



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

November 26-December 2, 2018
Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester
The Road to Bethlehem: Alive at the End of Time
First Sunday of Advent

Notes from sermon on 12/02:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

Even in the midst of trouble and turmoil, God allows us glimpses of the kingdom to come. What signs of promise do you see that bolster your hope in a new heaven and a new earth?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. How can you be "on guard" this Advent season, as Jesus describes in Luke 21?
2. Why does Jesus entreat us to not worry?
3. Why have so many generations believed that they were the ones alive at the end of time?

Monday, November 26: Read Luke 21:25-28

Believe it or not, this week, we begin our preparation for the first Sunday of Advent, the time when we anxiously await the coming of Christ. This week, we can focus on the double meaning of that phrase to modern Christians: *the coming of Christ*. On one hand, we are waiting for the celebration of Christmas, and will undergo a journey to prepare our hearts and minds for the gift of the Christ child. We also use this time to bring our attention to the fact that we are currently waiting for the *return* of Christ, as promised in scriptures such as today's gospel reading.

As a modern people, we do not wait very well. Just consider how early we all saw Christmas decorations go up in stores. We either rush to the future or dread it. Are we trying to make Christmas come today, or burying our heads in the sand? We might ask ourselves the same question in light of Christ's dire-sounding words in this scripture. Before we are tempted to run away from the reality of the end of days and the difficulty of days ahead, let us take strength and encouragement from Christ's words, "Stand up and raise your heads, for your redemption is near."

Tuesday, November 27: Read Luke 21:29-36

When we get depressed and anxious, we tend to worry or find an escape, too often in unhealthy ways. We withdraw from family and friends in favor of a bottle or a screen. We lose focus on what really matters and fill our time with mindless busywork. Or, we can follow Christ's teaching and live in the joy, hope, and peace that comes with having faith in the victory of Christ. We can spend Advent engaged in activities of love and charity that will guard our hearts from being weighed down. We can guard against drunkenness and overindulgence that would make us look back on Advent with regret. We can spend more time and energy preparing for Christ's arrival than the arrival of Santa Claus.

Wednesday, November 28: Read Jeremiah 33:14-16

Sometimes it seems that the Christmas season better resembles the movie "Groundhog Day" than anything else: the same thing over and over. We begrudge taking out the decorations, trying to find that perfect gift again, or even hearing the same old songs, as no one seems to have been able to write a new Christmas song in decades. Today's scripture, however, can help us see each Christmas as progress toward a future when love and justice reign and our world is redeemed. Even as we see signs of turmoil and hardship, we also see signs of life and light. The best news is, we already know how the story ends.

Thursday, November 29: Read 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

What if we used the time of Advent to help create the kind of loving community and deep personal bonds described in today's scripture? Can we seek out those whom we have not seen in a long time, create opportunities to bring people together, and find new people to pray for, include in our social events, and show the light of Christ? As the days grow darker, can we more actively and intentionally point out the shining light of Christ at the end of the tunnel? Let us all pray today that God will make us "increase and abound in love for one another and for all" so everyone can find the joy and hope of Christmas.

Friday, November 30: Read Psalm 25:1-10

We know that this time of year can be especially hard for many who are experiencing heartache, loss, loneliness, illness, or regret. We wish that this pain could be instantly taken away, but instead it is something that must be gone *through*. When we can see the light at the end of the tunnel, however, and feel the love of God surrounding us, we can have the hope and strength we need. Today's psalmist puts his faith and hope in God even as it's obvious he is experiencing hardship and is struggling with the need to be forgiven for past sins. We, too, can find this joy and blessed assurance even during our dark days. We can also be the light of Christ and the loving arms of God to others while they take the same journey.

Saturday, December 1: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Jeremiah 33:15b

"I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David;
and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."

Sunday, December 2: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Lord, have mercy on us. We are not ready for your coming. We live in sin, as though there were no justice. We live in fear, as though there were no grace. Forgive us, Show us your mercy and steadfast love. Lead us in your truth, and teach us your paths, for you are the God of our salvation. Amen.*