



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

April 6-12, 2020

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester

EASTER SUNDAY

Sermon Title: "Surprised by Joy: *The Empty Tomb*"

Notes from sermon on 4/05:

Things to Pray For This Week:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

What signs of resurrection do you see in your midst, even now?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. Paul believed that if Christ did not rise from the grave "your faith is futile." Is this true for you?
2. How does the resurrection of Jesus bring you hope for your life?
3. How can the church make known that Christ is alive?

At a time when we are reminded more than ever that you can never "cancel church" because the church is us, we thank you for continuing to grow, pray, and serve with us through the GPS

Monday, April 6: Read John 20:1-18

Well, this is a surprise. It's Holy Week, and we are not preparing for the large family gathering. We aren't picking out a new outfit to wear Sunday morning. This Thursday night, this Friday night, and this Sunday morning we will be home, not at church. Everything we have grown to expect from this week seems to have disappeared, and we are left not knowing what this will look like...feel like.

So...are we ready to be surprised? Are we ready to be surprised by the unexpected joy God will reveal to us this week, just as God shockingly revealed in the first Holy Week...one that began with a triumphant entry into Jerusalem, descended into torture, crucifixion, and death, then ended with an empty tomb? No one knew what to expect on the first Easter, and we don't know what to expect this week. There will be

dark times- yes. But there is an empty tomb and a victory over all death waiting for us. Are we ready to go on this journey this week, together with one another and with Christ, to receive the incredible surprises of joy, victory, healing, and eternal life God has in store for us all?

Tuesday, April 7: Read 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

In recent weeks, conditions in hospitals throughout the world and in our own backyard have been described as “war zones.” Our medical heroes have been on the front lines fighting difficult conditions and overwhelming odds to win a battle against “an invisible enemy.” We owe these people our incredible respect and gratitude. Today, we are reminded that we have had an even greater one fighting a war for us...a war against all death and suffering...and he has already won. Today we pause to give respect and gratitude to Christ, who willingly marched into Jerusalem and sacrificed himself to defeat the enemies of sin and death. We celebrate and give thanks for our ability to live in victory, even in the midst of trial and war. We praise God for the privilege of being able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, even while we walk through dark valleys.

Wednesday, April 8: Read Acts 10:34-43

We hold a hope others need. We have been witnesses to light others are struggling to see. Peter’s words today call all of us to be the light, the hope, and the healing of Christ to a world that so desperately needs it. The healing and love and victory of Christ knows no bounds, and we know Christ can bring us together in the most astounding ways, under the most extreme of circumstances. “God knows no partiality,” Peter states in today’s scripture. We’ve heard how this current sickness shows no partiality and knows no national, state, or class boundaries. How much more so is the love and power and healing of Christ? How much faster can the light of Christ spread, and to what greater effect? How can we be agents to spread this surprising joy that can bring us together, heal, and change our world?

HOLY THURSDAY, April 9: Read John 13:1-17, 31-35

Perhaps more this year than any before, we can appreciate the intimacy and power of Christ’s act of breaking bread and washing his disciples’ feet at the Last Supper. Christ our King kneels down and undertakes a task that is reserved for the lowliest of servants. Those of us who have ever partaken in a foot washing service know how initially awkward and then surprisingly intimate this act is. We crave that human touch and spiritual intimacy now. Today, we not only give our gratitude to a Savior who humbled himself in service to all of us, we give praise to a God who created us to be together, craving human touch and fellowship. We know God is working to physically bring us together again, even as God is finding surprising ways to bring us together in new ways. Tonight, let us find a new and surprising way to serve one another and break bread together.

GOOD FRIDAY, April 10, Read John 18:1-19:42 (The Passion of Christ)

We will walk through darkness before we come to the light. We cannot go from the celebration of Palm Sunday to the celebration of the Resurrection without honoring what happened in between. Being children of Easter does not mean we do not mourn; it does not mean we do not experience loss and pain. At a time when we may feel numb to the pain and suffering and death around us, we are called to open ourselves to the difficult descriptions of humiliation, torture, and death in today’s long text. We are called to feel it. See it. We are tempted to turn away and skip to the end, but the pain is real, and the sacrifice must be recognized. Today, let us take this time to feel pain, respect the sacrifice, and mourn the death.

HOLY SATURDAY, April 11: Read Matthew 28:1-10

They came expecting to mourn, and instead found joy. A tomb of death became a symbol of everlasting life. None of us knows exactly what to expect tomorrow, or in the weeks ahead, but we know we are the beloved and forgiven children of a God who loves incredible surprises and giving gifts of love, peace, and eternal joy. We don’t have to go to a church sanctuary tomorrow morning to find it...we will find it in places we don’t expect. The healing and joy of Easter is everywhere, in everything. Today, tomorrow, and in the days, months, and years to come, we celebrate Christ’s victory over all pain and death, washing us clean and calling us together in new and surprising ways- now, and for all eternity.

EASTER SUNDAY, April 12: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession:

Lord Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit we have been raised from the waters of baptism to share in your glorious resurrection. Yet we have not lived as Easter people. We are unsure of your promise, confused about your will, and afraid in the face of danger. Like Mary, we weep at the tomb, but do not recognize your presence. Call us by name, risen Lord, that we may know you with confidence. Whenever we are tempted to fear death, give us courage to confess your Easter victory. Whenever we are distracted by petty conflicts, keep our minds on your reconciling love. Whenever we are overwhelmed by the power of evil, reveal again to us your triumph over the destructive powers of oppression. Forgive us our sin and let our lives be a testimony to your salvation through the love of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.