



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

December 3-9, 2018

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester

Journey to Bethlehem: "The Beginning of the End"

Second Sunday of Advent

Notes from sermon on 12/02:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

The prophet Malachi says that God is "like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap" (Malachi 3: 2). Reflect on events of the past year. How has God been working to refine and purify your life?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

Paul writes to the church at Philippi: "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1: 3-5).

1. Who are the people who for whom you give thanks?
2. Who has brought good news to you?
3. How can you share the Gospel with others this Advent?

Monday, December 3: Read Luke 3:1-6

Some of us look at the date "December 3" and are filled with awe and excitement that Advent is here and Christmas is coming. Others may be filled with anxiety or dread due to personal experiences that make this time of year painful, and look forward to it being over. There is one feeling in common for us all: hope. Hope for good times to come and bad times to pass. Those of us who have experiences prolonged suffering know that the hope of things someday improving can, on some days, be the only thing that keeps us going. For followers of Christ, we even have the ultimate hope- that the best is yet to come, and that "best" will last forever.

In Dante's Inferno, Hell is a place where there is absolutely no hope of anything ever getting better. Our scriptures for the week show us that we, instead, live in God's kingdom where there is always hope. Today's text reads like the beginning of the end- the end of suffering, oppression, and life without redemption. Thanks be to God.

Tuesday, December 4: Read Malachi 3:1-2

Who are the “messengers” in our lives who have shown us the way out of darkness into the light? They can live among us today or in the ancient pages of scripture. They can be trusted loved ones or strangers on the street. Are we listening to them? Messengers don’t necessarily bring us immediate deliverance. Instead, they bring us news. Something *new*. No matter where we are in our lives, we can rejoice that every day, God is putting something new in front of us. How can we rejoice in it? How can it help us grow? How can it help us love? Just as we can read the same Bible passage a thousand times and always get something new out of it, we can find new wisdom and joy and guidance and comfort in the voices of nature, people, writings, and our own redeemed holy spirits within us. Every day can be one that leads us closer to Christ and his kingdom. What a wonderful way to spend Advent- to follow these voices all the way to Christmas morning and beyond.

Wednesday, December 5: Read Malachi 3:3-4

Some messengers bring gentle comfort when we are fragile. Others have enough love and courage to act like “a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap,” allowing us to see the dross and dirt of our own making so we can be purified and made whole. God’s voice convicts us but never condemns. Conviction give us a renewed sense of purpose and energy, it doesn’t drag us down. It helps us face consequences without fearing eternal judgment. Let us stop shutting out the voices that are helping us become purified and more holy. At the same time, let us *start* shutting out the voices that do not come from God – the ones that tell us we will never be enough, will never be happy, and will never be forgiven. When we listen to God through those ancient and modern voices, and the Holy Spirit within us, we are preparing ourselves for the gift of God’s kingdom – where the mountains and valleys and crooked, rough paths of our lives will all be made straight and we can all rejoice in seeing the salvation of God.

Thursday, December 6: Read Philippians 1:3-11

How perfect for our theme of hope this week that we are reading Paul’s greatest letter of joy...coming to us through Paul’s prison cell. The abundance of hope and love and joy that come through this short letter have helped emancipate millions of people through millenaea. Perhaps never has a person more powerfully and eternally escaped prison than Paul in the writing of this letter, even while his physical body temporarily remained in the cell. How can we escape the prisons in our lives today, even if our physical circumstances may temporarily remain? How can we set our eyes on the prizes promised by God and become delivered in spirit now, knowing we will also be delivered in circumstance soon?

Friday, December 7: Read Luke 1:68-79

We end our scripture reading this week with the prophesy of Zechariah, spoken upon the birth of his son, John the Baptist. Nothing that Zechariah speaks of had actually happened yet, but he speaks with joy and confidence. Today, we can all live in this joy and confidence too. We can rejoice in the miracle of Christmas, the miracle of the Easter Resurrection, and the miraculous promises of Christ’s return. What else could we start celebrating today before it has physically happened? What messages of good news can we rejoice in that will spread hope though our world?

Saturday, December 8: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Philippians 1:6

“I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”

Sunday, December 9: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Refining God, you have sent us prophets and we have not listened. We have not always determined what is best or made way for your reign in our lives, our church, and our society. Forgive us, we pray, and renew your covenant within us, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*