

A way in the wilderness February 2, 2020

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

Book of Judges:

The book of Judges spans their history in the Promised Land from the time after Joshua's death to the start of the Monarchy. The book's author is unknown, but some theorists believe that Samuel was the author. It was most likely written after the Monarchy had started. The history of the Israelites in the book of Judges centers on the line of leaders who guided the people under the hand of God as suggested in Judges 2:16 (NRSV), "Then the Lord raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them." In the account of history each Judge was evaluated and determined if they had served God well. The themes of the book carry the stories of God's people turning away from God and then God rescuing them out of their apostasy. Rather than having a king, God was the King of the Israelites and Judges were raised up to guide the people. Eventually, the people called for a King on earth, and the time of the Judges went away as the Monarchy started.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Judges 21:24-25 (NRSV)

²⁴ So the Israelites departed from there at that time by tribes and families, and they went out from there to their own territories.²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.

John 18:33-38 (NRSV)

³³ Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to

me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." ³⁷ Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸ Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

Questions to Ponder:

What jumps out at you from these passages?

What do you think the structure of rule was during the time of the Judges?

What happens in Israelite history when there is no strong leader like a King or a Moses with a mission?

How does one judge what is right or wrong on their own accord?

What Kingdom did Jesus represent?

What does it mean to be a part of Jesus' Kingdom?

Why did Jesus come into the world?

What do you think motivated Pilate to ask, "What is truth?"

Commentary: By Pastor Tom Palmer

In the book of Judges, we find that if there is no compelling common narrative/authority (King) to hold a people together, chaos and division result. When there is no objective standard or accepted source of truth, everyone drinks from the broken cistern of their own micro kingdom and does what is right in their own eyes. (True for societies and for churches). Fragmentation, Divisions and echo chambers of outrage will abound as we continue to wander.

In the book of John, Jesus reveals himself as the true source of living water and calls people to his Kingdom of grace and truth. Our unity is in Jesus (as revealed in Scripture). He is the one who makes a way in the wilderness. Following him and drinking of his living water leads to the land of flourishing.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

What do think truth is?

What do you hold as authority over your life?

In a world where many believe that there is no objective truth, what does it mean to follow one who said, "I came into the world to testify to the truth" John 18:37b (not a truth)?

What is your wilderness, and how is God helping you to make a way through it?

What does it mean when Jesus calls people to his kingdom?

How can you be an example of God's Kingdom on this earth?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Matthew 22:37-40, “³⁷ He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

If you agree, then what must you do to live in this way of life? If you live this way, you are representing the Kingdom of God here on earth.