



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

February 11-17, 2019

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester

Why Church? "The Church is a Place of Hope"

Notes from sermon on 2/10:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

Why is it important to you personally that Jesus is raised from the dead?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

C.S. Lewis calls the notion that Jesus can be a great moral teacher but not the Son of God as "patronizing nonsense" and "an option Christ has not left open to us."

1. Is Lewis correct?
2. Why is the resurrection so essential to Jesus' identity as our savior?
3. What does the resurrection tell us about the things Jesus did and said?

Monday, February 11: Read I Corinthians 15:12-20

How often do we as Christians think and live as people without hope? Whenever we open a paper or turn on the news, everything sounds and feels like doom and gloom. When we experience our own physical decline, it feels as if the best is now behind us. When we see change, we fear it's taking us permanently in a wrong direction. Our anxiety rises and spreads to others, overshadowing everything...including the real story.

This week our scriptures will call us to remember the central message of Christianity: *hope*. They will challenge us to recognize the church as the bride of Christ, who conquered death and "lives that death may die." As the church, we can live as those whose fate rests in crucified hands...resurrected hands...in the promise that we, too, are people of resurrection and new birth.

Tuesday, February 12: Read Jeremiah 17:5-10

In our fear, we put our trust in the tangible and the immediate, which only leads to disappointment, disillusionment, and despair. "Cursed on those who trust in mere mortals," says the prophet. We believe politicians only to have them betray us. We count on family members only to discover they, too, are human and flawed. We rely on ourselves and soon discover our weakness, inefficacy, and sin. Without God, we most certainly will become cynical and hopeless. When we turn our trust to God and God alone, however, we find ourselves constantly renewed by hope and energy, as a "tree planted by water," even as the climate withers everything around us. When storms push everything over, our roots are set firmly in the ground. What storms are we allowing to threaten our sense of peace and victory, when we could instead be enjoying the blessed assurance of God's protection, providence, and love? In what parts of our lives are we going thirsty when all we have to do is be fed by the eternal spring of God's living water?

Wednesday, February 13: Read Luke 6:17-21

Sometimes we lose hope too quickly. We compare our circumstances to others and assume we have missed the boat or drawn the short end of the stick. In today's gospel, Christ immediately healed some people of their physical and mental ailments, delivering them from their circumstances. More famously, however, Jesus gave hope to all of us despite our circumstances, promising ultimate sustenance and joy in abundance. How would it change our lives today if we lived in the joy and assurance of God's promises, rather than the fickleness of our present circumstances? What cares could we cast down if we recognized the outcome as already resolved...the victory as already won?

Thursday, February 14: Read Luke 6:22-26

Christ's seemingly harsh words in today's scripture jolt us out of complacency and pride in our current circumstances. They expose the well-documented dangers of greed, gluttony, hedonism, and people-pleasing for what they are – temporary opiates that eventually leave us hungry, sick, empty, and alone. We know God wants us to be full, happy, a loved, just with the bread of life and living water that will leave us never wanting or needing more. Where in our everyday lives could we be replacing gluttony with living bread? Alcohol with living water? Mindless pleasure seeking with purposeful work? Reputation building with Kingdom building?

Friday, February 15: Read Psalm 1

As we read this week's psalm, we can use it as an exercise in presence and mindfulness. After reading it through a few times (don't worry, it's short), visualize yourself as a tree planted by a cool, clean running stream that has the power to give you everything you need to thrive and bear fruit. Imagine your roots burrowing down into the cool soil that is God's abounding love and protection. Relax into the secure soil as you feel the wind harmlessly blow through your leaves. Notice the thermometer rise as you feel only the cool of the dirt and the refreshment of the stream. Watch as the stream carries away any debris caused by storms or even your own areas of weakness and breakage. This is where you stay planted, for all eternity, bearing fruit for God's world. This is the Kingdom of God in which we are invited, needed, and assured a place, now and forever.

Saturday, February 16: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Psalm 1:3

"They are like trees planted by streams of water; which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all they do, they prosper."

Sunday, February 17: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of

Common Confession: *Merciful God, your call to discipleship is demanding. You call us to reorder our lives by the kingdom you are bringing in Jesus Christ. Yet we still pass by the ones you especially notice: people who are poor and hungry; people who weep. We have not stood with those who are hated, bullied, and excluded. Comfortable with the way things are, we are too complacent, even complicit with injustice and prejudice. Forgive us, O God, and turn us back to your gospel. We pray this now, for our sake, and for the sake of your world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*