



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

March 4-10, 2019

Sermon by Rev. Stephen Coleman

Ash Wednesday; 1st Sunday of Lent

Sermon Series: *Courage to Believe: When Faith is Difficult*

Notes from sermon on 3/03:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

What is the best way to help other people know about God and trust in the Lord?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

- 1) What does it mean to confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead?
- 2) Do you have an assurance of your salvation and how do you obtain that assurance?
- 3) What words of scripture have been helpful to you in difficult times?

Monday, March 4: Read Romans 10:8b-13

The Lenten season is upon us, and we don't feel ready. We are still struggling with the most basic tenants of our faith and think we should be further along. We have no idea what to give up for Lent and are not even sure we want to do anything at all. We're almost certain we'd never make it through, anyway. We're flawed, messy, and just so...*human*. Today's scripture even fills many of us with anxiety: "*If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*" What if we wrestle with doubt? What if we stray? What if everyone knew all the things we have done in our past and still are tempted to do today? How are we to know the right words to say?

Several of us admitted in a recent survey given to the congregation that we struggle with assurance of salvation and our worthiness of God's love. As we prepare for Ash Wednesday and Stephen Coleman's sermon, we explore scripture that prompts us to experience the freedom of confessing our shortcomings and give us peace about God's forgiveness and love.

Tuesday, March 5: Read Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Today's popular psalm (some of us may have sung it as "On Eagle's Wings") glorifies God as being our refuge and fortress...our *salvation*. The easiest way to trust in God for our future is to reflect on God's faithfulness in our past. How many "hands" has God sent to bear us up every day, ranging from every moving vehicle that does not harm us to the very gravity that keeps us on this planet? How many billions of decisions, actions, and "coincidences" went into our arrival on Earth? When we pause to marvel in the sheer amount of love and energy that went into our very existence, it is easier to trust in God's ability and desire to be with us throughout life and into death. There is power in speaking aloud God's Word – let us speak aloud this gorgeous psalm today, allowing it to wash over and through us; enabling us to recognize the Word of God that is already in us, guiding us and giving us peace.

Wednesday, March 6: ASH WEDNESDAY: Read Psalm 51:1-17

Some of the most powerful words we can speak are those of personal confession. Rather than carrying our guilt around inside us, leading to fear, guilt, anxiety, and condemnation, we celebrate the solemnity of Ash Wednesday by confessing our sins to God. David's prayer today is one of the most famous and exquisite examples of personal confession to God, and a great place for us to start. Too often we don't trust in the power and adequacy of a sincere confession to God; we just can't believe we are forgiven. Yet we read today that "the sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart...." When we stop fearing condemnation and embrace the freedom and joy of forgiveness through confession, we can truly see ourselves as washed "whiter than snow." Think of a time today when you experienced the pure relief, joy, and peace that came with a sincere confession. How did it feel when that person forgave you? How much more wonderful can it feel...today...knowing God will forgive ALL of your sins and create in you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you?

Thursday, March 7: Read Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

So now we are in Lent. Today we pause for some good ol' practical advice for how to ensure our words support the spiritual practice of fasting. It's so tempting to tell anyone and everyone what we are giving up for Lent, especially if we are hungry or feeling deprived. Maybe we do it in a complaining tone or in a way that seeks attention. Jesus tells us today to keep our fasting between us and God. In following the teachings of Christ, perhaps we can fast from unnecessary words this Lent – ones that detract from our journey into better knowing God or diminish the sacredness of a spiritual practice.

Friday, March 8: Read Luke 4:1-13

We will face temptation and can submit to guilt and condemnation because of it, therefore guaranteeing we will fail. Or we can recognize the fact that we are loved and cherished by a Savior who faced temptation himself. We can follow Christ's example of drawing close to the promises and guidelines of scripture to gain strength for perseverance. There is power in speaking the Word aloud in times of trial. What scripture passages give us strength? Could we take the time this Lenten season to commit them to memory and begin the practice of saying them aloud whenever faced with temptation, confusion, or despair? If we are struggling with something, we can research (Google search!) helpful verses for our area of weakness. Let us begin to embrace the full power of God's Word to transform us and our world.

Saturday, March 9: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Romans 10:13

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Sunday, March 10: FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Gracious God, even when we give our best and strongest love to your service, we still fall short of the glory you intended for us; Lord have mercy. Even in our moments of sharpest clarity and wisdom, we are yet creatures of profound ignorance and much foolishness; Christ have mercy. Since you know how hard it is for us to see your truth clearly, to follow it fully, and to love you completely; Lord have mercy. Gracious God, the magnitude of our sins is far outweighed by the magnitude of your mercies. We, your grateful people, turn to you in trust, asking through Christ Jesus that our sins may be forgiven and our folly overruled by your abundant grace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray.*