



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

November 5-11, 2018

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester

Jesus in Jerusalem: "Playing Faith vs. Living Faith"

Notes from sermon on 11/4:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

What is Jesus trying to communicate to us by praising the widow in Mark 12?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. What can we learn from Jesus's critique of the scribes in Mark 12?
2. What does Jesus' criticism of the outward appearance of religion mean for us?
3. How then are we to live?

Monday, November 5: Read Mark 12:38-40

What images come to mind with the term "church leaders"? For much of the world, they may be fancy robes, special parking places, lucrative publishing deals, filled stadiums, or cable TV shows. Perhaps our images are more local, however: we picture people like the head of church council, the lay readers at the 11am service, the Sunday school teachers, and, of course, the clergy. You know- the people whom everyone knows, and who seem to know everyone too. In Jesus's time, this same phenomenon existed with the scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees consisting of the Jewish leadership - positions that held not only honor but power. These were the people considered God's most "faithful." As we can read in today's text, Jesus was not impressed. Jesus defines faithfulness by something else entirely.

In today's reading and throughout the week, we will be challenged to examine our own faithfulness through Christ's eyes. Are we ever guilty of putting on the outward trappings of faith for appearances sake? Do we spend more time and money picking out our church clothes than concerning ourselves with those in our community who have no winter coat or warm shoes at all? Do we go through the motions of prayer in worship while never thinking of others? We are all guilty of this to some degree. Today let us pray that God strips our sense of "religion" away and replaces it with true *faithfulness*.

Tuesday, November 6: Read Mark 12:41-44

One word can sum up the difference between the widow's offering in today's scripture as opposed to the large sum offered by the rich people: *sacrifice*. As opposed to how we do things at Reveille today, the offerings at the Synagogue were a public affair- notice how everyone can witness the amount each person puts in. Putting in a large sum could be an occasion to show off one's wealth and "generosity." Perhaps Jesus highlights the offering of the poor widow for two reasons: to demonstrate what true sacrificial faith looks like, and to draw attention back to what the church ought to be focused on in the first place – the plight of the very people the church faithful should be focused on helping. Today let us ask ourselves, are we giving of our time, money, and talents only when we have an abundance of them? Are we ever ignoring the very people we are supposed to help in the midst of the busy-ness and ritual of church life? Today, we can look up the words to hymn #427, "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life," which we will sing Sunday, as a prayer to ask God to help us remember those in need in the midst of life's distractions.

Wednesday, November 7: Read Ruth 3:1-5, 4:13-17

We return to the story of the Bible's most famous widows, Naomi and Ruth. It's hard for us to imagine the desperate situation childless widows were in during this time, for there was no social security or public welfare. There was one thing, however, that ended up saving Naomi and Ruth: Boaz's faithful observance to Jewish law. Surprised? Just yesterday Jesus was railing against the Jewish establishment. If we read the entire book of Ruth, we witness how Ruth and Naomi first survived off the unharvested edges of Boaz's fields – left unharvested due to ancient Jewish laws specifying they be reserved for the poor (See Leviticus 23:22). Ultimately, they are saved because Boaz marries Ruth out of adherence to protective next-of-kin social laws that protected widows (see Deuteronomy 25:5). While most of us don't own grain fields today or would ever want to marry our brother or sister in law (!), are there ways we could be more faithful to our own Christian commandments to ensure that no one in our community or world finds themselves in Naomi and Ruth's desperate situation?

Thursday, November 8: Read Hebrews 9:24-28

There are so many ways we could approach today's complex text, but today we will focus on the beginning of the passage. The writer of Hebrews states that Christ's true sanctuary isn't one of human making, but of heaven itself. Salvation no longer depends on ritual, but on God's grace through Christ's single, extraordinary sacrifice. We must ask ourselves, are we practicing a *religion* based around rituals, or practicing *faith* based around God's grace through Christ? If we've discovered we are in a rut, let us ask God to shake up our lives, disrupt our habits, show us how to live in true faith. It may mean getting out of our human-made social and financial comfort zones. It may even hurt a little...at first. But what we want is a spirit-filled life of true faith that really bears fruit...not an appearance-filled religion that never makes it past the interior walls of Reveille.

Friday, November 9: Read Psalm 146

Praise, trust, and love...all centered on God and nothing else. That is the spirit of today's psalm, and the mindset to which we are all aspiring. This psalm also does something special- it praises God for helping the oppressed, the hungry, the imprisoned, and the blind rather than just thanking God for helping US. Today let us ask God to transform not only our actions, but our prayers and sources of joy to include others, especially those most in need of God's love and help...often provided through *our* love and help.

Saturday, November 10: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Psalm 146: 8b

"The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous."

Sunday, November 11: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Dear God, you gave us your only son, yet we fail to give you our best. You answer our prayers, even though we pray with a haughty spirit. You continue to bless us, even as we ignore those in need. Forgive us, we pray, and turn us toward you, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*