



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

October 2-8, 2017

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester

“Defying Gravity: Breaking Free”

Notes from sermon on 10/1:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Question (before sermon):

Have you ever felt like the older brother in the story of the prodigal son? Why?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. What do you think was expected of the prodigal son the next morning after the celebration?
2. Why did the father receive the younger son as he did?
3. What does the story of the prodigal son say about the nature of God?

Monday, October 2: Read Luke 15:11-16

Last week we met a rich young man who was experiencing so much financial gravity that he could not bear to break free and accept Jesus' invitation to be a disciple. He could not or would not submit one area of his life to Christ: his wealth. This week, as we continue our scriptural study and sermon series based Tom Berlin's book "Defying Gravity: Break Free from the Culture of More," we encounter another rich young man who appears in the Gospels. He is a character in a parable Jesus told about a loving father. He is the younger of two sons who feels financial gravity with such force that he goes to his father and asks for his inheritance early. We can imagine how the family would react to the younger son's wish. The anger would be as high as the hurt would be deep.

This young man wanted to pursue fully the kingdom of self. How often have we done this in our lives? We may not have been as obviously irresponsible as the prodigal son, but many of us have put our own short-term agenda in front of God's long-term, loving plan for our lives, even as we ask God for blessings so we can use them to our own immediate benefit.

Tuesday, October 3: Read Luke 15:16-32

It's so easy to put ourselves in the older son's shoes when reading today's passage. Perhaps we are proud of many of the decisions we have made in our lives, and frustrated with the loved ones and family members who have failed to save and sacrifice, yet still expect to be bailed out. We may recall the parable of the workers in the vineyard we read a few weeks ago in Matthew, where we empathized with those who had worked all day but received no more pay than those who worked a single hour. We live in a world that keeps score. We live in a kingdom, however, where all debts have been paid, and none of us have earned our wage. When we continually remember that we are living in the grace of a loving Father who runs to us despite our own faults and hurtful choices, we can better extend that grace and empathy to others.

Wednesday, October 4: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

How easy it is to lull ourselves into a sense of peace and security based on the fragile house of cards we create around us. How strong the pull of gravity toward material goods and society-valued positions to make us feel important, stable, and in control. How foolish and fruitless our efforts are in the face of the cosmic reality that we are all living on grace and dependent on God for absolutely everything. We are to arm ourselves with faith, love, and salvation in joyful assurance of the true treasures to come, rather than arm ourselves with fame, money, and goods in tortured worry that there will never be enough to go around.

Thursday, October 5: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

Rather than using this realization of God's saving grace as an excuse to do nothing, save nothing, and plan for nothing, today's scripture urges us to live in a state of constant readiness. We have work to do, but it's not for stockpiling our own treasures. Our efforts should lead to peace, encouragement, help for others, patience, and kindness. Let's take an inventory of the purpose and outcome of what we are working so hard to achieve. Is our work pulling us toward God, holiness, and the well-being of others, or further pulling us into the idolatry of self and the illusion of self-sufficiency?

Friday, October 6: Read Matthew 6:19-21

It's the end of the work week. How much of what we have done will stand the test of time in 10 years? 10 days? *Eternity*? What have we done with our time, energy, and money this week that will outlive us? If we listed our top values, then listed our top spending items, would they match? How can we spend more time storing up treasures in heaven? What would we have to let go of, here and now, to do so?

Saturday, October 7: Scripture Memorization: Matthew 6:21

"For where your treasure is, your heart will be also."

Sunday, October 8: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Rescuing God, you brought us out of the land of captivity, out of the house of slavery. Forgive us when we willingly return to slavery, making divine the machine of production, crafting idols from the excess of consumption. Forgive us when we consider ourselves so grand that we do not rest and enjoy your presence, defining ourselves by our ability rather than your love. Forgive us when we esteem ourselves so little that we dare not rest and sit with ourselves, exposed, without the cloak of productivity. Forgive us when we deem our species so central that we do not rest and halt consumption, decimating Earth, denying her Sabbath and integrity. Forgive us through Christ, who redeems us from the brokenness of slavery that we might enjoy your presence, creation, and community. Amen.*