



# grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

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**September 7-13, 2020**

**Sermon by Lead Pastor Pete Moon**

**Sermon Series: "2020: What Have We Learned?"**

**Sermon Title: "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"**

Notes from sermon on 9/6:

Things to Pray For This Week:

**Family Focus Question:**

**In our reading, when Cain didn't get his way, he got very angry at his brother and ultimately at God. Has this ever happened to you during this time of dealing with the pandemic?**

**Questions for Small Groups**

- 1. One of the meanings of the Trinity is that God, in God's very character is relational. We are created in God's image and as a result, a need to be in relationship is built into our nature. Would you agree with this?**
- 2. In the creation story, we are told that it is not good to be alone. How has this COVID season worked for you? Have you enjoyed your increased alone time or have you missed connection?**
- 3. When Cain was angry, God told him that "sin was crouching at (his) door". Describe a time when you heard that sin growling at your door, especially during the tension of this pandemic.**

**Monday, September 7: Read Genesis 4:1-16**

Of the many lessons we have learned in COVID, one of the most immediate is that we are all interconnected. The very air we breathe...or cough into...can change the life of a stranger or loved one. The unconscious biases we harbor can have compounding effects on the minds, bodies, opportunities, and lives of entire racial groups. Even as we feel our interconnectedness, we also suffer from our forced distance. We miss parties, concerts, movie theaters, intimate restaurants. We miss handshakes and hugs. We are people created in God's Trinitarian image and we need to be in relationship with one another and with God.

But as much as we need one another, we struggle to get along. This season of COVID has revealed the best and the worst in us as we strive to be our "brother's keeper" with sin yet "crouching at our door." This week, our scriptures will challenge us to face the sins with which we struggle, as old as Cain and Abel, yet call us to hope as we appropriate these lessons and find God's intervening grace.

## **Tuesday, September 8: Read Genesis 2:4, 15-18**

In our Bible's very first descriptions of humanity, two verses appear back-to-back: the only commandment the first humans had to obey, and God's declaration that "It is not good for the man to be alone..." Temptation and connection. Foreshadowing of sin and the complexities of relationship. We know from the story of Eve's original sin that it immediately affected all of her relationships, ensnaring Adam and isolating her from God. Our sins do the same. Our sins of commission and omission hurt strangers and loved ones. They ensnare others, then result in isolation. We must own up to our roles in this complicated and painful and sinful human condition. Then we must turn to God for forgiveness and grace. We know the story of Adam and Eve's fall is not where the story ends. COVID is not where our story ends, either. The story...*our* story... ends with grace, redemption, unity, and glory in Zion.

## **Wednesday, September 9: Read Romans 7:14-20**

We want to do better, but we just can't seem to. We want to think differently about people who don't look or speak like us, but our ingrained fears and prejudices keep surfacing. We have resolutions about our health, destructive eating and drinking habits, and charitable giving, yet we don't follow through. We, like Paul, struggle with the weakness of our flesh even while our spirit is willing. Today's complicated yet all-too-understandable passage from Romans shows us one thing loud and clear: we are not going to get out of this situation through willpower or our inherent human goodness. We are just too weak. We will get out of it, however, through God's grace – both by receiving it for ourselves and granting it to others. Where do you need to receive and grant grace today?

## **Thursday, September 10: Read Luke 15:11-31**

Let's take a poll...how many of us have always secretly sided with the older brother in this story? It doesn't seem "fair" that the prodigal son should receive this kind of unconditional love and grace from the father when the older son did "everything right." Yet this is exactly the kind of mentality that causes us to judge others, hoard our resources, and create an "us vs. them" mentality. Instead, we must all see ourselves as both the prodigal son and the elder brother, and see others as the same. What would change if we recognized both these characters in ourselves and others? What would change if we saw all of us as the deeply flawed yet incredibly loved children of the same Father?

## **Friday, September 11: Read Psalm 133**

We were created to live in unity and peace. It can happen. Today's short and beautiful psalm paints a picture of a better way- one where we live in harmony with one another, and it's "pleasant." This seems like a hilariously understated word to describe the phenomenon of world peace, but then we can remember another time we have read this word in the Bible – back in the first chapter of Genesis when God looked down at his created and "was pleased with what he saw." When we get along in unity and peace, we reflect God's original creation of us. Let us better learn not only to see the image of God in one another, but see the image of God *pleased* every time we choose to love one another and live together in unity and peace.

## **Saturday, September 12: Scripture Memorization: Psalm 133:1**

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"

**Sunday, September 13: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession:** *Lord, you have designed us to be in relationship with you and with one another. I am not complete when I am on my own and yet so often, I seek rugged independence. Like Cain, my pride and anger drives me away from you and from those I love. Forgive me for thinking I am independent instead of dependent and draw me once again into the loving relationship that you have offered through Christ. In him I pray. AMEN*