



# grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

May 18-24, 2020

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester

**Ascension Sunday/Aldersgate Day**

**Sermon Title: *Transitions*: “Protect Them in Your Name”**

Notes from sermon on 5/17:

Things to Pray For This Week:

### Family Focus Questions (before sermon):

When have you experienced a sense of God’s protection?

### Questions for Small Groups

1. Where have you experienced God’s welcome in your life?
2. Where have you experienced God’s welcome in our church?
3. If we are to be one with Christ, as Christ is one with God, how can our church become a more compelling witness to God’s radical invitation to homecoming?

### Monday, May 18: Read John 17:1-11

The disciples had already been through so much change. First, they believed their beloved rabbi and messiah would conquer Jerusalem in triumph. Then they saw him crucified. Three days later, they saw Jesus risen from the dead. Now, in today’s scripture, Jesus seems to be leaving them again, ascending to heaven and leaving them behind...with what? For what? This latest transition seems almost the most painful, and the most frightening. Yet we know what seemed like an end to the Christ-following movement was actually the beginning of our church. Even as Jesus was leaving them in body, he was leaving them with even greater power and Spirit.

This week we celebrate Ascension Sunday at the same time we celebrate Aldersgate Day, commemorating the historic moment on May 24, 1738 when John Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed,” writing, “I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” This transition, along with others such as Wesley’s harrowing and often heart-breaking experience in Georgia, were painful yet powerful transitions that created something new and greater in the world. What new,

wonderful phase of our lives might be around the corner, thanks to a loving, protective Lord and Savior who never leaves us alone, unarmed, or hopeless.

**Tuesday, May 19: Read Acts 1:6-14**

“So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time...?” (verse 1:6) This passage could be describing all of us today as easily as the disciples two millennia ago. Surely the disciples didn’t like the answer, “It is not for you to know the times or the periods...” any more than we do today. The disciples were tasked with growing the church and spreading the gospel even when they had no idea when Christ would return or what the future held. We are being asked the same thing now. We don’t know what the near or distant future holds, yet we are called to be kingdom builders and faith-filled spreaders of hope, love, and peace anyway. Especially. Are we waiting to know what will happen before living in peace, love, and hope before building (and enjoying) God’s kingdom?

**Wednesday, May 20: Read 1 Peter 4:12-14**

Not all transition will be easy. We are never told we will be spared from pain, sorrow, or loss. The early Christians certainly experienced this. Many in our community are experiencing loss unprecedented in our lifetimes, and sacrificing things all the while wondering, “is it making a difference? Is it worth it?” Our scripture today acknowledges this pain, and assures us that sacrifice is noticed and ultimately rewarded by our all-seeing God. When we share others’ pain in love and self-sacrifice, we are sharing in Christ’s pain as he sacrificed himself for us. As with the early Christians, we can be assured this pain is temporary and leading to something so much better. How does knowing our sacrifices are noticed and are making an eternal difference ease our burden and restore our energy and soul?

**Thursday, May 21: Read 1 Peter 5:6-11**

We don’t have to work out all the details. We don’t need to know how it all ends. We don’t have to win all the battles. Instead, we need to “cast our care” (or anxiety, as some translations say), resist the temptation to plunge into despair or slip into sin, and let the God of all grace “restore, support, strengthen, and establish” us. We are children of God who have an advocate who has gone before us, ascended into heaven. We can live in the present, surrounded by the immediate and tangible love of God, and we can live for eternity, where the battle is already won. As far as the immediate future...the one we cannot see...let us all “cast our anxiety” on God.

**Friday, May 22: Read Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35**

In a world that seems so unpredictable and out of our control, today’s exquisite psalm helps us hand control and glory back to God, reminding us that God has the power to dispel enemies, protect the weak, and shower abundance on us. We don’t understand the how, the when, or the why, but we know that ultimately we are all living in God’s awesome sanctuary, in God’s presence, and in God’s dwelling place. Let us speak this psalm aloud today, putting it in our own words, naming the times God has delivered us, protected us, provided us with a home, and restored beauty and order and peace. Could we always see how it would turn out? No. Did we experience temporary loss that still hurts today? Probably. But looking at both God’s faithfulness in the past and God’s promises for the future, we, like the disciples at Christ’s ascension, can know God always has an incredible plan around the corner for us – one that involves unbelievable protection, divine resources, and eternal meaning.

**Saturday, May 23: Scripture Memorization: 1 Peter 5:7**

“Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.” (NRSV)

**Sunday, May 24: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of**

**Common Confession:** *Loving God, we confess that we do not always bring honor and glory to your name. We are rebellious and weak; we flee before your goodness. Forgive, restore, and strengthen us by the grace and mercy of Christ, that we may rise up again in peace to love and serve your world. Amen.*