



PULPIT

PROJECT

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NOTE: Any referenced URLs were accurate and active at time of publishing. Things may have changed since then.

LIFE'S A BEACH

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Topical, Focused on visitors/
new to faith

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Faith development and evangelism in Beach
metaphors

FIRST SERMON

Finding Our Way

Isaiah 49:5-6

The overall series views the Faith Journey as a trip to the beach - everyone is at a different place in their journey, and recognizing where they are is vital to helping us each to grow at our own level.

This particular sermon helps set the stage by seeing how Isaiah was called to recognize more than just the children of Israel - but also to be a witness to the Gentiles. It introduces the concepts of the "beach layers" (where everyone is in their journey).

SECOND SERMON

Finding Your Space

Romans 15:5-9; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

This message goes further into the sketch we have of the beach - delineating what each section is, and why it's important.

Some people just want to sit up on the sand in the sun - some people just want to be IN church, but not necessarily get out into the water.

Some people get into the water up to their knees - splashing and playing. Some people like the idea of faith, but only want to stay in the shallows.

Some people get out deeper into the water, until they find that they are lifted up by the waves and no longer touching the ground! This can be seen as finally experiencing faith - when you are held up by something you haven't experienced before!

And finally, some people go down into the depths - scuba, surfing, seeing and experiencing things that the people on the shore never realized!

Where are you on this journey?

THIRD SERMON

Getting Your Feet Wet

John 1:43-46

Once we know where we are in the diagram (see previous sermons), we can then look around us. Who is just in front of us? Who is just behind us?

Your best mentor is someone who is just a little bit deeper out than you are. And your best witness is with those who are just

behind you.

Those on the shore have no idea what is going on with the scuba divers. They will be most connected with those who are wading in the shallows. So know where you are, and work on the relationships with those just around you!

FOURTH SERMON

Learning How to Swim

John 3:1-9, 12-17

This sermon deals specifically with the experience of salvation - when we no longer have our feet on the ground, but are totally held up by the waves!

The story of Nicodemus is the focus - how he had been following all of the rules of his faith. He was in the water. He was at least up to his waist. But had he ever let the water truly support him?

There comes a moment when we have to stop trusting in our own strength, and lie back and let Jesus support us.

FIFTH SERMON

Going to the Depths

Romans 11:33-36; Philippians 3:13-14

The final message of this series is an encouragement to go deeper. Throughout this process the congregation has been challenged to find themselves in the illustration, and this final one is to look towards the next level.

It's not that the persons who go to the depths can never influence those on the shore, but they can only do that when they go BACK to the shore! Go deep! Learn something new! Find somethings amazing!

And then GO BACK! Tell others what you have seen, and invite them to go at least one step deeper!

RESOURCES

Full sermon drafts and graphics can be found at the following link:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/dw6a08x7r30ge7lyx2r88/AJFzqwR64_LLgWgHYBRxUxkc?rlkey=fu7p2vuwanul6hcolwy1yd3u0&st=0h58ep1p&dl=0

Lead Creator: Rev. Dr. Bill Fisackerly, IV

THE WAITING ROOM

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Think about it, our life is a series of waiting rooms—where we are always moving from one stage of life or thing to the next. We wait for new seasons to begin. For our lives to start after graduation. For our name to be called. For us to be selected. We wait for things to get better. We wait to get better. We wait for relationships to grow or dissolve and end. We wait for new careers and opportunities. We wait. We wait for God.

FIRST SERMON

It Was Said

Acts 1:1–5; Luke 24:49

It had only been a few days that the disciples had gotten Jesus back and here in Acts 1, he tells them that he will be leaving again. We can only imagine how they must be receiving that news. But before Jesus Ascends, he tells them to “wait and remain in Jerusalem until they have been furnished with heavenly power.” What the disciples don’t know is that they will be required to wait 10 more days.

How did the disciples wait for the gift? What happens to them? What are the lessons they have to teach us?

Here are three points to help with the wait:

1. Wait with Expectation
2. Pray and Encourage Yourself and Others
3. Remember What Was Said

SECOND SERMON

Shortcuts and Setbacks

Numbers 13:1–3, 25–33; 14:1–10

This week as we return to the waiting room, we take a look at the children of Israel who

have some stories about being in the waiting room. They were in the waiting room for 40 years, 14,600 days before they were able to receive what God promised. They wind up in the waiting room not because they had been driven there, like Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. The Children of Israel are in the waiting room, because they put themselves there. When you find yourself waiting because of your own actions, what do you? How do you navigate the wait?

Here are some points to help with the wait?

1. Recall the movement of God. Replay the reel and footage of how God has been faithful before.
2. Recall the Message of God. “...Only don’t rebel against the Lord and don’t be afraid of the people of the land. They are our prey. Their defense has deserted them, but the Lord is with us. So don’t be afraid of them.”
3. Reframe your situation. (See with the eyes of God) Joshua and Caleb refused to see the “giants” as obstacles they could not fight against or overcome. They reframed their situation. God is bigger, mightier and more powerful.

Remember: The waiting room is the place where you often have to fight through — fight through your emotions, fight through the discomfort, fight through the process of being stripped of the things that will not serve us well in the place where the Lord is leading. It is a place of character building, trust and faith development. We have to be careful to not become our own Setback!

THIRD SERMON

Ashes Required

2 Corinthians 12:6–10

What is impossible for man is possible for God. And the person, who is probably better able to exhibit this is the Apostle Paul, who forces us to consider what it means to bring “weakness” into the waiting room. We live in a culture that says we need to be strong, we have to be strong. Show no weakness.

Today, it is about rugged individualism. That we are responsible for ourselves. That we hold all the control and power. Paul has a thorn. He is struggling with it and he wants it removed. And won’t do it.

Instead, God responds, “My grace is

sufficient, because power is made perfect in weakness.”

What Paul learns is that when he enters into this space with God with his weakness, it makes room for God’s perfect strength to be given to him.

To survive the waiting room, Paul teaches us to:

1. Enter participating in the act of surrender and submission. These two words are not the same. The difference between the two is this: You can surrender without giving up your power. You can throw in the white towel, but refuse to give in to the one who is over you. Submission is about giving up your power and turning it over.

2. Paul teaches us about humility. He is constantly remembering his experience on the Damascus Road and realizing what God has given him. He preaches that he is in debt with God and cannot redeem himself. Paul preaches it is imperative to empty ourselves and be broken, because it makes room for God to work and transform us and our situation.

3. Say “Yes” to the beautiful exchange.

In Isaiah 61:3, the prophet writes, we get beauty for the ashes. We get oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The prophet reminds us that God is inviting us into a beautiful exchange. Ashes become the ground of the transformation and hope and the new thing God is creating.

Some years ago, I took a trip to Sunset Crater in Arizona, where the volcano eruption had occurred. In the midst of the devastation and black ash, I saw a small reddish-pink flower budding through the ground. This process is known as primary succession, which is when vibrant new life emerges in places that appear to be completely destroyed. The image of that small flower was amazing when you think about all it went through to emerge above ground to reach something life-sustaining like sunlight and water.

It’s also important to note that ashes are rich in magnesium and potassium and once they begin to break down provides nutrients to plant life and can “supercharge” its growth.

What Paul teaches us is that the story does not end with a thorn or eruption in our lives.

Consider Looking for images of the pinkish red little flowers found in Sunset Crater.

FOURTH SERMON

Holding Pattern Maneuvers

John 11:1-7, 17-37

KEY VERSE: vs. 6-7 “When he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was. After two days, he said to his disciples, Let’s return to Judea again.”

Of the many things we have learned over these last few weeks, I believe one is that these waiting room experiences are to be expected. This is the life of a Christ follower – moving from orientation (the familiar place and what is already set) to disorientation (the place of unfamiliarity and desperation sets in) to re-orientation (adapting to the new, not a return to the old). In the waiting room, it was where God shaped them and transformed them and prepared them for the “new thing”, the new season, the new home, God had for them. God was preparing them for a different reality.

In this text, Mary and Martha’s brother falls ill. They send word to Jesus, that the “one

whom he loves” is not doing well. Jesus hears the news about his best friend and he does something strange: He doesn’t move. He doesn’t rush home. He doesn’t rush to his friend’s bedside. He doesn’t change his mission plans. As a matter of fact, the news does not appear to be problematic for Jesus. He does not freak out and he is not in panic mode. To him this is not a crisis.

A friend of mine shared a bit of information I have always remembered. I had come to her one day in a tizzy and upset about something and she said, “My mother has always told me, “God is not up in heaven wringing God’s hands and pacing back and forth, saying, “Oh my, what am I going to do about this? I didn’t see that coming. What are we going to do with this situation?”

1. If Jesus is okay, we should be okay. When Jesus hears the news, he pronounces Lazarus’ outcome – it won’t end in death – and he pronounces God’s intention – for God’s glory. He makes it clear, the situation is not what it looks like. Sometimes, we have to be in a holding pattern to give God a chance to work in the background and prepare the ground for our faith to be fortified from

where it is to where it needs to be for the situation.

2. Consider God is up to something more than we can see. Lazarus’ death is not so much about death, as it is about the transformation that occurs in the process of death-like situations. (Remember God is up to something bigger than what we can see).

Maybe what needed to be resurrected and restructured was the faith of the people. Mary and Martha were not the only ones who witnessed Lazarus’ death, according to the text. Jesus’ response calls for an “even now” kind of faith. After Lazarus had been dead for 4 days and Jesus returns, Mary says, “Even now, I know that whatever you ask God, God will give you.”

3. The Holding Pattern is the Viewing Box – It is the place we are positioned to see and scout for Jesus.

Lead Creator: Dr. Juana Jordan

BE AFRAID - BE VERY AFRAID!

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

When an angel brings a message to someone in the scriptures, usually we hear the words, “Do Not Be Afraid”. In addition, most people have a false view of angels, relying more upon cultural stereotypes than actual scriptural references. This series focuses on the real intent of those passages - with the idea that the MESSAGE of the angel is what we have to fear! It’s going to mean a major change in our lives!

FIRST SERMON

When Your Life Starts to Change

Genesis 18:1-15

Theme: When God sends a Messenger, you can be sure that the message is going to mean changes in your life!

There is a lot of mythology that has arisen about angels which is based more upon folklore than the scriptures. Most people think of the adorable cherub Cupid or of guardian angels grabbing the steering wheel of their car – neither of which is Biblical!

When the scriptures mention “angels”, it is usually in reference to a messenger that God has sent for a specific purpose. The word “angelos” in Greek and “Mal’akh” in Hebrew have the same meaning – one who delivers a message, news, or is carrying out God’s will. This can be either a celestial being or another human being.

The “heavenly host” referred to in scripture are called Cherubim and Seraphim – both described as terrifying creatures with multiple eyes and wings, not the sweet plump beings that shoot arrows of desire into lovers’ hearts! Cherubim and seraphim

are not mentioned as coming down to earth to bring messages; they normally are in the court of heaven, praising God forever. (Exceptions could be the angel guarding the entrance to the garden of Eden in Genesis 3:24).

POINTS TO CONSIDER

First mention of angels in scripture: Garden of Eden after the fall; cherubim was sent with flaming sword to keep humans out. (Fearful image)

After that time, angels are seen as divine messengers. This is a more comforting image.

But the messages that the angels bring usually is NOT comforting! It will mean a major change in the character’s lives!

For Sarah and Abraham, it meant HAVING A BABY WHILE THEY WERE IN THEIR 90’s!

Renewing of relationship

- Redefining their roles (No longer just a couple; now a family)
- Re-engaging in sexual intimacy (“My back hurts!”)
- Adapting their lifestyle to a child in the home (How do you baby-proof a tent?)

Renewing of self

- After decades of infertility and rising doubt, a new sense of peace
- Did Sarah feel guilt, since Abraham could have children by other women?
- Be sensitive to couples struggling with fertility

Renewal of promise

- God is faithful, even when we get impatient
- Faithful living is the goal, even when we don't get what we want.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What would you do if you went to the doctor this week and found out you were pregnant? (This can cause lots of laughter in older churches; much consternation in younger congregations! Be sensitive to the dynamics of infertile couples here.)

What issues would Abraham and Sarah have to face? (Late night feedings, energy to play with the kids, finding a midwife?)

What would be their biggest fear? (Have congregation respond to this one.)

SECOND SERMON

Feel the Burn

Exodus 3:1-6

Theme: Even when we run away from God, the calling is still there!

Moses had been called by God previously, but had run away. He tried to get as far away as possible – hoping maybe that God would not find him out in the wilderness.

But God knew where Moses was, and didn't come with condemnation, but with a renewal of his call.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

We know intellectually that we can't run away from God, but what are ways that we still try?

New hobbies/activities that keep us away from church (rationalizing that "It's family time/I have to make ends meet/etc.)

- Avoiding reading the Bible
- Going to church, but being overly-involved with activities that keep us from worshipping
- Working in the kitchen during worship

- Volunteering in nursery without having spiritual development in some other way
- A/V booth every week without taking a break

Do we expect that, once God finds us, God will be angry or encouraging?

Where is the last place we would expect to find God?

FUN THINGS TO TRY

Role-play Moses taking off his sandals on the hot, sharp rocks of the desert!

Have a someone dressed as a bush, speaking to Moses.

Deliver this message from the perspective of one of the sheep. (Who is Moses talking to? Why has he led us out here? I KNEW he was running away from something!)

THIRD SERMON

God – Come Again?

Hosea 1:2-9 OR Jonah 1:1-3, 3:3-4, 4:5-11

Theme: Our own attitudes can be the biggest fear we have to overcome.

You can choose either of the two scriptures for this week, both of which are issues of

pride or prejudice that we have to face.

Hosea was told by God to marry Gomer, a prostitute. While he did it to obey God's command, Hosea fell in love with Gomer. Even later when she left him and went back to her old ways, Hosea still pursued her.

Jonah, on the other hand, hated the Ninevites. He only went so that he could rub it in their faces that they were going to die! So when the people of Ninevah repented and turned towards God, Jonah was furious!

POINTS TO CONSIDER

God calls us to do some things which can lead to public disgrace or embarrassment (Hosea, marrying a prostitute; Jonah, going deep into a foreign city to preach judgment upon them). What do we do when God's call conflicts with our comfort?

Many times our biggest barrier is our own fears – of ridicule, of safety, of being hurt.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What would the gossip on the street be if a local pastor married a prostitute? Would that pastor have any credibility?

What does it feel like to be betrayed that

deeply? By your spouse? By a close friend? By a business associate? And what would you do if God told you to forgive and take back that person?

Is there someone who has hurt you that you would be upset if you found out God forgave them?

Whom do you avoid talking about Jesus with? (Co-workers, family, people begging by the side of the road, the other political party?)

FOURTH SERMON

Surprise!

Luke 1:30–38, Matthew 1:18–25

Theme: Answering God's call will take your life in a completely new direction – and it's okay!

We often forget what societal and family dynamics were going on with Mary and Joseph during their engagement. While it wasn't unheard of for a betrothed couple to become pregnant, it wasn't encouraged.

This message explores the emotional states of the earthly parents of Jesus. Will he believe me? Will our family, or neighbors? Is

this calling from God worth the shame?

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Mary didn't know that Joseph had also received an angel, nor did Joseph know that Mary had. What was that initial conversation like?

People say that they believe in miracles, but rarely expect them to actually happen in their own lives.

Both Joseph and Mary decided that God (and their partner) were true.

Joseph might have been in his 20's or 30's; Mary 14 to 16 years old. (This was common and expected in those days.)

Mary and Joseph only lived a couple of blocks from each other in Nazareth. They probably had seen each other regularly throughout their lives.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What would people in the community be saying behind their backs?

What would happen to Joseph's business once this got out?

What were Mary's fears?

What were Joseph's?

Who has given you comfort when you were in an emotional dilemma?

Lead Creator: Bill Fisackerly



A GENEROUS LIFE

SERIES TYPE

Stewardship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

“A Generous Life” is a four-week sermon series that challenges the way most of us think about generosity. This isn’t a series about giving campaigns or stewardship drives. It’s about something deeper — the kind of life that gives freely because it has first received freely.

FIRST SERMON

Grounded in Gratitude

Psalm 95:1–3; Psalm 100:4–5; Colossians 2:7

The series opens with a simple but essential claim: generosity doesn’t begin with guilt — it begins with gratitude. Using the Psalms as a doorway, this sermon explores worship as the first and most natural expression of a thankful heart. Psalm 95 invites us into joyful praise rooted in who God is — good, sovereign, worthy. Psalm 100 reminds us that thanksgiving isn’t just a posture we take in church; it’s the rhythm that carries us through the week.

Paul’s image in Colossians 2:7 takes this further — roots, growth, overflow. Gratitude isn’t a feeling we chase. It’s the soil our faith grows in. When we are rooted deeply in Christ, the false foundations that compete for our trust — comparison, fear, entitlement — begin to lose their grip.

SECOND SERMON

Revealed in Prayer

Philippians 4:6–7; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

If Week 1 establishes gratitude as the soil of generosity, Week 2 makes the case that prayer is where that soil is tended. Paul writes Philippians 4 from prison — a place of real scarcity — and his tone is one of peace. That’s not an accident. Prayer doesn’t change our circumstances. It changes our orientation within them. And a heart at peace is a heart that can give freely.

The sermon moves through three postures: the posture of prayer (Philippians 4 — from anxiety to peace), the practice of prayer (Colossians 4 — devoted, alert, thankful), and the product of prayer (1 Thessalonians 5 — joy, prayer, and gratitude woven together as a way of life). The guiding image is a spring-fed well — prayer draws from the source, and generosity is the water that flows out.

THIRD SERMON

Committed in Faith

Proverbs 11:24–25; 2 Corinthians 9:6–8, 11

Week 3 takes aim at scarcity thinking — the deeply human fear that giving will leave us with less. Proverbs 11 names the paradox plainly: some give freely and grow richer; others withhold and suffer want. This isn’t a

prosperity gospel formula. It's a theological statement about how life works when it is aligned with God's purposes.

Paul's farming metaphor in 2 Corinthians 9 carries the same truth into the New Testament. The sower doesn't control the harvest. But the sower plants anyway — in trust. That's what faithful generosity looks like. It's not calculated. It's not contingent on the right conditions. It's an act of discipleship — trusting God's future enough to sow seeds today.

FOURTH SERMON

Transformed

1 John 4:7–12, 16–19; 2 Corinthians 5:14–17

The series closes with its deepest claim: generosity isn't ultimately about what we give. It's about who we become. John's letter, written to a community marked by division and fear, recenters everything in God's initiating love. We love because God first loved us. The capacity to love — and to give — is itself evidence of being born of God.

Paul picks up the same thread in 2 Corinthians 5. The love of Christ doesn't

just inspire us. It compels us — presses us together, redirects self-interest, reorients our entire way of living. In Christ, the old patterns of self-protection and scarcity pass away. Something new has come. The three marks of a transformed life — confidence in God's love, commitment to reconciliation, and compassionate generosity.

Lead Creator: Matt Wallis

WHO IS JESUS?

SERIES TYPE

Topical, Focused on visitors/new to faith

SERIES DESCRIPTION

This is a 4 week series looking at different characteristics of Jesus. Jesus as teacher, healer, shepherd, and Savior.

FIRST SERMON

Jesus: The Teacher

Matthew 7:24-29

This is about how at the end of Jesus's Great Teaching, "The Sermon on the Mount," Jesus gives us a parable of how wise builders build their lives on the word of God.

Begin with discussing a favorite teacher or what makes a good teacher

Talk about how Jesus is often referred to as "Teacher" or "Rabbi" in scripture

Jesus is telling us the wise thing to do is build our life on the teachings of Jesus, specifically the Sermon on the Mount. And yet, if we truly look at the Sermon on the Mount, the words at first glance might seem unwise.

Will we choose to just hear the teachings of Christ, or will we choose to live them out?

SECOND SERMON

Jesus: The Healer

Matthew 9:18-26

Begin with talking about healing stories in your own life

This story is a healing within a healing. Both

times, Jesus is interrupted on his way to go somewhere else, but still heals. Jesus is never too busy for us.

The bleeding woman wasn't just healed physically, but restored to community as well.

Jesus doesn't want to just heal us personally and physically, but at a society level as well.

Where do you need healing in your personal life? Where does our world need healing?

THIRD SERMON

Jesus: The Shepherd

John 10:11-18

Begin with an image of a guide. I used a white water rafting guide. Many of us aren't as familiar with the idea of a shepherd. But explain the idea of a shepherd in scripture, and tie in Psalm 23 as well. Talk about how the sheep know the voice of the shepherd, babies know the voice of their mothers, and pets know the voice of their masters. That's how we're to know the voice of our shepherd: Jesus. Talk about ways to better hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in our lives through scripture, prayer, etc.

FOURTH SERMON

Jesus: The Savior

Matthew 17:1-13

This happened to also be Transfiguration Sunday, so I used the Transfiguration Story. In this transfiguration, Jesus is no longer just a man or teacher to the disciples, he is transformed into the Savior of the World. Talk about our own mountaintop experiences. Finishing up this series we're moving from Teacher, Healer, and Shepherd, and moving toward Savior. We're moving toward the cross. What does it mean for Jesus to be your Savior? What does the transfiguration mean for our lives today?

Lead Creator: Katie Harrington

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND VOTING JESUS

SERIES TYPE

Topical, Justice Focused

SERIES DESCRIPTION

A 7-week sermon series designed to encourage Christians to consider the wisdom of Jesus when they vote. The first 5 sermons describe the Kingdom of God. Although they do not mention anything about voting, they prepare people to consider how Jesus should influence their votes. The last 2 sermons focus on voting. They do not endorse any candidates or political parties but encourage people to consider what type of person Jesus would vote for. This series is optimal to give in August and September just prior to mid-term or Presidential elections.

FIRST SERMON

The Unstoppable Expansion of the Kingdom of God

Mark 1:15, Luke 17:20–21, Romans 14:17, Matthew 13:31–33

Core theological idea: The expansion of the Kingdom of God is unstoppable and is from heart to heart.

Purpose: To encourage people to seek various ways to be part of the unstoppable expansion of the Kingdom of God.

SECOND SERMON

God is Sovereign in the Kingdom of God

Genesis 1:1, Psalm 33:10–11, Romans 12:1–2

Core theological idea: God is ultimately in charge. In the Kingdom of God, we surrender all that we have and all that we are to you.

Purpose: To encourage people to surrender all their possessions, abilities, attitudes, actions, and opinions to the loving authority of God.

THIRD SERMON

Love breaks through in the Kingdom of God

Mark 12:28–34

Core theological idea: God's type of love breaks through the worldly lies and brings us to truth so we can experience the KOG.

Purpose: To encourage people to allow God's type of love to lead them so they can recognize truth.

FOURTH SERMON

We have the unlikeliest of friends in the Kingdom of God

Luke 4:14–30, 14:12–14

Core theological idea: In the Kingdom of God, people who would normally have nothing to do with each other become intimate, loving friends

Purpose: To encourage people to develop loving relationships with people who are different from them.

FIFTH SERMON

Christ-like holiness (not money) is success in the Kingdom of God

Matthew 5:48, Philippians 2:1-5, 1 Peter 1:15-16

Core theological idea: Success in the Kingdom of God (KOG) is Christ-like holiness and love.

Purpose: To encourage people to surrender to the loving authority of God so that they can be successful in the Kingdom of God (KOG).

SIXTH SERMON

Scriptural Purpose of Government

Psalms 72:1-20, Romans 13:1-7

Core theological idea: We should vote for the candidate that best fulfills the Scriptural purpose of government.

Purpose: To encourage people to prayerfully vote in accordance with the life & teachings of Jesus.

SEVENTH SERMON

What type of person would Jesus vote for?

Mark 1:15, 12:13-17

Core theological idea: Jesus would vote for the candidate that best reflects Kingdom of God values.

Purpose: To encourage people to consider Kingdom of God values when casting their vote.

Lead Creator: David L. Charlton

POWER WHEN WE PRAY

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Prayer is priority. Prayer is lifestyle. Prayer is corporate power. Prayer produces deliverance.

FIRST SERMON

Before Anything Else—Pray

Matthew 21:12–13; Luke 5:16

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and Eternal God,

We come before You not because we have it all together, but because we need You.

Slow us down in this moment. Quiet every distraction.

Open our hearts to receive Your Word.

Teach us what it truly means to pray—not out of duty, but out of dependence. Have Your way in this place.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

BUSY BUT EMPTY:

Good morning New Horizon Church, are you ready to hear this truth this morning?

We are busy. We are active. We are doing a whole lot of things... Raise your hands if you have been very busy lately?

And the question I am asking us is—Are we doing them with God, or just for God? Because there is a big difference.

We plan. We organize. We serve. And we give.

All wonderful things to do.

And yet... we are tired. Frustrated. Running on empty. And maybe—just maybe—it's because we have learned how to work without praying.

Our text says:

Jesus walks into the temple and declares:

“My house shall be called a house of prayer.”

Not a house of performance. Not a house of activity.

Not a house of programs. Jesus states: A house... of prayer.

And then Luke tells us something powerful: “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

Let that settle. Jesus—Fully God. Fully human... Still prayed.

POINT 1: IF JESUS PRAYED, WHAT ABOUT US?

Now help me understand something.

If Jesus needed to pray... What makes us think we don't?

If Jesus paused before decisions... Why are we rushing into everything?

If Jesus withdrew from the crowd... Why are we addicted to noise?

Jesus prayed:

Before choosing his disciples

Before miracles

Before the cross

Which means prayer is not optional—it is essential.

Say that with me please: “Prayer is essential.”

But here is where we struggle. We don’t mind praying...

We just don’t want to depend on it.

We treat prayer like a spare tire—only used in emergencies.

But God says: Prayer is not your backup plan. It is your first response.

POINT 2: WE HAVE REVERSED THE ORDER.

Let me ask you something real simple:

Which comes first—Serving... giving... or praying?

Most of us live like this:

We serve first

We give when we can

And we pray when things go wrong

But the Kingdom order is: Pray -> Then serve
-> Then give

Because when you pray:

You don’t have to be forced to give.

You don’t have to be begged to serve.

When you pray... something changes inside of you.

You start asking:

“Lord, where can I help?”

“Lord, who can I bless?”

“Lord, what do You want from me?”

There’s a powerful quote: I want us to hear it well.

“The devil smiles when we make plans. He laughs when we get busy.

But he trembles when we pray.” [This quote is attributed to Corrie Ten Boom.]

Oh, I feel that. Do you?

Because the enemy is not intimidated by your schedule.

He’s not afraid of your meetings. He’s not concerned about your activity. Corrie Ten Boom also states: “If the devil cannot make us bad, he will make us busy”.

However, when we get on your knees, he starts shaking.

POINT 3: WHY WE AVOID PRAYER

Let’s be honest this morning. We avoid prayer because:

It slows us down

It confronts us

It reminds us we are not in control

Prayer requires humility.

Prayer says:

“God, I cannot do this without You.”

And some of us don’t like that. We would rather figure it out ourselves...

fix it ourselves... control it ourselves... And then when it falls apart—

we say, “Lord help me!”

I come to tell somebody right here or online listening this morning:

You don’t have to wait until it falls apart!

You don't have to wait until you're overwhelmed!
You don't have to wait until you're exhausted!
You can pray:
Before the meeting
Before the decision
Before the argument
Before the breakdown
Before anything else—PRAY!
Say it again:
Before anything else—PRAY!
POINT 4: PRAYER CHANGES US FIRST
Here's the truth we don't always like: Prayer doesn't just change situations... it changes us.
Prayer:
Aligns our heart
Adjusts our attitude
Strengthens our spirit
Sometimes God doesn't fix the problem immediately—
because He's working on you first.
Have you ever gone into prayer upset... and came out different? I have many times. I go to

prayer broken and come out uplifted.
The situation didn't change yet—but I changed; you changed.
That's the power of prayer.
So, here's the challenge this week:
Before you:
Check your phone
Answer that email
Make that decision
Pause... And pray. Even if it's simple:
“Lord, guide me.” “Lord, help me.” “Lord, lead me.” Pause and Pray.
As always, I like to invite you to God's altar of grace. It is open and ready for you to come and have a personal chat with Jesus.
Because some of us—if we're honest—and we try our best to be honest,
we have been doing life without prayer.
We've been:
Serving without prayer
Leading without prayer
Struggling without prayer
And today God is calling us back. Not to

perfection—but to dependence.
So, if you're here this morning and you're saying:
“Lord... I need to get back to prayer.”
“Lord... I've been doing too much on my own.”
“Lord... teach me to pray again.”
I want you to come. Come right now. Don't wait. Don't overthink it.
This is your moment.
Come on... God is calling you. This is your reset moment.
ALTAR PRAYER
Father, in the name of Jesus, You see every person at this altar.
You know their struggles. You know their burdens.
You know where they have been trying to do it on their own.
Today, we surrender. Teach us to pray. Draw us back into Your presence.
Break every spirit of independence that keeps us from You.
Let this church become a house of prayer.

Let these people become people of prayer.
And from this day forward—we will seek You first. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, go with us this week. Remind us to pause and pray.

Interrupt our busyness with Your presence.

Let prayer become our first instinct. We give You glory.

We give You honor. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BENEDICTION

Go now...Not just to work...

Not just to serve...But to pray.

And as you pray—watch God move.

SECOND SERMON

A Life That Breathes Prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; John 17:9

Good morning, Church and welcome to my favorite hour of the week. I get to enjoy God's presence together with you. Today we continue with our series Power When We Pray. If you miss week 1, please go online either on our website or Facebook and you

will be blessed with God's Holy Word. Let us pray together:

Gracious God,

We don't just want to know about prayer—we want to live in it.

Breathe on us this morning.

Revive dry places in our hearts.

Where we have become mechanical, make us alive again.

Where we have become distant, draw us close again.

Let Your Spirit teach us how to stay connected to You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

HOLDING YOUR BREATH

Let me ask you something simple this morning...

How long can you hold your breath? 30 seconds? A minute... maybe two?

Eventually—your body starts reacting. Your chest tightens. Your lungs begin to burn. Everything in you starts screaming—"I need air!"

Because you were not created to live without

breathing.

And here is the spiritual truth:

You were not created to live without prayer either.

Paul says in our text this morning:

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances..."

Pray... without ceasing.

Not occasionally. Not when it's convenient.

Not just on Sundays.

Without... ceasing.

And then Jesus says in John 17: "I am praying for them..."

Even now—Jesus is praying. How uplifting to know!

POINT 1: PRAYER IS OUR SPIRITUAL BREATH

Prayer is not just something we do—it is how we live.

Just like breathing:

You don't schedule it. You don't force it. You don't announce it.

You just... do it.

And if you stop breathing—you don't slowly fade... you start dying.

And some of us, may be spiritually out of breath. Why you say this Pastor Tammie, you may ask?

Because We're tired... Not just physically—
But spiritually tired.

Easily irritated. Emotionally drained. Quick to worry. Slow to trust.

And it's not always because life is harder...

Sometimes it's because we haven't been breathing.

POINT 2: JESUS LIVED IN CONSTANT CONNECTION

Let's look at Jesus and hear this well:

He didn't just pray in emergencies—He lived in connection with God. Watch him:

Before big decisions—He prayed

After long days—He prayed

In the middle of pressure—He prayed

Before the cross—He prayed

Prayer wasn't an event for Jesus... it was a lifestyle.

And if we are going to follow Jesus—we

cannot just admire His prayer life...We have to adopt it. Can I have an Amen in the house!

But here's where it gets real... Most of us don't struggle with believing in prayer—we struggle with staying in prayer.

We start strong... and life interrupts.

We get distracted. We get busy. We get overwhelmed.

And slowly... quietly...we disconnect.

My life is so full at times, with my work load, family load, overseas mission load, I can easily run without stopping to pray. And I know when this happen for I feel the disconnect.

POINT 3: DISCONNECTION IS SUBTLE.

You don't wake up one day and say: "I'm going to stop praying."

No. It happens little by little.

You skip one moment...then another... then another...

Until prayer becomes occasional instead of continual. It is like exercising. You were doing so well. And suddenly you skip one day, and two days and three days and before you know it, you are not exercising at all.

Little by little you find yourself:

Making decisions without God. Anyone in the house?

Handling stress without God.

Carrying burdens without God.

And you don't even realize... you've been holding your breath.

And here is the good news of the gospel I am here to proclaim to you here and online this morning:

God has not moved. God has not withdrawn. God has not disconnected.

If there is distance—it's not because God left you...

It's because you stopped breathing.

And the moment you pray again—Everything begins to shift.

Not because your situation changed immediately...

But because you reconnected.

Say it with me: "I need to reconnect." Say it again:

"I need to reconnect. Help me Lord."

POINT 4: PRAYER CHANGES THE ATMOSPHERE OF YOUR LIFE

When you stay connected in prayer:

Anxiety loses its grip

Fear loses its voice

Confusion begins to clear

Strength starts to rise

Because prayer is not just communication—it is transformation.

You ever had a moment where: You were stressed... overwhelmed... about to break... And you whispered only three simple words:

“Lord, help me...” And nothing around you changed right away—

but something inside of you did? That my friend is prayer.

So, what does “praying without ceasing” look like?

It’s not being on your knees all day. It’s staying aware of God all day.

Driving -> “Lord, guide me”

Working -> “Lord, give me wisdom”

Struggling -> “Lord, strengthen me”

Deciding -> “Lord, lead me”

Short prayers. Real prayers. Constant connection with God.

You don’t have to wait:

For church

For Sunday

For a crisis

You can pray: In the car. In the kitchen. On the job.

In the middle of the night. Because prayer is not about location—

It’s about connection.

Now please allow me to speak to your heart this morning.

Some of us are not bad people...We have just disconnected from the power source. We still love God...However, we’ve lost the rhythm of prayer.

Life got heavy. Schedules got full. Pain got real.

And somewhere along the way—we stopped breathing.

Today...God is inviting you and me back.

Not to guilt—but to relationship with God’s

Son Jesus Christ.

So, if you’re here and you’re saying:

“Lord... I need to reconnect.”

“Lord... I’ve been distant.”

“Lord... teach me how to stay close again.”

I want you to come. Come right now to the altar of God’s grace.

This is not about shame—this is about restoration.

Come on... He’s calling you back.

Come on... He’s waiting for you.

ALTAR PRAYER

Father, in the name of Jesus,

You see Your sons and daughters.

You see the weariness. You see the distance.

You see the silent struggles. Right now—draw them back.

Restore their hunger for prayer.

Restore their desire for Your presence.

Restore the rhythm of connection.

Teach us to breathe again. Let prayer become natural again.

Let Your presence become constant again.

We reconnect to You now.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, walk with us this week.

Remind us in every moment that You are near.

Interrupt our distractions with Your presence.

Keep us connected to You.

We will not hold our breath anymore—we will live in prayer.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

BENEDICTION

Go now...

Not just with a prayer...

But with a life that breathes prayer.

And as you stay connected—
watch your strength return.

THIRD SERMON

When The Church Prays Together

Acts 12:1-12

OPENING PRAYER

Sovereign God,

You are the One who hears when Your people cry out together.

Not just individually—but collectively.

Not just quietly—but fervently.

Awaken something in this house today.

Shift us from being observers to intercessors.

Teach us what happens when the church truly prays.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ONE PERSON, ONE PROBLEM... OR A CHURCH RESPONSE?

Good morning, New Horizon family. We are in week 3 of the series Power When We Pray. Again, visit us online to hear all the sermons preached. Ask God how God wants you to respond.

May I ask you something this morning: When one person is in trouble...

whose responsibility is it? Is it just their burden?

Or is it the church's assignment?

Because we live in a culture that says:

“Handle your own problems.”

“Figure it out yourself.” “Don’t bother anybody.”

But the Kingdom says something different:

When one suffers—we all respond.

Acts 12 opens in crisis.

King Herod is persecuting the church

James has already been killed

Peter is arrested

And not just arrested—he is locked down.

16 soldiers guarding him

Chained between two guards

Sentries at the door

One man...maximum security. Herod is not playing.

And here’s what makes it heavier... This is not hypothetical.

This is not a warning. James is already dead.

So, the church knows: Peter could be next.

And then comes one of the most powerful words in Scripture:

“BUT...”

“But the church was earnestly praying to God

for him.”

Not complaining. Not panicking. Not organizing a protest. Praying.

POINT 1: THE CHURCH’S FIRST RESPONSE IS PRAYER

Notice what they didn’t do first. They didn’t strategize.

They didn’t negotiate. They didn’t panic. They prayed.

Because when the situation is out of your hands—

you put it in God’s hands.

When it’s too big for me—(Congregation: “I give it to God!”)

When I can’t fix it—(“I give it to God!”)

When I don’t understand it—(“I give it to God!”)

I remember growing up, we were but teenagers. Me and my eldest sister were privilege to have our own bedroom. We would gather at night with the other siblings and the maids and prayed from 9pm until 2 in the morning. We sing, we pray, we read the Scripture and we had a revival. What motivated us, so young to spend 5 or 6 hours

in prayer? We were praying for our country, for our families, for our church, for the world. There is power in coming together. Last week I quoted Ten Boom and there was a line left out. “The devil smiles when we make plans. He laughs when we get too busy. But he trembles when we pray—especially when we pray together.”

POINT 2: CORPORATE PRAYER RELEASES POWER

Now don’t miss this. Peter is in prison...and he is not alone.

Because while he is in chains—the church is in prayer.

And there is a connection between the two.

What happens in the prayer room... starts affecting the prison room.

Chains on earth... Prayer in heaven...

Guards standing watch... And God is moving...

Darkness in the cell... And light is on the way...

I read a story about believers in South Africa who gathered together for a national day of prayer. They were mocked. Accused.

Misunderstood.

But they prayed anyway. And while change didn’t happen overnight—something shifted in the spirit.

Because when people pray together—strongholds don’t stand forever.

POINT 3: INTERCESSION SUSTAINS OTHERS

Let me say something that might surprise you:

Peter is sleeping. Sleeping... in prison... chained... facing death.

How? How can this be? Because somebody is praying for him.

Some of you are still standing today—not because you were strong...

But because somebody prayed for you.

A grandmother... A friend... A church member...

You made it because somebody stood in the gap.

My grandmother was about 106 when she went on to glory. She prays for us constantly. Lay her hands on us and wish us well because

she stated I am going to the Father. I may not wake up tomorrow morning. So, the next morning, we all say good morning grandma. We believe you are here to pray some more for us.

And now here is the question: Who are you praying for?

Not casually...Not occasionally...

But intentionally... consistently... faithfully?
Because the same way someone carried you—
God is calling you to carry somebody else.

POINT 4: GOD RESPONDS TO PERSISTENT PRAYER

The Bible says the church prayed earnestly.

That means:

Not passive

Not distracted

Not half-hearted

They prayed like it mattered.

And watch what happens:

An angel shows up

Light fills the prison

Chains fall off

Doors open by themselves

Nobody touched the chains—and they fell off.

Nobody opened the door—and it opened.

Nobody fought the guards—and Peter walked out.

What God does in response to corporate prayer—

no human effort can replicate.

Now we're not going to just talk about this...
We're going to do it.

I do not want this to be just a preaching moment—How about making it a praying moment? Are you with me?

I want you to think of one person.

Someone struggling

Someone bound

Someone discouraged

Someone who needs breakthrough

Maybe they're:

Sick

Depressed

Financially burdened

Spiritually distant

Bring them to your mind right now. Can you do that? Say Amen if you're with me.

I want you to come to the altar—not for yourself... but for them.

This is intercession. You are standing in the gap. There are candles provided at the altar. Light one and say a prayer for that person. Talk to Jesus about that person. Name that person. Listen to the Holy Spirit direction on behalf of that person.

Come now. Come on... we're praying for others today...

Come on... bring their name before God who is willing to do far more than we can imagine or ask.

Let us pray together:

Father, in the name of Jesus, We come not just for ourselves—but for others. You see every name represented here. Every burden. Every chain.

Every situation. Lord—move.

Where there is sickness—bring healing.

Where there is bondage—bring freedom.

Where there is confusion—bring clarity.

Where there is despair—bring hope.

Send Your light into dark places. Break chains we cannot break.

Open doors we cannot open. And God—teach us to keep praying.

Not one time—but continually. We trust You. We believe You.

We stand together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, make us an interceding church.

Let us not be silent when others are suffering.

Give us hearts that carry one another.

Let this not end today—but become who we are. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BENEDICTION

Go now...Not just as individuals...But as intercessors.

And as you pray for others—watch God move in ways you cannot explain.

FOURTH SERMON

Chains Fall When We Pray

Acts 12:6–11; Psalm 46:10

OPENING PRAYER

Mighty Deliverer,

You are still the God who breaks chains and opens doors no one can shut.

We bring every burden, every hidden struggle, every silent battle into Your presence. Move in power today. Let chains fall right here in this place.

Let freedom rise in this place. In Jesus' name, Amen.

LOOKING FREE... BUT NOT FREE

My homeland Haiti gained its independence in 1804. Its children went on to fight alongside Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, the United States, Dominican Republic, to name only these. Haiti, the first black nation to gain its independence is still longing to be free one day.

The truth remains: Every country who seems sovereign is not. Everybody who looks free... is not free. Some people smile in public...and struggle in private.

Some people show strength...and carry chains you cannot see.

Chains of:

Fear. Addiction. Anxiety. Shame. Generational cycles. Silent oppression. And the hardest chains are the ones nobody else can see.

Acts 12 brings us back to Peter.

In prison

Bound with chains

Guarded on every side

Scheduled for execution

There is no human way out. No appeal. No escape plan.

However, heaven has already been activated—because the church has been praying.

POINT 1: GOD WORKS WHILE YOU WAIT.

Verse 6 says: Peter is sleeping.

Sleeping... in chains... the night before trial. That's not normal. That's supernatural peace. Some of you are asking:

“How can I have peace when everything around me is falling apart?”

Here's the answer:

When you've been prayed for... and when you've been praying...

God gives you peace that doesn't make sense.

POINT 2: GOD ENTERS IMPOSSIBLE SITUATIONS

The Bible says:

An angel appears

Light fills the prison

Don't miss this: God knows how to step into dark places.

Your prison:

Depression

Financial pressure

Family conflict

Health crisis

God is not afraid of your darkness.

Dark room... God sends light.

Locked door...God steps in.

Chained hands... God is not restricted.

POINT 3: CHAINS FALL BY GOD'S POWER

The angel tells Peter: "Quick, get up."

And immediately—the chains fall off his wrists.

Nobody unlocked them. Nobody cut them. They fell. Can I hear an Alleluia!

I want to sing with Charles Wesley this morning: "Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee."

There are some things in your life that will not break by effort...

They will break by prayer. We cannot afford not to pray.

CALL AND RESPONSE

Not by power—"But by God's Spirit!")

Not by might—"But by God's Spirit!")

POINT 4: DELIVERANCE REQUIRES RESPONSE

The angel gives instructions:

Get up

Get dressed

Follow me

God does the miracle—Peter still has to move.

Freedom is given...and it must be followed. I mentioned my country earlier. Our ancestors

paved the way for freedom. How well are we following their path?

Now here's where this becomes real for us.

Some of you have been praying...and you're still sitting in what God is trying to bring you out of. God is saying: "Get up."

Get up from:

That mindset

That fear

That situation

That cycle

Because when the chains fall—you cannot stay where you were.

POINT 5: GOD OPENS WHAT YOU CANNOT

The Bible says: The iron gate opened by itself. No struggle. No force.

Just... opened.

Chains fall... Doors open... Paths clear... Freedom comes...

Listen friends: What God opens—no one can shut.

And what God breaks—cannot hold you again.

Now this is a deliverance moment. This is the hour of grace.

I'm not asking you to come just because you feel something—

I'm asking you to come if you need freedom.

If there is anything in your life:

Holding you. Binding you. Controlling you. Weighing you down.

This is your moment. Don't analyze it. Don't delay it.

Come. Come now. Be persistent. Do not give up.

The prayer team in the house is ready to pray with you and anoint you with oil if you so desire.

[Prayer team—come and surround them please].

Church—stretch your hands. We are not spectators—we are participants.

Let us pray:

In the name of Jesus, Every chain—break.

Every stronghold—loose its grip.

Every spirit of fear—be gone.

Every spirit of oppression—release now.

Every cycle of bondage—end now.

We declare freedom over Your people. Chains are falling.

Burdens are lifting. Minds are clearing. Hearts are healing.

God, step into every prison represented here.

Shine Your light. Do what only You can do.

And we will give You all the glory. In Jesus' name—Amen.

Now just take a moment... Lift your hands...

And begin to thank God—even before you see it fully.

Because chains are already falling.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, seal what You have done today.

Let no one leave the same way they came.

Give us the strength to walk in our freedom.

And remind us—when we pray, You move.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

BENEDICTION

Go in freedom.

Go in power.

Go knowing that what once held you—

does not hold you anymore.

CLOSING HYMNS (CHOOSE ONE)

Option 1: "Break Every Chain" – Tasha Cobbs Leonard

Option 2: "There Is Power in the Blood" – Lewis E. Jones

Option 3: "And Can It Be"

Lead Creator: Tamara Isidore

THE “SERMONS” OF CHARLES WESLEY

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

An initial answer to Bishop Tom Berlin’s call for a Wesleyan Sermon series, this series draws inspiration from six famous hymns written by Charles Wesley.

NOTE FROM CREATOR: Throughout this sermon series, the congregation sang each of the hymns listed immediately prior to the sermon. The hymns were sung in addition to the normal roster of music.

FIRST SERMON

Everlasting Praise

Romans 5:1–5

Hymn Inspiration: “Maker in Whom We Live”

Inspired by Charles Wesley’s “Maker in Whom We Live,” this sermon unpacks the basics of Trinitarian Theology lyrically encapsulated in Charles Wesley’s iconic hymn. Offered on the weekend of Aldersgate Day, the sermon also pays homage from John Wesley’s historic “heart warming” moment in 1738.

SECOND SERMON

Love is Heaven

1 John 4:7–11

Hymn Inspiration: “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing”

Love is...heaven?! If we pause to think about it, this is a startling declaration. Culturally (and perhaps religiously), people tend to think of a Utopia in which those who believe in Christ travel to after death. How is Love “Heaven?”

Taken in the context of John the Apostle’s own proclamation that “God is Love,” though, perhaps Charles Wesley’s description of Love as Heaven makes more sense. The sermon link Charles Wesley’s lyrics with brother John’s commentary on 1 John, and makes a theological case for the faithful doing the will of God on Earth as it is in Heaven by loving one another as Christ loves us.

THIRD SERMON

A Most Amazing Love

1 John 1:5–9

Hymn Inspiration: “And Can It Be That I Should Gain”

Who is Jesus to me? How does his sacrifice apply to me? Does God really care about little old me, imperfect, selfish human being that I am?

Opening with an excerpt from a poem written by Samuel Wesley, father of John and Charles, this sermon draws from “And Can It Be” and 1 John 1 to highlight the freedom from sin bestowed upon us by Christ’s loving sacrifice upon the cross.

God loves us with an Amazing, Unwavering Love and when we turn to him, praying in the Name of Christ our Lord, our lives will change forever!

FOURTH SERMON

Not Just Christmas Hope

Isaiah 9:6–7

Hymn Inspiration: “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”

This sermon was offered by Rev. Nancy Wood while Anil was out. No details are available at this time. Hopefully the hymn and scripture can afford some thematic direction.

FIFTH SERMON

Come, All the World!

1 John 2:1–6

Hymn Inspiration: “Come Sinners to the Gospel Feast.”

Who stands on the inside of God’s circle of Love and who dwells on the perimeter? How sad that some people who profess our faith exalt themselves as God’s favored, and perceive their neighbors as God’s enemies.

Inspired by Charles Wesley’s “Come Sinners to the Gospel Feast,” this sermon highlights the notion that God’s love for us in Christ Jesus is wide enough, and broad enough to embrace the entire universe.

SIXTH SERMON

A Liberated Life

James 1:19–27

Hymn Inspiration: “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”

The final installment of an initial attempt at a Wesleyan sermon series, this sermon extolls the notion that Jesus frees us to live lives of light and love. Offered on the weekend around July 4th, 2024, the sermon also cautions that with freedom comes the responsibility to seek the good of all.

Lead Creator: Anil K. Singh

FAITHFUL DISCOMFORT

SERIES TYPE

Justice Focused

SERIES DESCRIPTION

As a primarily white church, how do we understand the issues of racial oppression, inequality, and our own privilege? Why did we accept slavery and racial discrimination in the first place? Do we truly understand the history of Methodist churches in Florida and how they didn't exactly address these issues at first? And how do we go forward as children of God accepting our differences and similarities?

FIRST SERMON

Slaves to Our Own Beliefs

Exodus 21:2–6; Ephesians 6:5–9

As we enter Black History Month, knowing that the vast majority of African Americans in America are descended from people forced into a life of servitude, we look back at slavery as written about in the scriptures. We see how our country was influenced by the words of the Bible and how we used these words to not only permit slavery but to shape the way our church developed. Only by looking at how the Methodist Church dealt with this issue can we see why we are where we are today. And what we can do about tomorrow.

SECOND SERMON

A Church for All God's Children

Psalms 10:17–18; Psalm 103:6, Matthew 21:12–17

The Church was created by Christ so that His will... God's will... would be done by Christ's disciples after He ascended to heaven. He charged us with following in His footsteps, being guided by the Holy Spirit. But over

the years the Church has been finding the path difficult to follow, and has sometimes had other motivations behind what it does. We have to remember the reason the Church exists—not just for its members and followers, but for everyone.

THIRD SERMON

But Ya Gotta Have Friends

Luke 19:1–9; Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

Sometimes we lament that we haven't any friends. At least, not a lot of close ones. But friends are necessary in this world and in our lives. Jesus was always making friends, although He also made many enemies. How can we make friends (even if it means making some enemies)? Who can be our friend? What keeps us from being friends with certain people—especially those who are not like us? And how can we follow Christ's way of reaching out to others?

FOURTH SERMON

A System of Grace

James 2:1–9; Acts 10:34–35

In America and around the world, people

of color have said that there is a system of racism within the government, society, and church. After all these years, is this still true? If not, why bring it up? If it is, then how do we change the way we act and think?

Lead Creator: Woody Woodward

GOD'S CREATIVE CONNECTION

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

The series is the story of Abram and his wife Sarai from the time they leave Harran after his father dies to go to the land God will show him. Changing their names to Abraham and Sarah, God leads them to the land where Abram will become a great man, despite their respective stumbles along the way for they are not a perfect family.

FIRST SERMON

Depend on Me

Genesis 12:1–9

We must each depend on God just as Abraham did when he arrived in Canaan from Harran to find it was occupied by the Canaanites. God promises Abraham he will give the land to Abraham's offspring. We find it difficult to depend on God when the outcome is not the one for which we hoped.

SECOND SERMON

God Chooses an Imperfect Family

Genesis 18:1–5 (Genesis 21:1–7)

As with us all, Abraham and Sarah show themselves as imperfect as Sarah arranges for Abraham to have a son by her slave Hagar even though God has promised Sarah a child. Like Sarah, we often reveal our doubt of God's word the same way. No wonder we sometimes laugh along with Sarah when three strangers come saying that Sarah will have a child the next year. Do we not believe either?

THIRD SERMON

A Painful Shortcut

Genesis 21:8–21

Like any of us, like Sarah we also want to ensure things work to our benefit. Once Sarah's child is born as the Lord promised, she makes Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away so Sarah's son would be the favored one. Though their sojourn in the desert ended well, the pain of Hagar as she thought her son would die was alleviated by God while Abraham was still in pain, despite God's assurance of Ishmael's future, all due to Sarah's painful shortcut to remove Ishmael.

FOURTH SERMON

An Unthinkable Trial

Genesis 22:1–14

Sometimes we do unthinkable things but like Abraham, they are even worse when it is God who asks it of us. At the very last moment before Abraham readies himself to sacrifice Isaac, God intervenes and provides a ram for the sacrifice, seeing Abraham's obedience, the kind of obedience we all must learn by

way of being proven ready for the work God has in store for us.

FIFTH SERMON

A Biblical Romance

Genesis 24:34–38, 42–49, 58–67

Sometimes our help comes from God by way of someone unexpected as in Abraham's sending of his servant to find a wife for Isaac. The servant, though not a follower of God at the beginning, leans on the God of Abraham to help him in his quest for the right young woman for Isaac. In his success, he experienced the closeness of God just as we do when we sense God near and he assists us.

RESOURCES

I have multiple modern stories to help illustrate each sermon.

Sermon 1:

- a) Story of a cat being mailed inadvertently and compare to God sending Abraham from Haran so soon after his father, Terah dies.
- b) Letter written by Leslie Weatherhead, a well respected Christian leader in the United Kingdom, who commends the Basic

Christian in a note to the author John Stott
c) Recalling the 2024 Annual Conference with new Bishop Tom Berlin and the others helped us leave Annual Conference with a sense of hope.

Sermon 2:

- a) Used movie The Last Unicorn as an example of how what we expect versus what happens in our lives are often completely different.
- b) Spoke to those who, like Sarah, had unfulfilled desire to have a child and the yearning and disappointment it brings, just as with Abraham and Sarah.
- c) Shared James Fowlers term sacrament of defeat when we recognize who we truly are and what we have done that is irrevocable

Sermon 3:

- a) Anecdote about my mother and the TV show Family Feud and how not working with the team, which was rest of the family, often led to losing the game.
- b) How we are tempted to take shortcuts, even with God.
- c) My experience of being at a great

appointment for which I wasn't a fit.

Sermon 4:

- a) talked about things that are unthinkable
- b) What God testing us could mean
- c) Shared about man my husband knew who had brain cancer yet still praised God for the life he had and making himself ready to meet his Lord.

Sermon 5:

- a) Reflections on my then 38th anniversary with my husband, Greg.
- b) I speak of romance from our text for the family is where we learn our first lessons about love: for family, friends and more, including our love for God and his love in return, as I noted that God loves us with intensity.

Lead Creator: Kim Uchimura

REALLY, JESUS?!?!

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

In Scripture, God often says or does something that makes us uncomfortable. He commands others to do things we don't feel right about. He allows bad things to happen. His words are taken to mean things which can hurt others. How can we reconcile what God has done in the Bible with how Jesus portrays him?

FIRST SERMON

Love your enemies?

Matthew 5:43–48

Jesus tells us how much God loves and cares for everyone, the good and the bad. During the next 3 sermons, we will refer back to Matthew 5:43–48 as a lens through which we can better understand the more troubling passages of Scripture. Also, over the next three weeks, ask the congregation to submit questions about the Bible portraying God in ways that are contrary to how we believe God should be.

SECOND SERMON

The violent images of God

Joshua 6:17–21

For being a loving, caring, and just God, many parts of the Old Testament give us pause. Killing entire cities, down to the last infant? Showing anger and no mercy to those who turn away from him? Are these truly the acts of the God of love?

THIRD SERMON

Justifying the pain

Genesis 16:3–10

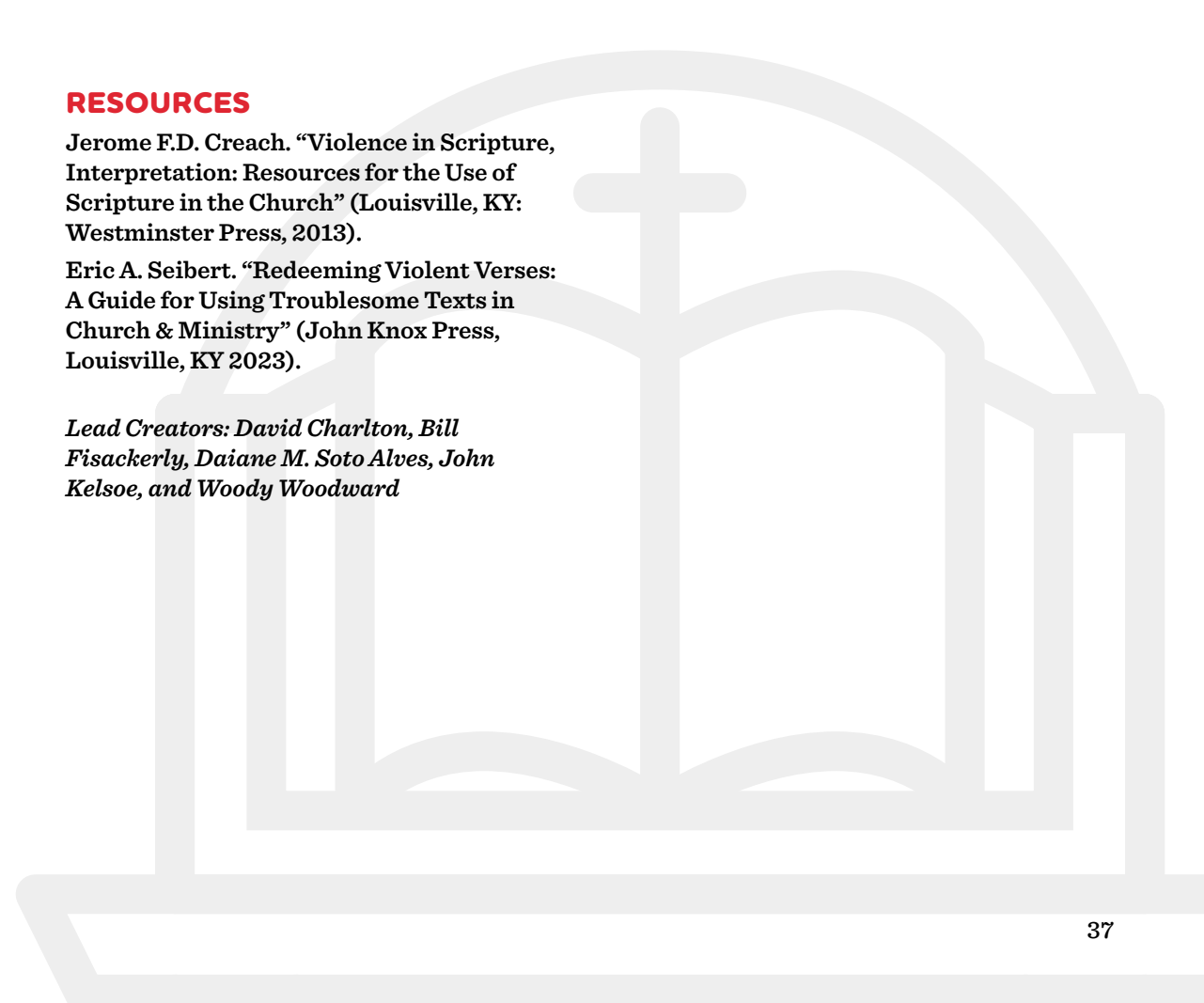
Many things we read about in Scripture reinforces social norms which many find upsetting – while others use them to feed their own misogyny, oppressive actions, and social prejudices. How are we to take these examples which may lead to injustice and inequity? How should we respond to God telling Hagar to go back and submit to her oppressor?

FOURTH SERMON

What bothers me about God's story

Luke 12:11–12

Responding to the questions submitted by congregants over the previous three weeks. (Refer to first sermon) Can we use the teachings of Jesus to let us know what is accurate and what might have been hyperbole or an allegorical story?



RESOURCES

Jerome F.D. Creach. “Violence in Scripture, Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church” (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 2013).

Eric A. Seibert. “Redeeming Violent Verses: A Guide for Using Troublesome Texts in Church & Ministry” (John Knox Press, Louisville, KY 2023).

Lead Creators: David Charlton, Bill Fisackerly, Daiane M. Soto Alves, John Kelsoe, and Woody Woodward

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

This is a three-part series based on Blessings that fits well in November before Thanksgiving. The focus is on turning our gratitude into blessing others (with our time, talent, and resources) and thus making an impact inside the church and in the world.

FIRST SERMON

A Grateful Heart

1 Thessalonians 5:18 and James 1:16-18

When we give thanks IN all circumstances we open the door for God to work. Gratitude is a spiritual practice and way of being in the world. In order to live in gratitude we need to: NOTICE the good things in our lives, NAME them and thank God, and NURTURE the practice of gratitude.

Takeaway: 1. Notice a blessing from God in your life. 2. Share it verbally with someone else.

SECOND SERMON

Bless Others With Your Time, Talents, and Resources

1 Peter 4:8-10; 2 Corinthians 9:11 and Numbers 6:24-26

We are stewards of God's grace and His grace flows through our hands, our hearts, and our voices. Discuss each of the main resources God gives us - our time, our talents, and our resources as well as give examples you see from the congregation. Model how to verbally bless someone with Numbers 6:24-

26 and have them practice with the person next to them.

Takeaway: Give a verbal blessing to someone in your family or even a total stranger!

THIRD SERMON

The Mission of the Church

Matthew 25:31-46

Have the parable of the sheep and the goat read before the sermon and begin with asking how our church is doing with loving and blessing others. Give and show examples of how we are blessed others outside our walls with the food pantry, Wednesday night family dinners, and other ways. Tie in the mission of the church and ask each person to reflect on how they are doing out in the world. Are we judging others or honoring and blessing others?

Takeaway: See one person this week the way Jesus sees them - and bless them!

Lead Creator: Charley McClaren

THE MISADVENTURES OF THE APOSTLES: THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE ALL-EMBRACING GOD

SERIES TYPE

Based on Book(s) of the Bible

SERIES DESCRIPTION

In The Acts of the Apostles, Jesus calls His Apostles to serve as His witnesses to the ends of the Earth.” What did that witness look like in the Early Church? This series offers several views on Christian witness from the perspective of the Apostles as they took the Gospel from Jerusalem to Damascus, Macedonia, Athens and beyond. We are including multiple scriptural references so that Pastors may focus on one or more stories from this epic travelogue. This series is intended to begin on the Sunday before Pentecost.

FIRST SERMON

Be My Witnesses

Acts 1:6–11 (The Ascension)

Jesus calls His Apostles to serve as His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. In a legal sense, witnesses observe some event or events, and then testify (hopefully in truth) to what they saw. To serve as a witness for Christ, however, means to put the Good News into action: Acts of healing, forgiveness, love and self-giving. Given the expansive vision of Christ’s command, what might such acts of Christian witness look like in the Church today?

SECOND SERMON

A Multitude of Voices

Acts 2:1–13

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit enables the Apostles to proclaim God’s deeds in a multiplicity of languages. From the very beginning, God seeks to invite people from all walks of life to unity in Christ. Thinking back on our Methodist history, how far have we taken the Gospel? What possibilities for

expanding God’s embrace open before us today?

THIRD SERMON

Visions and Visitations: The Spirit’s Call to Reach the Unreachable

Acts 9:1–8 (Saul’s “Road to Damascus Moment”); Acts 9:10–18 (God calls Ananias to instruct Paul); Acts 10:1–8 (God calls Cornelius to seek Peter); Acts 10:9–16 (Peter’s accompanying vision); Acts 16:6–10 (Paul’s Call to Macedonia)

The Holy Spirit calls the Apostles to visit unfamiliar places and seek out people they’ve never met, all with the intent of incorporating people of all sorts into the Body of Christ. Do Churchgoers today sense a similar call? To whom is God calling us?

FOURTH SERMON

Who is The Church?

Acts 8:26–40 (Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch); Acts 11:1–18 (The Apostles in Jerusalem celebrate the Gentiles); Acts 15:7–11 (Peter and the Council on Circumcision)

In the Church today, who is in and who is

out? What are the essentials of Christian faith that hold us together, and which are more cultural expressions? As John Wesley famously asked, “If we do not think alike, can we not at least love alike?”

The love of Christ keeps us together!

FIFTH SERMON

The Unlikely Evangelists

Acts 16:11–15 (The Conversion of Lydia); Acts 16:25–34 (The conversion of the Jailer); Acts 28:1–10 (Paul on Malta)

Opportunities to invite people to Christ can come unexpectedly. What we may at first think is a chance encounter might very well be God calling us to share the Good News. Whenever or however the opportunity comes, let’s take it!

SIXTH SERMON

The Spirit Speaks Through Us

Acts 2:14–41 (Peter’s Pentecost Sermon); Acts 3:11–26 (Peter Preaches in Solomon’s Portico); Acts 7:1–53 (Stephen’s Sermon); Acts 17:16–34 (Paul in Athens)

The Apostles preach the Gospel during

holiday festivals, before crowds at the temple, while under arrest and facing persecution, even for people who have never heard of Christ before! When we have a chance to share the Good News, let’s trust that the Holy Spirit will give us the words!

RESOURCES

Skinner, Matthew L. (2020). *Acts: Catching Up with the Spirit*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Lucado, Max. (2018). *Life Lessons from Acts: Christ’s Church in the World*. Nashville: HarperChristian Resources.

Martin, Francis, and Thomas C. Oden (Eds.). (2014). *Acts: Volume 5 (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture)*. IVP Academic.

Lead Creators: Anil Singh, Lisa Degrenia, Katie Harrington, Chandra Snell, Matt Wallis

OUT OF THE BOX

(A SERIES FOR WHEN YOU
HAVE MOVED)

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

This is a series of 5 sermons for the first 5 Sundays at a new congregation. It involves setting the atmosphere by having moving boxes, hand trucks, and a lot of “mess” up on the chancel area. It helps the congregation and the pastor to understand the moving process as more than just changing houses; it is about beginning a new ministry together.

FIRST SERMON

Living Amidst the Confusion

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

SECOND SERMON

Finding Your Way Around

Acts 17:16–23

THIRD SERMON

Finding Your New Routine

Philippians 4:10–13

FOURTH SERMON

When You Finally Feel At Home

1 Thessalonians 5:12–28

FIFTH SERMON

And Now, Going Out Into the Fields

Matthew 9:35–38

RESOURCES

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/mv5ti94gwqv9h5mfx9zow/AL0Y2yeFuSSjaYsjq-HOipe?rlkey=7t06jfoW4xx90a8e4a29kbfxb&st=3p2xe25f&dl=0>

Lead Creator: Bill Fisackerly

WHAT THE LORD REQUIRES

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Based on Micah 6:8 (NKJV), this series explores what it means to “Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”

FIRST SERMON

Do Justice

Micah 6:8 (NKJV)

Our God is a God of Justice.

Jesus personifies justice.

Our faith is evidenced through our works;
including those of justice.

Justice is inextricably part of our Methodist
Christian tradition.

SECOND SERMON

Love Mercy

Micah 6:8 (NKJV)

Jesus exemplifies mercy.

Grace and mercy are intertwined.

Mercy is also inextricable from our Method-
ist Christian tradition.

THIRD SERMON

Walk Humbly with your God

Micah 6:8 (NKJV)

Jesus exemplifies humility.

How do we embody humility in our relation-
ships with God and others?

Lead Creator: Chandra Snell

TABLES OF JESUS

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Discussion of the many ways in which Jesus shared a meal with others, and how this breaking of bread taught, healed, and brought people together.

FIRST SERMON

Lunch with an Outcast - Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

Many have assumed that Zacchaeus was a cheat and a swindler. As a tax collector, he was universally despised. But Jesus knew him better than they did.

SECOND SERMON

Eating with the Enemy - The Pharisees

Luke 7:36-50

Those who are opposed to us have probably never sat down with us to truly meet us. Jesus took the time to share bread and His presence with those who had it in for Him.

THIRD SERMON

Dining with the Sinners

Matthew 9:10-13

We usually share a meal with family and friends—sometimes with total strangers. But not many choose to dine with the sinners in society. Jesus knew that people have more than one side to their stories, and He wanted to get to know them. And change them.

FOURTH SERMON

Sharing with the Many

Matthew 14:15-21

When people are hungry, it's not right to let them go without food. Even when resources were limited, Jesus knew that all are entitled to a meal and fellowship—and the multitudes were fed.

FIFTH SERMON

The Last Supper

Mark 14:12-26

Jesus knew that His time on earth was soon to be over, but He chose to spend His last moments with those who had been beside Him for so long—and to leave them with some final words and memories.

SIXTH SERMON

The Breakfast of a New Dawn

John 21:9-14

Appearing to His followers after He had been resurrected, Jesus chose to share one last meal with them to help them start on their new journey of making disciples in the world.

RESOURCES

The series might be timed to have the fifth sermon be on Communion Sunday.

*Lead Creators: David Charlton, Bill
Fisackerly, John Kelsoe, Daiane Soto Alves,
Woody Woodward*

FORMED IN THE WATERS

SERIES TYPE

Lectionary Based, Discipleship, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

A 4-week pastoral journey through formation, healing, and purpose, grounded in 1 Samuel 17 and Psalm 23, and culminating in restored life through Christ. Before David faced Goliath, he paused at the brook and chose stones that had already been shaped in hidden places. In the same way, God forms us through time, relationships, and even friction.

FIRST SERMON

The Valley Is Certain

Psalm 23:1–4

The valley is part of the journey, not a detour. Psalm 23 does not say if we walk through the valley, but when. The valley is where fear appears, where wounds surface, where relationships are tested. Yet it is also where God draws near. “You are with me.”

Healing does not begin when the valley disappears. It begins when we recognize we are not alone in it. God does not rush us around the valley. He walks us through it. The presence of God becomes the foundation for everything that follows. Without that awareness, the valley feels like abandonment. With it, the valley becomes a place of formation.

SECOND SERMON

Formed in the Waters

1 Samuel 17:38–40

Before the battle, David bends down and selects smooth stones from the brook. Those stones were not shaped in a moment. They were formed through constant movement,

contact, and pressure over time.

In the same way, God forms us through life together. Relationships, differences, even moments of tension become the place where our rough edges are shaped. The church becomes one of the primary spaces where this happens. Not because it is perfect, but because God uses imperfect people to shape one another.

What feels uncomfortable is often necessary. Without that process, the stone remains rough. Not ready. Not prepared. God is not just giving us what we need. He is preparing us to carry it.

THIRD SERMON

Healing in the Friction

Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Psalm 103:14

Friction without grace leads to division. Friction with grace leads to healing.

Scripture calls us to forgive, to bear with one another, to extend the same mercy we have received. “Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” This is not easy work. People fail. Words hurt. Expectations break.

Yet God relates to us with understanding.

“He remembers that we are dust.” That truth changes how we see each other. Not as finished people, but as people still being formed.

Healing begins when we choose to forgive even when it is costly, to understand before reacting, to remain when it would be easier to withdraw. In that space, something deeper is formed. Not just peace, but maturity. Not just reconciliation, but transformation.

FOURTH SERMON

Prepared for the Moment

1 Samuel 17:45–50

David did not pick random stones. He picked stones that had already been shaped. What was formed in the hidden place became the instrument of victory in the visible moment.

The same is true for us. What God is doing in us now—the healing, the stretching, the forgiving—is not isolated. It is preparation. The real victory is not always the battle we see. Sometimes it is a restored relationship, a softened heart, unity where there was distance.

And from that place, we are ready.

When the moment comes, what was formed quietly becomes part of God’s work openly. Nothing was wasted. Not the valley. Not the friction. Not the process.

God forms us so that we may become instruments of healing, within the church and beyond.

RESOURCES

SHORT TESTIMONY

This series rises out of two difficult moments:

—There was a Sunday in New Jersey. Two senior pastors, long-time friends, one visiting, stood in the same service. Something was said, and in a moment everything shifted. Words escalated. The room tightened. What should have been worship became tension in front of the whole congregation.

In the middle of that moment, I felt a clear nudge to step forward. I took the mic and spoke about David, about the stones shaped in the water before the battle. About how God uses pressure, contact, and time to form us. About how what feels like friction is often

preparation.

Something broke open in the room. The two pastors moved toward each other. They embraced. Tears followed. Then the congregation. People began to hug, to forgive, to release what they had been holding. It became a moment of reconciliation none of us could have planned.

—Recently, something similar happened again. A lay supply was deeply disrespected by a brother in the church. The weight of that moment lingered. I knew I had to return to that same teaching at a men’s breakfast.

We spoke again about the stones. About grace in the middle of friction. About understanding before reaction.

And again, something shifted. Conversation turned into confession. Distance turned into reconciliation.

This series comes from those moments and it is written for those kind of moments.

Because the valley is real. Friction is real. Wounds are real. But so is the work of God in the middle of it all.

Over these four weeks, we walk through the

valley, the process of being formed, the call to forgive, and the moment when what God has shaped in us becomes part of His healing work. Nothing is wasted. Not the tension. Not the struggle. Not even the pain.

In God's hands, it all becomes part of the formation.

Amen

Lead Creator: Elvis Soto



THE MORAL TEACHINGS OF JESUS

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

So many of those who identify as Christian intuitively know that their old version of faith is no longer working and they feel the theological vacuum. In “The Moral Teachings of Jesus,” written by David P. Gushee, its author examines forty teachings of Jesus, drawn from all four New Testament Gospels to clarify what Jesus said about the moral life.

FIRST SERMON

I See You!

John 4:39–41

In this story Jesus’s humanity is humbly revealed. Jesus sits at the well at noon, because he is tired and thirsty. A Samaritan woman comes to the well, and Jesus asks her for a drink.

SECOND SERMON

Once Was Lost but Now I Am Found

John 7:53–8:11

Scribes and Pharisees bring to Jesus a woman allegedly caught in adultery. They make her stand in front of all of them.

THIRD SERMON

Love One Another

John 13:31–35

Jesus is about to say good bye to his disciples. He is about to be glorified through willingly going to his gruesome death, that classic paradox of the cross. His passion is now beginning “I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me.. but where I am going, you can not come” (John 13:32–33)

FOURTH SERMON

May They All Be One

John 17:20–21

This is a prayer for Christian unity, the unity of all believers. Jesus asks that the unity that he enjoys with the Father would be theirs.

FIFTH SERMON

What Belongs to God

Mark 12:17

Then he entered the Temple and began to drive out all the money changers. This story seems to indicate local suspicion that Jesus and his followers did not pay the tax to support the Jerusalem temple.

SIXTH SERMON

As You Did to the Least of These

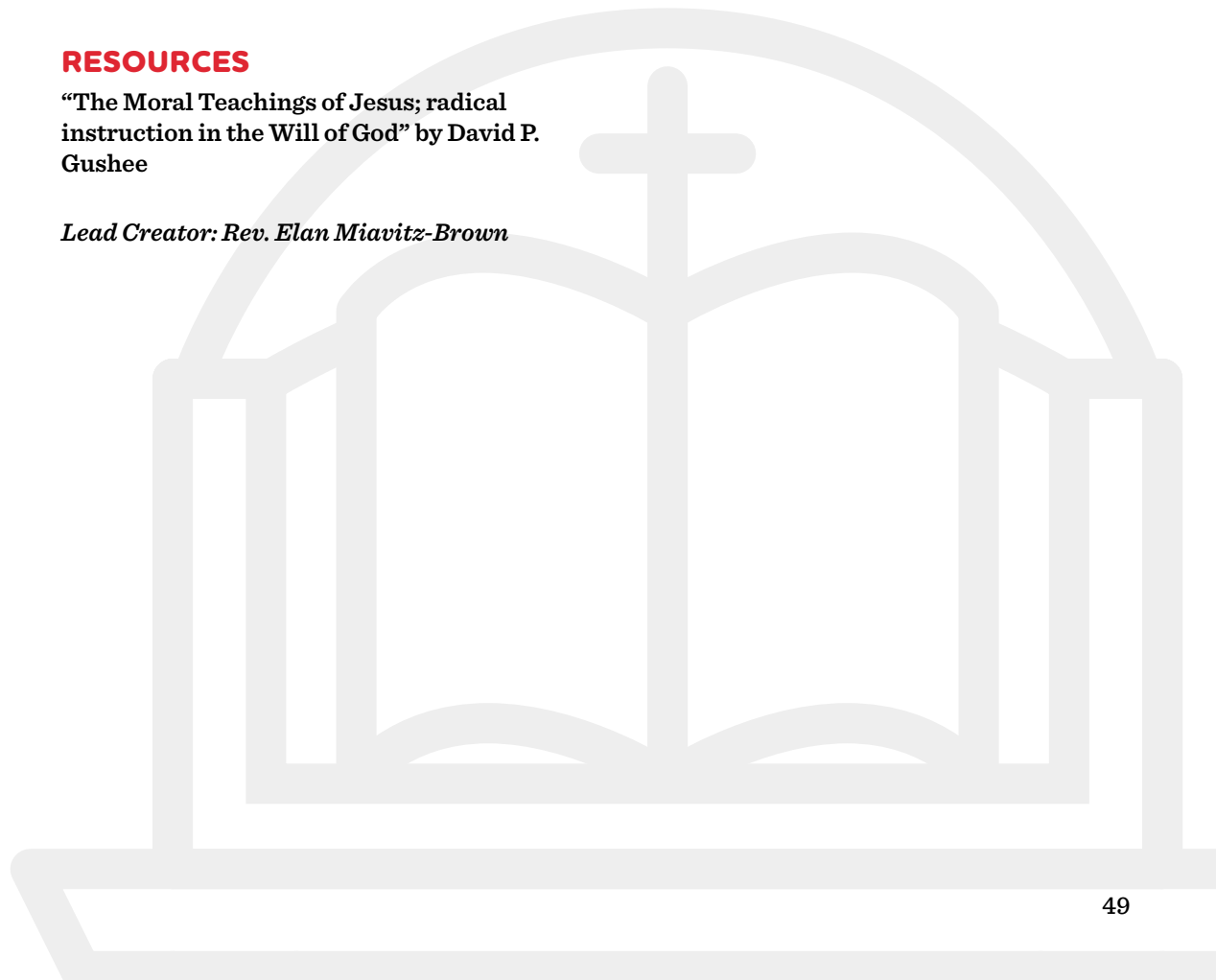
Matthew 25:31

This text, the last block of Jesus’s teaching prior to his passion, has been described as the most revolutionary text in Matthew and its social ethic is one of the most visionary in human history. This passage is rooted in the Hebrew Bible.

RESOURCES

“The Moral Teachings of Jesus; radical instruction in the Will of God” by David P. Gushee

Lead Creator: Rev. Elan Miavitz-Brown



DEVOTED: A BLUEPRINT FOR GENEROUS LIVING

SERIES TYPE

Stewardship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Acts 2:42-47 – Theme for the whole series

The community in Acts is formed and living under the rule and authority of Jesus, inhabiting his values over that of Caesar. People's devotion has changed and it shows. This series shows us the devotion of the apostles in the early church, especially the way they shared everything together. Keying in on the words, "learning, fellowship, sharing, prayer, and worship", the goal is for this series to help us to think about stewardship as more than just how we steward our money but how we must be devoted to God and to one another as well.

FIRST SERMON

Devoted to Learning

Luke 2:41-52 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17

In our theme verses from Acts, we see that the early church was devoted to the teachings of the apostles. In our scripture for this week, we also see Jesus as a boy in the temple, and the reminder in 2 Timothy to "continue in what you have learned." As followers of Christ, we should never feel that we have "fully arrived" at our understanding of God. We are to keep learning and growing in our faith. Stewardship is not only about committing to giving of only our money. It's also about committing to continuing to learn. How will you commit to being a part of a Bible Study, small group, or studying the Bible on your own to continue to grow in your learning about God?

SECOND SERMON

Devoted to Fellowship

Hebrews 10:19-25

In the early church, fellowship (koinonia) wasn't optional, it was life-sustaining devotion, central to the early church's

experience. To live generously, you must be "all-in" with one another. The early church prioritized this, sharing their time and resources because they understood what could happen if one made it a habit to live in isolation or away from the community – it would weaken their devotion to God and each other, weaken their faith and their witness. The writer of Hebrews emphasizes this when he writes, "Let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near." (vs. 24-25) Particularly now, as the world becomes more fragmented, where we see divisions and uncertainty increase, the act of fellowship becomes a radical act of the Body of Christ gathering to shine their collective light.

THIRD SERMON

Devoted to Sharing

2 Corinthians 8:1-9

In Acts 2, we see the believers "sharing with all, as any had need." And they did

this because of the encounter they had had with God. They understood that everything they owned was a gift from God that was intended for the good of the community. Using the Macedonian church as a case study, Paul shows us how sharing is the outward overflow of an inward grace. The Macedonian church, this congregation of many trials with an “extra amount of happiness” didn’t wait for extra money or a surplus, they shared out of their “extreme poverty,” which produced their “rich generosity.” And they did it because “they gave themselves to the Lord first.” Sharing is physical evidence of spiritual devotion.

FOURTH SERMON

Devoted to Prayer

Colossians 4:2–6

This scripture of Colossians begins with “devote yourselves to prayer.” How might our relationships and the life of our church look different if we were devoted to prayer? Sometimes we may think we can’t give as much as others, but we can all pray. Can you commit yourself to being devoted to prayer and praying for the life of our church so that

through our ministries more will come to know about Christ?

FIFTH SERMON

Devoted to Worship

Romans 12:1–2

The reason the early church could be so generous with their time and possessions is because they had already offered their entire lives to God. Before we can give of ourselves, we must give over ourselves. The Acts 2 congregation broke rank with the ways of the world, that had them looking out for only themselves and trying to find ways to “get ahead”. They lived into the Acts 2 blueprint of learning together, sharing, sacrificing, praying together and fellowshiping with one another. Here in this text, Paul redefines worship and reminds us that by daily “presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God ...” is the “blueprint for generous living” illustrated to us in Acts 2.

Lead Creators: Juana Jordan, Katie Harrington

A CALL TO PRAISE, WORSHIP, LOVE, AND FAITH

SERIES TYPE

Congregational Leadership/Vision, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

We journey through Psalm 100:1-5 (NKJV), embracing the psalmist's joyful invitation for all of God's people to lift their voices, bow in sincere worship, rest in God's steadfast love, and stand firm in unwavering faith. This series calls the church into a deeper, more vibrant walk with God. In a season when many hearts are weary, this series offers a powerful reminder that God is still worthy of praise, still seeking true worshipers, still surrounding His people with unfailing love, and still calling us to live by faith every day.

FIRST SERMON

A Call to Praise

Psalm 100:1, Psalm 150:6, Psalm 107:2, Acts 16:25-26, Hebrews 13:15

This sermon emphasizes that praise is a joyful, expressive response to God's goodness and not dependent on circumstances. All people are called to praise God because of who God is and what God has done. Praise becomes both a spiritual weapon and a witness that invites God's presence and power into our lives.

Main Points:

- Praise is a universal call for all people.
- Praise is rooted in gratitude and testimony.
- Praise has power even in difficult situations.
- Praise shifts focus from problems to God.
- Praise is both a sacrifice and a weapon.

SECOND SERMON

A Call to Worship

Psalm 100:2, John 4:24; Romans 12:1, Psalm 95:6, Luke 9:23

Worship moves beyond praise into a deeper relationship with God, focusing on who God is rather than just what God does. True worship is authentic, Spirit-led, and involves surrendering our entire lives to God. It calls believers into intimacy, transformation, and daily discipleship.

Main Points:

- Worship is relational, not routine.
- True worship is in spirit and truth.
- Worship involves the whole life, not just church moments.
- Worship requires humility and surrender.
- Worship calls us from spectators to followers.

THIRD SERMON

A Call to Love

Psalm 100:3, 1 John 4:8, Matthew 22:37-39, Ephesians 4:32, Galatians 5:13, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Colossians 3:14, John 13:35

This sermon highlights that our identity as God's people calls us to live a lifestyle of love. Because God is love, we are to reflect God's nature in how we treat others. Love is not

just emotional, it is active, enduring, and the clearest evidence of a true relationship with Christ.

Main Points:

- Love flows from our identity in God.
- God's love is the model for our relationships.
- Love is action, serving, forgiving, and enduring.
- Love holds everything together.
- Love is the evidence of true discipleship.

FOURTH SERMON

A Call to Faith

Psalm 100:4–5, Hebrews 11:1, 2 Corinthians 5:7, James 1:2–3, 2 Chronicles 20, Proverbs 3:5–6

Faith empowers believers to trust God's character even when circumstances are unclear. Rooted in God's goodness, mercy, and truth, faith allows us to walk confidently and give thanks in every season. It is through faith that we experience victory, endurance, and deeper dependence on God.

Main Points:

- Faith is grounded in God's unchanging

character.

- Faith allows us to trust beyond what we see.
- Faith grows through trials.
- Faith leads to victory and confidence.
- Faith calls us to trust God fully, not ourselves.

RESOURCES

4 Week Series Conclusion

Psalm 100 presents a complete picture of the believer's life, calling us to praise God for what God has done, worship God for who God is, love God as a response to God's love, and trust God fully by faith. These are not just words we speak, but practices that shape how we live each day. As we embrace praise, worship, love, and faith consistently, they transform us from the inside out, deepening our relationship with God and guiding how we think, respond, and walk through life. This is not routine religion, but the foundation of a vibrant, growing relationship with the living God that impacts every area of our lives.

Lead Creator: Charles Fisher

LET THE ADULTS COME TO ME

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship, Congregational Leadership/
Vision, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

I have spent my entire ministry working with children — and I am telling you, the crisis is real. The children are out there, but they are not in our pews, and God will not let me stay silent about it. Let the Adults Come to Me is a four-week prophetic invitation for the Church to welcome children, raise them in faith, and ultimately become like them before the Father.

FIRST SERMON

Jesus Calls the Children

Mark 10:13–16; Matthew 18:1–5; Matthew 19:14; Luke 18:15–17; Psalm 127:3

I want to open this series by saying something out loud that I believe the church desperately needs to hear: we do not have a children's program problem — we have a Kingdom vision problem. I've seen it with my own eyes. Jesus does not merely tolerate children; He calls them near, He rebukes the disciples for pushing them away, and then He holds a child up in front of everyone and says, "This. This is what the Kingdom looks like." So we have to ask ourselves — honestly, painfully — what are we doing to the children He is calling? Who are we turning away? This first sermon is where we stop making excuses and start hearing the voice of Jesus again.

Main Points:

Jesus ran toward children — stop building walls that keep them out.

The Kingdom of God belongs to the child-like — so what does that say about who we've become?

Welcoming children is not a ministry option — it is obedience to Christ.

SECOND SERMON

Raise Them Right

Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:14–15; Psalm 78:4–7

I grew up hearing "it takes a village" — and I believe it with everything in me, because the Bible said it first. Deuteronomy 6 does not just give parents a homework assignment; it gives an entire community a calling. We are meant to talk about God when we walk, when we sit, when we rise up. And what I've seen in my own ministry is that when the whole church decides to take ownership of a child's spiritual formation, something miraculous happens — that child grows up and becomes the one who disciples the next generation. But when we abandon that calling? We lose them. This sermon is a wake-up call to every adult in the room: these children are not someone else's responsibility. They are ours.

Main Points:

Don't wait for parents to do it alone — the

whole congregation is called to raise disciples.

Spiritual formation starts before you think it does — be intentional, and start now.

The child you invest in today is the leader who will carry the church tomorrow.

THIRD SERMON

Get on Their Level

Acts 16:13–15; 1 Corinthians 9:22; Mark 9:36–37; Luke 10:38–42; Philippians 2:3–5

There is a moment in Acts 16 that I come back to again and again: Paul does not rent a hall or put up a sign. He goes to a riverbank — where the women already are — and he sits down. That is ministry. That is what it looks like to get on someone's level. I've learned in my years working with children that you cannot reach a child from a distance. You have to get low. You have to go to them. You have to sit in the mess and the noise and the beautiful chaos of their world. Jesus knew this — He took a child in His arms. Not from across the room. In His arms. That is the posture this sermon calls us back to: close, humble, and willing.

Main Points:

Stop waiting for the children to come to you — get up and go to where they are.

Humility is not weakness; it is the posture Jesus modeled every time He knelt down.

Closing the distance between you and a child is one of the most Christlike things you can do.

FOURTH SERMON

I'm Telling Dad!

Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6–7; Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 15:20–24; 1 John 3:1

Every child knows what to do when things fall apart — they run to their parent. They don't overthink it, they don't make an appointment, they don't clean themselves up first. They just run. And that is exactly the faith Jesus calls us back to. This final sermon is where everything we've walked through together lands: the church that learned to welcome children, the adults who humbled themselves to become like them — they all end up in the same place, running to the Father. I want every person in this room to leave with one thing: the courage to cry out

“Abba, Father!” like you mean it. Like a child who knows, without a single doubt, that they are loved.

Main Points:

Stop calling childlike faith immature — it is the most mature trust you will ever offer God.

You have been adopted — so run to your Father like you actually believe it.

Don't go alone: run to the Father, and bring every child you can with you.

RESOURCES

Throughout this series, I relied deeply on Scripture as the primary foundation for every message. The biblical passages included in each sermon shaped both the theological direction and the pastoral urgency of this work, especially the call to return to the childlike posture Jesus lifts up in the Gospels.

I am also grateful for the insights and encouragement of my colleagues in the Pulpit Project cohort. Their shared reflections, conversations, and ministry

experiences helped spark several of the themes explored in this series—particularly the emphasis on community responsibility, intergenerational discipleship, and the courage to reimagine how we welcome and form children in our congregations. Their wisdom strengthened this work, and I am thankful for the collaboration. Gracia y paz!

Lead Creator: Rev. Daiane M. Soto Alves



UP TO SOMETHING GOOD

SERIES TYPE

Lectionary Based, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

In a world filled with bad news, “Up To Something Good” reminds us that God’s goodness is still at work—in creation, in our lives, and in our communities. Over six weeks, we’ll rediscover how God is moving in powerful and hopeful ways. Come and see where God is up to something good—and how you’re invited to be part of it.

FIRST SERMON

Good Creation

Genesis 1:1–5, 27–31

In the beginning, God created the world and called it good—very good. Yet somewhere along the way, we lost sight of our role as caretakers. What might it look like to rediscover our calling to steward God’s good creation with love and intention?

SECOND SERMON

Good Purpose

1 Samuel 3:1–10, John 1:43–51

God created each of us with a good purpose—rooted in loving God, loving others, and participating in God’s work in the world. Through the stories of Samuel and the first disciples, we see that purpose begins with listening and responding. What might God be calling you to in this season of your life?

THIRD SERMON

Good News

Jonah 3:1–5, 10; Mark 1:14–20

At the heart of our calling is the invitation to receive and share good news. From Jonah

to the disciples, God calls ordinary people to proclaim a message that transforms lives. Where are you in the story—hearing, rediscovering, or ready to share this good news?

FOURTH SERMON

Good God

Psalms 111

Scripture reminds us again and again: God is good—all the time. From mercy and compassion to justice and faithfulness, God’s goodness shapes everything. Our response is simple but powerful—praise, gratitude, and trust in the One who loves us without end.

FIFTH SERMON

Good Shepherd

Psalms 147:1–11, 20; Mark 1:29–39, John 10:1–18

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, knows us, guides us, and cares for us—especially when we feel lost or worn down. He meets us in our need and leads us toward healing and wholeness. How might you receive his care—and extend that same care to others?

SIXTH SERMON

Good Community

2 Kings 2:1–12, Mark 9:2–9

From the very beginning, we were created for connection—with God and with one another. Through stories of deep relationship and shared experience, we see that faith is never meant to be lived alone. Where is God inviting you to grow in good, life-giving community?

Lead Creator: Erick Ashley

FIRM FOUNDATION: MESSAGES OF HOPE IN A SEASON OF CHANGE

SERIES TYPE

Congregational Leadership/Vision, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

In seasons of change, when familiar rhythms shift and trusted leaders move on, we need something unshakable to stand on. Our sermon series, Firm Foundation, draws us back to Christ- the Rock beneath our feet, the Cornerstone of the church, the One who never changes. When everything else feels uncertain, Christ remains steadfast. As followers of Christ, we can stand firm in hope, even as we step into a new season.

FIRST SERMON

Living Stones

*1 Peter 2:4–10 (The Voice Translation);
Ephesians 2:19–22*

We are living stones, built into a spiritual house, with Jesus as the cornerstone. Will you take your place, allowing yourself to be built up and built together, so others may find a meeting place with God?

SECOND SERMON

Rock of Salvation

Psalms 62:5–7; Matthew 7:24–27

Change is a strange season, especially when you're in between the now and not yet. It feels like you're standing on one foot or the other, not both. The shifting feels unsteady, but God isn't. God is our Rock, our Fortress, our Refuge.

THIRD SERMON

The Gift of Seasons

Ecclesiastes 3:1–8; Jeremiah 7:24

Time is not an enemy; it's a good gift of God. Change is not an enemy; it is a companion. Seasons do not threaten us; they shape us,

providing space for release, new beginnings, and growth. What would it be like to embrace growth and change in this new season?

FOURTH SERMON

God Brings the Growth

1 Corinthians 3:5–9a, Matthew 13:31–32

Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the growth. God gives the growth, God gets the glory, not any particular leader. Imagine what you and God will grow together in the coming years.

RESOURCES

Scripture reading plan with reflection questions to accompany the sermon series.
<https://revlisad.com/2025/08/14/firm-foundation-a-sermon-series-and-scripture-reading-plan-for-spiritual-grounding-in-a-season-of-change/>

Passing the Mantle, a liturgy for pastoral transition

<https://revlisad.com/2025/06/28/passing-the-mantle-a-liturgy-for-a-pastoral-transition-plus-a-personal-update/>

Help us Build our Lives on You by Lisa Degrenia

Jesus,
You are our Refuge.
You are The Rock.
You are our Strong Foundation.
You are the Cornerstone.

Help us build our lives on You so we are not shaken
when the winds howl and the waves scream,
when change swirls and the shadows of grief stretch long.

Help us build our lives on You so we are not shaken
when the job disappears and the nations war,
when needs keep rising and headlines bleed.

Help us build our lives on You so we are not shaken
when the diagnosis comes and confidence wanes,
when the unexpected arrives and the wicked seem to win.

Offer prayers for the instability in your own life and the lives of others.

Jesus, You are Steadfast and Faithful Forever.

Our hope is in you.

Jesus, You are the Resurrection.
The Rock who rolls the stone away.
Our hope is in you.

Jesus, You are near and You are good.
You are strong to save.
Our hope is in you.

Most Blessed, Most Beautiful Christ by Lisa Degrenia

Most blessed, most beautiful Christ,
in you, we receive all things

The receiving takes growth, so you give us guiding-
saints and sages and scripture.
Thank you for the guiding.

The receiving takes others, so you give us the world-
nature and neighbors and nations.
Thank you for the world.

The receiving takes change, so you give us seasons-
life and death and new life.
Thank you for the seasons.

The receiving takes time, so you give us time-
present and future and forever.

Thank you for the time.

Most blessed, most beautiful Christ
You give us yourself,
and in you, O Christ
we belong to you and to God and to all.
Thank you for the giving.

Lead Creator: Lisa Degrenia

THE COURSE OF GRACE

SERIES TYPE

Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Wesley's means of grace is headed to the golf course. From the invitation to play to loving the game, the course, and the One who invited you, this Sermon series aims to show how God's grace shapes our faith journey.

FIRST SERMON

Invited to Play - Prevenient Grace

John 1:9-13

Before anyone swings from the tee-box, the sun is already up, the course is ready, and God's invitation extends. The opening prologue to John's Gospel emphasizes that God has already made the first move in our faith story.

SECOND SERMON

Deciding to Tee-Off - Justifying Grace

Luke 18:9-14

In the Luke 18 parable, a Pharisee and a tax collector step into the temple to pray. The Pharisee talks about himself and lacks dependence on God. He appears spiritual but never trusts God. The tax collector prays for forgiveness, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." A prayer not of performance, but a prayer of surrender. Justifying grace happens the moment we stop watching and start trusting. Today is the day to take your swing and tee off!

THIRD SERMON

Play the Course - Sanctifying Grace

Philippians 2:12-13

The Apostle Paul encourages believers, "continue to work out your salvation... for it is God who works in you." The ultimate partnership of growth; God is active, and you are active. The Spirit-empowered effort leads us down the course. The presence of God's Spirit is with us throughout the smooth fairways and the sinful sand-bunkers of our faith journey. God is shaping us from the inside out.

FOURTH SERMON

Fall in Love - Onward to Christian Perfection

1 John 4:16-19

The final destination is not putting the ball into the hole. The goal is loving the game, the course, and the One who calls us to play. In our Wesleyan theology, the final step is to be perfected in Love, living in love just as God is Love. Onward to perfection! Onward in God's course of grace!

Lead Creator: John Kelsoe

MISS YOU WHEN YOU'RE AWAY

SERIES TYPE

Discipleship

SERIES DESCRIPTION

A four week series, this pastoral call to restoration addresses how absence can cause pain, whether it is the absence of a thing or a person. Through the parables of Luke 15 and supporting Scriptures, we see who God seeks, a Savior who restores and a community called to welcome people back with grace. Each message moves intentionally from God's pursuit to our responsibility to help create a pathway for return, healing and reconnection.

FIRST SERMON

When Loss Hurts

Luke 15:1-10

Supporting Scriptures: Deuteronomy 4:29; Isaiah 43:4; Psalm 42; Ezekiel 34:11-12

The lost sheep and the lost coin both cause hurt to those who lost each one. They each celebrate with friends when the lost sheep and the lost coin are recovered. How will we and Jesus celebrate when something or someone we miss returns?

Key Line: You may feel lost, but you were never devalued.

Core Idea: Lost does not mean worthless. Both shepherd and woman search because what they lost was still valuable.

Preaching Direction: Some people feel forgotten, overlooked, or spiritually misplaced. God searches with intention and persistence. The church reflects God when it creates environments where people know they still matter. People don't always leave loudly, many drift quietly. The church must develop the heart of the shepherd, not just the mindset of the crowd. Restoration begins

when someone is willing to go after the one whether it's for sheep or coin.

SECOND SERMON

Grace Meets You Where You Are

Luke 15:11-24

Supporting Scriptures: Romans 5:8; Luke 15:24

Imagine the heartbreak of the younger son who demands his inheritance before his father has died, essentially saying his father is dead to the son. Then he packs up and leaves home, leaving behind the father and the son's older brother. The younger son doesn't return until he is defiled by the pigs he lives with, suffering from hunger and without two coins to rub together. If you were the younger son's father, would you be a father who looks for him on the horizon every day? What goes through your mind when you finally see the younger son on his way home?

Core Idea: Return does not begin with perfection - it begins with turning back. The Father runs to the lost son before the son can explain himself.

Preaching Direction: Shame keeps people away longer than sin does. This message removes barriers by revealing the posture of the Father. Restoration is not earned; it is received.

Key Line: Before you can explain, God is already embracing.

THIRD SERMON

The One Who Stayed Home

Luke 15:25–32

Supporting Scriptures: Jonah 4:1–3, Romans 5:8

While we do not know the older son's ultimate reaction, in Hebrews, the author tells us how to move closer to others rather than separate. He suggests that we take up the habit again of meeting together, presumably referencing worship at minimum. How would you respond to this encouragement to seek God in community on a more regular basis instead of on your own? What keeps those away who come infrequently? How can we mend the gap back together while becoming closer friends in Christ?

Core Idea: The older son stayed with his father but when the younger brother returns, the older son checks out emotionally.

Preaching Direction: Consider the root of the older son's anger and how it might reveal his feelings more directly than his words. Seeing the younger son receive so much from the father made the older son angry that his father would welcome the son who left with such extravagance but the older son wants to be right not welcoming.

Key Line: Sometimes we are unaware of how we are hurting until we see someone who is celebrating.

FOURTH SERMON

Making Room, Again

Hebrews 10:24–25 (Luke 15:25–32)

Supporting Scripture: Ephesians 2:19; Romans 15:7

While we do not know the older son's ultimate reaction, in Hebrews, the author tells us how to move closer to others rather than separate, suggesting that we take up the habit again of meeting together, presumably referring to worship. How will you respond

to this encouragement to seek God again in community?

Core Idea: Restoration is incomplete without a welcoming community. The older brother represents resistance within the house.

Preaching Direction: The challenge is not only bringing people back - it is receiving them well. The church must guard against judgment, comparison and coldness. Reconnection thrives in environments of encouragement and belonging.

Key Line: A returning heart needs an open house.

RESOURCES

I believe I would share my own story of being the Prodigal child but it would be woven through all four sermons and frankly, only I could preach it because I alone understand not only the story but it's impact on my life. So, for anyone who has a story, it could be they would feel comfortable to share. If not, look for others' Prodigal stories to use such as from books or magazines but you would have to ask for permission. Finally, you can focus on the salvation Christ gives even to

**the Prodigal. I'm sure there are other ways to
put illustrations in each sermon.**

***Lead Creators: Kim Uchimura, Elvis Soto,
Charley McClaren, Elan Miavitz-Brown***



A THRILL OF HOPE

SERIES TYPE

Advent/Christmas

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Sermons inspired by the beloved carol, O Holy Night.

FIRST SERMON

The Soul Felt Its Worth

John 1:1–5, 10–14 or Matthew 1:18–21 or 18–25

The coming of Christ reveals our sacred worth and restores our hope.

Lyrics

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,
it is the night of our dear Savior's birth. Long
Lay the world in sin and error pining, Till He
appeared and the soul felt its worth.

SECOND SERMON

A Thrill of Hope

Luke 2:8–14

Into a weary world, Christ comes, breaking
into and breaking through despair and great
need. This isn't the thrill of adventure,
accomplishment, or beauty. The shepherds
remind us that the thrill of hope inspires in
us curiosity, enthusiasm, presence, and joy.

Lyrics

A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices for
yonder breaks a new and glorious morn. Fall
on your knees! O hear the angel voices! O

night divine, O night when Christ was born.

THIRD SERMON

He Knows Our Need

Psalms 34:17–18 and/or Isaiah 40:1–5

Christ meets us in our sorrow, our weakness,
and our longing with grace and hope. His
incarnation, life, and death remind us that
he understands our pain. His resurrection
reminds us that evil, harm, and death are
overcome. This message would also work
well for a Blue Christmas or Longest Night
service.

Lyrics

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming
with glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
So led by the light of a star sweetly gleaming,
here come the wise men from the Orient
land. The King of kings lay thus in lowly
manger, in all our trials born to be our friend.
He knows our need, to our weaknesses no
stranger. Behold your King! Before Him,
lowly bend.

Follow this link for an Order of Worship for
Blue Christmas. Feel free to substitute this
sermon for the suggested sermon and main

scripture. <https://revlisad.com/2024/11/26/order-of-worship-for-a-blue-christmas-service-also-known-as-a-longest-night-service-2/>

FOURTH SERMON

His Law Is Love

Luke 1:46–55 and Isaiah 9:2–7

God does not observe poverty and oppression from a distance. God is born into it. God comes to an overcrowded town without enough affordable housing. God enters the world in a borrowed stable, in a gush of amniotic fluid and a mother's cry. God comes needing to be fed, changed, soothed, educated. The salvation of the world arrives unable to hold up its own head.

The song Mary sings when Jesus is within her womb is the song Jesus lives and invites us to live. The way of Christ is compassion, peacemaking, and justice. We join Christ in breaking chains and setting people free.

Lyrics

Truly He taught us to love one another. His law is love and His gospel is peace. Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother

and in His name all oppression shall cease

FIFTH SERMON

Christ Is the Lord!

Luke 2:15–20

Our response to the incarnation is joyful praise and lifelong worship.

Lyrics

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we. Let all within us praise His holy name. Christ is the Lord! O praise His Name forever. His power and glory evermore proclaim!

RESOURCES

Follow this link for a powerful, literal translation of O Holy Night.

<https://revlisad.com/2024/11/26/the-songs-of-christmas-o-holy-night-luke-1/>

The Story of “O Holy Night”

In 1843, in the small French town of Roquemaure, the organ in the church of St. John the Baptist the Evangelist was renovated. It was near Christmas, so the priest reached out to a local wine merchant and poet named Placide Cappeau, to write a

Christmas poem to celebrate the renovation. Cappeau was a free thinker with no interest in Christianity or any other religion, but he accepted the commission anyway. To prepare, he read the gospels, especially the Christmas story (Matthew 1–2, Luke 1–2, John 1). The poem was called “Midnight, Christians.”

Four years later, in 1847, they asked a friend, a composer named Adolphe Adam, to write some music for it, and the song became known as “Cantique de Noel,” or “Christmas Carol” in English. It became very popular. It was sung in nearly every church in France, but not for long. When the leaders of the church discovered that Cappeau was against slavery, and when the rumor began to spread that the composer was Jewish, even though that rumor was not true, the song was quickly banned.

Eight years later, in 1855, an American minister and writer named John Sullivan Dwight found the song. He was an abolitionist, and he felt moved by the third verse. John Sullivan Dwight translated the song from French into English, and it quickly found favor in the United States, especially

in the North, and especially during the time of the Civil War. Later, this song came to be known by its opening words: "O Holy Night..."

An Advent Prayer of Hope by Lisa Degrenia

Holy Spirit, help us to receive and rejoice,
to rejoice with an indescribable joy.
Inexpressible. Unspeakable.
A joy greater than words.
A great and glorious joy.
Loose. Liberated. Boundless.
A joy worthy of new birth, of a living and
thrilling hope.
A joy offered in the small and vulnerable.
A joy anchored in The Imperishable, The
Eternal.
In Christ, this hope has come for us and for
all.
May all know and receive this great gift.
Amen.

Affirmation of Faith for Christmas

Adapted from the poem First Coming by
Madeleine L'Engle.

ONE:

Christians, what do you believe?

ALL:

God did not wait till the world was ready,
till nations were at peace.
God came when the Heavens were unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release.
God did not wait for the perfect time.
God came when the need was deep and great.
God dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.
God did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin
and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame,
God came and God's Light would not go out.
God came to a world which did not mesh;
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh,
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,

For to share our grief, to touch our pain,
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

Lead Creator: Lisa Degrenia

DARKEST NIGHTS, BRIGHTEST LIGHTS: AN ADVENT OF HOPE, PEACE, LOVE, AND JOY

SERIES TYPE

Advent/Christmas, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

An updated version of the Advent sermon series developed at the Pulpit Project offered in 2024. Drawing from the The Advent Themes of Hope, Peace, Love and Joy, the series culminates in Anil's Christmas Eve 2024 Meditation, "Jesus: Healer of the World!"

FIRST SERMON

Hope Under Pressure

Romans 5:1–5

Advent Theme: Hope

Musical Inspiration: "Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

Even in a season of longer nights, in the wake of disaffiliation in the United Methodist Church, in an era of declining overall Church participation, we as Christ's faithful STILL have an impetus to hope, even facing seemingly hopeless situations.

As Paul outlines in his letter to the Romans, "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

The hope firmly held by our ancestors in Christ led to the Church's growth around the world, even facing perilous resistance. And the hope in Christ WE hold offers us God's very same promise of healing, restoration,

salvation, revival and growth in the love of God and neighbor.

SECOND SERMON

One in the Spirit

Romans 8:31–39

Advent Theme: Peace

Musical Inspiration: "It is Well With My Soul" (sung intermittently throughout the sermon)

To be truly at Peace is to be At ONE in Christ's Spirit. As Paul writes in Romans: "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

The world offers us a smorgasbord of Earthly diversions from Oneness in the Spirit: Wealth, position, power, fear, anger, greed. All of these desires and distractions can pull us from Oneness in the Spirit. But God offers us a simple, elementary way to recover that oneness: Breathing. And what better way to connect with the Breath than through Singing?

THIRD SERMON

Seven Words (God Loves You And So Do I)

Romans 8:31–39

Advent Theme: Love

Paul assures the Church in Rome, “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Especially during Advent, the Faithful are called to proclaim God’s Love to any and all. Perhaps we can begin by learning to say these seven words: “God Loves You And So Do I”

Historically, Methodists went much farther than proclaiming God’s love in words. They also put God’s Love into action through myriad ministries. Especially during the Advent Season - BE GOD’S ENDURING, RELENTLESS LOVE. The world needs us!

FOURTH SERMON

Welcome the Light!

Romans 12:9–21

Advent Theme: Joy

Markets, Media, even meteorological shifts can impact our mood. One minute we feel happy, and another sad, or angry or afraid, largely due to some external influence. Emotions are weird! How might we live with joy, whatever our current emotional state?

As Paul advises, “Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.” Christ in His self-giving lifts all our burdens away, liberating us to live in Oneness with God and with one another in this life and in the life to come!

FIFTH SERMON

Jesus: Healer of the World

Inspiration: “Journey of the Magi” by TS Eliot.

Trinity has a collection of large ceramic figurines depicting the Christmas Story: The Magi, the Holy Family, the Shepherds, and assorted animals. Drawing from Matthew’s

telling of the Story of the Magi, I used the figurines to craft a meditation inspired by TS Eliot’s “Journey of the Magi.”

The force that impels the Magi to journey far, the force that prompts King Herod to plot viciously against a baby he’s never met, and the force that bends creation to its will by moving a star in the sky is LOVE! God’s healing, forgiving, restorative, re-creating LOVE!

God’s love has bent our life circumstances to bring us here (To our Christmas services), together, now!

As we prepare to depart on this Christmas Eve, let’s take God’s Healing Love out into the world.

Lead Creators: Anil Singh, Pulpit Project Small Group

LENT IN THE DARKROOM

SERIES TYPE

Lent/Easter

SERIES DESCRIPTION

In a world where images are instant and polished, Lent invites us into a slower, deeper process—the kind that happens in the darkroom. This Lenten journey draws on the imagery of photography and darkroom development to explore how God forms us beneath the surface.

Lent in the Darkroom reminds us that transformation does not happen instantly. It requires time, surrender, and trust in the One who is carefully developing our lives into reflections of grace, love, and truth.

FIRST SERMON

Developing Courageous Interdependency

Mark 10:17–31

Week 1 – The Rich Man

Theme: Courageous Interdependence

Jesus challenges the rich man not just to follow rules, but to reframe his entire life—moving from independence and possession toward shared life in the Kingdom of God. In the darkroom, we begin to see how tightly we hold onto what we think defines us, and how God invites us into deeper connection and trust.

Takeaway: In the darkroom, God develops us by loosening what we cling to so love can come into focus.

Midweek Reflection: What am I holding onto that keeps me from a deeper connection with God and others?

Practice: Give something meaningful away this week—not out of obligation, but as an act of trust.

Prayer: “Lord, develop in me a heart that shares freely and depends on you.”

SECOND SERMON

Developing Transforming Surrender

Genesis 32:9–13, 22–30; Mark 14:32–36

Week 2 – Jacob Wrestles with God

Theme: Transforming Surrender

Jacob wrestles through the night, refusing to let go until he receives a blessing. In a similar way, Jesus wrestles in the garden, surrendering to the will of the Father. In the darkroom, transformation often happens in the struggle—in the moments when we face God honestly, wrestle with our fears, and are changed by the encounter.

Takeaway: In the darkroom, God develops transformation through the struggle we refuse to walk away from.

Midweek Reflection: What am I wrestling with God about right now?

Practice: Spend time in honest prayer—name your struggle, don’t rush to resolve it.

Prayer: “God, meet me in the struggle and shape me through it.”

THIRD SERMON

Developing Persistent Righteousness

Mark 12:1–12

Week 3 – The Wicked Tenants

Theme: Persistent Righteousness

The tenants forget their role as stewards and begin to act like owners. Jesus calls us back to a life of faithful responsibility—knowing and doing what is right in God’s eyes. In the darkroom, God reveals where our lives have drifted and restores our call to faithful living.

Takeaway: In the darkroom, God develops righteousness through repeated exposure to truth and faithful action.

Midweek Reflection: Where in my life do I know what is right but struggle to live it out?

Practice: Choose one everyday responsibility this week (work task, relationship, resource, or space you care for). Each time you engage it, pause and say: “This is not mine—it is entrusted to me” as a breath prayer.

Prayer: “God, shape my actions to reflect your truth again and again.”

FOURTH SERMON

Developing Spiral Love

Mark 12:28–34

Week 4 – Look Up, Look In, Look Out

Theme: The Spiral of Love

Jesus centers all of life on love—loving God, self, and neighbor. Transformation happens not in a moment, but in a continual rhythm. Like a photograph slowly coming into clarity, our lives are shaped over time as we return again and again to love.

Takeaway: In the darkroom, God develops love layer by layer until it shapes everything we see and do.

Midweek Reflection: Which is hardest for me right now: loving God, myself, or my neighbor?

Practice: Notice one moment each day where love is difficult—and choose it anyway.

Prayer: “Jesus, center my life in your love and grow it within me.”

FIFTH SERMON

Developing Patient Alertness

Mark 13:1–8, 24–27

Week 5 – The End of the Age

Theme: Patient Alertness

In a world filled with uncertainty and fear, Jesus calls us not to panic, but to faithful awareness. The darkroom teaches us to wait—trusting that even when we cannot see clearly, God is still at work bringing something new into being.

Takeaway: In the darkroom, God develops hope as we learn to wait with patient trust.

Midweek Reflection: What fears or uncertainties am I carrying right now?

Practice: Pause daily and remind yourself: “God is still at work here.”

Prayer: “God, help me wait with trust instead of fear.”

SIXTH SERMON

Developing Extravagant Devotion

Mark 14:1–11

Week 6 – The Anointing at Bethany

Theme: Extravagant Devotion

A woman pours out costly perfume in an act of radical love for Jesus. While others calculate, she gives freely. In the darkroom, we learn that devotion is not measured in small drops but in wholehearted surrender.

Takeaway: In the darkroom, God develops devotion that is poured out freely, not measured carefully.

Midweek Reflection: Where am I holding back in my love for God?

Practice: Offer one extravagant act of generosity—time, attention, or resources.

Prayer: “Lord, teach me to love you without holding back.”

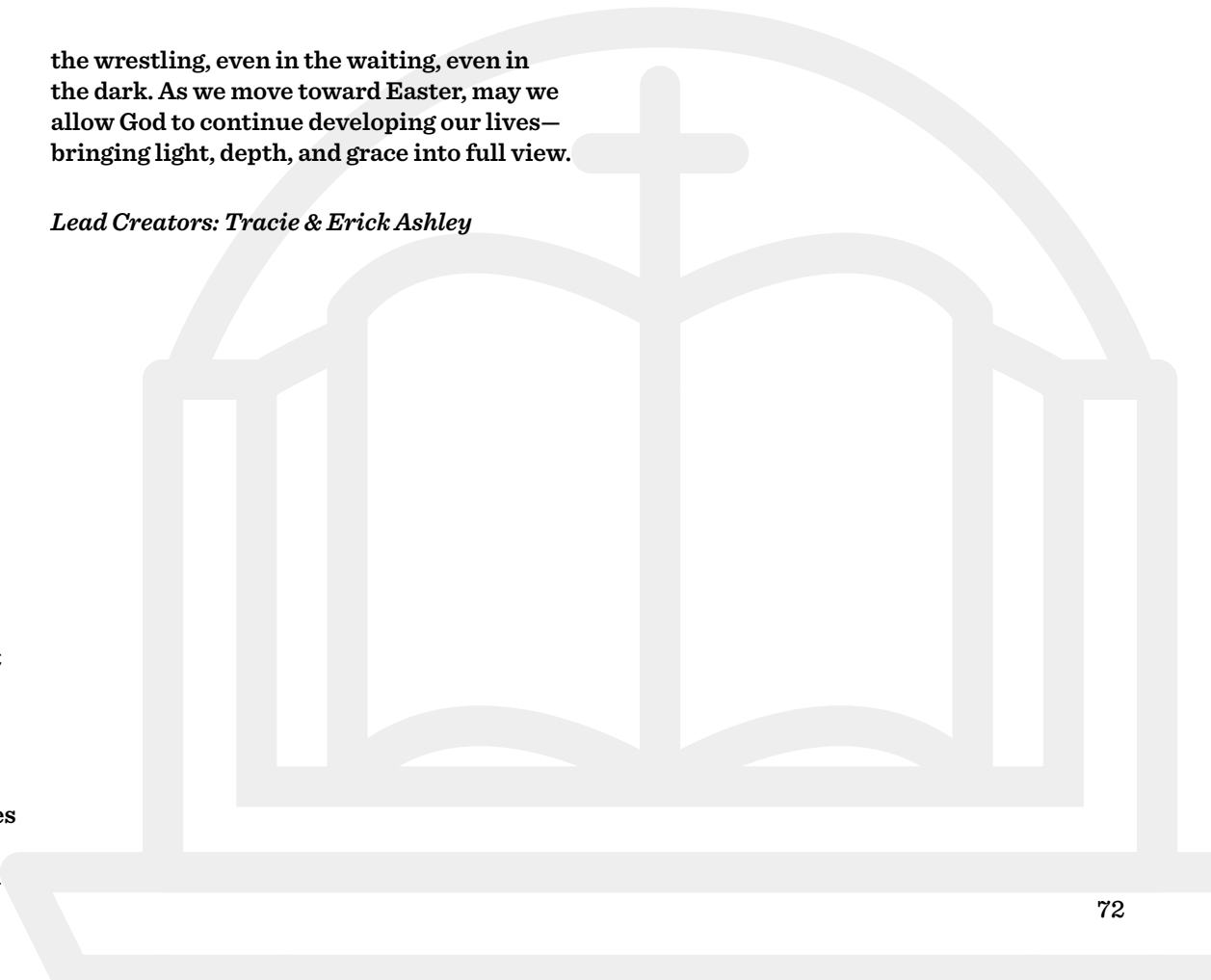
RESOURCES

Closing Invitation for the Series

Lent in the Darkroom is not about quick fixes or instant clarity. It is about trusting the slow, sacred work of God within us—even in

the wrestling, even in the waiting, even in the dark. As we move toward Easter, may we allow God to continue developing our lives—bringing light, depth, and grace into full view.

Lead Creators: Tracie & Erick Ashley



LEARNING TO LOVE AGAIN

SERIES TYPE

Lent/Easter, Topical

SERIES DESCRIPTION

This series invites the congregation into honest conversations that lead to grace and healing. Each week uncovers a spiritual obstacle that keeps us from trusting God's love, motivations, and ways.

FIRST SERMON

Loving God Without Fear

Psalm 27; 1 John 4:16–19; Matthew 25:14–30 (talents)

Healing the image of God as punitive, distant, or unsafe. Moving from “what must I do to be righteous” to “who I am invited to become through love.” Fear-based obligation to a love-centered relationship. Slave of God to Child of God. Religion as anxiety management, to faith as loving trust and transformation.

SECOND SERMON

Loving Ourselves Without Shame

Psalm 139:1–18; Romans 8:1–2; Ephesians 2:8–10 (NLT); Luke 15:3–7 (Lost sheep)

God grants us grace, dignity, and belovedness. We are fully known and fully loved. You do not have to hide in order to belong. Shame says, “I’m not worth the trouble.” Jesus, the Good Shepherd, says you matter and searches for you.

THIRD SERMON

Loving Others Without Judgement

Psalm 103:8–14; Matthew 7:1–5; Luke 10:25–37 (Good Samaritan) or Luke 18:9–14 (Pharisee and Tax Collector)

Grace over condemnation. Judgement draws lines. Love crosses them. It’s not who is my neighbor, but who isn’t my neighbor. God draws no boundaries. People are not categorized into boxes. We love because God first loved us.

FOURTH SERMON

Loving Again When We’ve Been Hurt

Psalm 147:1–6; John 4:1–42; Luke 15:11–32 (Prodigal Sons/Forgiving Father); Luke 23:34

Restored trust, redemption, and second chances. Healing love tells the truth, but it doesn’t weaponize it. God meets us in the truth of us, our situation, our choices, and says, “I’m still here.” We are seen, heard, and offered new life.

FIFTH SERMON

Loving Without Keeping Score

Psalm 130; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7; Matthew 18:21–35 (Unforgiving Servant) or Matthew 20:1–16 (Laborers in the Vineyard)

Grace goes beyond transactional relationships. Grace cannot be deserved, earned, or bought. Grace doesn't keep a ledger. Abundant grace interrupts cycles of destruction, sin, and death.

SIXTH SERMON

Love of Power vs Powerless Love

Psalm 118:19–29; Luke 19:28–40; Luke 14:15–24

Palm Sunday unmasks our deepest temptation, to confuse love with control. The way of love is not domination but invitation, not coercion but presence.

If used as a Lenten Series, this sermon would be offered on Palm Sunday.

Lead Creators: Matt Wallis, with Lisa Degrenia