



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

January 22-28, 2018

**Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester:
"Come and See: Casting out Demons"**

Notes from sermon on 1/21:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Question (before sermon):

How difficult is it for you to believe that God is bigger than the demons that plague you?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. What is the name of the demon, the spirit, the idolatry you carry?
2. What is the Holy One casting out today in your presence?
3. Who can you support this week as they battle their demons?

Monday, January 22: Read Mark 1:21-28

Demons and idols. It's easy to believe these are ancient problems that plagued ignorant, superstitious people who didn't have the knowledge of science available to us today. We can skim over passages like today's where Jesus miraculously casts out a man's demon in the synagogue in Capernaum, believing we don't need this kind of help from Christ today because we have medicine, therapy, or a better explanation for what was really happening to him. When we read Tuesday's and Wednesday's passages about idolatry, we can also be tempted to dismiss it as irrelevant, as few of us sacrifice food to bronze statues of gods or even equate eating habits to any religious practice we observe. We believe we can rely on our modern knowledge of psychology, physics, history, astronomy, and logic to avoid these problems.

That is, until we take a hard look at the problems that are really plaguing our lives and world today. Until we face the discontent, distraction, addiction, isolation, pain, confusion, and financial debt that can be traced to the false idols and personal demons wreaking havoc in our "highly developed and educated" society. Until we admit our need for a Savior who can cast out demons is greater than ever. Until we recognize that true deliverance is a life free from idolatry, solely focused on the love, laws, and gifts of the one true God.

Tuesday, January 23: Read I Corinthians 8:1-6

“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” What are the ways we “puff up” ourselves in attempts to feel worthy, loved, admired, respected, relevant, or special? Is it with material possessions? Professional accomplishments? Busy schedules? Physical beauty? “Holier than thou” adherence to rules and regulations, like the apostle Paul warns against in much of his writing? Few of us fully escape this trap of trying to build ourselves up in order to fill a void that can only truly be filled by God and God’s love. When we completely accept that we are fully known by God...faults and demons and all...and still wonderfully and unconditionally loved and cherished, we can be freed from the fruitless pursuit of worthiness through our own efforts. Better yet, we can share this joy with absolutely everyone, freed from the need to compete with others – one of the greatest sources of pain, isolation, and injustice today.

Wednesday, January 24: Read 1 Corinthians 8:7-13

In today’s passage, Paul addresses a major problem facing the early church in Corinth – whether or not Jewish converts to Christianity still needed to adhere to Jewish dietary laws. While some established Christians felt, in good conscience, freed from these restrictions, their eating habits were proving a stumbling block for others in their faith community. Today, let us examine our own habits to see how they might be affecting others around us. Could our spending habits, drinking habits, personal “brand”, or perceived values be a stumbling block for others, even if they aren’t a real problem for us? What could we sacrifice in order to help others more easily eschew our culture’s idols and demons...or their own?

Thursday, January 25: Read Deuteronomy 18:15-20

“Prophet” is another word we are tempted to dismiss as outdated and irrelevant to our modern culture, for we equate it with fortune-tellers or ancient heroes from the Bible, rather than its true definition, which is someone who speaks for God. In reality, how many false prophets exist today who try to tell us how we should spend our money, how we should look, how to spend our time, what we should believe, and what constitutes a worthy life? We can imagine God’s anger and heartbreak over the deceit that is robbing so many of us from true, sustainable joy, love, and peace through following God and God alone. Who are the false prophets in our lives and society, and how can we help make God’s voice louder than theirs? When have we consciously or unconsciously been a false prophet to others?

Friday, January 26: Read Psalm 111

By today, we may be feeling overwhelmed, incredibly guilty, and in over our head as we have recognized the demons in our lives and the ways we have worshipped false idols and followed false prophets, possibly helping others do the same. Today’s psalm, however, bookends beautifully with our gospel reading from Monday in showing us that we are loved and known by a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who can cast out our demons, forgive our sins, and redeem our lives *today*, and every day. We do not need to be prisoners of guilt, shame, addiction, or regret. We do not need to grab a shovel to begin digging ourselves out of the hole we may have created in our lives; we need to accept God’s outstretched hand. We don’t need to create a 5-year plan to become a person God can love and use, we are *already there*.

Saturday, January 27: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: 1 Corinthians 8:1b-2

“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him.”

Sunday, January 28: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Holy and all-powerful God, who commands all spirits, comforts those in distress, and casts out destructive forces, we confess that we are unable to do your will. We protect what is familiar and reject what is unknown. We admire those with courage but excuse ourselves when we falter from the truth. We forget that you are always with us, and that with you all things are possible. Forgive us, lead us, make us new. Remove our desire to heed false prophets, and show us your way; in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*