



Narrative Lectionary - Worship Resources

Summer 2017
June 11, 2017 to September 3, 2017
Worship Resources

Psalm 100
June 11, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Psalm 100
June 11, 2017
Scripture Readings

Text: Psalm 100

¹Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

²Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

³Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.

⁵For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Reader 2: Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

Reader 1: Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Reader 2: Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.

Reader 1: For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 100

June 11, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: A life of joy includes a steady rhythm of worship, living, and returning to worship.

The Psalms are a beautiful, poetic expression of the wide range of human emotions and experiences. They include hymns of praise; hymns of thanksgiving, both individual and communal; hymns of trust; psalms of complaint, both individual and communal; prayers for help, both individual and communal; cursing psalms; royal psalms; festival psalms; historic psalms; wisdom or instructional psalms; and acrostic poems.

Psalm 100 is a hymn of praise springing forth from the depths of a joyful soul. It expresses the sheer joy of being in communion with God, of recognizing God's goodness, and appreciating all that God has done. It is a response to God's magnificence. It bursts from its host, not because God needs the praise, but because the host needs to express it.

What results from this unadulterated joy is worship (v. 2), knowledge of the Lord (this is more than knowing – it is living fully in God's ways) (v. 3), and again worship ("Enter his gates...") (v. 4). This gives us a clear image of the life cycle of a joyful child of God. It begins with worship, goes out into the world to live and thrive, and then returns to worship, much like the ebb and flow of an ocean's tide. One can almost taste the bliss of a life driven by this rhythm of worship and praise!

The beginning of summer can be a wonderful time to encourage people to be mindful of God's creation – of what goes on around them, to appreciate the things God has done, to slow down and see with eyes and spirits the goodness of a loving God, and to worship and praise in those moments when the greatness of God touches their souls. Remember this is not a commandment – it's an invitation.

Some may not be feeling joyful. That's ok. This text is a hope-filled reminder that there is joy to be found, that despair will not have the final say. Rejoice! Worship! Praise!

Scripture Summary

The whole creation erupts in praise for its Creator, and we are a part of it. The time has come to rejoice in word, song, and action.

Call to Worship

L: Let us come into our Lord's presence with joy and singing!

C: We give thanks and bless God's name!

L: Our Lord is good!

C: Showering us with love and faithfulness!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Merciful Creator,

C: We bring our flawed and weary selves before you. We cry at the pain we see in the world: that which has been brought upon us, which we bring upon others, and which we bring upon ourselves. We know that healing is possible, but we often choose suffering instead. Visit us with your mercy and reconciliation, that we might know joy once more. Amen.

L: Weeping may last the night, but joy comes with the morning. Receive the word of our Lord's forgiveness and know that it is real—here and now. You have been restored. Your life is a testimony to God's healing power. In Christ's name, Amen.

Psalm 100
June 11, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

God of all, you are ever worthy of our praise. Show us your blessings anew and open our eyes to what has always been before us. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

We enter your gates, O Lord, with thanksgiving for all that you have entrusted to us. For your goodness, your love and mercy we cannot repay you. Receive the gifts that we now present as an expression of gratitude and joy that we can enter your presence as your beloved children. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Accept the songs of our hearts, O God—robust or silent, harmonious or off-key—assuring us that what is offered with joy is always received with affection.
Steadfast Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The earth cannot help but worship its Maker, and neither can we! It's in the fabric of who you have made us to be. Keep us connected and at one with all you have made, and with all peoples who are created in your image.
Steadfast Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We enter the season of refreshment and recreation with grateful hearts. Return us to a sense of awe at this vast planet, that we might enjoy your blessings and use our energies to renew ourselves and others who need a rest.

Steadfast Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Lord, we know that we can trust your faithfulness, especially when we find ourselves most in need. Refresh us and all those we name before you with your healing touch, especially... Make us whole again.
Steadfast Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your love endures forever, O God—even beyond the bounds of the grave. Give us strength to follow where our ancestors in faith have walked, knowing that the crown of life awaited them. Steadfast Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Your hands are sure and strong, and you hold all the prayers we offer in your loving embrace. Embolden us to be the answer that you seek to bring about in the world, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Your steadfast love endures forever, O Lord, and your faithfulness to all generations. Gather us into one with all who today join in this meal. Come, people of God, taste and see that the Lord is good!

Psalm 100
June 11, 2017

Litany

L: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, people!

C: What kind of noise?

L: A joyful noise!

C: Joyful? Should we laugh? That's joyful, right?

L: It certainly is.

C: But laughing? To the Lord? Won't that sound disrespectful?

L: Not at all. The Lord loves it when we laugh.

C: Why should we make a joyful noise to the Lord?

L: Because God made us, and we are God's people. That is something to be joyful about!

C: Yes, it is! It's a big deal to belong to God. Shouldn't we do more than laugh, though?

L: Of course! Thank God, praise God, bless God's name.

C: And how shall we praise?

L: Make whatever joyful noise you want! Remember, the Lord is good, loving, and faithful to us—forever.

C: Forever? That's a long time!

L: It certainly is.

C: So, we need to give God thanks and praise! Lots of both of those things!

L: YES! That's the whole point.

C: OK, then – thanks, praise and the joyful noise of our choice! We'll do it!

L: Thanks be to God!

C: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 100
June 11, 2017

Skit

Characters: Ella the Event Planner, Kato the Caterer,
Florrie the Florist, Sam the Psalmist

Ella: Come on, people, let's get moving! We have tons to do before the heavenly banquet tonight! Is the caterer here? I don't see any flowers yet! And we haven't even settled on the entertainment! This is a nightmare!

Sam: Calm down, Ella! Entertainment is all covered! Remember? I write the psalms that make the whole world sing!

Ella: Doesn't Barry Manilow do that?

Sam: Barry who?

Ella: Never mind. It's true, Sam, you are multi-talented. You play a mean lyre too!

Sam: I am not a mean liar! I rarely lie, and when I do I am very pleasant about it!

Ella: No, no. I meant the musical instrument!

Sam and Ella: The lyre!

Kato: Where do you want the food? I got a truck full of deviled eggs and Swedish meatballs!

Ella: Just set everything on the table in the banquet hall. And – let's call them something other than “deviled” eggs, OK?

Kato: Sure, sure, as long as I get paid we can call them anything you want.

Florrie: Sorry I'm late! The flowers are here and they are lovely if I do say so myself! All the kinds the Lord enjoys most – roses and tulips and lilies and even gladiolas!

Ella: Great, great thank you. Can you set out the arrangements quickly?

Florrie: Fine art can't be rushed! (*exits in a huff*)

Sam: So, I have a brand new psalm. Praise and thanksgiving – great stuff! Wanna hear it? It goes like this (*dramatic voice*) – Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with...

Ella: (*cuts him off*) I'm sure it's wonderful like all the others, Sam. But I don't have time to listen right now. Just get set up, the Lord will be here any minute.

Sam: Will do! (*dramatic voice as he exits*) Worship the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing. Fa-la-la-la-la...

Ella: What am I forgetting? Oh, well, too late now. I hear the Lord coming! And the Lord always forgives me! Places everybody! It's show time!

Psalm 100
June 11, 2017
Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Let's live thank-fully every day!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Jar
- Slips of Paper
- Markers or crayons

Setting the Scene/Background

What would it look like to live thankfully? Psalm 100 sings of thankfulness and contentment. Do we thank God daily for the big and little joys all around? I keep a jar by my desk. It is filled with small slips of paper and on the paper are things for which I am thankful. Each day when I see the jar, I am reminded to pause and give thanks and I grab a new slip of paper to write down another thanksgiving. This week perhaps you could talk about a practice of thankfulness and invite everyone – children and adults - to write down something for which they are thankful on a piece of paper. You could even start your own thankfulness jar for your congregation and leave it in a common area of the church where people could keep on adding slips of paper each week. If the slips of paper you leave out for people to write on are the correct size for doing so, you could even make a chain out of them – perhaps the week of Thanksgiving?

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have the jar and slips of paper ready when the children come forward.
- Ask children to write down names or pictures of things or people for which they are thankful.

Reflection Questions

- For what or who are you thankful?
- Why do we give thanks to God?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Very small children may have difficulty (or cannot) write out a question. Consider having an adult or older child help them write their questions.

Some children on the autism spectrum would prefer to draw a picture as their question. That's totally okay!

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Bag or backpack
- Rocks or small bricks

Psalm 13

June 18, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Psalm 13
June 18, 2017
Scripture Readings

Text: Psalm 13

¹How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

²How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

³Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

⁴and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed"; my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

⁵But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

⁶I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

Reader 2: How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Reader 1: Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed"; my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

Reader 2: But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

Reader 1: I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm 13
June 18, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Faith and the ending of suffering are intertwined, both feeding off each other.

“How long, O Lord?” How often have you cried these words in times of suffering? It is a universal plea. Time slows to a crawl in times of suffering, and the answer to the question “how long” is always too long.

This suffering is all-encompassing. There is suffering in the soul of the psalmist. There is suffering in the perceived absence of God. There is suffering at the hands of enemies. This person is being attacked from all sides. No wonder there is a desperate plea for relief!

But the psalm ends the way suffering must also end – with the presence and intervention of a loving God. The psalmist trusts in God, rejoices in the inevitable salvation from suffering, and sings praise for God’s goodness. All of these are hard to do when one is at rock bottom. I wonder whether the psalmist praised because the suffering ended or if the suffering ended because the psalmist praised.

When my first baby was 16 months old, he was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. For a year we went to doctors, learned all we could, struggled through blood tests and shots, high and low blood sugars, and new diets. Then he got very sick and spent several days in the hospital. The night he came home from the hospital, I put him to bed, and then I sat on my bed screaming and crying and cursing at God. My fit went on for a long while until I was completely spent. Finally, in the silence of a broken spirit I heard a voice, quiet but powerful. It said, “Trust me.” Chills ran through me as I recognized the voice of God. It said, “Trust in me. You have placed all your trust in the medical system. Learn from them, but trust in me.”

From that moment I was never the same. All the anxiety and angst of the first tenuous year was gone. I knew that we were going to be ok. In that quiet room I began an upward climb, a tangle of my trust and God’s salvation, intertwined and feeding off one another. Sometimes all it takes to begin the ending of suffering is a single, quiet moment of faith.

Scripture Summary

We come to God in times of suffering, seeking relief, seeking light, seeking answers. And God hears it all, without judging or abandoning us.

Call to Worship

L: How long must we wait, O God, to see you?

C: Show us your face; show us your mercy!

L: Give light to our eyes, for we have trusted in you.

C: And our hearts rejoice in your salvation!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Merciful Creator,

C: We bring our flawed and weary selves before you. We cry at the pain we see in the world: that which has been brought upon us, which we bring upon others, and which we bring upon ourselves. We know that healing is possible, but we often choose suffering instead. Visit us with your mercy and reconciliation, that we might know joy once more. Amen.

L: Weeping may last the night, but joy comes with the morning. Receive the word of our Lord’s forgiveness and know that it is real—here and now. You have been restored. Your life is a testimony to God’s healing power. In Christ’s name, Amen.

Psalm 13
June 18, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Holy Lord, all things come from you, and all things might be found in you. Open our eyes, O God, that we might know your presence and trust once more in your steadfast love. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

God, you have indeed dealt bountifully with us all, including these gifts that we offer back to you, in service of your people and your world. May they shine a light where others have given up, and serve as signs of your love and faithfulness. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Holy God, we can see how faith and the ending of suffering are intertwined, feeding off each other, and growing together. Give us eyes to see the miracles of healing all around us. Merciful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your world is vast, O Lord, and sometimes we are overwhelmed by helplessness in the face of all there is to address. Uphold us by your spirit and empower us to dwell in your promises, not in our despair. Merciful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You are a model for all earthly fathers, O Lord, the One whom we trust when we cannot turn to any other. Forgive us our shortcomings and be a shining light of steadfast love in a world which desperately needs it. Merciful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We cannot choose our circumstances, O Lord, but we can choose whether or not to suffer with them. When at last we have reached the end of our laments, we can trust you to complete your healing work in us, assuring us that you have been present all along. We pray especially for... Merciful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We are not the first to question your presence or be tempted to lose hope. Equip us as you did the saints of old with your gifts of insight, rest, and the promise of eternal salvation. Merciful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: You are the beginning and the end, O God, and everything in between. Hold us as you hold these prayers, and deliver us into your loving embrace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

We trust in your steadfast love and our hearts rejoice in your salvation. Pour out these mercies upon us in your holy meal, O God, that the bitter tears of our griefs might mingle with the sweetness of your promise. Come as you are—the body and blood of Christ are for you!

Psalm 13
June 18, 2017

Litany

L: The bad days are the longest days.

C: The days of pain. The days of sorrow.

L: They stretch ahead endlessly it seems.

C: All we need is some relief.

L: When it feels like we are alone

C: When it feels like God has forgotten us.

L: In the darkest moments

C: We believe God is still there.

L: Trusting is hard to do on the long, bad days

C: The days of pain. The days of sorrow.

L: But we trust that God loves us.

C: We trust that all will be well.

L: In God's time, if not in ours.

C: How long, O Lord?

L: We don't know how long.

C: But we believe God is with us.

L: We believe better days are coming.

C: And we will rejoice.

L: Believing and trusting

C: Will give us blessed relief.

L: Will remind us that we are not alone.

C: We are never alone.

L: Even on the bad days, the longest days

C: Especially on those long, bad days

L: We trust that God loves us.

C: We trust that all will be well.

Psalm 13
June 18, 2017

Skit

Characters: Voice of TV Announcer, Mya, Eli

Mya: I didn't know what was wrong with me. All the joy had drained out of my life.

Eli: Everywhere I went, my enemies were exalted over me. And I didn't even know I HAD any enemies!

Mya: Headaches, sleeplessness, that sad, blah feeling.

Eli: And foes—apparently, I had foes too. Lots of foes.

Mya: It all seemed so hopeless.

Eli: Enemies, foes—what's next, adversaries?

Mya: So, I went to my pastor, and she prescribed Faith.

Eli: Faith? What is that? Would it work on my foes?

Announcer: When you have pain and sorrow, when you've lost your joy, when life seems like one big headache... ask your spiritual leader about Faith. Ministers prescribe Faith more than 4 to 1 over other brands. Faith can be taken at any time of day or night, the higher the dosage the better. Side effects include happiness, hopefulness, and the return of joy to your life.

Mya: Wow, Pastor Jenna was right! Faith sounds great!

Eli: Mr./Ms. Announcer, is there anything in your script about enemies?

Announcer: Oh yes, Eli!

Eli: Hey wait a minute. How do you know my name?

Announcer: Lucky guess!

Mya: Tell us more about this Faith stuff!

Eli: And foes! Don't forget foes!

Announcer: Faith is for everyone! You can have faith even if you have conditions including faintness of heart, dullness of spirit, psoriasis, and tummy troubles. Faith is available in all sizes, and can be found wherever prayers are spoken.

Mya: How wonderful! I'm going to try Faith right now!

Eli: I'm not so sure...

Announcer: Did I forget to mention? With Faith, no more enemies exalting or foes rejoicing! They will not prevail over you, Eli!

Eli: OK, I'm sold!!

Announcer: *Faith!* Have some today!

Psalm 13
June 18, 2017
Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God helps us carry our worries.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Bag or backpack
- Rocks or small bricks

Setting the Scene/Background

Carrying around sadness and troubles is hard work. It weighs us down physically and emotionally. A backpack and a pile of small rocks can help bring that thought into focus: start with an empty backpack – pass it around. It's pretty light, isn't it? This is easy to carry. Sometimes we feel like that, we feel lighthearted, happy, nothing too much on our minds. But sometimes we don't feel that way. (Take the backpack and set it on the floor) Sometimes we have a lot on our minds. We worry about grades (put a rock in the bag), maybe someone in our family gets sick (put in another rock), we feel like we don't fit in (put in another rock), etc. until finally the backpack is pretty heavy. Try to pick it up – maybe invite some of the kids to try to pick it up. It feels pretty different now, doesn't it? It's awfully hard carrying around a load of worry and sadness. The psalmist felt that way, too – but then remembered that God could help to carry those burdens. God promises to do that. Even if the difficult things don't go away, God can still help us to carry them, to deal with them. We can know we are never alone, God is with us, and we will be okay. That thought brought a lot of joy to the psalmist. How do you feel knowing God is with you?

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have backpack and rocks ready and near the area where you will be giving the children's message.
- Put the rocks in the backpack one at a time to illustrate worries the kids might have. Maybe the kids can help you put some of the rocks in the backpack.

Reflection Questions

- What do you worry about?
- How do you feel knowing God is with you and you don't have to carry those worries around all by yourself?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

If there are very small children who would like to try to pick up the backpack full of rocks, give them assistance or have them do it along with another child.

If there are any kids who are in wheelchairs or those for whom it would be hard to physically pick up the backpack, maybe you could set it on their lap for a moment so they can feel how heavy it is as well.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Pictures of various homes for humans and animals

Psalm 23
June 25, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Psalm 23
June 25, 2017
Scripture Readings

Text: Psalm 23

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

³He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Reader 2: He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

Reader 1: He restores my soul.

Reader 2: He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Reader 1: Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

Reader 2: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Reader 1: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Psalm 23
June 25, 2017

Tag Cloud



Psalm 23
June 25, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God cares for us despite ourselves.

A shepherd is a caretaker for creatures that are utterly incapable of caring for themselves. Sheep will wander, even away from the safety of the flock. Sheep do not drink from running water like a river because they may fall in and get swept away by the current. Sheep have no self-defense against their many predators. Without a shepherd, their lives are constantly in danger.

This psalm is more about God than it is about us. We have a God that loves us as a shepherd loves their sheep. God guides us patiently as we wander aimlessly, slow to follow, and clueless as to where we should go. God provides everything that we need, even as we lament that God hasn't given us everything that we want. God shows us where the green pastures and still waters lie, even when we desire to venture onto sheer cliffs and into raging rivers. God cares for us despite ourselves.

Some time ago I lived in angst and fear that I would make the wrong life choices. I believed God had a plan for me, but I did not believe that I would make the right decisions to lead me down that single path. Then a wise companion asked me, "Do you really think there is only one right path for you? And if you choose any of the paths before you, do you think God will not walk with you on the path you choose?" It was obvious and simple, once they put it like that. But it helped me shake me out of a rut of paralysis I had gotten myself into. I realized that I could make any choice in the world, and God would never abandon me to my choices, bad or good. God would walk with me, guide me, prod me, correct me, but never, ever leave me. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long."

Scripture Summary

Today's psalm is an expression of ultimate trust. We do not know what perils may lie ahead. But we do know our shepherd, who guides and protects us.

Call to Worship

L: Fear not, children; you have God as your shepherd.

C: No matter the darkness of the valley; we are not afraid.

L: The Lord leads you in and brings you out.

C: No matter the enemy, we are not afraid.

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Merciful Creator,

C: We bring our flawed and weary selves before you. We cry at the pain we see in the world: that which has been brought upon us, which we bring upon others, and which we bring upon ourselves. We know that healing is possible, but we often choose suffering instead. Visit us with your mercy and reconciliation, that we might know joy once more. Amen.

L: Weeping may last the night, but joy comes with the morning. Receive the word of our Lord's forgiveness and know that it is real—here and now. You have been restored. Your life is a testimony to God's healing power. In Christ's name, Amen.

Psalm 23
June 25, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Loving God, you see the dangers ahead long before we could imagine them. Keep our eyes trained on the path, following in your trustworthy footsteps, by the grace of your spirit. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

Your blessings are like fresh water to our souls, O Lord. You fill us up so that we can refresh others. Use us—and these gifts—to show the vastness of your goodness and mercy to a world that craves it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: We have a guardian unlike any other in you, O God. Ease our anxiety and restore our souls with the stillness of your constant presence. Loving Shepherd,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You have made green pastures and restoring waters enough for all to enjoy, O God, but too often we hoard, pillage, and destroy what does not belong to us alone. Expand our hearts to hold and guard your whole creation, that all creatures might truly enjoy your blessings. Loving Shepherd,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: As the season of summer storms visits us once again, steer us through the driving winds, drenching rains and rising waters that we might emerge safely on the other side. Move us to share our plenty with others who have lost homes, property or loved ones to disaster. Loving Shepherd,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Anoint our heads with your healing oil, and offer to all who suffer your overflowing cup of healing. We pray especially for... Loving Shepherd,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Dwelling in your house are all your faithful ones, from every time and place. Join us all together as one big flock of your beloved children. Loving Shepherd,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: There is nothing left to want. There is nothing left to fear. We offer you our prayers and you hear them without judgment. Restore our souls again, O Lord. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Your cup of blessing overflows, and you prepare this table in sight of all—and for the benefit of all. Bind us together with those we consider enemy—and the enemy within ourselves—that we might know the true meaning of reconciliation and forgiveness. Come to the table of healing!

Psalm 23
June 25, 2017

Litany

L: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

C: We know that one! That's the psalm we have memorized.

L: Many people have. It's the most famous of the psalms.

C: It's used a lot at funerals.

L: Because it is so comforting.

C: Though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil.

L: Do we really believe that? Believe that we need not fear evil?

C: But it's only natural to fear evil. There is so much evil in the world.

L: Maybe natural, but not necessary.

C: But how can we not be afraid? The news makes our souls sick.

L: The Lord restores my soul. Remember that.

C: We remember that verse...and then it goes: He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

L: Memorizing is not the same as knowing.

C: What do you mean?

L: Without understanding, this psalm is just a bunch of pretty words.

C: We guess we don't understand it all that much, then.

L: To the sheep, the shepherd is more than just a caretaker. The shepherd is a lifesaver.

C: We know that shepherds feed and protect their sheep.

L: Sheep without a shepherd are in constant danger. But with the shepherd, they are totally safe.

C: Even in the darkest valley?

L: Especially then.

C: And we are the sheep, right? The Lord's sheep?

L: You got it.

C: But sheep are pretty dumb. We don't like the sounds of that!

L: Simple. Sheep are simple, and trusting. They let the shepherd guide them.

C: And we should let the Lord guide us?

L: In everything we do, yes.

C: Overflowing cups? Goodness and mercy following us? Dwelling in the Lord's house?

L: All of those wonderful things. Psalm 23 is more than a poem. It's a statement of faith.

C: It should be OUR statement of faith. The Lord is OUR shepherd.

All: Always and forever. Amen!

Psalm 23
June 25, 2017

Skit

Characters: Sheep #1, Sheep #2, Sheep #3, Shepherd

(Sheep enter together)

Sheep #1: Baaa!

Sheep #2: Yeah. Baaa!

Sheep #3: What they said.

Sheep #1: So where's our shepherd?

Sheep #2: We don't need no stinking shepherd! We can lead ourselves!

Sheep #3: Oh, yeah? Since when?

Sheep #2: Since now! Today! This is our Declaration of Independence!

Sheep #1: OK, big guy. So where to?

Sheep #2: The deal is, we can go anywhere we want now! We don't even have to stick together!

Sheep #3: I don't know about that. There is danger around here. There are wolves!

Sheep #1: Lots of wolves! And even skunks!

Sheep #3: Wait—you're afraid of skunks?

Sheep #1: Ever smelled one? They reek!

Sheep #3: Worse than we do?

Sheep #1: No contest!

Sheep #3: Wow!

Sheep #2: This is a great day for sheepkind! Who's with me?

(Sheep #1 and #3 shrug, then all three head off in different directions)

Sheep #2: This is the life! Freedom! Masters of our own fate!

(Sheep wander aimlessly, then back up into each other)

Sheep: *(all together, terrified):* Aaaaahhh!!

Sheep #2: That was nothing! You guys are such chickens!

Sheep #1: Uh, sheep, last time we checked.

Sheep #3: Yep. No feathers. Curly wool. We're no chickens.

Sheep #2: You can stay here if you want. I am off to adventure! *(starts off)*

(Sound of roaring wolf offstage)

Sheep: *(all together, terrified)* Aaaaahhh!!

Sheep #1: What good is going it alone if you get eaten?

Sheep #3: Our shepherd wouldn't let that happen!

Sheep #2: Suit yourselves. See you later, losers! *(exits)*

(Sound of roaring wolf offstage)

(Shepherd enters with arm around Sheep #2, who is visibly shaken up)

Shepherd: Why did you want to leave me? Haven't I taken care of you?

Sheep #2: I guess you're pretty mad now, huh?

Shepherd: At you? Never. A little disappointed, maybe. Life is so much better for you when you trust me.

Sheep #1: That's what I TOLD you guys.

Sheep #3: Excuse me, it was ME that told you!

(Sheep start to argue)

Shepherd: *(interrupting them)* Stop! No more fighting! It will be dark soon. You need to eat, and drink some water, and sleep.

Sheep #2: But the wolves...

Shepherd: Do not be afraid. I am with you always. Now, come on!

Sheep: *(Nod in unison, follow Shepherd off together)* Baaaa! Baaaa! Baaaa!

Psalm 23
June 25, 2017
Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God is our home.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Pictures of various homes for humans and animals

Setting the Scene/Background

Dwellings come in all shapes and sizes. I'm picturing birds in their nests, fish in a pond or aquarium, ants building a network of tunnels underground, and people living in houses, huts, or apartments. Perhaps you might bring pictures of these different kinds of dwelling places to share with the kids. Ask the kids what they like about the places they live. Do they know that they have another home besides the place they currently sleep at night? Psalm 23 tells us that God is our home. Wherever we go, whatever place we end up, no matter how lost we might feel, we can know that God is our home.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Make sure some of the pictures of different dwellings are in the area where you will be doing the children's message.
- Ask kids about places they have lived and what a home is like.

Reflection Questions

- What do you like about where you live?
- How can God be our home?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Be aware that perhaps there are kids and families who have been homeless in your midst. Think about how that might affect the questions you ask during the children's message.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- iPhone or any device that can have a pitch app downloaded; *High Pitch Blaster* and *High Frequency Noise* are two current options
- Microphone

Psalm 30
July 2, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Psalm 30
July 2, 2017
Scripture Readings

Text: Psalm 30

¹I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me.

²O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

³O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

⁴Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.

⁵For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

⁶As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved."

⁷By your favor, O Lord, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed.

⁸To you, O Lord, I cried, and to the Lord I made supplication:

⁹"What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?"

¹⁰Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!"

¹¹You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,

¹²so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

Pronunciation Guide

Sheol: SHEE-ol

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me.

Reader 2: O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

Reader 1: O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

Reader 2: Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.

Reader 1: For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

Reader 2: As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved."

Reader 1: By your favor, O Lord, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed.

Reader 2: To you, O Lord, I cried, and to the Lord I made supplication:

Reader 1: "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?"

Reader 2: Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!"

Reader 1: You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

Psalm 30

July 2, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God can turn mourning into dancing, and sorrow into joy.

This trust psalm recognizes that it is not God who causes our calamity – we do it to ourselves. “I shall never be moved,” boasts the psalmist, and that arrogance led to a downfall. Thankfully, despite our faithlessness to God, God continues to be faithful to us. God has the power to turn sorrow into joy.

In the spring of 2010, a young woman named Melissa Hinnant discovered that the baby she’d carried for 5 months would not survive. She was rushed to the hospital and put on emergency bedrest to delay the delivery. Stuck in bed, Melissa decided to crochet a baby blanket for her unborn daughter. Two weeks into her bedrest, her labor could not be stopped and she delivered her baby girl. Baby Halle didn’t survive the birth.

Melissa’s love of crochet carried her through her darkest times, and in 2011 she started making boot socks. They became instantly popular and she started selling them online. What started as a tragedy quickly turned into a miracle, as proceeds from her “accidental company,” Grace and Lace have built 2 orphanages in India. (For more information on her story, go to GraceAndLace.com.)

Melissa and her husband Rick are examples of how God can transform our darkest times into blessings for others. They eagerly credit God for bringing them up out of the pit and restoring their souls to praise.

“I shall never be moved,” writes the psalmist. The reality is all of us will be moved – shaken to the core – at some point. In this psalm are hope and a promise that one day God can restore us to joy. Whether our miracle is orphanages in India or simply a morning when we wake up and don’t immediately experience the pinch of sorrow, God certainly has the power to turn mourning into dancing.

Scripture Summary

The praise of a soul lifted up from despair cannot be silenced. The psalmist knows deep grief; thanksgiving for deliverance from that grief is deeper still.

Call to Worship

- L: Weeping may linger for the night,
C: but joy comes with the morning.
L: God has turned our mourning into dancing
C: And has clothed us with joy.

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

- L: Merciful Creator,
C: We bring our flawed and weary selves before you. We cry at the pain we see in the world: that which has been brought upon us, which we bring upon others, and which we bring upon ourselves. We know that healing is possible, but we often choose suffering instead. Visit us with your mercy and reconciliation, that we might know joy once more. Amen.
L: Weeping may last the night, but joy comes with the morning. Receive the word of our Lord’s forgiveness and know that it is real—here and now. You have been restored. Your life is a testimony to God’s healing power. In Christ’s name, Amen.

Psalm 30
July 2, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

God of life, you have the power to bring us up even from the depths of death. Dry our tears and lift our heads to the light of your healing love, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

God's favor is for a lifetime, even when riches and ideals fail us. Show us the true blessings of our lives, O Lord, that in our giving and in our sharing we might always tell of your faithfulness. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Make us bold, O Lord, to cry out to you, whatever the circumstance. This life, these sorrows, this day of mourning shall not be the end of us, with you constantly at our side. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The dust may neither praise you nor tell of your faithfulness; yet we, children of dust, are as much yours as each blade of grass and each drop of ocean that you have created. Give us strength as mountains, that we might see the power of your restoration. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your greatness transcends any earthly kingdom, administration, or nation-state. Instill in us a greater loyalty to our Maker, which inspires responsible citizenship and care for the disadvantaged among us. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Weeping may linger only for a night, but sometimes that night can seem endless. Sit patiently with those who wait on you, and enfold them in your tender arms. Send healing especially to... Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Join us to the generations of followers who called out to you and found your promises sure and true. For all the saints dearly departed and in fellowship with your whole church. Faithful God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: To you, O Lord, we have made our supplication. Clothe us now with the joy of your faithfulness, and receive these prayers we offer, for the sake of Jesus, Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

God has, indeed turned our mourning into dancing, and longs to gather us at the table of celebration. This bread and this cup are healing; receive them and be restored!

Psalm 30
July 2, 2017

Litany

L: Take off that sackcloth! It's dancing time!

C: What sackcloth? We aren't wearing sackcloth!

L: Not literal sackcloth. I mean your sadness and despair!

C: That's easier said than done! Do you know all that we've gone through?

L: The Lord knows.

C: Then the Lord must know we have good reasons to be sad and desperate.

L: But the Lord is with you, faithfully. That's a good reason NOT to be sad and desperate!

C: But we're so used to feeling terrible. How can we be happy?

L: The Lord is here to help you. The Lord is here to heal you.

C: To...take off our sackcloth, in a manner of speaking?

L: Exactly! And to clothe you with great joy!

C: That is amazing news! Sounds too good to be true!

L: The Lord can turn your mourning into dancing.

C: It's been such a long time since we danced.

L: The Lord knows that, too. The Lord can bring the good out of even bad situations.

C: Ours are pretty bad.

L: Can you trust in God?

C: It's hard!

L: Sure it is!

C: But if we can trust in the goodness and power of God...things will get better?

L: Only God knows your future. But yes, God wants you to be joyful. Right here and now.

C: Count our blessings? Is that it?

L: Count them of course, but also count on God to keep blessing you.

C: We'll try.

L: You go as far as you can, and God will meet you there.

C: That makes us feel—like dancing!

L: And that's the way it should be, you blessed and joyful children of God!

C: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 30
July 2, 2017

Skit

Characters: Mourning, Sorrow, Dancer, Joy, Director

Props: Signs for each actor: "Mourning" "Sorrow"
"Dancer" "Joy"

Director: Let's take it from Act One, Scene One. Places everyone!

Mourning: Oh woe! Woe is me! (*stops*) What's my motivation here?

Director: \$250 a week plus Actor's Equity points.

Mourning: That's good motivation. Should I continue?

Director: Well, it's Sorrow's line next.

Mourning: Sorrow gets all the best lines! Any chance of a rewrite?

Director: In a word: no.

Sorrow: My heart is broken, like a big, red, broken thing! (*stops*) Who writes this stuff?

Director: The producer's husband.

Sorrow: That explains that!

Dancer: (*dances in*) But wait! Do not be mournful! Do not be sorrowful!

Joy: That's right! Be joyful! Like me! (*dances awkwardly*)

Dancer: Honey, why don't you leave the dancing to the professionals, OK?

Joy: What is that supposed to mean?

Director: I'm losing control of this show! (*shouts*) Can you people please focus?

Mourning, Sorrow, Dancer, Joy: (*together*) Sorry!

Director: That's better. Let's go to the last scene. Sorrow and Mourning are gone. Dancer and Joy are left onstage. Big finish coming up! (*Sorrow and Mourning exit*)

Dancer: (*dances around*) Ah! Bliss! No more Sorrow! No more Mourning! Only joy! (*pause*) I said "Only joy," (*nothing*) Joy???

Joy: I'm sorry, what?

Dancer: You have a line here. You say, "The Lord be praised forever! Hallelujah!"

Joy: I know what I say.

Dancer: Then why didn't you say it?

(*Sorrow and Mourning re-enter*)

Sorrow: We think we should reappear at the very end.

Mourning: It will give the audience closure.

Director: Absolutely not! We do the show as written! Out! (*Sorrow and Mourning exit*)

Joy: The Lord be praised forever! Hallelujah!

Dancer: Dance party! Yeah, baby! (*grabs Joy's hand and dances around*)

Director: The end! Very nice! Keep up the good work, people, and we'll be ready for opening night.

(*Sorrow and Mourning re-enter*)

Sorrow: Can we come back in?

Director: For now. But remember, Joy has the last word. Always!

Mourning: Totally unfair!

Sorrow: I'm calling my agent! (*Mourning and Sorrow stalk off*)
(*Joy and Dancer take a deep bow*).

Psalm 30

July 2, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God hears us even when others can't. We can leap for joy knowing that God cares!

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- iPhone or any device that can have a pitch app downloaded; *High Pitch Blaster* and *High Frequency Noise* are two current options
- Microphone

Setting the Scene/Background

We all know that dogs can hear pitches that human beings can't. Did you know that children and youth are often able to hear pitches that adults can't? There are various apps that one can download and play different pitches. Play the various pitches over a microphone and have people raise their hands if they can hear the pitch being played. One finds out quickly that younger ears really do hear differently than older ears. Psalm 30 sings the story of someone who has felt sad, bullied, and wondered if God noticed. It ends with a sense of assurance that the psalmist can trust in God – even if others don't see and hear us, God always hears us. We might not always be able to hear everything, hear each other, but God does.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have iPhone or iPad ready to go with the *High Frequency* pitch app or another similar app.
- Play various pitches through the microphone and have kids and adults raise their hands if they can hear them.
- Soon as only the kids can hear, have them “leap for joy” when they hear the tone instead of raising their hands!

Reflection Questions

- Why is it hard to hear some of the pitches?
- Do you ever feel like people don't hear you or notice you?
- How can it be that God always hears us?
- What's your favorite way to show your joy?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

If you have children who are deaf, use the vibration setting on your phone to demonstrate how those touching the phone can feel it vibrate, even when others nearby cannot. God, who is close to us, notices us, even when others do not.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Instruments and instrumentalists

Psalm 150

July 9, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Psalm 150

July 9, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Psalm 150

¹Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!

²Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

³Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!

⁴Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!

⁵Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

⁶Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!

Reader 2: Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

Reader 1: Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!

Reader 2: Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!

Reader 1: Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

Reader 2: Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Psalm 150

July 9, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Music is a gift we can use to praise God.

It is no accident that the final word in the book of Psalms is a hymn of praise! No matter what we encounter in our lives, God has the final say, and God's final word is joy.

What better way to praise God than in song? Trumpets, lutes, harps, tambourines, string, pipes, cymbals – I'll bet even the angels can hear the racket raised by this raucous band!

Music is so much a part of my life I sometimes take it for granted. There's music on my iPhone, music in the shopping malls and stores, music in movies, TV programs and commercials, music in my car. There's even music in my head – it's a rare moment that I don't have some song or other stuck in my head.

Music has the power to support or even change my mood. I have a playlist called, "Music for Dancing," and one called, "Music for Crying." I have "Favorites," "Ultra Favorites," and "Uber Favorites." I have Pandora stations set for working out, for cleaning my house, for falling asleep at night.

My music is a near constant soundtrack for my life. It makes me wonder whether the music I listen to supports or contradicts the kind of life I want to live. I have music for when I want to be peaceful and faithful – songs of praise and trust in God (both religious and secular music can do that for me). But I also have music I listen to when I want to kick some serious booty. It's my defiant, rebellious, I-don't-give-a-hoot kind of music. I listen to it when I want to misbehave, to break some rules, to do what I know I shouldn't.

To be fair, I'm human. I think everyone needs a kick-booty soundtrack. But at the end of the day, I want my last song to be this: "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

Scripture Summary

Imagine handing out instruments to a roomful of children, and what the sound would be like. The psalmist encourages us to praise God with every note, every breath, in every corner of creation.

Call to Worship

L: Praise God in this holy sanctuary!

C: Praise the Lord!

L: Praise God with trumpets, pipes, and cymbals!

C: Praise the Lord!

L: Praise God, everything that breathes!

C: Praise the Lord!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Merciful Creator,

C: We bring our flawed and weary selves before you. We cry at the pain we see in the world: that which has been brought upon us, which we bring upon others, and which we bring upon ourselves. We know that healing is possible, but we often choose suffering instead. Visit us with your mercy and reconciliation, that we might know joy once more. Amen.

L: Weeping may last the night, but joy comes with the morning. Receive the word of our Lord's forgiveness and know that it is real—here and now. You have been restored. Your life is a testimony to God's healing power. In Christ's name, Amen.

Psalm 150

July 9, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

God in whom we praise, there is no place on earth or in heaven where our praise cannot reach you. Receive the offering of our hearts, and join our voices in one hymn of thanksgiving. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

Your mighty deeds and surpassing greatness are too much for us to express, dear Lord. Accept these humble gifts as a sign of our gratitude and a reflection of your grace in the world we share with so many who long for you. Receive our praise, generous God!

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: We raise our voices like trumpets, our hearts like harps, to glorify our Creator and echo your goodness. Magnify our song that all might hear and join in. Mighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your praise reverberates throughout creation, in every creature that breathes and every bit of matter you have made. Turn our songs of praise to cries for justice and peace, that all may live and love your beautiful world. Mighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We thank you for musicians who give voice to the deepest expressions of our human experience, who probe the depths and scale the heights of what it is to reflect our Creator's ultimate love. Mighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Sometimes the only sound we are capable of making is a cry for deliverance. Hear your children in pain, in need of healing, wholeness or relief. Especially be with... Mighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Make music of our days, and bring us at last to join the choir immortal, praising you around your holy throne. Mighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: As children's voices are music to their parents' ears, receive the earnest prayers of our hearts, and bless the efforts of our lives to be your living legacy in the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Now we draw near, to celebrate and to receive the gifts you offer to all who accept the invitation. Draw us close in the sanctuary of your table, that we might eat and drink, side by side, in harmony. Come and enjoy the feast!

Psalm 150

July 9, 2017

Litany

L: Well, this is it!

C: What is?

L: Psalm 150. The last one!

C: Awww, that's too bad. We really like the psalms!

L: Me too. But at least we go out with a bang!

C: An exploding psalm? How would that work?

L: No, no. A bang, as in strong ending.

C: Oh.

L: It' the ultimate psalm of praise!

C: Really? There have been some very good psalms of praise!

L: But this one uses the word praise 12 times in 6 short verses!

C: That's a lot of praising!

L: And it's filled with music too, instruments like trumpets, lutes, harps, tambourines, pipes, cymbals!

C: Is there an electric guitar? That's our favorite.

L: Nope. Hadn't been invented yet.

C: Guess vibraphone would be out too, huh?

L: Definitely out. The psalm writer talks about God's sanctuary and firmament. That's all the stars and planets, by the way.

C: How about mighty deeds? Are mighty deeds in there?

L: They are indeed.

C: Maybe even greatness? Surpassing greatness?

L: Right in the second verse!

C: Wow!

L: Psalm 150 is like a great outpouring of excitement and devotion. Praise for a God who deserves ALL praise.

C: Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!

Psalm 150

July 9, 2017

Skit

Characters: Soleil the Praise Band leader, Jamal the Drummer, Lin the Choir director, Georgea the Soprano, God

Props: Drum, drumsticks

Soleil (*to congregation*): I am so psyched to tell you guys. Jamal, our very own drummer, has written a totally awesome and rocking praise song. Wait till you hear it! It's going to blow the sound system! Jamal! Come here! (*slaps him five*) High five, dude!

Jamal: Awww, it's no big deal.

Soleil: No big deal? No big deal? This is better than *Hillsong* and *Casting Crowns* combined! Once this song gets out there, you'll probably get a recording contract!

Jamal: But Soleil, I just had to give it my best. I mean, it's about the Lord!

Soleil and Jamal (*together*): Praise the Lord!

Lin: (*enters*) Um, excuse me Soleil, but the choir needs to rehearse in here. You are going to need to wrap it up now.

Soleil: Excuse me, Lin, who died and made you choir director?

Lin: Bob Smith did, don't you remember?

Soleil: Oh, yeah. But seriously, we need to stay here. Can't you work in the music room?

Georgea: No, I need to practice my solo here in the sanctuary. Acoustics!

Lin: And I don't want to pull rank, but organ beats drums every time!

Jamal (*laughing*): I get it. Beats—drums. That's pretty good!

Lin: What are you talking about?

Jamal: Never mind. Hey Soleil, maybe we can share the space! I can play some of my song, and Georgea can sing her—what are you singing, Georgea?

Georgea: "Thou Art My Cornerstone, A Great Big Rock Art Thou"

Lin: Yes! What a classic hymn of praise!

Soleil: (*under her breath*) I hate that stupid song!

Lin: This isn't going to work. We can't agree on what music God wants to hear!

God: Did someone say my name?

Soleil: Are you...are you....

God: Yes, I am the Lord Almighty! What's the trouble here?

Georgea: God, we know you like traditional church music better, right?

Soleil: Oh yeah? Well my praise band knows you like contemporary best!

God: Sorry, but you're both wrong. My favorite is Electropop.

Lin: Huh?

God: Just kidding. I like all kinds of music, and I love to hear my children sing and play!

Jamal: So... you like us both the same?

God: Praise songs—of ALL kinds—are music to my ears. People—learn to appreciate each other for a change.

Jamal: You're right, Lord!

Lin: Yes, Lord, we've been childish. (*to Soleil*) Truce?

Soleil: Truce. (*they shake hands*) Georgea? I think I could learn to like your hymn!

Georgea: If you ever need a soloist, give me a call. I'm very versatile!

God: That's more like it! Jamal, to the drums!

(*Jamal plays wild drum solo*)

Psalm 150

July 9, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

We are all different, but we can all serve God in our own way.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Instruments and instrumentalists

Setting the Scene/Background

Does your church have instruments sitting around or maybe at home you have some you could bring in – a harmonica, tambourine, etc. Do you have people in your congregation who play some instruments they could bring in? Could you buy a pack of kazoos from a store? It would be great to have a variety of instruments – might be a cool opportunity for some of the older folks to show instruments that younger kids have never seen up close before – an accordion, an autoharp, a slide guitar! Psalm 150 is a beautiful psalm of praise. Whether kids get to play different instruments and shout out “Praise God!” or they get to witness others playing and praising God, they’ll witness this truth: All these instruments are different but all of them make music. All of us are different but each of us can serve God. It’s as simple and wonderful as that.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have instruments ready in children’s message area.
- If you are going to have parishioners share some of their instruments with the kids, arrange this beforehand.

Reflection Questions

- How are all these different instruments the same?
- What gifts do you have?
- How can you serve God with those gifts?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Really little kids and some others might need help playing their instrument. Have helpers ready to jump in if needed.

For kids with noise sensitivities, offer a banner or flag they can carry down the center aisle toward the back of the church (away from the noise) as part of the “marching band.”

Next Week’s Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- 50 ft. yarn
- Cross you can stand upright

Spiritual Blessings, Ephesians 1:1-14

July 16, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Spiritual Blessings, Ephesians 1:1-14

July 16, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Ephesians 1:1-14

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Pronunciation Guide

Ephesus: EH-fuh-suh

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reader 2: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

Reader 1: He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Reader 2: In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Reader 1: In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

Reader 2: In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Spiritual Blessings, Ephesians 1:1-14

July 16, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: We have been adopted by a loving God and we are inheritors of God's kingdom.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians lays out the relationship we can have with God, and the relationship people can have for one another. Both encourage unity and peace.

Paul (or the writer attributing the letter to the teacher, Paul) begins with a greeting and encouragement for the Ephesians. (This may have been a generic letter for a variety of Christian communities in addition to Ephesus.) Paul identifies followers as adopted by God and inheritors of God's kingdom.

My sister-in-law married a man with a daughter who is in her early twenties. His daughter has been a slave to addiction for many years. She has given birth to four children but has not been allowed to care for any of them. The first two were adopted by loving families. The two youngest were also adopted by a loving family – by my sister-in-law and her husband (the babies' step-grandparent and grandparent).

Here's what I know about them. Those babies are being raised by families that love them unconditionally. They were all given a chance at a life they never would have known if they were in the care of a mom in active addiction. They have all the same love, provisions, and experiences offered to the birth children of the adoptive families. In short, those babies are loved and cared for as if they had been born into those families.

We have been adopted by a loving God. We have been given a chance at a life we never would have known if we had been abandoned by God and left to fend for ourselves in a harsh world. There is none in the world that God loves more than another. We are all given full and unconditional love by a God that does not see our adoptive status. God sees only beloved children and loves us as such. Such an unconditional love is not as hard for God to offer as it may be for us to accept. But it is ours nonetheless.

Scripture Summary

The letter to the Ephesians begins with a dramatic description of God's extravagant generosity. They may not have been born into the faith, but as adopted children they—and we—have been blessed beyond measure.

Call to Worship

L: Come, chosen people, and give thanks to your God!

C: We have been blessed in Christ.

L: In him we have received redemption.

C: We have been blessed in Christ.

L: In him we have an inheritance.

C: We have been blessed in Christ.

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Loving God,

C: You have offered us the world and yet we turn to our own distractions, believing we know better. We have not lived as your beloved children, born of one spirit and belonging to one family. Instead we cut ourselves off from what is unfamiliar, intimidating or different. Forgive us for our limited vision. Forgive us for not trusting in you and your promise to never give up on us. Amen.

L: We have been adopted into God's family, an identity which cannot be taken from us. God is love, God is patient, God is merciful. We owe eternal thanks to the lover of our souls for continually reaching for us and holding us fast in an embrace of forgiveness, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Spiritual Blessings, Ephesians 1:1-14

July 16, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

God of spirit, we are yours because you have said we are. Guide us to live as full inheritors of your grace and joyful proclaimers of your promises to all. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

Generous God, you have given us everything, and at no cost to ourselves. Turn us likewise toward the world, offering our gifts of time, resources and presence, as a sign of your love and faithfulness. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: In you we have an inheritance, O Lord: a family, an identity, and a future. May the world know you through us, and may we live to the praise of your glory. Loving God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You promise to gather up all things to yourself, loving Creator, everything on earth and in heaven. May we see fit to love the world, others and ourselves with the kind of extravagance you have shown to us. Loving God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We give you thanks for all adoptive parents and families, who model themselves on your

compassionate example. Bless their children as they come to know more fully the grace that chose them. Loving God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We are marked with the seal of your promised Holy Spirit, and we come to you with all our frailties and infirmities. Wrap us in your healing, especially... Loving God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Gather us together with all your saints, in the fullness of time, that we might share with them your promised redemption and perfect union with our heavenly family. Loving God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We place these prayers into your hands, knowing that you accomplish all things according to your good will. Give us faith and make us trustworthy to carry out your good work on earth, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You are chosen and invited to sit at the family dinner table with all of God's children: the human race. God sets a place and pulls out a chair—you have only to sit and receive the blessings offered here! Come now, for all is ready and your brothers and sisters are waiting.

Spiritual Blessings, Ephesians 1:1-14

July 16, 2017

Litany

L: Paul writes to the Ephesians...

C: There Paul goes, writing again! He must have gotten writer's cramp!

L: Maybe, but he went on writing anyway. He had important messages to share with the early churches.

C: What's he saying this time?

L: He greets the people of Ephesus, assuring them of Christ's grace and peace.

C: As usual.

L: Then he tells the Ephesians that they are adopted.

C: Adopted? Who adopted them?

L: God did!

C: Was there a lot of paperwork involved?

L: No, no, not that kind of adoption!

C: Oh.

L: Adoption is a choice. A choice to love someone as your own child.

C: So, God chose them?

L: Yes, and God chooses us, too!

C: But what did we do to deserve to be loved like that?

L: It's not about anything we did. It's about everything God IS.

C: We keep forgetting that.

L: But it's so important to remember! And in our adoption, God blesses us and gives us gifts, gifts of forgiveness.

C: But we have so much to be forgiven for!

L: As much as we sin, that much more is God's grace given freely to us.

C: Clean slate?

L: Clean slate. And there's more!

C: Really?

L: As God's adopted children, we have an inheritance. We have been marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit. We are destined to live forever, to praise God's glory.

C: So, we are God's loved and saved children, just like the Ephesians were. That's good news!

L: That's the very best news of all, for Ephesus, and for us!

All: Blessed be God!

Spiritual Blessings, Ephesians 1:1-14

July 16, 2017

Creative Expression

Props: Large cutout paper dolls (two singles and two long chains, all different colors, cut from construction or other sturdy paper), piece of scotch tape, small table to hold chains and dolls

Once there was a woman who had a child. (hold up one paper doll)

She loved and cherished her child. It seemed she couldn't love anyone more than that child.

But then she met a child who needed a mother. (*hold up second paper doll*)

She didn't hesitate. She took that child in and raised him as her own.

And even when her adopted child disappointed her... (*crumple up paper doll*)

...she always forgave him. (*smooth out paper doll*)

Her adopted child grew in love, and soon there were more children for the woman to care for. (*put down single doll, hold up chain of paper dolls, all colors*)

No matter how many there were, the woman's love was enough for all of them.

No one was left out. No one. (*pick up smoothed out single paper doll and tape it to the chain, hold up chain*)

The mother and her first child rejoiced in the adopted brothers and sisters, of all races and creeds.

And through their great love, the chain was made so strong it could not be broken. (*pretend to try and tear paper doll chain, chain stays intact*)

So it is with us. We are the adopted children who are loved by God. (*put chain on table, point to congregation*)

Do we disappoint our parent? Of course we do! (*pick up and crumple up chain*)

But we never lose God's forgiveness. (*smooth out chain*)

And through Jesus, we are more than we were before. We are made new. (*put down first chain, hold up new chain*)

That is God's promise to us. To all of us. (*point to chain, put chain on table, point to congregation*)

So, let us make a chain. Let us hold each other's hands... (*invite congregation to hold hands*)

...so may the chain of us, all the blessed children of the world, of all races and creeds, the blessed children of God (*point to congregation*) ...

...be unbroken, through the grace of the God who saves us and sets us free, forever and ever. Amen.

Spiritual Blessings, Ephesians 1:1-14

July 16, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God has made us family members in God's kingdom. God adopts us as God's own.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- 50 ft. yarn
- Cross you can stand upright

Setting the Scene/Background

Show that kids are “members” of God's kingdom and that they are always part of God's family.

When you invite kids forward, silently place the yarn in an open area and create a circle.

To “open” the kingdom circle, you will take the cross to the place where both ends of the yarn meet. Open the circle at the cross. Open the circle so wide, like a crescent moon, that everyone in the congregation is “in” the circle (which is truly never closed).

For reflection questions, focus on how God's “circle” is wider than we can see with a piece of yarn, and in fact includes the whole world. The reflection questions can also focus on adoption and how Jesus makes us a part of the family of God.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Place the yarn in a circle. Explain how it represents God's kingdom. Ask kids to try to get in the kingdom without stepping over the yarn or touching it. (They can't.)
- Place the cross at the opening where both ends of the yarn meet. Open the circle wide at the cross.
- Jesus invites us to become inheritors of God's kingdom. We're all “in.”

Reflection Questions

- How did you become family in the kingdom of God?
- The circle isn't very big—could you fit the whole church in there? How big is God's “circle” really?
- God's adopts us as God's own through Jesus. Whose family do we belong to then?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Small children or kids with special needs could serve as helpers to “open up” the circle. Another child could also hold the cross to allow other children to enter.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Find people who are able to speak in languages other than what is usually spoken in your worship space
- A translating app on a smartphone

One in Christ, Ephesians 2:11-22

July 23, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

One in Christ, Ephesians 2:11-22

July 23, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Ephesians 2:11-22

¹¹So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision” —a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision” —a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Reader 2: But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

Reader 1: He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

Reader 2: So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Reader 1: So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

Reader 2: In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

One in Christ, Ephesians 2:11-22

July 23, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: We are one in Christ.

I find it exhausting that we as a community of faith haven't moved very far in the 2000 years since Jesus walked the earth. Paul was so adamant that the community stop building its walls and fostering hate. In Paul's time the disdain was between the Gentiles (non-Jews) and the Jews. Both had been welcomed into a new community – one that had been formed and blessed by Christ. But their differences continued to haunt them, even as they claimed unity under Christ. Paul implored them to live and act as one in Christ.

Yet here we are in 2017 still fighting the same fight. Both inside and outside the church we fight over differences, we cultivate and nurture our hatred, we claim insider status, all this while shunning anyone we consider outsiders.

Within the Christian faith our denominations fight over doctrinal differences. We call ourselves liberals or conservatives. We draw lines in the sand. We fight over potential congregation members as if they were merchandise at an auction. We fight our sisters and brothers in the next pew over the building, worship, music, ministries, staff, placement of art, colors of the walls – just about anything, really.

Outside the Christian community we outright condemn non-Christians. We build walls. We separate ourselves from those who differ from ourselves. We call them names. We keep them in poverty with our laws and ordinances. We rip families apart and we arrest those who don't belong here. All in the name of the law, and in the name of Christ.

Can we stop? Christ's message of love in the face of differentness is non-negotiable. Christ's family is not made up of insiders and outsiders. God's children are everyone. Every. Single. One. Even the ones we fear. Even the ones we hate. Even the ones we blame. We are all one in Christ. Not because we believe in Christ (or we don't). Not because we worship Christ (or we don't). Not because we follow Christ (or we don't). We are one in Christ because Christ has made us one.

Scripture Summary

The believers in Ephesus are given a monumental task: to live as though the age-old divisions of culture and religion no longer exist, for Jesus has made such distinctions irrelevant. Are these new Christians up to the challenge?

Call to Worship

L: Once we were far off,

C: But now we have been brought near.

L: Once we were strangers and aliens,

C: But now, in Christ, we have become one family.

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Loving God,

C: You have offered us the world and yet we turn to our own distractions, believing we know better. We have not lived as your beloved children, born of one spirit and belonging to one family. Instead we cut ourselves off from what is unfamiliar, intimidating or different. Forgive us for our limited vision. Forgive us for not trusting in you and your promise to never give up on us. Amen.

L: We have been adopted into God's family, an identity which cannot be taken from us. God is love, God is patient, God is merciful. We owe eternal thanks to the lover of our souls for continually reaching for us and holding us fast in an embrace of forgiveness, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Amen.

One in Christ, Ephesians 2:11-22

July 23, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

One true God, we are your dwelling place. Brought close to you by grace, may we reflect the unity which ours in Christ, in the Church and in the world. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

As members of your household, O Lord, we come rejoicing into your presence, offering the best of what we have, dedicating it to your service for the benefit of all whom you call beloved: our whole human family. Accept what we bring and bless it, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: It is our nature, O God, to draw distinctions, and in so doing draw ourselves further from you. Bring us back into fellowship with brothers and sisters of all backgrounds, beliefs, and biases, that we would know each other only as you do: beloved of our Creator. Uniting God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: When we deny our unity, we destroy ourselves and the earth we rely on for survival. Make us as conscious of caring for the planet as if it were our own body, capable of sustaining us for as long as we keep it viable and healthy. Uniting God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Uplift those who suffer for being different: immigrants, refugees, prisoners of war, and minorities in every country on earth. Awaken us from in the insanity of prejudice and persecution and set your children free to love each other. Uniting God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: A house divided cannot stand, nor a spirit fragmented, wounded or isolated. Reach out through us to all who suffer mental illness, grief, loneliness, confusion or any other affliction that marginalizes them. Heal your children, especially... Uniting God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: In Christ there are no distinctions. Join us with saints of every time and place, until we know the true meaning of community, and the scales at last fall from our eyes in your perfect kingdom of love. Uniting God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: O God, you are our peace. You have heard our prayers, and your prayer on our behalf is that we would all be one. May it indeed be so, Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Sisters and brothers in Christ, we are no longer strangers! Our Lord has broken down the dividing walls, revealing a table big enough for everyone. Come now, and gather around the One who unites us, feeds us, forgives us, and sends us out saying, do likewise!

One in Christ, Ephesians 2:11-22

July 23, 2017

Litany

L: Who belongs to God?

C: Is this a trick question?

L: Not at all.

C: We do. We belong to God.

L: All of you?

C: Everyone in this church!

L: How about beyond this church?

C: Beyond this church? What do you mean?

L: Do people outside of this church belong to God too?

C: Yes, of course they do! All Christians belong to God!

L: How about non-Christians? Muslims, Jews?

C: Non-Christians? We need to think about that a minute. OK, yes, they do.

L: How about people who don't believe in God at all? Do they belong to God?

C: We know where you're going with this. Yes. Everyone on earth belongs to God.

L: Which makes us all one. Right? The dividing walls between us come down.

C: But some of those walls are very thick. Suspicion, prejudice, misunderstanding...

L: Fear, conflict—yes, they can be thick walls.

C: It's hard to knock down those kinds of walls.

L: That's why we have help!

C: Help?

L: When we open our hearts, God stretches them much wider.

C: And the wider our hearts, the more room for love.

L: Trust instead of suspicion. Acceptance instead of prejudice.

C: Understanding, not misunderstanding. No fear. No more conflict. In a perfect world that would be true...

L: We don't need to wait for perfect. We can tear down those walls.

C: Even the thick ones?

L: Especially them!

C: So, may God open our hearts ever wider.

L: May we tear down the walls.

C: May we truly all be one. Amen!

One in Christ, Ephesians 2:11-22

July 23, 2017

Skit

Characters: Restaurant Maitre d', Blue eyed customer Beth, brown eyed customer Bill, two other blue-eyed customers

Props: Notepad and pen

Maitre: Good evening! Table for two? Do you have a reservation?

Beth: No, we thought if we came early we might be able to get a table.

Maitre: There's a short wait right now. May I put you on the list?

Beth *(to Bill)*: What do you think?

Bill *(shrugs)*: Sure. I've heard the food here is great!

Beth: OK then, two for dinner. Beth Blue-eyes and Bill Brown-eyes.

Maitre: *(starts to write)* That's Beth Blue-eyes and Bill...wait a minute!

Bill: What's the matter?

Maitre: I'm sorry, but this is a restaurant for blue-eyed people only. I think there's a brown-eyed place down the street. *(to Beth)* Of course, you are welcome to stay here!

Beth: You don't understand. We're together! We don't want to be separated!

Maitre: Together? But how can that be? You're...you're different!

Bill: Yeah, so?

Maitre: So? So? In this restaurant, we strive for consistency—excellent food, blue-eyed customers. It's been that way since we opened!

Beth: What kind of place is this?

Maitre: Now listen, you may be new around here, but our local restaurants and shops cater to either blue or brown eyed people. They are all very good places, mind you! We try to be fair to everyone.

Bill: How can separate be fair?

Maitre: I don't make the rules, I just enforce them!

Beth: Come on, Bill, let's go. Wouldn't want to eat here anyway!

Maitre: Suit yourself, but if you're trying to dine together in this town you're going to be very hungry! *(Beth and Bill exit)*

(Two blue-eyed customers enter)

Maitre: Good evening! Table for two?

Blue #1: Yes!

Maitre: Let me check one thing... *(walks over and looks at their eyes)*.

Blue #2: We're both blue.

Maitre: So I see! We just happen to have an open table! Right this way! *(they exit)*

One in Christ, Ephesians 2:11-22

July 23, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Our differences are beautiful and created by God.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Find people who are able to speak in languages other than what is usually spoken in your worship space
- A translating app on a smartphone

Setting the Scene/Background

Do you have people in your congregation who are from other places or speak various languages? Do some of the kids know how to say something in another language? Perhaps you could look up on a translating app how to say a few words in various languages. Ephesians 2:11-22 spotlights that there are no insiders or outsiders. No one is an alien. Everyone is welcome and we all have a place in God's family. Perhaps you could invite people who speak languages other than what is usually spoken in your worship space to each share a few words or a sentence so the kids can hear that and then you can talk about how our differences are beautiful. We don't have to be afraid of people who look or sound different than we do because God made us that way. Ask the children if they have ever felt left out or like an outsider. Talk about ways that we can help other people feel included and loved and welcome.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Make arrangements with those who are going to share other languages so they know when to speak.
- If you will be using a translation app on your phone, get the app downloaded and practice with it beforehand. You may want to use a microphone to amplify the volume of the translation app so others can hear it in the congregation.

Reflection Questions

- Do you ever feel like an outsider?
- Was there a time someone helped you feel included? How did that feel?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Feelings of being an "outsider" might be especially keen for some kids. Be sensitive to this in your own location and how you can help each kid to think about how they have been excluded – but also how they can each help to include others as well. For example, a kid in the wheelchair might have experienced their share of feeling excluded, but they might also have some of the best ideas for including others. Another example would be a child on the autism spectrum—they see the world differently, but that can be a wonderful thing! How can you celebrate that our challenges often give us the best inspiration for how to help others face those challenges?

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Package of gold star stickers or washable tattoos with encouraging messages (and wet paper towels)

Unity in Christ, Ephesians 4:1-16

July 30, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Unity in Christ, Ephesians 4:1-16

July 30, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Ephesians 4:1-16

4I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,
²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." ⁹(When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) ¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Reader 2: There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Reader 1: Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)

Reader 2: The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Reader 1: We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Unity in Christ, Ephesians 4:1-16

July 30, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God's world needs people with different gifts.

One of the most precious gifts people have to offer each other is our differentness. Despite my many attempts to achieve perfection, I continue to learn how lacking I am.

Once upon a time I was a pastor. I am no longer a pastor, but am now an artist – an artist of words, paint, food, people. Once upon a time my best friend was an accountant. She is no longer an accountant, but is now a pastor. I cannot think of two people with farther interests than my artist self and my accountant friend. Yet, strangely, we work well.

I am scattered and creative. I bounce from painting my kitchen to running a 5K to raising backyard chickens. All because it struck me as a good idea one day so I went and did it. At the same time, I struggle mightily to do the ordinary things like paying bills on time or cleaning my home on a regular schedule. Routines elude me. But I will be the first to take a knife skills class or dye my hair platinum blonde just because I never have before.

My friend is organized and predictable. She pays all of her bills on time, and even has money in a savings account (I mean, who does that?). She does not try something new unless she is statistically likely to succeed. She on time for everything and never misses an appointment.

But both of us were really good pastors. I was great at trying new things, teaching the middle schoolers (who doesn't want to climb through a makeshift obstacle course?!), and writing my own curriculum. She is great at managing people and budgets, and cleaning up the messy things and loose ends in the organizational structure.

The reason we work well together and are both great at ministry is because we both have a deep love for God and God's people. Massively different gifts, but at the core huge hearts for God's work. One thing I know for sure is that this world would be a far worse place without her in it. If not for our differences, this world would be a very boring and ineffective place. Thank God people have different gifts!

Scripture Summary

It is now no longer enough simply to sit back and marvel at God's gift of grace offered freely to all; the time has come to listen hard to the Spirit calling us to use our unique gifts for the good of the community. Game on!

Call to Worship

L: The Spirit is calling; can you hear it?

C: We will walk with humility, bearing with one another in patience.

L: There is only one body, one God who unites.

C: We will speak the truth in love. Come, Holy Spirit!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Loving God,

C: You have offered us the world and yet we turn to our own distractions, believing we know better. We have not lived as your beloved children, born of one spirit and belonging to one family. Instead we cut ourselves off from what is unfamiliar, intimidating or different. Forgive us for our limited vision. Forgive us for not trusting in you and your promise to never give up on us. Amen.

L: We have been adopted into God's family, an identity which cannot be taken from us. God is love. God is patient. God is merciful. We owe eternal thanks to the lover of our souls for continually reaching for us and holding us fast in an embrace of forgiveness, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Unity in Christ, Ephesians 4:1-16

July 30, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

God of unity, you have brought us together for a purpose. Show us each the way in which we might use our unique gifts in service to all. In Christ's name, we pray, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

God has granted us grace, according to Christ's immeasurable gift. Although it is one we can never repay, may our lives be a continual offering of praise and thanksgiving, returning all that we have to you, and to your highest purpose. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: We are indeed blown about by tempting schemes and promises too outrageous to be true. Guide us by your spirit to return to your Gospel of truth, which has never and will never fail us. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: God, you are above all, and through all, and in all. Show us your face when we look at one another, and amaze us with your power to create and renew, for we too are bearers of your creative light. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We see the seasons of our lives come and go, and yet you remain constant. Assure us by your spirit that you

are continually making something new of us, drawing forth new gifts as we mature, while returning us to a childlike wonder at your powers of creation. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Lord, you have raised up healers among us, to spread your love and impart your spirit of wholeness. Show us where we might be a word, a touch or a presence that someone else needs. Send a special blessing especially upon... God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We are your saints, O Lord, called and united by the same spirit, the same faith which rallied the saints of old. Keep us now and forever with them in the full communion of all your children. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Unite our prayers and our wills around your common vision, O God, and use all we bring to build up the body of Christ, Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Come now, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. Christ turns no one away; neither shall we. Gather at the table of mercy, and be joined to one another in the bonds of love in which our Savior holds us.

Unity in Christ, Ephesians 4:1-16

July 30, 2017

Litany

L: I tried to pick up a fork with my elbows the other day.

C: Well, I tried to tie my shoes with my knees.

L: and C: It did not go well!

L: Because hands are made for picking up forks and tying shoes, not elbows and knees.

C: No wonder!

L: It would be like trying to walk on your nose, or drive with your ears.

C: Ridiculous!

L: We all have our unique gifts and talents.

C: And while there are different ways to do things, each of us has a way that works best for them.

L: Not everyone is good at everything...

C: But each of us is good at something.

L: So, when things have to be done...

C: We should do the things that match our gifts and talents.

L: And if everyone does that...

C: Everything will go well!

L: We need knees and elbows and noses and ears as well as hands and feet...

C: But we need them to do what they were meant to do.

L: As members of the body of Christ, we are all equally important.

C: No matter what we can do, or can't do.

L: And when we bring our gifts and talents together...

C: There's nothing that can't be done.

L: And even if we lose some of our abilities...

C: Our knees don't kneel anymore; our ears can't hear very well...

L: God has given each of us MANY gifts.

C: So, we can still do many things.

L: So, let us celebrate our differences...

C: Even as we rejoice in our similarities.

L: Let us be Christ's body, together, in a broken world.

C: And coming together, let us make a real, positive difference.

L: Remembering who gave us our gifts...

C: May we say thank you, by using those gifts to God's glory.

All: Thank you, Lord!

Unity in Christ, Ephesians 4:1-16

July 30, 2017

Skit

Characters: Ms. Christopher (teacher), Francis, Augustine, Hildegard, Joe (students)

Ms. Christopher: Let's get started. I will call the roll. Francis of Assisi?

Francis: Here!

Ms. C: Augustine of Hippo?

Augustine: Here!

Ms. C: Hildegard of Bingen?

Hildegard: I'm here!

Ms. C: And... Joe Average?

Joe: Uh, here, I guess.

Ms. C: Since this is the first day of class, why don't you introduce yourselves and tell us a little about YOU? Francis, you're first.

Francis: Well, I'm Italian. My family has tons of money. But I turned away from that life to become a simple monk.

Ms. C: Anything else, Francis?

Francis: I can speak animals' languages.

Ms C (pauses): Alrighty then! Next, we have Augustine of Hippo.

Augustine: I am from North Africa. I was a pretty wild kid before I settled down. I write a lot – philosophy, mainly.

Ms. C: That is quite impressive!

Francis: Yeah, but can he talk to the animals?

Augustine: Why ever would I do that?

Ms. C: Moving right along. Hildegard?

Hildegard: I'm German. I became a nun as a very young woman. I write a lot, too, but my writing is a description of incredible, mystical visions that I have seen.

Augustine: Mystical visions? Sounds weird. Now, philosophy, THAT is something to write about!

Francis: Haven't heard anything to top talking to the animals yet!

Ms. C: Excuse me Francis, this isn't a competition. You are ALL incredibly gifted and talented. And last we have Joe Average. Joe, what can you share with us?

Joe: Uh, I'm from Milwaukee, and... I'm not a writer, or a philosopher, or a mystic.

Francis: Animal lover?

Joe: Not particularly, sorry. Uh, what else about me? Big Brewers fan...listen, I think I'm in the wrong class.

Ms. C: Joe, you are all in my class for a reason. You have gifts and talents too, even if you aren't sure what they are. Now, we are all here to learn more about our Creator and Redeemer. What can you tell me about God?

Francis: I already know God made the animals!

Augustine: God has a brilliant and infinite mind.

Hildegard: God is the spirit of divine love.

Joe: Uh... can I pass?

Ms. C: For now, Joe. But by the end of this class you will know yourself, and God, much better. I promise!

Joe: I sure hope so!

Ms. C: So now, students, shall we begin?

Francis: One second. Talking with this ant on my desk.

Ms. C: Francis! Not on class time!

Francis: Sorry!

Ms. C: Now then, let's continue our lesson!

All together: Yes, Ms. Christopher!

Unity in Christ, Ephesians 4:1-16

July 30, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Each of us serves God in our own way.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Package of gold star stickers or washable tattoos with encouraging messages (and wet paper towels)

Setting the Scene/Background

Find a package of gold star stickers or washable tattoos. Ask the kids to each tell you something they are good at doing and then as they each tell you what they are good at – give them a gold star or tattoo for that. Paul tells the Ephesians that each one of us are given different things we are good at doing and we need to look for ways we can use those gifts to serve God. We were given those gifts for a reason and we need to let those gifts shine for God. Maybe you could point out how some people in your church are already using their gifts: “The organist is a gifted musician and so one of the ways they serve God is by playing music each week; today’s reader is great at reading and isn’t it awesome that they just read the lessons for us? The custodian is good at fixing things and they came and fixed the stove in the kitchen the other day. How can you use your gifts to serve God?”

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Be sure the gold star stickers or washable tattoos are accessible before the service starts.
- Give the kids each a gold star or washable tattoo when they tell you something they are good at. If you are pointing out gifts of people in the congregation, give them a star or tattoo as well!

Reflection Questions

- What do you think it means to shine for God?
- Is it easier to point out things other people are good at or things you are good at?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

It may be hard for some kids to talk about (or even think of) things they are good at. Encourage the kids to point out one another’s gifts. Remember being good at something is not always a physical gift; kids with physical limitations might be good at math, kids with cognitive limitations might be good at expressing cheerfulness or love; kids with attention limitations might be quite creative.

Next Week’s Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Basket filled with various items

Put on the Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-20

August 6, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Put on the Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-20

August 6, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Reader 2: Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.

Reader 1: With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Reader 2: Take the helmet of salvation,

Reader 1: And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Reader 2: Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication.

Reader 1: To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

Reader 2: Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Reader 1: Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Put on the Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-20

August 6, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Our greatest enemies are the spiritual dangers inside ourselves.

This section of Ephesians always reminds me of the flower children of the 1960's. It evokes the image of [peaceful protesters sticking flowers into the barrels of guns held by military police during a march to the Pentagon on October 21, 1967](#). Both the text and the image are compelling pictures of just how powerful peace and love can be.

At a time when God's people were undeniably in danger from the physical forces of the Roman empire, Paul recognized an even greater danger – “the cosmic powers of this present darkness... [and] the spiritual forces of evil.” Paul did not encourage people to lie down and be doormats. No, Paul rallied the troops to prep for battle. But a different kind of battle. “Fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness... the shield of faith... the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Paul encouraged people to gird themselves with truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and God's word.

What might our world look like if we were to gird ourselves with these weapons of the spirit? In light of racial and religious tensions, might we speak our truth and at the same time listen to the truth of another? Could we not put on airs of pretentious righteousness, but instead be righteous? Could we live lives of faith, loving and accepting all God's children despite our differences? What if we were to proclaim salvation to our Muslim neighbors? Not a salvation contingent on conversion, but a gift offered freely by a loving God. Could we let God's word work inside of us instead of using God's word to beat others down?

The battles we face may not be against other people. Instead, as Paul suggests, these might be battles against the forces that corrupt humanity – the forces of ignorance, arrogance, and hatred we find inside ourselves. Perhaps we are primed to win these battles when we surrender ourselves to the hope, peace, and love of a loving God.

Scripture Summary

God's armor doesn't look like ours. It is comprised of truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and proclamation. It's not designed to protect against the dangers of combat, but rather the forces that seek to destroy humanity.

Call to Worship

- L: Be strong in the Lord and the strength of God's power.
- C: The Spirit will keep us standing firm.**
- L: Pray at all times, keep alert, and persevere.
- C: We will speak boldly the mystery of the Gospel.**

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

- L: Loving God,
- C: You have offered us the world and yet we turn to our own distractions, believing we know better. We have not lived as your beloved children, born of one spirit and belonging to one family. Instead we cut ourselves off from what is unfamiliar, intimidating or different. Forgive us for our limited vision. Forgive us for not trusting in you and your promise to never give up on us. Amen.**
- L: We have been adopted into God's family, an identity which cannot be taken from us. God is love, God is patient, God is merciful. We owe eternal thanks to the lover of our souls for continually reaching for us and holding us fast in an embrace of forgiveness, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Put on the Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-20

August 6, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Mighty God, your weapons are spiritual and your armor is truth. Teach us not to be defensive, but to stand in the strength of your Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

Lord, you provide us with everything we need—protection, sustaining words, and a community of support. Turn us away from our own concerns and outward to those who need what we have to offer—all the gifts with which you have blessed us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: In a world of uncertainty, our first temptation is to defend ourselves, our views, our perceived "home territory." Show us clearly what it is that truly threatens us—narrow mindedness, selfishness, fear—and equip us to break down the true enemies of our soul. Almighty protector,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Show us the places where our shortsightedness causes harm to others, to relationships, and to our world. Teach us to stand instead in defense of the helpless, the less fortunate, and the persecuted. Almighty protector,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: As we travel our neighborhoods, our land, and territories beyond, open us to being transformed by the unfamiliar, the uncomfortable and unwelcome surprises. You have given us all that we need; now help us to grow in faith and courage. Almighty protector,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The wounded are all around us, Lord. Victims of war, disaster, abuse, and misfortune. Take us beyond pity and into the front lines of healing and reconciliation. We offer special prayers for... Almighty protector,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We remember your soldiers who have hung up their earthly armor, but now rest in your heavenly arms. Join us in one sacred mission: spreading the good news to all. Almighty protector,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: You are our protection, our comfort, and our strength, O Lord. Keep us, and these prayers, in your safe and sure embrace, for in you alone we put our trust. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Prepare now to be fed on the body and blood of our Lord. Fortify yourselves with the sacrament of salvation and renew your strength to continue the campaign entrusted to us by Jesus, our caretaker, host and guide. Come, eat, and be restored!

Put on the Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-20

August 6, 2017

Litany

L: Put on the whole armor of God!

C: Whoa! Does God want us to do battle?

L: A kind of battle, yes.

C: Not us! Make love, not war—that's what we say!

L: This is a different kind of battle. It is a spiritual battle.

C: Spiritual battle? Then we don't need armor, right?

L: Again, not literal armor. Paul wants us to fight the forces of evil with things like the belt of truth, and the shield of faith.

C: Ah, we get it now.

L: The breastplate of righteousness. The helmet of salvation.

C: We get it already!

L: The sword of the Spirit.

C: Are you finished?

L: All finished. But seriously, we need all these things to help good to triumph in this world.

C: Yes, there is so much evil—so many evil people! The world would be better without them!

L: But what about the evil in us?

C: What are you talking about?

L: The biggest battle is fighting the sin in ourselves.

C: But we aren't evil people! We're good people!

L: Everyone has both bad and good in them. It's not black and white.

C: So now we're gray?

L: In a manner of speaking. God knows our strengths and weaknesses. God knows where we are vulnerable to bad influences and impulses.

C: Hence the armor?

L: Yes. God's spirit gives us what we need to be better, and to make the world a better place.

C: We just need to use what we've been given, right?

L: Right. So, put on the armor of God!

C: We will!!

Put on the Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-20

August 6, 2017

Skit

Characters: Sales Person, Customer

Props: Dress on a hanger, scarf

Sales: Welcome to our boutique! May I help you?

Customer: Maybe you can.

Sales: That's what I'm here for.

Customer: What outfit would you suggest for a firing?

Sales: Excuse me?

Customer: I'm firing someone today. She's been really sick, and her husband left her, yada yada yada. She hasn't been producing for me. I guess basic black might work? With maybe a pop of color?

Sales: I guess so. But pardon me for asking... do you really have to fire someone because she's having a hard time?

Customer: I really don't care. Her problems are starting to affect our bottom line! Out she goes!

Sales: That seems—a little harsh.

Customer: This is absolutely none of your business! You are a nobody, working in a nothing store.

Sales: You don't have to be insulting.

Customer: I call it like I see it. And looking at you... I see a nobody. No offense, of course.

Sales: Of course, I'm offended.

Customer: Well, that's your tough problem, isn't it? Listen, I need a new outfit. I can buy it here or take my business elsewhere. Are you going to wait on me or not?

Sales: *(sighs)* Yes, ma'am. This is a new dress from one of our most popular designers. Would you like to try it on?

Customer: Only if it will make me look beautiful. My appearance is very important to me.

Sales: For your—firing event tonight.

Customer: Yes. I always want to look my best! That's another thing...the woman I'm firing always looks pathetic. No makeup, the MOST unfashionable clothes! That is NOT how you present yourself to the world!

Sales: Yes, it doesn't matter what's on the inside as long as the outside is pretty, right?

Customer: Exactly. I mean—what do you mean, the inside? There is nothing wrong with my insides! They are perfect!

Sales: Whatever you say, ma'am. Here's a colorful scarf to go with the dress.

Customer: Yes, that's more like it! I'll go try it on. *(she exits with dress and scarf)*

Sales: *(shakes head sadly)* Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. My eyes hurt.

Put on the Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-20

August 6, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

We can prepare our hearts to follow Jesus by remembering to pray.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Basket filled with various items

Setting the Scene/Background

You might think about having a basket with various items and pull them out of the basket and show them to the kids: for instance, a tennis racket, sunscreen, a bag of flour, a book. Ask the kids something like, "Okay, I have all these things, now you have to help me select the right item for what I'm preparing to do. If I were going to make cookies, which of these would I need? If I wanted to play a sport, which of these would I need? Etc. Ephesians 6:10-20 is about being prepared for walking the Christian way of life – and one of the best ways to do that is to pray. If we want to do anything we need to be prepared. That's why we pray, so that our hearts are as ready as can be to follow Jesus. Let's pray together now.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have your basket of items ready to go before the service.
- Think about how you will use each of the items in your basket to talk to the kids about being prepared.

Reflection Questions

- Why is it important to be prepared?
- How do you think we can prepare best for living as Christians?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Many kids might have a hard time with the idea of prayer – they think of it as sitting still, and sitting still is hard! Why not teach them about other ways to pray? Could you make a small labyrinth and talk about how for centuries people have done walking prayer? Could you have adults in the church talk to the kids about non-traditional ways they like to pray – perhaps when they are out for a run or even driving in their car? How can you help the kids think creatively about prayer and that it is not all just about being still and quiet?

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Pitcher of water and baptismal font
(Baptism/Lord's Prayer unit)
or
- Toy crown
(Revelation unit)

Baptism, Psalm 46; Acts 2:37-42

August 13, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Baptism, Psalm 46; Acts 2:37-42

August 13, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Psalm 46

¹God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

²Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

³though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah

⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

⁶The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

⁷The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

⁸Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

⁹He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰ "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."

¹¹The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

Secondary Text: Acts 2:37-42

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" ³⁸Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." ⁴⁰And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Pronunciation Guide

Selah: SEE-lah

Dramatic Reading of the Text: Psalm 46

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Reader 2: Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

Reader 1: though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah

Reader 2: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

Reader 1: God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

Reader 2: The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

Reader 1: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

Reader 2: Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

Reader 1: He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

Reader 2: "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."

Reader 1: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

Baptism, Psalm 46; Acts 2:37-42

August 13, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Baptism is an invitation and a promise.

Immediately following the coming of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost, Peter addressed the crowds with the good news of the risen Christ and a proclamation that the prophecies of old had been fulfilled in Christ. New believers were stunned and confused as to what they should do in response to this new knowledge. In this text Peter answers their question. “Repent [literally, to turn around], and be baptized.”

Peter invites them to turn around, and turn back to the God who “is our refuge and strength... [who] shall not be moved... and [who] makes wars cease.” They are invited to be baptized into the family of Christ that celebrates such a powerful and loving God. Baptism brings with it the promise of new life for them, their children, and for all who had lost their way.

Baptism is not magic. The sprinkling of water does not place a magic shield around people, nor does it promise a charmed life.

Baptism is an invitation. It is a welcoming into the body of Christ. It is welcoming the Holy Spirit into one’s self. It is walking in the world fully equipped with the spiritual gifts necessary for navigating this life.

Baptism is a promise. It is a promise made by those getting baptized to surrender fully to a life lived in Christ. It is a promise made by the community of Christ to support and love one another. Most importantly, it is a promise by God to walk with us, to guide us, to love us, and to welcome us home.

Scripture Summary

The world’s powers bluster on about their own importance, and why you should fear them. God sits back with an immovable calm and enduring authority—the kind that stops armies in their tracks.

Call to Worship

L: God is our refuge and strength!

C: The Lord of hosts is with us!

L: We have a home in the city of God!

C: The Lord of hosts is with us!

L: Be still and know the God who ends all wars!

C: The Lord of hosts is with us!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Loving God,

C: You have granted us every blessing on earth, but we do not mirror your generosity to the world. We turn inward and hold tightly to things that aren’t even ours. We make others uncomfortable to be around us instead of welcoming as you would. And we regularly forget the grace that has been freely offered. Forgive us for not living each day as your beloved, chosen children, for the sake of Jesus, Amen.

L: We do not continue in sin in order that grace may abound, for God’s mercy is not something which can be taken from us. Go forth in the sure knowledge that you are forgiven, made new, and strengthened to serve another day in God’s kingdom. Amen.

Baptism, Psalm 46; Acts 2:37-42

August 13, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Holy Lord, we offer ourselves to you, and you claim us as your own. Make of our lives a never-ending testimony to your goodness and mercy, which are ours through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

You have given us the greatest gift of all: your Holy Spirit. Bless us and these offerings we place before you as a thanksgiving for everything we have received as your children. Use them to bless our entire earthly family, that the Spirit's work may know no bounds and your name might be known in every place. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: You offer us a covenant like no other, O Lord: the chance to be your people. May we always remember to whom we belong, and whose love has surrounded us since our birth. Almighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: This world can often be a frightening place, with dangers unimagined and threats real and perceived. Protect us and fortify us to go out with good courage, working tirelessly to bring about your peaceful kingdom on earth. Almighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Bless all the newly baptized, and those preparing for baptism. Keep them steadfast in your word, and empower their sponsors and communities to uplift them as they grow in Christian love. Almighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Bring all the weary to your streams of healing water, O Lord. Assure them of your care, your presence and your power. Be especially with... Almighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Lord of hosts, you are our refuge forever—in this life and the life to come. Unite us with those who precede us in life and in death, that we may one day inhabit your holy city as neighbors. Almighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We entrust our supplications to your capable hands, both gentle and strong. Receive us and our prayers, and make us ever faithful to you, the lover of our souls. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Just as the disciples of old, we dedicate ourselves to teaching, fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread. In this meal you take the ordinary and make it sacred, just as you take our common lives and make them extraordinary by the power of your amazing grace. Gather us now to be fed and fortified for our ongoing journey as your followers.

Baptism, Psalm 46; Acts 2:37-42

August 13, 2017

Litany

L: Most of us don't remember our baptism.

C: But we've seen the pictures. The christening gown. The godparents. A font with water. Oil. A candle.

L: We may not remember that day, but we need to remember that we ARE baptized.

C: Blessed, loved, welcomed into a life of faith.

L: We need to remember that we still make mistakes, after our baptism. We still hurt others. We still sin.

C: Baptism doesn't make us perfect. It makes us God's.

L: And every time we repent, every time we turn back to God...

C: The heavens rejoice. We are always welcomed with open arms.

L: Most of us don't remember our baptism.

C: But our Baptism is not just one day. Baptism is every day.

L: Even at our worst, our Baptismal blessing is never taken from us.

C: Even when we do not repent, God waits for us to turn around. God never gives up on us.

L: We belong to God, and nothing will ever change that.

C: It doesn't really matter if we don't remember the christening gown, the water, the events of one day.

L: Because God remembers us, and loves us without condition, every day we live.

C: And, baptized, we are invited to live a new life. A life in Christ.

L: May we turn back to the God who waits for us.

C: May we live a life of faith and love and blessing. Not just one day.

All: EVERY day. Amen.

Creative Expression

Props: Pitcher of water, bowl, map, compass, heart-shaped pillow

In the waters of Baptism, we are welcomed into the family of God. (*Pour half the pitcher of water into bowl*)

We are blessed and sent on our way, out into the world.

We will travel far, over mountains, through deserts and oceans. Through city and countryside. (*Pull out map*) Every day is another step in our journey.

In our Baptism, God gives us each a compass, to find our true North. (*Show compass*)

As we grow, we sometimes put away our compass. (*Put compass down*)

We stop looking at our map. (*Put map down*) We think we can find our own way.

But we get turned around. We get lost. We run into danger. Unseen cliffs, undertows in the ocean, broiling heat and freezing cold.

We forget that we are not alone, and we are afraid.

We are too proud to admit that we can't make the journey on our own.

We need to find our compass again, to find our true North.

We need to turn back. Our map and our compass are right there where we left them. (*Pick up map and compass*) And with them, we can continue on our way in safety.

Our journey of faith begins with the waters of Baptism (*Pour rest of water into bowl*), continues with the guidance of the Holy Spirit (*Point to map and compass*), and finally, one day, our journey on this earth comes to an end.

And we realize that we're right back where we began (*Pick up heart pillow, hold it close*), resting in the heart of our God.

Baptism, Psalm 46; Acts 2:37-42

August 13, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

In baptism, we learn that God is our safe place—God is on our side.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Pitcher of water and baptismal font

Setting the Scene/Background

With a pitcher of water and a baptismal font nearby, tell the kids the story from Psalm 46. Do any of the children remember their baptism day? How many have seen a baptism up close? Pour the water into the font and make the sign of the cross on the forehead of each child. Tell them about how, on the day they were baptized, they were marked with the cross of Christ forever. Why do we light the candle? Why do we use anointing oil on the forehead for a blessing? What do sponsors do? Why do we baptize? Consider these questions with the kids and all gathered there. Even better, if a child is to be baptized that day, do it at the end of the Kids' Storytime, and let the other children stay up front so they can watch this beautiful sacrament up close.

Another nice connection to make with the Psalm is that “rushing water” and “wind” are indicators that God is near. (In the ancient church, many communities used “moving” or “rushing” water, because they believe that water was “alive!”)

We hear that God is “on our side.” Unpack what that means through baptism. It doesn't mean that things always go our way, but it does mean that God claims us as God's own.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have your baptismal font and a pitcher of water accessible.
- Make the sign of the cross on the forehead of each child to remind them of their baptism. Consider saying alternative words when you do this: “God is on name's side!”

Reflection Questions

- Why do we baptize?
- Why do you think we do the different parts of the baptismal service (light the candle, anoint with oil, etc.)?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

It is great for kids of all ages and abilities to be able to touch the items used in a baptismal service. Let them help put the water on each other's heads in the sign of the cross.

For kids with aversion to touch, offer to mark their hand instead of their face. Also, give them the option not to be marked if they don't want to be touched at all.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Suitcase

Baptism, Psalm 84; Romans 6:1-11

August 20, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Baptism, Psalm 84; Romans 6:1-11

August 20, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Psalm 84

¹How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

²My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

³Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

⁴Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Selah

⁵Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

⁶As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.

⁷They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

⁸O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah

⁹Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed.

¹⁰For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness.

¹¹For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.

¹²O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.

Secondary Text: Romans 6:1-11

6What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Pronunciation Guide

Selah: SEE-lah

Baca: BAH-kuh

Baptism, Psalm 84; Romans 6:1-11

August 20, 2017

Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text: Psalm 84

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

Reader 2: My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Reader 1: Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

Reader 2: Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Selah

Reader 1: Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

Reader 2: As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.

Reader 1: They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

Reader 2: O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah

Reader 1: Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed.

Reader 2: For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness.

Reader 1: For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Reader 2: O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.

Dramatic Reading of the Text: Romans 6:1-11

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?

Reader 2: Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Reader 1: For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Reader 2: We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

Reader 1: For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Reader 2: We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Reader 1: So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Baptism, Psalm 84; Romans 6:1-11

August 20, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Baptism offers death to sin, and a new life.

I am forever searching for a new life. It's not that my life is so awful – it's just that I can envision it could be so much more. I watch the celebrities with their millions of dollars and wish I could have enough money to do all the things I want. I watch teenagers come and go from my home and wish I could have no responsibilities save a little school work. I never seem to be satisfied, always wishing for a life that's not mine.

Baptism offers new life. But not the kind I think I want. The kind of new life baptism offers is already mine. But I resist claiming it. This new life offers death to sin. But I still cling to my sin, reluctant to let it go. This new life offers peace, joy, and love. But I keep searching for peace, joy, and love in shiny new things, new relationships, and new locations. How difficult it is for me to let go of the old life and accept the new!

But God promises in this new life a home that is more comfortable even than the home God offers a sparrow and her young. One day in God's courts is "better than a thousand elsewhere." How marvelous if I could realize that a day in God's courts already is this new life God has offered. I have God's new life; I live in God's courts – it is this beautiful planet and the creative, expressive, unique people that live in it. I am home.

Scripture Summary

The place where God dwells defies description. It is a refuge like no other, a sanctuary of grace and an endless source of strength. Such a home would be the fulfillment of our every desire. Guess what? It's already ours!

Call to Worship

L: Come into the dwelling place of the Lord!

C: We long to be in the presence of God!

L: These courts, this place—it is our true home.

C: We will dwell in the Lord's house forever!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Loving God,

C: You have granted us every blessing on earth, but we do not mirror your generosity to the world. We turn inward and hold tightly to things that aren't even ours. We make others uncomfortable to be around us instead of welcoming as you would. And we regularly forget the grace that has been freely offered. Forgive us for not living each day as your beloved, chosen children, for the sake of Jesus, Amen.

L: We do not continue in sin in order that grace may abound, for God's mercy is not something which can be taken from us. Go forth in the sure knowledge that you are forgiven, made new, and strengthened to serve another day in God's kingdom. Amen.

Baptism, Psalm 84; Romans 6:1-11

August 20, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Lord of freedom, we are no long enslaved to sin. Inspire us to live as children forgiven, freed to share the story of our deliverance and invite others into it, for the sake of Jesus, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

As we live, we live to God. Graciously receive the offerings of our lives—all these things we lay upon your altar. But most of all, accept our grateful selves, dedicated to you in the praise and proclamation of your salvation. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: You offer us otherworldly gifts, O God, and yet we so often settle for the temporal ones. Show us what is good, and tempt us with the life which cannot be destroyed, eroded or taken from us. Gracious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The sparrow and the swallow are instinctively drawn to their Maker. May we join with all creation in making our home with you, our sun and shield. Gracious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: As students and instructors prepare for their return to school, guide them in the ways of your goodness. Teach them patience, compassion, and joy at the gifts of study and fellowship. Gracious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: As our souls long for you, the afflicted faint for a touch of your healing hand. Extend your grace through careers, medics, and loved ones who offer their gifts and comforting presence. Especially we lift up... Gracious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Happy are the saints who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Join their heavenly songs with our earthly refrains, and make of us one united choir of praise to our Savior. Gracious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Our strength is in you alone, O God, and to you we entrust the petitions of our hearts. Receive them for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

One day in your courts far surpasses a thousand anywhere else, and an invitation to your table is a promise of the food that never runs out. Welcomed by our heavenly host, let us take this bread and cup as a taste of the eternal feast which awaits us in our forever home.

Baptism, Psalm 84; Romans 6:1-11

August 20, 2017

Litany

L: No one wants to talk about death.

C: Death is scary. No one wants to think about the end.

L: In our world, we cling to life, as hard as it can be.

C: We refuse to think of the alternative.

L: Death is a closed door. A sealed tomb.

C: Whatever our worries, whatever our trials, we tend to choose life.

L: To keep that door open as long as possible.

C: Death is scary. No one wants to think about it.

L: But Christ died, and showed us another way to live.

C: A life without fear, a life of hope and joy.

L: Because Christ died and rose again, we need not be afraid.

C: We live eternally, because Christ died and opened the door of heaven for us.

L: The door we thought was closed.

C: Now, with Christ, the door is open, and the tomb is empty.

L: And death has lost its power over us.

C: No one wants to talk about death, but we need to die in order to live forever.

L: Christ leads the way to and through death, with us every step of the way.

C: We need not fear, because whatever happens...

All: Christ has opened the door wide to welcome us home.

Baptism, Psalm 84; Romans 6:1-11

August 20, 2017

Skit

Costumes: Black cape with hood for Death

Prop: Piece of paper

Characters: Death, Child, Mom, Jesus

(Death enters, knocks on invisible door)

Child: *(enters from other side)* Who's there?

Death: Delivery!

Mom: *(enters)* Wait, honey, don't open that door. *(calls out)*
We didn't order anything.

Death: Is this *(checks paper)* 122 Garden Road?

Child: Yes, that's us!

Death: Then I'm at the right place. Open up!

Mom: I said we didn't order anything.

Death: This is a special delivery. A surprise!

Mom: *(hesitates)* Well...

Child: Come on, Mom, open the door! Surprises are the coolest!

Death: Yeah, Mom, the coolest!

Mom: I guess... *(pretends to open door, quickly slams it)* Oh, dear Lord!

Child: What's the matter?

Mom: Nothing, sweetie it's just... that's not a good surprise.

Death: *(knocks again)* You won't get rid of me that easily!
Open the door!

Mom: Never!

Death: Look, lady, you don't have a choice. It's time!

Mom: But my little girl!

Death: It's a shame, but I have my orders.

Mom: This is cruel!

Death: Give it up. I am inevitable. It'll go better if you just open the door.

Mom: No!

Jesus: *(appears behind Death)* What's going on here?

Death: Jesus! Not you again! Here... *(shows Death paper)* I need to take the woman who is inside this house. See? Right address and everything.

Jesus: *(takes paper and tears it up)* First of all, you're in Springfield, not in Greenville.

Death: Really? Darn it!

Jesus: Second, it's not her time. So, beat it!

Death: That's what you ALWAYS say. Sheesh! *(exits)*

Jesus: It's OK now. He's gone.

Mom: Thank heavens!

Jesus: He'll be back someday, but don't worry. I'll be with you.

Child: Are you one of the good guys?

Jesus: You might say that. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to head over to 122 Garden Road in Greenville. There's an old gentleman there who's about to have a visitor and I promised I'd be with him. *(exits)*

(Mom hugs Child)

Baptism, Psalm 84; Romans 6:1-11

August 20, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God promises us new life.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Suitcase

Setting the Scene/Background

Bring a suitcase with you. You could talk about the last time you moved and/or ask the kids if they have ever moved. Describe the house you used to live in, where it was, what it was like, how long ago you lived there. In baptism, God claims us as God's own. Our new place is with God!

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have the suitcase accessible.
- Ask the kids about places they used to live. Tell them about somewhere else you used to live.
- Point out how God's promises are like a new home for us.
- Make certain that you stress that we reside in this new home regardless what we do. Baptism is a gift—our new dwelling place has been set because God has claimed us.

Reflection Questions

- What does our new place with God look like?
- How do you know you are living in God's world?
- How can we remind ourselves where our true home is?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Kids with physical or cognitive limitations might have modifications made to their homes that might be interesting to learn about. Ask them about their homes. Reassure them that their physical homes are safe places where we can live in God's world as God's children.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Bread
- Wine
- Other Communion items

The Lord's Supper, Psalm 65; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

August 27, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

The Lord's Supper, Psalm 65; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

August 27, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Psalm 65

¹Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed,
²O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come.
³When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions.
⁴Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.
⁵By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.
⁶By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.
⁷You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.
⁸Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.
⁹You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.
¹⁰You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.
¹¹You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness.
¹²The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,
¹³the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Secondary Text: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

¹⁷Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. ²⁰When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. ²¹For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. ²²What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!
²³For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. ³⁰For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. ³³So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

The Lord's Supper, Psalm 65; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

August 27, 2017

Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text: Psalm 65

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed,

Reader 2: O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come.

Reader 1: When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions.

Reader 2: Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.

Reader 1: By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

Reader 2: By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.

Reader 1: You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.

Reader 2: Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

Reader 1: You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.

Reader 2: You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

Reader 1: You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness.

Reader 2: The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,

Reader 1: the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Dramatic Reading of the Text:

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2

Reader 1: Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it.

Reader 2: Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk.

Reader 1: What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

Reader 2: For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,

Reader 1: "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Reader 2: In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying,

Reader 1: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Reader 2: For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.

Reader 1: Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves.

Reader 2: For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Reader 1: So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

The Lord's Supper, Psalm 65; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

August 27, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: The Lord's Supper is for unity and community.

Many of the early Christian communities struggled to find their way in a new world order. For the Corinthians, their old ways were hard to break. They were used to the hierarchies, the classes, and their roles in the culture. They were not used to Jesus' new way of equality and unity.

Paul knew that the Lord's Supper had the potential to shake people out of their habits and recognize the oneness of humanity. Jesus' final dinner with those he loved gave a new meaning to the ritual of sharing a meal. The meal, Jesus' body and blood, became a new ritual of bringing all followers together, of eliminating class and caste, of treating all people the way Jesus would treat them. Paul made it quite clear that misusing the Lord's Supper would be cause for condemnation; sharing the meal properly would lift up the entire community.

Once I was in a work environment that was, let's say... challenging. Tensions rose high in the office, and arguments and fights were commonplace. I often found the lunch break a welcome reprieve from the stress. Interestingly, I gravitated toward lunches alone or lunches with those I did not have arguments with. I guess that seems obvious, but when I look under the surface, I notice that mealtimes are a time when I feel most relaxed, but only when I am in the presence of those I trust. There is something about sharing a meal that exposes our vulnerability. On the rare occasions it was necessary to eat with people I did not trust, I found my appetite considerably changed. Eating and trusting kind of go together in a weird sort of way. Refraining from eating (or overeating, which is another form of abnormal eating) and distrust also seem to go together. When we are asked to share a meal with people we don't know well or do not trust, we are asked to be vulnerable. Jesus' invitation to eat together is also an invitation to share our vulnerability. It is only through being vulnerable and then discovering that our vulnerability will not be exploited that trust can be formed. Maybe Jesus knew that people could truly come together over the sharing of a meal.

Scripture Summary

The Lord's supper is the greatest invitation of all, for its host is the very one who made the earth and brought forth its goodness. What better reason to honor and respect this most precious meal?

Call to Worship

- L: Come, enjoy the goodness of God's holy temple!
- C: You are the hope of all the ends of the earth.**
- L: By God's strength were the mountains established.
- C: You bring peace to the seas—and to your people.**

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

- L: Loving God,
- C: You have granted us every blessing on earth, but we do not mirror your generosity to the world. We turn inward and hold tightly to things that aren't even ours. We make others uncomfortable to be around us instead of welcoming as you would. And we regularly forget the grace that has been freely offered. Forgive us for not living each day as your beloved, chosen children, for the sake of Jesus, Amen.**
- L: We do not continue in sin in order that grace may abound, for God's mercy is not something which can be taken from us. Go forth in the sure knowledge that you are forgiven, made new, and strengthened to serve another day in God's kingdom. Amen.

The Lord's Supper, Psalm 65; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

August 27, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Lord of the feast, your gifts are precious beyond measure. May we never forget the cost of the grace that is ours, and may we ever honor you in receiving and sharing it. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

You have crowned the year with your bounty and all the earth overflows with the goodness of your harvest. Teach us to enjoy your blessings and share them in equal measure, as you are Creator, provider, and lover of all. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: What you have offered freely, Lord, we so often seek to hoard, manipulate, or deny to others. Bring us back to the essence of your sacraments, your gifts, and the blessings of your Church, that we may merit the trust you have placed in us to administer them. Generous God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The whole creation bursts with the fruits of your abundance, and there is plenty for all to live and thrive. Use us to work out solutions where there is inequity of distribution, or obscene profit for the few, that your ingenious design might at last benefit all your beloved creatures. Generous God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Forgive us, Lord, when we exclude others or make them feel unwelcome, either intentionally or by neglect. Bring us back to the heart of your Gospel—one that leaves no one out. Generous God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You are the One who answers prayer, and to you we bring our deepest hurts and most urgent needs. Our hearts cry for healing, for wholeness, for reconciliation. We ask a special blessing today upon... Generous God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: All your faithful saints share this holy meal with us and complete the circle of our fellowship in Christ. Feed us all with the feast that does not end. Generous God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Gather our prayers as you gather your people, O Lord. We bring our hopes and hearts to you, through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

As often as we receive this bread and cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Make us worthy of your table as only you can do. Forgive us our shortcomings and satisfy the hunger which eats away at us. This meal is holy because you are holy—sanctify us through the grace of your boundless love.

The Lord's Supper, Psalm 65; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

August 27, 2017

Litany

L: Are you hungry?

C: Very hungry!

L: Then come to the table, but check your bags at the door first.

C: Bags? What bags? Our hands are empty!

L: But they're not empty. You have lots of baggage—anger, resentment, envy, distrust... shall I go on?

C: No. We get your point. But it's hard to let go of our stuff. We've been carrying it forever.

L: And you don't need to carry it a moment longer.

C: What will happen to all of it? We may need some of it later.

L: But you won't. Come to the table and see.

C: Who else is at the table? Are they people we know?

L: Some, yes. Some are strangers—for now.

C: We're not comfortable eating with strangers!

L: But you see, they won't be strangers once you share this meal.

C: Did they check their bags too?

L: Yes, indeed. Their hands are empty, ready to receive the bread and wine.

C: Can we eat now? We're hungry!

L: Yes, yes, but first, take those hands, those empty hands of yours, and hold each other's hands.

C: We're not comfortable holding hands with strangers!

L: In this moment, strangers become friends, and more than friends. Brothers and sisters in Christ.

C: Brothers and sisters. No baggage. Ready to eat?

L: Ready to eat together, ready to share a heavenly meal.

C: We give thanks for this meal. Bless us, Lord. Together!

All: Together, now, and forever. Amen!

The Lord's Supper, Psalm 65; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

August 27, 2017

Skit

Characters: Uber Driver, Gino, Uma

Props: Four chairs (two rows of two)

Driver: (*sitting in a front chair, miming steering a car, stopping*)

Gino: (*sits in "back seat"*) How you doing?

Driver: Good, good. Yourself?

Gino: Great! Having dinner with old friends tonight!

Driver: And it's OK that I pick up somebody else going in your direction?

Gino: Absolutely!

Driver: She should be waiting right around the corner.

Gino: This is my first ride with Uber, believe it or not!

Driver: It's great, right? (*pulls over, Uma sits next to Gino*)

Uma: Hi. (*to Gino*) I'm Uma. Nice to meet you!

Gino: Gino. Likewise. (*they shake hands*) So you're headed downtown too?

Uma: I am. I just moved here from Phoenix. This is a wonderful city!

Gino: Lived here all my life! I agree! (*to Uber Driver*) How about you?

Driver: Excuse me?

Gino: Have you lived here long?

Driver: A few years. I gotta say that driving here is a challenge, especially at rush hour.

Uma: Well, you drive very well. I hate to drive!

Gino: Are you meeting someone?

Uma: Actually, no. I decided to try a restaurant I read about. I don't mind eating alone.

Gino: Really? I don't like it. Eating with friends, that's the ticket for me!

Driver: I am dropping you (*to Gino*) off first. San Marzano is right up here.

Uma: San Marzano? Is that a good restaurant?

Driver and Gino: The best! (*look at each other*).

Gino: I guess we agree. Their pasta is out of this world!

Uma: Maybe I'll try that next time.

Gino: Hey listen. Why don't you try it tonight? You're welcome to join me and my friends.

Uma: Oh, no, I don't want to intrude!

Gino: You wouldn't be! It's tough to move to a new place, meet new people.

Uma: Well, if you're positive. That's very nice of you.

Driver: (*pulls over*) San Marzano! Enjoy your dinner! You're my last ride. I'm going home to eat something. This food talk is making me hungry!

Uma: Wait! If you're hungry (*to driver*) and you love San Marzano, why don't you join us too? (*to Gino*) Is that OK?

Gino: Sure! (*to driver*) Unless you have someone waiting home for you?

Driver: Nope. It's just me.

Uma: Then eat with us!

Driver: Well, thanks very much! I think I will. (*parks car, all three stand up*)

Gino: (*as they exit together*) I recommend the penne with pesto. It's amazing...

The Lord's Supper, Psalm 65; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

August 27, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

We receive forgiveness and Jesus' own self through Holy Communion.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Bread
- Wine
- Other Communion items

Setting the Scene/Background

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he is reminding them what Holy Communion is all about. Could today be a good day to remind the kids and all gathered about the same thing? Bring the kids up to the altar to look at the bread and the wine, the chalice and paten and all the special elements your church uses for Communion. You could talk about the significance of the shape of the altar rail – in some churches it is the shape of an incomplete circle. The meaning of this was that the present-day community gathers at the rail and the saints who have gone before us complete the circle. We are united forever with the saints throughout the ages in this sacrament. What is a sacrament? Or just keep it simple and just talk about the most important thing – that we receive forgiveness and Jesus' own self through the bread and the wine, Jesus' body and blood.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have the bread and wine and Communion elements ready to share in the Kids' Storytime area.
- Have the kids come up to the altar to look closely at the Communion items and altar rail.
- Different faith communities have different practices concerning Communion—how often it is done and what age is appropriate. Discuss what practices you use and why.

Reflection Questions

- What is a sacrament?
- Why do we share in Communion?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

If it is difficult for some kids to get up to the altar rail, be prepared to have the Communion items in a location closer to where the kids are.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A Bible with the words "Holy Bible" on the cover

The Lord's Supper, 1 Samuel 21:1-9; Matthew 12:1-8 or Mark 14:12-25

September 3, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

The Lord's Supper, 1 Samuel 21:1-9; Matthew 12:1-8 or Mark 14:12-25

September 3, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: 1 Samuel 21:1-9

21 David came to Nob to the priest Ahimelech. Ahimelech came trembling to meet David, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one with you?" ²David said to the priest Ahimelech, "The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, 'No one must know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.' I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. ³Now then, what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here." ⁴The priest answered David, "I have no ordinary bread at hand, only holy bread—provided that the young men have kept themselves from women." ⁵David answered the priest, "Indeed women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?" ⁶So the priest gave him the holy bread; for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the Lord, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away. ⁷Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds. ⁸David said to Ahimelech, "Is there no spear or sword here with you? I did not bring my sword or my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste." ⁹The priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you will take that, take it, for there is none here except that one." David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."

Secondary Text: Matthew 12:1-8

12 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ²When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath." ³He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. ⁵Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷But if you had known what this means, 'I desire

mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

Alternate Text: Mark 14:12-25

¹²On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" ¹³So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, ¹⁴and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." ¹⁶So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

¹⁷When it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." ¹⁹They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" ²⁰He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. ²¹For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

²²While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. ²⁴He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Pronunciation Guide

Nob: Nahb

Ahimelech: uh-HAI-muh-lehkh

Doeg: DOH-eg

Edomite: EE-duh-myt

Philistine: fih-LIHS-tihn

Elah: EE-luh

The Lord's Supper, 1 Samuel 21:1-9; Matthew 12:1-8 or Mark 14:12-25

September 3, 2017

Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text: 1 Samuel 21:1-9

Readers: Narrator, Ahimelech, David

Narrator: David came to Nob to the priest Ahimelech. Ahimelech came trembling to meet David, and said to him,

Ahimelech: "Why are you alone, and no one with you?"

Narrator: David said to the priest Ahimelech,

David: "The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, 'No one must know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.' I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. Now then, what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here."

Narrator: The priest answered David,

Ahimelech: "I have no ordinary bread at hand, only holy bread—provided that the young men have kept themselves from women."

Narrator: David answered the priest,

David: "Indeed women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?"

Narrator: So the priest gave him the holy bread; for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the Lord, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away. Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds. David said to Ahimelech,

David: "Is there no spear or sword here with you? I did not bring my sword or my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste."

Narrator: The priest said,

Ahimelech: "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you will take that, take it, for there is none here except that one."

Narrator: David said,

David: "There is none like it; give it to me."

Dramatic Reading of the Text: Matthew 12:1-8

Readers: Narrator, Pharisees, Jesus

Narrator: At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him,

Pharisees: "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath."

Narrator: He said to them,

Jesus: "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

The Lord's Supper, 1 Samuel 21:1-9; Matthew 12:1-8 or Mark 14:12-25

September 3, 2017

Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text: Mark 14:12-25

Readers: Narrator, Disciples, Jesus

Narrator: On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him,

Disciples: "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

Narrator: So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them,

Jesus: "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

Narrator: So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said,

Jesus: "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me."

Narrator: They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another,

Disciples: "Surely, not I?"

Narrator: He said to them,

Jesus: "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

Narrator: While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said,

Jesus: "Take; this is my body."

Narrator: Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them,

Jesus: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

The Lord's Supper, 1 Samuel 21:1-9; Matthew 12:1-8 or Mark 14:12-25

September 3, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: People can use food to enslave, but God uses food to free.

At a time when David was in exile, fleeing from an angry King Saul, he and his men sought refuge in a temple of the Lord. The only bread available was holy bread reserved for “young men [that] have kept themselves from women.” David insisted that he be given the bread in part because their need was greater than the meaning of its holiness.

Similarly, Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees when he and his disciples plucked and ate grain on the Sabbath. Jesus called upon David's story to show how human need for sustenance is sometimes greater than its ritual meaning. In short, the Sabbath was created to serve humanity, not for humanity to serve the Sabbath.

Too often have humans been enslaved by food, rather than food serving humanity. [Currently, millions in the middle east are being starved as sieges seek to gain the upper hand in an ongoing war.](#) Humanitarian efforts have failed to provide enough food for citizens, many of whom are civilians and children. It is a terrible reminder that people have the capacity to use food to gain power and control, but the innocents who suffer are left powerless and starving. Feeding the hungry is a primary goal of all major religions, and yet people are often powerless to make that happen.

The Lord's Supper is much more than a meal or a ritual. It is a profound invitation to radically change the way humans approach food, power, class, and war. When we share the meal in our congregations, we are claiming Jesus' mission to feed the hungry, to lift up the lowly, to bring down the powerful, and to work toward peace throughout the world.

Scripture Summary

Today we cannot escape the image of God's servants eating holy grains against ritual practice, in order to sustain themselves. And they might even get away with it—as long as God is the final judge.

Call to Worship

L: Come to God's house; all are welcome.

C: The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.

L: God desires mercy and not sacrifice.

C: The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Loving God,

C: You have granted us every blessing on earth, but we do not mirror your generosity to the world. We turn inward and hold tightly to things which aren't even ours. We make others uncomfortable to be around us instead of welcoming as you would. And we regularly forget the grace which has been freely offered. Forgive us for not living each day as your beloved, chosen children, for the sake of Jesus, Amen.

L: We do not continue in sin in order that grace may abound, for God's mercy is not something which can be taken from us. Go forth in the sure knowledge that you are forgiven, made new, and strengthened to serve another day in God's kingdom. Amen.

The Lord's Supper, 1 Samuel 21:1-9; Matthew 12:1-8 or Mark 14:12-25

September 3, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, your law is good and exists for the sake of your people. Uphold us in putting love above all other things, that the world would know your goodness and mercy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

You desire mercy, O Lord, and not sacrifice. Accept the offerings which we place upon your table, and show us the way of compassion where all are fed, all have enough, and all enjoy the riches of your harvest. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: The sabbath was made for people—not the other way around. May we truly honor you in our worship, not through keeping the letter of the law, but through offering our whole selves to the service of your purpose. Bountiful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: What good is bread, O Lord, if none are allowed to eat it? We repent of all the food we waste, through our own mismanagement or neglect at poor business practices. Give us a passion for feeding your people—at home and in other lands—and make us champions for the wise use of precious resources. Bountiful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We work to enjoy the fruits of our labor. And yet there are those whose efforts are never enough to meet their basic needs. There are those who want to

work but can't, or who seek work and cannot find it. Lead us to create societies where all who are able may work, and all who work are treated and compensated fairly. Bountiful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Most generous God, you do not withhold your mercies from those who ask. Grant healing to the suffering and wholeness to the wounded. Pour your blessings this day upon... Bountiful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Something greater than a temple stands here: the fellowship of all your saints, past, present and future. Bless us all with the same spirit, the love that holds us forever. Bountiful Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Your arms are wide enough to hold our prayers, ourselves, and a world in need, O Lord. Use us as the living answers to the questions which perplex us, and shower us with your unfailing mercy. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

As Jesus prepared for the last Passover with his disciples, so our table has been made ready. As our Lord invited everyone to share in the meal, even the one who was about to betray him, so we all are welcome, regardless of our motives, what we have or haven't accomplished, or what we perceive as our own shortcomings. Come now and take the bread and cup freely offered, with no conditions, for the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of souls.

The Lord's Supper, 1 Samuel 21:1-9; Matthew 12:1-8 or Mark 14:12-25

September 3, 2017

Litany

L: Let all who are hungry, eat.

C: There is enough food to feed the whole world.

L: Every man, woman, and child on this planet. Nobody should starve.

C: And yet people do. Many people. Every day.

L: And why is that? God's plenty is for everyone.

C: But we don't share. We don't take care of each other.

L: Many people live in poverty, even working two or three minimum wage jobs.

C: Their children go to bed hungry.

L: And some people have much more than they will ever need.

C: They will never know hunger or deprivation.

L: Food is also used as a weapon in places wracked by conflict. People are deliberately starved.

C: Food is held back from the people who need it most.

L: We must share. We must take care of each other.

C: So that no one goes to bed hungry.

L: God invites us: let ALL who are hungry, eat.

C: God gives us a bountiful earth, and expects us to share it.

L: May all of us be nourished, and nourish one another, every day.

C: May our children thrive, all around the world.

L: This is more than a suggestion. This is God's command:

All: Share. Feed. Love each other.

Skit

Characters: James (The disciple), a Pharisee, Jesus

James: It's been such a long day. We need to get some food. There is a field of grain over there. We can pick some, and eat.

Pharisee: Uh uh uh! No work on the Sabbath!

James: You're kidding, right? We are hungry! *(to Jesus)* Is that true, Lord?

Jesus: Well, it IS the Sabbath.

Pharisee: See? What did I tell you? It's the Sabbath, and there are Sabbath rules!

Jesus: But the Sabbath was never meant to be a punishment. No one is expected to go hungry! Go ahead, James, take some grain.

Pharisee: What? That is a scandal! You are telling him not to honor the Sabbath!

Jesus: I am telling him to use his common sense. The Sabbath is here to serve us, not the other way around!

Pharisee: I suppose you think all rules are made to be broken!

Jesus: That's not what I said. I said some rules make no sense. There's a difference.

Pharisee: Not to me! Without rules, there is chaos! And observing the Sabbath is one of God's rules. *(to Jesus)* You of all people should know that!

Jesus: God meant us to rest on the Sabbath—not starve.

Pharisee: *(to James)* So what will it be? Will you break God's rule? Or not?

James: *(hesitating)* I'm not sure. I don't want to displease God... *(to Jesus)* But you say gathering grain won't displease God. Who is right?

Jesus: Gather, James. Eat, then rest.

Pharisee: Suit yourself, but I know I'm right! *(muttering as he exits)* Wait till the other Pharisees hear about THIS!

Jesus: Come on, James. I will help you gather. I am hungry too! *(they exit)*

The Lord's Supper, 1 Samuel 21:1-9; Matthew 12:1-8 or Mark 14:12-25

September 3, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

What makes something holy?

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A Bible with the words, "Holy Bible" on the cover

Setting the Scene/Background

What makes something holy? In the church, we talk a lot about things being holy. There is the holy Bible. We celebrate Holy Communion. We sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy." What does it mean when we say something is holy? Holy is a great word – it means "set apart" or "dedicated to God." A holy moment is a time when God's presence is felt especially keenly. Maybe you could talk about how the church is a holy place because when we come there, we praise God and thank God and think about ways to serve God. But it's important to remember that holiness isn't just something reserved for church or things we do in church. What are ways that we can help kids understand that sacredness, holiness is everywhere – we just have to recognize it, learn how to spot God's handiwork in the world? Spending time with a friend when they are in need, visiting someone who is sick, enjoying God's creation, all of these things and so many more can and often do sing of holiness even as they are everyday activities. How can we help our kids and adults reflect on that?

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have the Holy Bible near the area where you are doing the Kids' Storytime.
- Talk with the kids about what it means when something is "holy".

Reflection Questions

- Is holiness something that only happens in church?
- What do we mean when we say something is holy?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

It might be easier for some of your kids to pay attention if you have pictures of people engaged in different activities and ask if those activities are holy or not. Is digging a hole a holy action? Well, if you are doing it to plant a tree, sure! Is building a house a holy thing? Well, if you are helping to provide shelter for someone, definitely.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Pillow
- Sleeping bag
- Short bedtime story
- Other bedtime items

Joy and Hope Amid Sorrow, Revelation 4:1-11

August 13, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Joy and Hope Amid Sorrow, Revelation 4:1-11

August 13, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Revelation 4:1-11

4 After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” ²At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne! ³And the one seated there looks like jasper and carnelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. ⁴Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God; ⁶and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal. Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

⁸And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing, “Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.” ⁹And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, ¹¹“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Voice

Narrator: After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said,

Voice: “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

Narrator: At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne! And the one seated there looks like jasper and carnelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God; and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal. Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

Voice: “Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.”

Narrator: And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

Voice: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Joy and Hope Amid Sorrow, Revelation 4:1-11

August 13, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: When we praise in the midst of suffering, a powerful and mighty God can offer hope.

Revelation can be daunting to readers that have not studied it. But it does not need to be intimidating. It is a frightening read for those looking through the lens of a prophecy of the way the world will come to an end. But there's another way to look at Revelation – it is, literally, a revelation of how challenging life can be for those who have given up on faith, and how victorious life can be for those who continue to trust. More importantly, it reveals who – a loving and powerful God – is at the center of all power and majesty.

This fourth chapter paints a striking picture of the majesty of our powerful God. It shows a suffering world oppressed by Roman rule, just how grand, glorious, and mighty God's kingdom is in comparison. The gemstones, thrones, and gold, the flashes of lightning and spirits – all of these are far more splendid than even the mightiest in Rome. John's images are a powerful promise of the presence of a God that cannot be overpowered by their oppressors. It offers hope to a frail, broken community, and hope is a powerful remedy for suffering.

This chapter also lifts up how praise and worship of a mighty God can turn sorrow to joy. This scene encourages readers not to give up hope, but to continue to praise even in the midst of their suffering. Certainly this is a theme most of us can relate to.

It can be extremely difficult to rejoice in the midst of suffering. Many of us inevitably resort to “why me” and “where is God”? But when we do dare to rejoice, even when all hope seems lost, that glimmer of hope can grow in strength. Hope can pierce sorrow, like a tiny light that pierces the darkness. In John's words there is hope for a suffering community, and there is hope for us as well.

Scripture Summary

The writer of Revelation so well cloaked his letter to the early Christians in bizarre imagery, it seems he was destined to be misunderstood. But the message is clear: God's power transcends everything; there is nothing to fear.

Call to Worship

L: Holy is the Lord God Almighty!

C: Who was, and is, and is to come.

L: God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power,

C: For by God's will all things exist and were created.

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Eternal Lord,

C: We live in a world of anguish, and our sin only multiplies our suffering. Our despair discourages others. Our hopelessness paralyzes us from carrying out your work in the world. We pray for mercy, for strength, and for our faith to be restored, knowing that all good things come from you. Amen.

L: God will indeed make all things new. Our Creator knows, hears, and answers the cries of our hearts. Despair no more, for the One who comes in power also comes in love, and death has no dominion in the world to come. Receive our Lord's promise of pardon, renewal, and peace which knows no end. Amen.

Joy and Hope Amid Sorrow, Revelation 4:1-11

August 13, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Heavenly Creator, we live in a world of increasing confusion and mixed messages. Show us clearly the path that you have set, the way that leads to you alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

You do not wish, O God, that we would be paralyzed in the presence of your glory. Rather you invite us to come to you and offer ourselves humbly to your service. Receive our gifts and use them to the glory of your holy will. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: When we are faced with difficulty, our first impulse is to escape. To a fantasy world, a place of denial, a state of anger. Stand firmly by us when we struggle, and give us the wings of your spirit when our faith falters. Glorious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: This world is not as you—and we—would want it to be. Injustice persists. Cruelty continues. Love does not yet appear to rule supreme. Show us your true and final vision for the universe, where the final word belongs to you, and salvation is the end of suffering. Glorious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: A storm is a frightening place to be, especially when we cannot be sure who or what will survive. Bring us through the tempests—both real and symbolic—of our days, sure in the knowledge that we shall be restored. Glorious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We turn to you for healing, Lord. Where else are we to go? Your hand is swift to pardon and your arms to embrace. Surround us and those who need your special care today with mercy, especially... Glorious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your saints worship you continually around your throne of glory. Incline our ears that we might catch a stray note or two, a promise of the eternal life which awaits us at your side. Glorious God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: By your will everything exists—ourselves included. Encourage us to trust you with our prayers, our faith, and our lives, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

We do not need to wait for your heavenly feast to join in holy fellowship with you, Lord God. We need only accept your continual invitation to join your table of grace. Feed us now, bind us together in love, and strengthen us for the journey ahead.

Joy and Hope Amid Sorrow, Revelation 4:1-11

August 13, 2017

Litany

L: The Book of Revelation is beautiful, and terrifying.

C: Scenes of splendor, and scenes of horror.

L: Is it a book of prophesy?

C: Does it describe the end of the world?

L: Many people read it that way.

C: But was it written that way?

L: Was it written to scare us about the future?

C: Or was it written to give us hope?

L: John wrote it in a time of Roman oppression.

C: The people were struggling. Hope was scarce.

L: In Revelation, John describes the world as it was then.
In all its sadness and misery. As the world still can be.

C: In Revelation, John also tries to describe the incredible majesty of God.

L: John uses vivid words to paint a picture.

C: John's images are symbolic, not literal.

L: Does God really sit on a jeweled throne? Are there really fantastic creatures who worship God?

C: Can we see Revelation as a vision of God's glory in the here and now?

L: A vision we can share, here and now? Hope from suffering, glory from despair.

C: And God with us, in triumph, always!

Joy and Hope Amid Sorrow, Revelation 4:1-11

August 13, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God is our king.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Toy crown

Setting the Scene/Background

How many books of the Bible can you name? Do you know what the last book of the Bible is? It is a book called Revelation. It is full of visions of the future that a man named John had. In Revelation 4, John has a vision of God sitting on a throne like a king. Why would God be sitting on a throne? What does it mean to be a king? What is God the king of? You could talk with the kids about how a king is treated – with reverence, as being in control, as being powerful, etc. How do we show that God is our king? How do we show that God has control and we look to God for leadership and guidance?

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have the toy crown nearby the Kids' Storytime area.
- Ask the kids who wears a crown.

Reflection Questions

- Why is God our king?
- How do we show that God has control and we look to God for leadership and guidance?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

If there are kids who like to be doing more than just talking, perhaps having some crowns handy they can color during the children's message or take with them to color at their seats could be helpful.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Rolled-up piece of paper with writing on each side

Scroll and Lamb, Revelation 5:1-13

August 20, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Scroll and Lamb, Revelation 5:1-13

August 20, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Revelation 5:1-13

5 Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; ²and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁴And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

⁶Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. ⁸When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹They sing a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; ¹⁰you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.” ¹¹Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²singing with full voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” ¹³Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, “To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Voice

Narrator: Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice,

Voice: “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”

Narrator: And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Then one of the elders said to me,

Voice: “Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Narrator: Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song:

Voice: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.”

Narrator: Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice,

Voice: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

Narrator: Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

Voice: “To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

Scroll and Lamb, Revelation 5:1-13

August 20, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, has made God's ultimate plan for the saving of humanity a reality.

Chapter 5 begins with a scroll that contains God's plan for the saving of humanity. Such a scroll was bound to be sealed not with one seal of wax, but with seven – a sign that this was a truly important document. Alas, there was no human worthy of opening such a powerful scroll.

But the Lamb of God, ("the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" – Jesus) is, indeed, powerful enough to open the scroll. And more than that – it is the Lamb of God that has made the contents of the scroll a reality.

Jesus, because of his sacrifice, has bridged the gap between heaven and earth, and has made God accessible to all.

Truly, this is a scene to behold, and an event to sing praises for! "Worthy is the Lamb!" they cry. Once again, hope is offered to a community filled with dread and despair.

Is Christ's word in your community a word of warning or a word of hope? Does it demand obedience, or does it encourage praise? Consider all the things that are said in your community of faith – the words and the things unspoken. What does your building communicate?

Consider the sanctuary and the narthex. Consider the hallways, the restrooms, the offices, and classrooms. Think about the parking lot and the grounds. Consider, too, what is seen and heard in your worship services, of what goes on in the gathering spaces after worship? What do each of these tell others about what goes on there? About who is welcome and who is not? Of how grace is shared? Of where hope is offered?

Does your community express the unconditional and unearned love of a Christ that gave everything for us? Of a lamb who walked willingly into death so that we might live? Do you praise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"?

Scripture Summary

John's secret message to the persecuted Christians continues as cryptically as before. Only now a familiar presence appears. The resurrected Lamb, worthy to reveal God's message—can there be any doubt of his identity?

Call to Worship

L: The Lion of Judah, the Root of David is among us.

C: Christ has ransomed saints from every people.

L: Worthy is the Lamb who gave himself freely,

C: To receive wisdom and honor, glory and blessing!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Eternal Lord,

C: We live in a world of anguish, and our sin only multiplies our suffering. Our despair discourages others. Our hopelessness paralyzes us from carrying out your work in the world. We pray for mercy, for strength, and for our faith to be restored, knowing that all good things come from you. Amen.

L: God will indeed make all things new. Our Creator knows, hears, and answers the cries of our hearts. Despair no more, for the One who comes in power also comes in love, and death has no dominion in the world to come. Receive our Lord's promise of pardon, renewal, and peace that knows no end. Amen.

Scroll and Lamb, Revelation 5:1-13

August 20, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Living Christ, you are our hope when all hope has failed. Gather us under your wings of mercy, and renew your song of praise within our hearts. In your holy name, we pray, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

You have made us worthy, O God, to approach your throne and offer freely the gifts of our hearts. Accept all that we bring, as children before a loving parent, and make them perfect in service to your people, and to the glory of your name. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: You bear God's word, O Christ, even as you embody that Word. Speak in our time—to us and through us—that the Spirit's power may move us as it did your first followers. Holy Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The Church stands as a beacon of hope in a world that often loses heart. Keep us true to our mission and lead us away from preoccupation with petty, superficial, and nonessential things, lest our witness lose its power. Holy Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: A new school year is the perfect time to remind ourselves of what lies at the heart of our proclamation: your eternal, unyielding love, O God. Place it firmly within our hearts that it might guide our minds, our words, and our actions. Holy Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: From your wounds, we receive healing, sweet Lamb of God. You who have known deep suffering have the power to soothe our broken souls. Lay your hands upon those whom we lift up in prayer to you, especially... Holy Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The prayers of your saints are like sweet incense. Have mercy on us for the sake of all the faithful, and keep us united as one family in you. Holy Lord,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We lay our supplications and praise before your throne, trusting always that you receive our prayers with love and mercy, for the sake of the Lamb who offered himself up for us. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Our Lord is mighty, but merciful. Glorious, but gracious. Have no fear, but come willingly to the table where all are welcome and none are turned away. Join your brothers and sisters at the feast of the Lamb!

Scroll and Lamb, Revelation 5:1-13

August 20, 2017

Litany

L: There is a scroll, and on that scroll, is God's plan for us.

C: For our salvation.

L: There are seven seals on the scroll, and no one can break them.

C: Because we are only human.

L: Who can open the scroll? Who can read our destiny?

C: Who can save us?

L: There is a lamb, so young and innocent.

C: A lamb who has been brutally slaughtered.

L: Yet the Lamb is alive, and the Lamb has the scroll.

C: The scroll with God's plan for our salvation.

L: We are only human, and we cannot save ourselves.

C: And the scroll, the seven-sealed scroll, is opened at last...

L: By the Lamb. The young and innocent and slaughtered and living Lamb.

C: Jesus opens the scroll for us.

L: Jesus is God's plan for our salvation.

C: There are no seals Jesus cannot break, no scrolls he cannot open.

L: The Lamb lives on in glory.

C: And because the Lamb lives, we do too.

L: Holy is the Lamb who was slain for us!

C: Eternally we will sing praise and thanksgiving for our salvation!

Scroll and Lamb, Revelation 5:1-13

August 20, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Jesus is the Lamb of God. What does that mean?

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Rolled-up piece of paper with writing on each side

Setting the Scene/Background

Bring a rolled-up piece of paper with writing on each side and ask the kids if they know what it is called. In Revelation 5, John has a vision of a scroll that could not be opened up. Then, in his vision he sees a Lamb. Do you know who the Lamb is? Who is someone who we talk about a lot in church who is sometimes called the Lamb? It's Jesus – and why? You could talk about sacrifices and why people used to do sacrifices, what kinds of things were sacrificed, and how Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice for us. He gave up his life for us. You could talk about how in John 15:13 it says that there isn't a greater love than sacrificing one's self for one's friends. Jesus did that for us. Such amazing love.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Don't forget to have a rolled-up piece of paper with writing on each side placed near the area where you will do the Kids' Storytime.
- Tell the kids about John's vision from Revelation 5 regarding the scroll that could not be opened and the Lamb he envisions.

Reflection Questions

- Who is the Lamb?
- How was Jesus the ultimate sacrifice for us?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

If you have little kids who might not be able to comprehend the whole idea of sacrificing, you might want to lean more toward talking about John 15:13 and what great love looks like. You could have hearts they could color in with pictures that remind them of love: family members, pets, God.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- "Feelings" chart

Four Horsemen, Revelation 6:1-8; 7:9-17

August 27, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Four Horsemen, Revelation 6:1-8; 7:9-17

August 27, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Revelation 6:1-8; 7:9-17

6 Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures call out, as with a voice of thunder, “Come!” ²I looked, and there was a white horse! Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer.

³When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature call out, “Come!” ⁴And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another; and he was given a great sword. ⁵When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature call out, “Come!” I looked, and there was a black horse! Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand, ⁶and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a day’s pay, and three quarts of barley for a day’s pay, but do not damage the olive oil and the wine!” ⁷When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature call out, “Come!” ⁸I looked and there was a pale green horse! Its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed with him; they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the wild animals of the earth. ⁹After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²singing, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?”

¹⁴I said to him, “Sir, you are the one that knows.” Then he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. ¹⁶They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; ¹⁷for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Four Horsemen, Revelation 6:1-8; 7:9-17

August 27, 2017

Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Voice

Narrator: Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures call out, as with a voice of thunder,

Voice: “Come!”

Narrator: I looked, and there was a white horse! Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer. When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature call out,

Voice: “Come!”

Narrator: And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another; and he was given a great sword. When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature call out,

Voice: “Come!”

Narrator: I looked, and there was a black horse! Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand, and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying,

Voice: “A quart of wheat for a day’s pay, and three quarts of barley for a day’s pay, but do not damage the olive oil and the wine!”

Narrator: When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature call out,

Voice: “Come!”

Narrator: I looked and there was a pale green horse! Its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed with him; they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill

with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the wild animals of the earth. After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

Voice: “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Narrator: And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing,

Voice: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Narrator: Then one of the elders addressed me, saying,

Voice: “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?”

Narrator: I said to him,

Voice: “Sir, you are the one that knows.”

Narrator: Then he said to me,

Voice: “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Four Horsemen, Revelation 6:1-8; 7:9-17

August 27, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: There is nothing on earth that can withstand the love of our powerful God.

The four horsemen of the apocalypse – is there any image more iconic or frightening than this? And perhaps most misrepresented, too. The opening of the scrolls is not the releasing of mortal destruction – it is a promise that the expectation of God’s power is imminent.

The first horse suggests that even the most powerful national defense cannot overpower a mighty God – a hopeful word to a community oppressed by a foreign national power.

The second horse suggests that even the rule of society cannot withstand the coming of Christ.

The third horse suggests that even wealth cannot withstand the forces of famine, drought, or poverty.

The fourth horse suggests that even life itself cannot withstand the inevitable death, for we all will die.

There is nothing in this world that can withstand the power of God. This does not mean we should fear God – quite the opposite – we can trust in a God that can topple the hierarchies of nations, society, and wealth. For those oppressed, starving, and poor, this is a word of hope to be sure!

In the end, all the nations come before the Lamb washed clean and worshiping God day and night. There will be no more crying – songs of praise will forever muffle cries of hunger and despair. In the end, God’s love wins.

Scripture Summary

The apocalyptic vision has become extreme indeed—horsemen unleashing disasters on an unimaginable scale. To persecuted Christians, they are more real than imagined. The final and complete deliverance of God’s faithful ones is the best possible news they could receive.

Call to Worship

L: Salvation belongs to our God,

C: Who is seated on the throne in highest heaven.

L: The Lamb has become our Shepherd.

C: He will quench our thirst and wipe away our tears.

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Eternal Lord,

C: We live in a world of anguish, and our sin only multiplies our suffering. Our despair discourages others. Our hopelessness paralyzes us from carrying out your work in the world. We pray for mercy, for strength, and for our faith to be restored, knowing that all good things come from you. Amen.

L: God will indeed make all things new. Our Creator knows, hears, and answers the cries of our hearts. Despair no more, for the One who comes in power also comes in love, and death has no dominion in the world to come. Receive our Lord’s promise of pardon, renewal, and peace that knows no end. Amen.

Four Horsemen, Revelation 6:1-8; 7:9-17

August 27, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, your strength far outstrips any earthly power. May we put our fears aside and our trust in you, in whom our hopes will not be disappointed. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

We put our faith in your wisdom, O Lord, that you see and know all that we do not understand. We bring our offerings as a sign of our trust that you will bless our efforts and multiply them on behalf of the disadvantaged and despairing. Our hope lies always in your goodness and all-powerful love. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Lord, there will come a day when suffering of any kind is no more. Hold your vision and promise before our eyes, that our hearts might be cheered in the sure knowledge of your deliverance. Triumphant God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: When disaster strikes we are tempted to panic, judge, or despair. Help us to see the world through your eyes, to sow seeds of healing and reparation wherever it is in our power to do so, and to share the good news of your victorious love with everyone. Triumphant God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: As summer draws to a close, let us not forget the rest and renewal we enjoy in you. May we seek you often and find refreshment from our tasks, even as we also find satisfaction in the work that you have laid before us. Triumphant God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You guide us to springs of water and wipe away the tears from our eyes. Bring healing, an end to suffering, and a wellspring of hope to all who cry out to you, especially... Triumphant God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Blessed be the saints who have washed their robes clean in the blood of the Lamb. Encourage us with their faithful example, and bring us with them into your eternal embrace. Triumphant God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Hear the fervent prayers of our hearts, and may blessing and wisdom and honor and might be yours now and forever. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Lord, we are always ready to come to your feast—for fellowship, for refreshment, for forgiveness, and for relief from this world's concerns. Assure us that however we come to the table, all will be welcomed and all will be fed. Come to the supper of the Lamb!

Four Horsemen, Revelation 6:1-8; 7:9-17

August 27, 2017

Litany

L: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

C: This is a part of Revelation most people know.

L: A part that seems to herald gloom and doom.

C: The horsemen are symbols of destruction.

L: Terrible times, warfare, bloodshed. But what are they destroying?

C: And what will survive?

L: Who will survive?

C: We will survive!

L: Nations will come and go, bad times will hit us hard.

C: We have to pass through much pain in this life.

L: But in the Kingdom of God, there is no more pain.

C: Wars cease. We are washed clean.

L: "Apocalypse" has come to mean great damage or destruction.

C: But the original Greek word means...

L: "Uncovering."

C: "Lifting the veil."

L: "Revealing."

C: The four horsemen lift the veil on our world.

L: And under the veil, there also is our God. Ever living, ever loving.

C: God is revealed, right in the midst of everything.

L: Bringing a kingdom of peace and joy and hope and love

C: A kingdom close enough to see, close enough to touch.

L: May there be an apocalypse in our lives.

C: A burning away of all that is painful, of the wars that rage within us and outside of us.

L: May the veil be lifted on our world, and may God be revealed in glory.

C: May we all experience a great apocalypse of love.

Four Horsemen, Revelation 6:1-8; 7:9-17

August 27, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God is able to wipe away our tears.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- “Feelings” chart

Setting the Scene/Background

If you go online, it is pretty easy to find examples of a “Feelings Chart” – the kind where you can point to a picture describing your current mood. One of those would be a good springboard for talking about how some days we feel happy and some days we feel sad and some days we are all sorts of emotions in-between. In the reading from Revelation, it talks about how God is able to wipe away our tears. God brings us comfort through the Holy Spirit, and through each other. Was there a time when someone spent time with you when you were sad? What are ways that we can help one another when we are feeling sad? Knowing that God can wipe away our tears doesn't mean we'll never be sad, but we can trust we are not alone.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Download a “feelings” chart and have it near the Kids' Storytime area.
- Show the feelings chart to the kids and have them point to how they are feeling today.

Reflection Questions

- Was there a time when someone comforted you when you were sad?
- How does it feel to know that God can wipe away our tears? Does that mean we will never be sad?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Emoticon pillows are really popular. If you have some or can borrow some, perhaps you could let the kids hold the pillows and talk about what feelings they represent. This would be a great way to help kids who get more out of being able to touch and hold items rather than just talking.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A box or bag filled with items that glow or light up

Alpha and Omega, Revelation 21:1-6; 22:1-5

September 3, 2017

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Alpha and Omega, Revelation 21:1-6; 22:1-5

September 3, 2017

Scripture Readings

Text: Revelation 21:1-6; 22:1-5

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; ⁴he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." ⁵And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Voice

Narrator: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

Voice: "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

Narrator: And the one who was seated on the throne said,

Voice: "See, I am making all things new."

Narrator: Also he said,

Voice: "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Narrator: Then he said to me,

Voice: "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

Narrator: Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Alpha and Omega, Revelation 21:1-6; 22:1-5

September 3, 2017

Theme and Prayers

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: In the midst of suffering there is still hope, laughter, beauty, faith, and love.

The beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, the Garden of Eden in Genesis and the garden containing the tree of life in Revelation. God is the beginning and end of all things. This is not a threat for the end of humanity. It is a promise that there is nothing outside the confines of an immense, timeless, and loving God.

Confession: I'm a *The Walking Dead* junkie. It is, of course, a drama about the end of life as we know it, as zombies overrun the earth and small bands of humans try to survive in this terrifying new world. What is so intriguing about this show, once the shock of the zombie apocalypse wears off, is the question about what it is to be human. Is it enough simply to survive? In this world that looks nothing like what it used to, these survivors have discovered that survival is not enough. To be truly human is to risk love (couples, families, and friends) despite the very real possibility of losing those that are loved. In the midst of terrible tragedy, people have found love, laughter, music, art, farming, community meals, and many of the beautiful things they thought they had lost forever – and yes, even faith.

Though far-fetched, the show helps me wrestle with the questions of what it is to be human, and it is this – in the midst of tragedies and suffering, there is still hope, laughter, beauty, faith, and love.

Scripture Summary

Finally, we have a vision of the new creation that God has kept for us. Death and destruction will never have the final word, not as long as our God is the beginning and end of all things.

Call to Worship

L: It is the desire of God to dwell with us.

C: Death and mourning shall be no more!

L: God is making all things new!

C: Water to the thirsty; light to the lost!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Eternal Lord,

C: We live in a world of anguish, and our sin only multiplies our suffering. Our despair discourages others. Our hopelessness paralyzes us from carrying out your work in the world. We pray for mercy, for strength, and for our faith to be restored, knowing that all good things come from you. Amen.

L: God will indeed make all things new. Our Creator knows, hears, and answers the cries of our hearts. Despair no more, for the One who comes in power also comes in love, and death has no dominion in the world to come. Receive our Lord's promise of pardon, renewal, and peace that knows no end. Amen.

Alpha and Omega, Revelation 21:1-6; 22:1-5

September 3, 2017

Prayers

Prayer of the Day

Faithful God, when all has passed away, you remain. May our hearts be glad and our hope restored, that we might live each day to the praise of your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Offertory Prayer

As the tree of life bears fruits of healing, so we bear fruit ripened by the sunshine of your love for us. Receive these gifts, offered in humility for the purpose of fulfilling your gracious will on earth. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: You are the beginning, and you are the end, O Lord. There is nothing outside of your presence, outside of your love, outside of your redemption. Embolden us with this proclamation, that in the midst of life's darkest days, there is a light of the promise that outlasts the deepest despair. Eternal God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You are the ultimate healing of the nations, and you alone have the power to restore all things to yourself. May we find in this our true consolation, knowing that we do not have to wait until the end of time to know your surpassing love in the here and now. Eternal God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Labor bears fruit, the eventual rewards of honest efforts. May your benevolence be our model for life and society—that all would have a fair chance to enjoy the returns of their work and be able to share the plenty of their harvest. Eternal God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: There is no balm like the comfort of your presence. When we seek you, you are there, if only to remind us that you have never left. Bring a special word of healing to those we name before you today... Eternal God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: To those who see your face, and who bear your name on their foreheads, we give thanks and long for our final and perfect communion within your holy family, in our forever home. Eternal God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Until that day when there is no more night, we bring our prayers to you, laying them at your feet and finding our rest in you, all-loving Creator. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Rejoice! God is our light, our hope, our comfort, our promise of all that is and is to come! What better reason for celebration? What better time than now to throw a feast? Come—the table is ready, and there is a place for us all.

Alpha and Omega, Revelation 21:1-6; 22:1-5

September 3, 2017

Litany

L: More beautiful images from Revelation.

C: More extraordinary symbols.

L: The shining New Jerusalem

C: The sparkling river of life.

L: The tree of life, with its succulent fruits and its healing leaves.

C: An amazing scene of hope, written in a seemingly hopeless time.

L: Revelation again reminds us of who is the author of all life.

C: Alpha and Omega, beginning and end.

L: Everything begins in joy.

C: We humans bring pain and darkness—on each other and ourselves.

L: The middle of our story can be rough.

C: But God is there, even in the middle,

L: And most certainly in the end.

C: Our companion in all seasons, our Creator and Redeemer.

L: God invites us to live into the New Jerusalem

C: And God promises to stay with us there forever.

L: As it was in the beginning, is now and ever will be.

C: World without end. Amen.

Alpha and Omega, Revelation 21:1-6; 22:1-5

September 3, 2017

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Jesus is the light.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- A box or bag filled with items that glow or light up

Setting the Scene/Background

You could bring in a box or a bag of the following things or similar items and set them out: a candle, a flashlight, a small lamp, a glow stick, a lighter, a lantern, a picture of the sun. What do these have in common? Well, they all give light. Can you think of other places light comes from? The Bible talks about someone who is the light – do you know who that is? Jesus is our light. What do you think that means? What does light do? It helps us to see clearly, it helps us not be afraid. You could also draw in the verse from Matthew that says we are to let our light shine before others so they see the good things we do and give glory to God in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

- Have the box or bag of illuminating items near the Kids' Storytime area.
- Show the items to the kids and let them tell you what those items are and hold them, practicing turning them on and off.

Reflection Questions

- The Bible talks about someone who is the light. Who do you think that is?
- How is Jesus our light?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

For kids who get wiggly and distracted, this might be a good week to break into singing! Sing "This Little Light of Mine" with the kids.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Pillow
- Sleeping bag
- Short bedtime story
- Other bedtime items

Copyright © 2017 Clergy Stuff

Published by Clergy Stuff
8621 Poplar Bridge Curve
Bloomington, MN 55437

New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Tag Clouds were created at www.tagul.com. Used with permission. A Tag Cloud is a visual representation of words that are in the text. The words used most often are the largest in the Tag Cloud. Common words like “the” are removed.

Pronunciations are from biblespeak.org/ or www.pronouncenames.com.

Images and clipart are licensed by Creative Commons. Used with permission.

Prayers written by Wendy Sherer.

Creative Expressions written by Elise Seyfried.

KidStuff Bulletins' Stories and *Kids' Storytimes* written by Ruth Hetland

Praise Music by Jay Egenes.

KidsStuff Bulletins by Daniel Maurer.

Preaching Themes, Daily Devotions, God's Story, Our Story, and Hymns by Kace Leetch.

Original Music written and composed by Jerry Salter.