



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

March 5-11, 2018

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester:

“Covenant: Unbreakable”

Notes from sermon on 3/04:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Question (before sermon):

What in your life needs to die so that new life can spring forth?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

Read John 3:14-21. What does the light of God's truth reveal about your life?

Are there parts of your life that you want to hide from God?

Can you imagine what it would be like to live completely transparent to God's piercing light?

Monday, March 5: Read Ephesians 1:1-10

Humans tend to suffer from two conditions: ignoring our sinfulness, or drowning in guilt over it. Either way, our response can be similar – relying on our own efforts to “earn” worthiness, respect, love, or forgiveness. The result is also similar – emptiness, pain, isolation, strife, anxiety, discontent, and more sin. We can see the results of this human condition all around us, and feel it within ourselves. We search in all the wrong places to fill this void inside of us, when all the while, God is trying to give us the answer.

Rarely has it been this easy to find our theme verse for the week, for if there was a fundamental belief in Protestantism that could serve as our mission statement, Ephesians 2:8 summarizes it beautifully: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”* This week as we continue our Lenten journey to the cross, we will face the reality of our sinfulness, the futility of our own efforts to “earn” redemption, and the awesome truth that we are completely free and forgiven through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we embrace that freedom through our faith in Christ, we are saved from our human condition of guilt, condemnation, darkness, and sin and can enjoy a life of joy, light, and love.

Tuesday, March 6: Read John 3:14-17

No matter how hard we try, we will never be free until we trust in the comprehensive and unbreakable promise of God's love for us. A love that comes to us, scoops up our imperfect lives, becomes one with us, and even lives the life that we cannot. A life that responds to God's enduring love with enduring love. That responds to God's commitment to us with perfect obedience. Here's the overwhelming truth: only God can keep God's covenant, and so, in Christ, God became us. Through faith in Christ we are saved, not by works. And that faith is unbreakable because it begins and ends, is initiated and answered, by the perfect love of God. What is the heavy weight of past regret or shame tied around your neck? What is that insult, that failure, that pain you can't let go of? We all carry burdens that feel impossible to lay aside. God's covenantal love promises to ease your burden. Christ carried that cross for you, and you are free. God wants you to know it is time to cut the cords and be free to do the good works of an unbreakably forgiven life.

Wednesday, March 7: Read John 3:16-21

When we do not fully believe that we are loved and forgiven, we suffer from a sense of condemnation and judgment that causes us to hide ourselves from others and from God. However, when we realize that we are unconditionally loved and washed clean of all of our sins through the blood of Christ, we can stop hiding and stop fearing exposure, knowing that God sees all of us...and loves us anyway. Our United Methodist faith does not view these passages in John as a harsh dividing line between heaven and hell in the afterlife; it views them as a description of the harsh reality of our broken world and a description of the incredible life we have available to us if we accept God's grace through Christ. God's hand is held out for us to take – let us drop our burdens so we can take hold of it.

Thursday, March 8: Read Numbers 21:4-9

The Hebrew name for the book of Numbers translates as "Into the Wilderness." As they make the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, the Hebrews' complaints, bitterness, and apostasy (turning away from God) result in 40 years of hardship, pain, and death. God's chosen people are incapable of fulfilling their end of the covenant, but God never gives up on them, and in today's story, gives them deliverance from the poisonous snakes plaguing their lives if they just gaze upon the gift of the bronze serpent made by Moses. We have many "poisonous snakes" in our lives. Some are of our own making; others, the result of the brokenness around us. How can we turn our eyes upward and focus instead on the gifts of God, including God's loving commandments, healing power, and beloved Son?

Friday, March 9: Read Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

When we think of the joy each of us has experienced when we received forgiveness and pardon when deserving punishment, we can multiply that infinitely to try to capture the joy we can all feel in realizing that every single sin we have ever committed has been washed clean by the blood of Christ! Today's psalmist sings of the steadfast love and redemption and faithfulness God has shown us from the very beginning, and we can each feel the psalmist's sense of relief and joy at being delivered from his distress. Today, let us all live in that joy and gratitude, praising God the Father, Son, and Spirit for all God has done!

Saturday, March 10: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Ephesians 2:8

"For by grace you have been saved through faith,
and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

Sunday, March 11: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in prayer our Prayer of Common Confession: *Merciful God, we confess the folly of our sin and the hypocrisy of our complaints. We grumble about the evils in our world, even as we commit injustices and profit through deceit. We fret about the scarcity of resources while hoarding earth's goods and cheating the poor. We protest the problems of our world, but we do not actively work to address them. Merciful God, expose our sins before the light of your grace. Heal our sin and free us from our foolish ways that we know the joy of eternal life in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.*