



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

March 18-24, 2019

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester

3rd Sunday of Lent

Sermon: *Courage to Believe: "Building Endurance"*

Notes from sermon on 3/17:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

How can you build endurance in your faith life?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

Luke 13:1-9 tells the story of a fruitless fig tree that the owner is ready to cut down. The gardener, however, asks for a little more time. The gardener wants to tend and cultivate the soil in the hope that figs may yet grow.

The gardener is open to a different future for this tree, in spite of its present condition.

1. Think about my own life, or the life of someone I love, in relationship to this story:
 2. What needs special tending?
3. What will cultivate the "soil" of daily life so that new growth, new possibilities, might emerge?

Monday, March 18: Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

We're beginning the third week of Lent, and the lectionary readings are getting difficult. They demand more of us, both in study and in action. Paul begins today's scripture with a review of the trials of the Hebrew people in the desert- trials they largely failed. He writes to a church in Corinth plagued by discord, temptation, and persecution - surely they wanted some encouragement and a pass on some of their backsliding under the circumstances. Instead, they are given warnings not to fail as their ancestors had, ending with the frequently quoted but often resented "God never gives you more than you can handle." We want relief, not growth. But don't athletes seek challenges and opportunities to build endurance? We want our children to be challenged in school to build their brains. How do we strengthen our faith to endure the inherent trials of the faithful? And if we have nothing to endure for our faith, what does that say about it?

Tuesday, March 19: Read Luke 13:1-5

Today Jesus addresses some common questions and worries we have when it comes to facing hardship and evil: If we view trials as a chance to build faith, does that mean God purposefully sends terrible things to us? When unspeakable tragedies overcome others, does that mean their faith wasn't strong enough? Jesus's answers both give us comfort and a sense of unease. No, Christ says, when bad things happen to people it is not because they are worse sinners than others. Whew. But wait- Jesus then exhorts everyone to repent, or we will "all perish just as they did." Our Savior does not give us a sugar-coated, "Don't worry, everything will be alright no matter what" gospel. He doesn't tell us that everything we're doing right now is okay. Instead, we are reminded that we are broken people in a broken world, desperately in need of God's grace, which we access through repentance and faith. What "tough love" message is the Holy Spirit sending to us today? To what sins are we still clinging that could lead to disaster?

Wednesday, March 20: Read Luke 13:6-9

Today, we have yet another reading that leaves us feeling uneasy. Jesus's Parable of the Barren Fig Tree is a procrastinator's worst nightmare. It demonstrates God's grace while also demanding accountability. It calls all of us to bear fruit in our lives, and to get started *now*. What push do we need today to finally take that step of faith that will allow us to bear the fruit we know God is asking of us? What sins are standing in the way that enable us to continually turn away from God's call? What fears must we offer up to God? We are never promised this path will be easy, but we are promised that God will be with us every step of the way. Let us repent and begin bearing fruit *today*.

Thursday, March 21: Read Isaiah 55:1-9

One of the hardest things in the world to do is listen to someone who does not share your opinions or beliefs, especially if those beliefs threaten a deeply ingrained underlying assumption of ours. Even within our own denomination, we close our ears to those with opinions different than ours. It's almost physically painful to face the errors of our own thinking, so we lash out and claim a monopoly on God. Today's scriptures lead us to take a hard look at our tendencies to fill our lives with "echo chambers." "My thoughts are not your thoughts, says the Lord...so are my ways higher than your ways." Let us all stop and examine if we are allowing our thinking and beliefs, not just our actions, to be transformed today.

Friday, March 22: Read Psalm 63:1-8

The psalmist's single-minded pursuit of God humbles us today, causing us to ask ourselves if we are doing the same. Are we willing to endure the same degree of discipline and discipleship to achieve this degree of intimacy with God? What is distracting and deterring us? Can we commit to using our words only for praise and uplifting, setting our eyes only on that which is holy, and turning our thoughts to God every morning and night? What would change in our lives if we did this?

Saturday, March 23: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: 1 Corinthians 10:13

"No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it."

Sunday, March 24: SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Holy God, we confess that we have grown complacent in our response to you. You set before us a rich feast of blessing, but we are drawn to lesser things that cannot satisfy. You call us to attend to urgent needs in the world, but we indulge our own desires. Our ways are not your ways; our thoughts do not ascend to your thoughts. Forgive us when we fall short of your claim upon our lives. Disturb our complacency and quicken our desire for a more fruitful life. Be patient, we pray, as we amend who we are, in the hope of becoming who you intend us to be. We ask this in the name of our Savior, your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*