



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

December 7-13, 2020

Sermon by Lead Pastor Pete Moon

Third Sunday of Advent

Sermon Title: “Beauty for Ashes”

Notes from sermon on 12/06:

Things For Which to Pray This Week:

Family Focus Question:

Fireweed is a beautiful flower that is named for the fact that it is often the first plant to grow out of the ashes of a forest fire. Name a time in your life that you found fireweed growing out of some “ashes”.

Questions for Small Groups

1. How do you describe or define beauty?
2. Describe a time when you could join in singing Mary’s song, when you found that the Lord was “mindful of the humble state of his servant.” (Luke 1:48)
3. What is it that made Mary’s Song (Luke 1:46b-55) such a thing of enduring beauty that has inspired so many for so many centuries?

Monday, December 7: Read Isaiah 61:1-4

Things are starting to look a bit different outside. Many of our neighbors have started to decorate their houses for Christmas, and the lights shine brighter each night as the sun sets a little earlier. The beautiful image of the single candle burning in the darkness is one of which we are all familiar. This week, we will be given even more images of beauty as we contemplate God’s history of creating exquisite beauty and joy out of ashes. Today’s prophecy from Isaiah describes such a time, when God creates garlands out of ashes, gladness out of mourning, and oaks in the midst of ruins.

This present darkness is the perfect time to look for the displays of God’s beauty. When have we witnessed beauty in the midst of pain in the past? Where can we see it now? How can we better prepare ourselves to recognize and appreciate it in the future?

This Advent season is, by necessity, less busy with parties, long lines at shopping malls, concerts, school activities, and church events than in the past. A lot less busy. Can we spend this extra time looking for God’s gifts of beauty? What would that look like, and where could they be?

Tuesday, December 8: Read Isaiah 61:8-11

As any parents, godparents, aunts, uncles, or mentors know, some of the most beautiful sights during Advent are the looks of joy and anticipation on children's faces. The joy we get when a child feels loved and adored is a glimpse of what our God feels when we are justified, restored, and redeemed. Today's verses from Isaiah describe a God who is always looking out for us, caring for our well-being, and working for the day when all wrongs will be made right. God is continually working for us, in us, and through us to create this joy in the world, and we can be both a witness to it and an instrument for it. Where can we seek the beauty of joyous faces, and how can we be used by God to help create them?

Wednesday, December 9: Read John 8:1-11

We take a brief pause from the lectionary readings today to read another scripture passage that demonstrates Christ's ability to create beauty and joy out of ashes. In what could have been a gruesome story of the stoning of a woman caught in adultery, Jesus creates a timeless story of love and redemption by mysteriously drawing in the ashes. Imagine the relief this woman felt and the healing this story has created for centuries. Jesus wasn't averse to getting himself a little dirty in order to help others. He didn't avoid confrontation, sensitive issues, or, most of all, people others believed beneath them. Instead, Jesus rolled up his sleeves, entered the ashes, and caused love and eternal life to bloom. We, too, can follow Jesus into the ashes of our community, our hearts, and our world and help love, acceptance, and life bloom. Where will we start?

Thursday, December 10: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

We do not have to wait for the fire to be over to begin enjoying beauty and life. We don't have to only celebrate the flowers blooming in front of us. As this incredible, must-be-memorized scripture passage tells us today, we can always be rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks. We know God can use everything for our good. We know the beauty is coming and, with practice, we can see the forms of beauty that are already here. Let's spend today in a sincere effort to rejoice continually, looking for the blessings in absolutely everything that happens...slowing down to find it in the details and hidden shadows if necessary. May the peace of God and God's sanctifying grace wash over us all, allowing us to thoroughly enjoy every moment of our lives and be freed from all fear, worry, and depression.

Friday, December 11: Read Psalm 126

We can all be living with the joyful anticipation of today's psalmist, who confidently describes the moment when all will say, "The Lord has done great things for them." Every obstacle we encounter can become a comeback story. Every present weakness can become a benchmark for a future strength. Every teardrop can magnify an upcoming shout for joy. We do not need to mourn the losses of "Christmas as usual" this year; rather, we can wait in anticipation for the magnified glory of Christ to rise out of the darkness. What incredible surprises does God have in store for us? What new forms of beauty will we discover this season painted against such a different canvas? Let us prepare for the beautiful sounds of laughter and song, the exquisite displays of love and light, and the shining glory of Christ our Lord.

Saturday, December 12: Scripture Memorization: Isaiah 61:11

"For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all nations." (NRSV)

Sunday, December 13: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Lord, forgive us for the times we overlook your beauty. So often, we try to speak of you and characterize you accurately, but our words fall so short of the wonder and majesty that is you. Hear our heartfelt desire to worship you well. By your grace fill us with that same beauty and enable that wonder to govern all we do, say and think in the name of Jesus. AMEN*