



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

February 19-25, 2018

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester:
"Covenant: Promises We Can't Keep"

Notes from sermon on 2/18:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Question (before sermon):

Why does God change the names of Abram and Sarai in Genesis 17?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

Jesus asks his disciples to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him. How do you practice self-denial for the sake of the gospel?

Is every instance of self-denial an act of obedience to Jesus?

Can some forms of self-denial foster oppression?

Monday, February 19: Read Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Who among us has not broken a promise? We have all been guilty of this, whether the promise was to someone else, to ourselves, or to God. Perhaps you are thinking of the Lenten promise you have already broken, or a deeper regret that caused real pain. The Bible is filled with broken promises, broken laws, and broken covenants, even by some of our greatest Biblical heroes, such as Abraham. No matter how hard we try, we will never achieve perfection on our own, for we are broken, imperfect, weak, and – each in our own way – barren like Sarah in today's scripture. There are some promises that are never broken, however – God's. We see from today's reading that even a promise as unfathomable and seemingly impossible as making a great nation out of an elderly, barren couple was not only fulfilled for Abraham and Sarah's sake, but magnified by the blood of Christ to become a blessing for us all. God didn't need Abraham and Sarah to be perfect in order to be used and blessed. He simply needed them to have faith. He wasn't drawn to their strength and virility. Perhaps he was drawn to their barrenness. An empty pot is an opportunity for God to fill us up, perhaps with the help of others in our community. Do you ever feel as if you have nothing to offer? That your pot is bare and dry? Such pain can be deeply humbling and leave us empty. But maybe that's not the worst place to be. Because God is known to speak to and use barren vessels and out of them to serve a feast of grace.

Tuesday, February 20: Read Mark 8:31-38

How easy it would have been for Christ to break his promise to God to be led to the cross so he could be a sacrifice for us all. How justified he would have seemed in saving himself and refusing to die for those who hated him, spit on him, and sinned against God. Yet even the mildest and seemingly well-intentioned suggestion by Peter that he should avoid this path brings about perhaps the harshest words Christ ever uttered to one of his disciples: "Get behind me, Satan!" But look at the next sentence: "*You are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.*" How often do we measure our own morality based on human metrics instead of God's? How often do we measure God's faithfulness by our own timelines, agendas, and limited perspectives? What if Christ had determined his own actions based on what was, in human terms, "fair"? We all would be in trouble! In the rest of this scripture passage, Christ urges his followers to measure life and death itself through a divine, eternal perspective. By setting our mind on divine things, we develop our faith to transcend earthly circumstances, human reasoning, and selfish desires so we can begin to see the amazing God work is doing for us, in us, and through us to fulfill his ultimate promise to transform and heal our world.

Wednesday, February 21: Read Romans 4: 13-16

In much of his writing as well as in today's scripture, Paul addresses a serious concern of his fellow Jews: how can Gentiles inherit the promises of God when they have not followed Hebrew Law? Not only does it not seem fair, it seems to negate all of the good work and obedience and "specialness" of God's chosen people, the descendants of Abraham. By extending his promise of salvation to the Gentiles, it seems to some like God has broken his promise to the Jews. Have we ever felt this way? Have we ever resented someone else's blessings or favor because we believe they didn't deserve it as much as we did...even when we got blessings and favor too? Instead, could we all approach God's blessings and favor as the empty, barren vessels that we are, simply having faith that God will fill us up, even as we are unworthy, broken, and sinful? Can we have faith that there is enough of God's grace and mercy to go around?

Thursday, February 22: Read Romans 4:16-25

Perhaps a key to having faith in God's promises is to adopt a faith in God's math. Sarah's womb was empty (zero), yet God promised hers and Abraham's descendants would outnumber the stars (infinity). This is what Abraham focused on, as Paul writes in today's scripture, instead of considering the number of years he and Sarah had been alive or the statistical probability of their conceiving a child. When we focus on God's math, anything is possible. We can also stop counting our good deeds, our neighbor's possessions, our friends' transgressions, or even our own sins, because in God's math, none of that matters. We can be zero and God can still multiply with us. When we have this faith, God can do anything through us, even as we are nothing without him.

Friday, February 23: Read Psalm 22:23-31

Today, as spiritual "offspring of Israel" and heirs through faith to God's promise to Abraham, let us praise God for his faithfulness, power, and grace. Let us kneel down in gratitude that God is not measuring our worthiness of salvation based on anything we are doing ourselves, but offering us salvation for free based on the worthiness of the Lamb of God, whose blood has washed us clean. As we read in verse 27, let us include "all the ends of the earth" in our vision of God's kingdom, refraining from measuring who is "in" or "out," and who is able to be used by God to bring healing and transformation to the world. Let us all come to God's table as God serves a feast of grace to all of us who are broken, empty, barren, and beloved.

Saturday, February 24: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Mark 8:33b

"Get behind me Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Sunday, February 25: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of

Common Confession: *Merciful God, we confess that we have not been sincere Christians. We claim to follow Jesus but have not taken his path of sacrificial love. We profess to be disciples, but we are not willing to bear the cost of discipleship. We affirm the virtue of self-denial, but we indulge our selfish desires and seek earthly gain. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for sincere repentance through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*