

## Interactive lesson



picture from <https://www.wrvo.org/post/syracuses-columbus-stature-come-down-columbus-circle-be-renamed#stream/0>

Do you know what this statue is? <Let them respond>

What do you think of statues of Columbus, like this one in Syracuse? <Let them respond>



pictures from <https://www.wrvo.org/post/syracuses-columbus-stature-come-down-columbus-circle-be-renamed#stream/0>, <https://www.syracuse.com/us-news/2019/10/christopher-columbus-statues-vandalized-in-2-us-cities.html>

What is the obvious difference between these two statues of Columbus, aside from pose and location? <Let them respond>

Some people are very proud to claim the history of the explorers and enjoy statues of them like you see on the left. Others feel strongly against the statues, as evident on the right. Do you know why someone would feel that way? <Let them respond>

How do you think Jesus would respond to this? <Let them respond>

Does everybody support that approach? <Let them respond>

What do you think we can do to help bring peace amid this controversy? <Let them respond>

Jesus brought God's love and direction into the midst of people so focused on their personal affairs that they had difficulty accepting other views – sound familiar? He helped them and opened their hearts so that they could live better with one another. Let us strive to do likewise.

## Gospel lesson

After Herod's birthday party last week, today's Gospel gets back into Jesus's countryside ministry.



*picture screenshot from*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUcvSS8tTVs> (LUMO)

**Mark 6:30-34, 53-56** (NRSV)

<sup>30</sup> The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

<sup>31</sup> He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

<sup>32</sup> And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

<sup>33</sup> Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.

<sup>34</sup> As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

<sup>53</sup> When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat.

<sup>54</sup> When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him,

<sup>55</sup> and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.

<sup>56</sup> And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

*The word of God for the people of God*

<Hymn "Take Time to Be Holy" UMH #395>

## Message: He Is Our Peace



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/geared-up-for-life/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Gracious Savior who takes so much mercy on us, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may share Your restorative peace everywhere we go. Amen.



We continue our worship series today with “He Is Our Peace”:

“What does it mean to be the dwelling place or a dwelling place for God? How can we present the

church and/or the community of faith of something worthy of that designation?

“In this second chapter of Ephesians, this is the description that we are given of the church: the dwelling place of God. God takes up residence among us. What does it mean to be God’s home?”

Vera (not her real name) has had a hard life. Divorced from a cheating husband, she raised their two girls as best she could – but she is only human, and was sometimes overwhelmed. She was not the model parent.



picture from <http://archive.jsonline.com/news/opinion/why-dont-the-poor-just-go-get-a-job-b99107024z1-225270391.html>

Credit: Tim Brinton  
illustration

Her daughters describe a childhood marked by episodes of negligence and abuse. Often it felt like they were being more of a parent to her than she was to them.

They worked hard, somehow making it through college, only to wind up in near-minimum wage jobs and struggling to make ends meet. They lacked the confidence and poise of someone who had grown up in a household full of love and support.

Vera would contact them, needy and wanting their attention. Often she would be drunk – and she is not a pleasant drunk. The girls felt like she was pulling them down to drown in her problems, and distanced themselves from her as a survival tactic.

Do you know anyone like them? Struggling to get by in life, trying to survive, and getting hurt by those they love and need most? Grasping for help in ways others do not appreciate, trying to be noticed and valued as people?

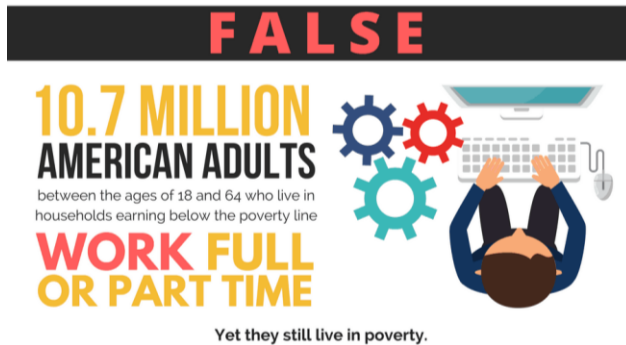
We heard in the Gospel reading today about folks who probably fit that bill. Needy, sick, running from town to town in the hope of finding help, like sheep without a shepherd. They were a far cry from King David in the Old Testament, who was worried about creating a building for *God* to dwell in. The Creator of everything, in need of a *house*?!

David was living in luxury, a house built of fine wood. Like the wealthy of today, he completely missed seeing the need where it was. Even those who are not wealthy do not understand lifestyles different than their own. Paul alludes to this in his letter to the Ephesians, highlighting how the Gentiles and Jews historically were at odds.

The world is far too full of people judging those different from them as less. It is too full of people

living in depressing situations and being judged bad or unworthy by others. Often, they are associated with getting handouts and dismissed [as not doing the obvious to improve their lot] by those who do not know their full situation.

**"Poor people don't want to work!"**



picture from 2018 article at <https://4thworldmovement.org/poverty-myths-busted-poor-people-dont-want-work/>

Our society is full of catch-22's. To get *and keep* a job, an adult – even one who speaks English well, is in good health, and is qualified for the work – needs some basics:

- † Clothing appropriate for the interview and for the job itself (not always the same thing, not always cheap, not always culturally easy e.g., hairstyle).
- † Transportation to/from the worksite (if cannot afford a car, public/shared transportation – *if available and affordable* – may not match the work schedule closely enough to be feasible)
- † Positive demeanor (difficult when personal problems are overwhelming outside of work).

And this assumes good health for the person who probably does not have health insurance and may be dealing with hidden issues such as depression.



Add to this cultural differences which may offend the hiring staff or bigotry against the person, sudden illness, family crisis, vehicle-disabling accidents, or any one of a myriad of things outside of their control, and making do becomes a near miracle.

Heaven help those poor who slip into addiction, to ever make their way back out!

And yet, there is exactly where everyone needs to go for help: Heaven – to God, to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit. In the scripture readings today, God understood the peoples’ intents and needs:



picture from  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerard\\_van\\_Honthorst\\_-\\_King\\_David\\_Playing\\_the\\_Harp\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerard_van_Honthorst_-_King_David_Playing_the_Harp_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

picture from  
<https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-peter-confession/>

picture from <https://www.saintmarks Lutheran.org/2012/07/22/stories-of-flesh-and-blood/>

- † David was honored with promises for the future – not only did his son Solomon get to build the temple David dreamed of building, but David’s offspring Jesus built the true dwelling place of God – within the temple of the body of believers.
- † The apostles with Jesus were given time for rest between gatherings, and the crowds were given healing in body and spirit.



† And as Paul described, because of Christ, God's Holy Spirit reconciles people to God, bringing **peace** to them.

God's peace involves wholeness, a restoration to what we were intended to be. That's what *shalom* is. And the Spirit works in the world today, bringing peace through those who love God. He is our peace.



picture from <https://bestlifeonline.com/dating-in-your-40s/>

Time passed and Vera met a man, a widower who had had a long and happy marriage. A bit nervous at first, they found they really liked one another. On a date, when he paused and bowed his head briefly before eating, she learned that he was a Christian.

Vera had been “brought up” a Christian, liking church with other kids well enough, but had drifted away from it in her rebellious years. With the guilt and inadequacy she felt as a poor single mother, she had not been drawn back to church.

Her daughters became faithful Christians after college, but struggled with forgiving her because she kept hurting them, and they had their own issues.

With the support of other churchgoers, they slowly improved their lot; they got better jobs and were able to donate to charities that once helped them.

Now, with a faithful Christian man helping her to feel more loved and to take better care of herself, Vera began to blossom. Drinking less, she stopped attacking her daughters via text and phone. Quitting smoking, she was able to afford a new used car so that she would not be so housebound.

Her daughters were relieved by the changes. Still wary but thinking of the forgiveness of Jesus, they welcomed their mom back into their lives rather than shutting her out completely. Because of the love shown to them, they allowed room for the Spirit to work.

Those three lives had been broken, but the love of God as shown through those faithful to Christ helped them to find value, healing, and restoration. It was not just one person helping once, though there were many one-offs along the way. It was the whole Christian community, helping in various areas and in various ways for any one of the different people, that made the difference.

Note that helping just one of them contributed to a better life for all three of them: we do not know how far the work of the Spirit ripples out when we share

God's love, but we can be sure it goes further than the immediate situation.



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/geared-up-for-life/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

God created us and knows, to the tiniest detail, what our situation is – and God loves us. So we need to start, not by judging what we see, but by listening to understand the needs and what we can do to help.

Jesus came, gave Himself, and with Divine Grace freed us from the bondage of sin, restoring us for life in God's love. He did not give up on us. If we truly love God and one another, we do not give up. We may need to rest in between attempts to help, and the ways in which we help may vary, but in grace we must seek to help bring God's peace to the world.

Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us; we are that great temple where God dwells on earth. The Spirit helps us in our relationships with one another. If we let the Spirit guide us, God will work through us that all may be restored through Christ's love and have the wholeness of His peace.

*ShaLom.*

Now let us respond with

**The World Methodist Social Affirmation UMH #886**

We believe in God, creator of the world and all people;  
and in Jesus Christ, incarnate among us,  
who died and rose again;  
and in the Holy Spirit,  
present with us to guide, strengthen, and comfort

**We believe; God, help our unbelief.**

We rejoice in every sign of God's kingdom:  
in the upholding of human dignity and community;  
in every expression of love, justice, and reconciliation;  
in each act of self-giving on behalf of others;  
in the abundance of God's gifts  
entrusted to us that all may have enough;  
in all responsible use of the earth's resources.

**Glory be to God on high; and on earth, peace.**

We confess our sin, individual and collective,  
by silence or action:  
through the violation of human dignity  
based on race, class, age, sex, nation, or faith;  
through the exploitation of people  
because of greed and indifference;  
through the misuse of power  
in personal, communal, national, and international life;  
through the search for security  
by those military and economic forces

that threaten human existence;  
through the abuse of technology  
which endangers the earth and all life upon it.

**Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.**

We commit ourselves individually and as a community  
to the way of Christ:

to take up the cross;  
to seek abundant life for all humanity;  
to struggle for peace with justice and freedom;  
to risk ourselves in faith, hope and love,  
praying that God's kingdom may come.

**Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.**

### **<Doxology>**

#### *<Prayer of Dedication and Pastoral Prayer>*

Let us pray:

Holy God, you love us so deeply that you pursue us  
relentlessly. You sent your son Jesus into the world  
that we who were far off would be brought near to you  
by his blood.

We offer our gifts to you, knowing we can never  
outgive you, never balance the equation. You don't  
desire balance, no quid-pro-quo, only that we find  
the peace you desire for us, whose foundation is in  
your word and whose cornerstone is Christ alone.

Use our gifts and guide us with Your wisdom in our  
daily lives.

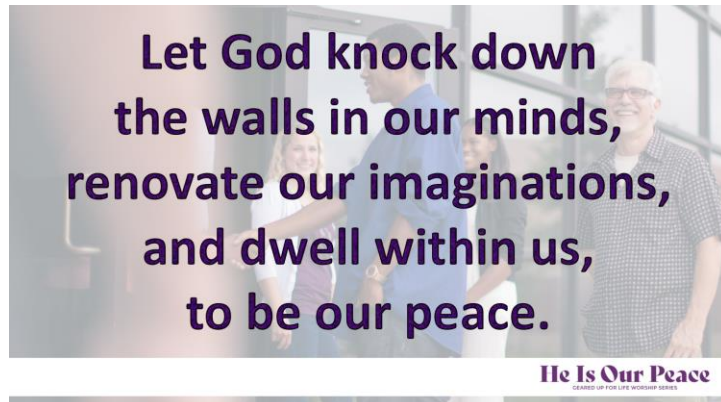
- Help us, Lord, with healing touch and comfort for:
  - -
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  - **Family of Paul Lott** - died Thursday
  - **Covid** - delta outbreaks, vaccine issues worldwide
  - **Places devastated by severe weather** - storms, flooding (europe), heat (NW US), drought (mideast)
- Thanks for
  - -
  - -
- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
  - Family far off
  - Travelers
- Send Your Spirit to address world/social problems
  - end bigotry, dismantle racism, reform systems persist
  - bring world peace
- Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,  
<Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Lord, Speak to Me" UMH #463>



<Benediction>



background from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/geared-up-for-life/seventh-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/seventh-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Gearing up for **life** in the Spirit,  
Let God knock down the walls in our minds,  
renovate our imaginations,  
and dwell within us, to **be our peace**.  
Filled with God's fullness, let the restoring love of  
Jesus overflow to all whom you encounter. Amen.