



From the Pulpit - March and April, 2018

March 4 – “Contemplate God’s Glory” - Focus Text: Psalm 19

This week: It is so easy to just fire off an email or Facebook update or Twitter “tweet” or text message without thinking much about it. Challenge yourself to be more mindful of your words in these contexts this week. Take a deep breath before you respond to anything and make space in your heart before you start typing or texting. Notice how this mindfulness affects your sense of connection to others.

March 11 – God’s Love is Steadfast – Focus Text: Psalm 107:1–3, 17–22

This week: Spend an entire day being thankful for everything that happens, no matter what happens. Take a digital camera with you throughout your day, take pictures of moments of gratitude and post them to Facebook, Flickr, or your personal blog with your reflections on what it was like to be intentionally thankful throughout the day.

March 18 – “God’s Love Is on Our Hearts” - Jeremiah 31:31–34

This week: What has God written on your heart? Make a list of what you hold most dear. Cut out a heart shape on a piece of paper – it doesn’t have to be very big. Write a favorite quote, a word of encouragement, something you love on it and find a public place to put it. Leave it at a coffee shop, post it on the bulletin board at work, put it in a book your loved one is reading for them to discover.

March 25 – “Love Arriving” - Mark 11:1–11

This week: What does it mean to come in someone else’s name? Think about the various responsibilities you have throughout the week; in whose name do you come in each of them? How might it change what you do or how you approach what you do if you understood yourself to be coming into each situation in the name of God?

Easter

Jesus sends the disciples out with the blessing, “Peace be with you.” During Lent, we journeyed inward to find the laws of God written on our hearts. The Easter season is our time to move back out into the world, empowered by the Spirit we have encountered within. Choose a project for yourself, your family, group or faith community that brings the peace of the risen Christ out into the world during this season.

April 1 – “Love Comes to Life” – Focus Texts: John 20:1–18; Mark 16:1–8

This week: In this year, we have two gospel stories of the Resurrection from which to choose. In John’s gospel, Mary Magdalene has an encounter with the risen Christ. In Mark, the women see the empty tomb and are told by “a young man, dressed in a white robe” that they will see Jesus in Galilee. In John, Mary announces what she has seen; and in Mark, the women run away in fear. Read both stories side by side and simply reflect on the differences. What is your own Easter experience like?

April 8 – “Love Is a Response to Grace” - John 20:19–31

This week: In this story, Jesus appears to the disciples when they are locked away in fear and breathes upon them with a word of peace and empowerment. Think of the last time someone

calmed and empowered you. When have you done the same for someone else? Make it your mission this week to look for occasions to breathe peace into a situation of fear.

April 15 – “Witness to Life Eternal” – Focus Text: Luke 24:36b–48 and I John 3:1-7

Here it is again – another story like last week from John’s gospel (John 20:19–31) when Jesus encounters the disciples after the Resurrection and greets them with a word of peace. This encounter, however, doesn’t seem to calm the disciples but stirs them up. When does being a Christ-like peace bearer stir things up?

Do some reading on the Internet about peace bearers like Martin Luther King, Jr. or organizations that protest against nuclear armament. Explore your own sense of call to being a peace bearer.

April 22 – “Love in Truth and Action” - John 10:11–18

Jesus identifies himself in terms that people of his day and culture could understand – “I am the good shepherd.” Being a good shepherd is linked to knowing the sheep and laying down one’s life for the sheep.

Although this is a metaphor for Jesus caring for his followers, think about people in our current culture who work with and advocate for animals. How can you support their work?

April 29 – “Shepherd and Beloved of God” - Psalm 23, I John 3:16 and John 10:11-18

Jesus explains that God is like an expert gardener – an image well understood by the people who lived in Jesus’ agrarian times. Today we can still identify with this imagery’s meaning in our lives. We might already know that if we do not stay connected to the source of life we will not flourish. We will not bear fruit. The connection, to the source of life and community, is vital to our Christian faith. When we forget, how do we become reconnected?

Plant something new in your garden or on a windowsill and watch it grow. If you don’t have a “green thumb,” get a head start by planting something that’s already flowering or producing fruit, such as a basil plant or flowering bush.