



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

December 4-10, 2017

Second Sunday of Advent

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester:
Better Days Ahead: "Crying Out"

Notes from sermon on 12/3:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Question (before sermon):

The prophet Isaiah announces good news: God comforts and strengthens a wearied and exiled people in preparation for their homeward journey. Mark's Gospel announces the good news of God in Jesus Christ: God comes to turn the world right side up and baptize us with the Holy Spirit.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Messiah, what is the beginning of God's good news in your life, and how will it change the way you approach this season of expectation and hope?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. What was it about John the Baptist that appealed to the crowds?
2. What is baptism by the Holy Spirit?
3. How can you "prepare the way of the Lord" this Advent?

Monday, December 4: Read Mark 1:1-6

This is "the beginning of good news" – that Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer, is coming. This is how our scriptures begin this week, and this is the overall theme of our Advent sermon series- that there are Better Days Ahead. Throughout the week, we will see this theme of hope of better things to come, and we will also see another theme: of crying out. Sometimes the cries will be in pain, aimed at God, begging for a sign. Other times the cries come from God, speaking to us and through others to offer comfort, forgiveness, and direction. Often, we are

being called to be the voice that cries out to others. We must locate ourselves in whatever passage we are reading to discover what the scripture is speaking to us at this time. Many of us are in desperate need to hear that comforting and guiding voice telling us of the Good News of Jesus's love, forgiveness, and redemption, promising better days ahead. As a church, we are also called to be that voice to others. How do we do this?

Tuesday, December 5: Read Mark 1:7-8

Most of us can admit that we often must hear something multiple times, from multiple sources, before we actually believe it, internalize it, and act upon it. That great advice our spouse gives us goes largely ignored until our best friend echoes it, and suddenly, it's a great idea. We also know that it takes time for us to accept new ideas, accept help, and accept the fact that we must change. We are surrounded by seed-sowers whose words and deeds may not seem to have an immediate effect, but are in fact preparing us for radical transformation. John the Baptist helped prepare the way for Christ's coming, sowing the seeds of baptism for forgiveness of sins, recognition of the need for repentance, and hope in a savior. What seeds of light, hope, and redemption can we be sowing in the world this Advent? What seed sowers can we recognize in our own lives, thereby giving us hope and assurance that God is at work in preparing better days ahead for all of us?

Wednesday, December 6: Read Isaiah 64:1-9

Just as in the opening of today's scripture, we want giant, dramatic, instant signs that God is sweeping down and erasing our problems, defeating our enemies, and performing miracles on our behalf. We want proof that God is taking care of everything, and all we be okay...NOW. While instant, dramatic miracles do happen on occasion, more often God's protecting, transforming, and redeeming power takes place within us, molding us like clay (see verse 8). This process can be so gentle and gradual that we don't recognize it's happening it all, and it sometimes can seem violent, painful, and unwelcome. The important thing to remember is that at all times, God is at work in us and for us to make us clean, make us whole, and prepare us for eternal joy, love, and peace in the kingdom. Let us all continue to cry out to God to forgive us, guide us, and mold us into His image.

Thursday, December 7: Read 2 Peter 3:8-15

We want proof. We want a timetable. We want it NOW. If better days are ahead, Lord, they'd better come quickly. In the meantime, I will continue doing what I want, and just tap me on the shoulder when it's about to be show time. The earliest Christians felt this same way – anxious for the return of Christ, and tempted to go back to their old sinful ways until major signs indicated that Jesus was returning. We are called by the scriptures today to have faith in God's timing, which is eternal and all-knowing, never late but also rarely early, and we must live in constant expectation of God's coming. This can mean the second coming of Christ, and it can also mean the daily or hourly interventions, revelations, and acts of grace that God can send to us. Are we looking for them? Are we living in hope and light so we can recognize them?

Friday, December 8: Read Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

When we begin our days with gratitude, acknowledging what God has already done in our lives, we prepare our hearts and minds to hear God's voice and recognize God's work in our lives, each day. We can then serve as a voice crying out to others living in their wildernesses of pain and hopelessness, preparing the way for God's healing power in our families, neighborhoods, church, and world. The gratitude and hope filling today's psalm can help us begin to the form the words that will allow us to cry out to God, and cry out to the world, that better days are ahead, for God has been with us all along, molding us, guiding us, protecting us, and redeeming us. This is good news worth sharing.

Saturday, December 9: Scripture Memorization: Isaiah 30:3

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Sunday, December 10: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Faithful God, we confess that we have not led lives of holiness. We suffer from impatience, apathy, and greed; we have not been at peace. We repent of these offenses and turn to you in love. Forgive our iniquity and pardon our sins, that we may walk in righteousness to the glory of your name. Amen.*