



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

September 10-16, 2018

Sermon by Rev. Kelley Lane:

God Unbound: "Spiritual Confusion"

Notes from sermon on 9/9:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

When you are nervous or anxious about something like a test or a work project or trying something new, what helps you to feel less anxious? Can prayer help? Could practicing prayer on a regular basis (every morning or evening for example) help you to be less anxious in general?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. What types of prayer have you practiced? Would you be interested in trying other ways?
2. When you listen to Psalm 23 or Psalm 42, what images come to mind? How do these images inform your relationship with God?
3. What would it mean for you to practice the four steps Heath outlines on p. 76 of her book, *God Unbound*? How difficult is it to recognize that "God is God and we are not"?

Monday, September 10: Read Galatians 4:1-7

Anxiety and fear. Jesus gives more commandments relating to these two crippling emotions than any other commandments in the gospels, yet our church struggles almost as much as the rest of our society today in dealing with them. In fact, throughout the Bible, we are implored constantly to fear not, but trust in God. Much of our fear today comes from the rapid pace of change, and how we as individuals and a church must address change while keeping our eyes on Christ and the gospel message. It can be confusing, and cause splits within and between denominations as we all try to obey God and God's commandments. The church in Galatia in today's scripture was also facing fear and anxiety due to the incredible, head-spinning changes the gospel of Jesus Christ brought to traditional Judaism- changes that threatened their very identity and way of life, but gave them new identities as *heirs* and enabled them to effectively spread the gospel message throughout the world. What changes at Reveille do we need to make to more effectively reach today's population and spread the gospel? What fears do we have of this?

Tuesday, September 11: Read Psalm 42

"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?" Who among us cannot relate to at least sometimes having these feelings of depression and anxiety so beautifully articulated by today's psalmist? In our theme book for this sermon series, *God Unbound: Wisdom from Galatians for the Anxious Church* (Upper Room, 2016), Elaine Heath posits that "much of our anxiety comes back to our sense of identity, our need for security, and our need to belong" (p. 71). When we truly recognize ourselves as beloved, adopted children of God and heirs to God's kingdom, we can possess the greatest weapon against anxiety available to humankind. As we celebrate Reveille United Methodist Church and the annual startup of the year's ministries, let us reflect on the times Reveille has given us that sense of identity, security, and belonging. What power and good could we do in the world if we can extend these gifts to our community and world? Are we also willing to examine our traditions and take risks in order to find new, innovative ways of reaching today's lost sheep?

Wednesday, September 12: Read Philippians 4:4-6

Preserving our honored traditions while responding to changes in the world and the needs of God's people can feel like walking a tightrope...or engaging in a vicious game of tug-of-war. Where do we start? How can we do this without descending into anxiety, strife, and all the related problems that can tear churches apart and render them ineffective? We return to one of the most powerful and famous scripture passages on anxiety in the entire Bible, and don't have to make it past the first word to find our first step: *rejoice*. Next step: rejoice in the *Lord always*. What has God done for us already? How has God shown continual presence and love for our congregation and congregants? Next step: let your *gentleness* be known to everyone. We know any discussions or changes will be done with love and respect, giving ear to all voices and creating emotional safety for all. We know we will remain *present* in the lives and needs of our congregation and community, neither focusing too much on our past OR our future. If we begin with joy in the Lord and the gentle caring of others, now and always, how can we go wrong?

Thursday, September 13: Read Philippians 4:7-8

Final two verses in this wonderful passage give us the blueprint for how we can focus our hearts and minds when facing anxiety and strife as a church, or in our individual daily lives. We've set our eyes on God while also opening our eyes to the needs of those around us...now the next step? *Pray...with thanksgiving*. When our thoughts start to go down a dark alley, focus on what is honorable, just, pleasing, excellent, commendable, lovely, or praiseworthy. It's impossible to be angry and anxious while simultaneously being grateful.

Friday, September 14: Read Psalm 23

We will always have deep valleys in our lives through which we must pass. There are no promises in the Bible that say otherwise. But we can count on a promise that God makes perhaps more than any other in the Bible: that we will not be alone. God is near. God is with us. God is in us. We will not make decisions on our own; we will make them with the Holy Spirit. We will not try to love people on our own; we will love them through Christ. We will not try to predict the future through our own efforts; we will follow our Creator's omniscient plan. We are not alone...humankind's most primal source of fear...because we have Christ and are part of Christ's body on earth, his church. Let us reach out to one another as one blood, one body more than ever this year, in joy and love and peace!

Saturday, September 15: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Philippians 4:4-8

*We may have part of this scripture memorized, but if we take the time to learn it by heart in its entirety, we can use it as a daily guide and mantra whenever facing uncertainty or anxiety.

Sunday, September 16: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen. (UMC Hymnal, #890)*