That means we as Christians are called to notice when some children are left behind, and to ask why and take action to make changes.

The United Methodist Church has a stance on education in our Social Principles under Basic Rights and Freedoms and the Book of Resolutions under #4213, Education: The Gift of Hope and #4214 "The Right of All to Quality Education."

Break up into two groups and have each group read Resolutions# 4213 & #4214.

Pause for groups to read the Resolutions.

Ask the groups to summarize the Resolutions

NOTES

Faith & Fact Card on Education:

<https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/49>

Resources on Education Reform:

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/tools-and-resources/the-state-of-americas-children/soac-education/>

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Discussion Questions:

- Where have you seen differences in education between schools or communities?
- How does Isaiah's vision of fairness and peace challenge us to think about education equality?
- What would it look like if education reflected God's kingdom- all children thriving?

Title the poster "The Tree of Knowledge: God's Vision for Education"

Provide 3-4 cutouts of leaves for the students. Ask the students to write/draw on each leaf one thing every student should have for a fair education. (Examples: new and updated books, access to arts and music, safe school, ...)

Provide time for students to reflect and write/draw on their leaves.

Have students come forward and tape/glue the leaves on the branches and share what they wrote/drew and why.

After all the students have gone, ask these discussion questions:

- What do you notice about our tree? What themes keep coming up?
- Which of these things are already happening in your school or community?
- If Isaiah's vision is about fairness and peace, how does our tree help us imagine education reform today?
- Think back on the Resolutions, what are some recommendations listed to move towards a more equitable education for all?

Hand each student one leaf and ask them to write one action they can take this week to support fairness in education. The class can also come up with one that they will work on together. (Examples: help a classmate with homework, donate school supplies, speak kindly to someone left out, pray, write thank-you note to a teacher, raise awareness, find out what's going on at the school board and if it's an issue that they

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want to do something about, find out if there are any state legislation on education reform and contact their State congressional members.) Add the leaves to the tree (different colors from the first leaf exercise), showing how we participate in God's vision.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN)

Say: Our Tree of Knowledge shows us what Isaiah was dreaming about: a world where everyone gets what they need to grow, and no one is left out. Education is one way we live into God's kingdom of peace and justice- if it is just, fair, and equitable. Let's pray that our small actions become part of God's big vision.

Close with a prayer.