Name: _____

Gratitude and Sermon Journal

Shift

April 27-May 31

But...

June 1 - July 12

Look Up

July 13 - August 9

Dear Church,

The purpose of this “Gratitude and Sermon Journal” is to help us connect with the Lord through daily prayer and study. Furthermore, we want to help connect others to the church. The reading on Monday is the sermon text for the following Sunday. The daily readings support the Sunday sermon. I’m pleased some of our groups, including Discipleship Communities and prayer groups, use this journal to talk about the texts and the preaching on Sunday mornings. In this journal we have added a daily prayer section to unite us in Scripture-based prayer for one another.

Asbury is deeply rooted in our ancient traditions (Scripture and the church) while also being focused on what is happening today and will happen in the future. If we lose touch with our past, we have no guidance. If we fail to have an application, then we become “rear view mirror” people. This Gratitude and Sermon Journal looks back at Scripture and the teaching of the church while looking forward to the Lord to discern His will for us.

Tom

Small Group Discussion Questions

Consider using this journal not only for yourself, but also as an opportunity to meet with others in a small group. The Christian faith is about helping others follow Jesus. This journal provides a mutually blessed way for you to do precisely that. Below are some questions your small group may use for discussion each week:

- Review the key Scripture(s).
- Review the key point(s) from the sermon.
    - How were you encouraged?
    - How were you challenged?
    - What questions did it create?
    - What convictions did it bring?
- What was the pastor asking of you, even expecting you to do in response?

Transforming Moments

Alfred Hitchcock, the famous movie director, said, *"Movies are life with the dull bits cut out."* Nobody wants to watch movies of people just eating breakfast, texting, driving, sitting at a computer or washing dishes. A plot must sustain our interest. We must care about the characters. We could paraphrase Hitchcock (and with all due respect to the book of Leviticus), *"The Bible is life with the dull bits cut out."* There are many shifts in the Bible's stories.

While life is overwhelmingly lived in dull, monotonous, tedious and boring spaces, there are moments that transcend the routine. These are the times when what has been normal is disrupted. Pregnancy, birth, school, learning to drive, graduation, moving, promotion, termination, marriage, divorce, retirement, emotional and physical challenges and death are transitions and rites of passage. We are always shifting from one thing to another. The Bible describes these events because people are people no matter our time, tribe, nation, language or religion. Transitions create conflict, pain and hardship. Yet, new life springs forth. God uses these defining moments to transform us into His image.

This journal describes these **SHIFTS**, and our tendency to look down on them, rather than **LOOK UP**. It is easy to be discouraged, depressed, angry and isolated. We can lose our nerve when life overwhelms us. We must be aware of these changes taking place – even anticipating them. We must keep our focus on the Lord. We must find teammates to help us through them and they must find us, too. Even though things may be going against us, we must remember the most important word in the Bible: **BUT...** We experience despair, but we also find hope. The Crucifixion brought death, but resurrection brings eternal life.

But First, Pray...

For this journal we are including Scripture-based prayers to help the congregation pray for one another. We have one prayer per week, which can be prayed daily. As you lift up your brothers and sisters in Christ, know that you are also being lifted up in a spirit of unity.

Week of April 27: Lord, we do not cease to give thanks for every Asbury believer, remembering each one in our prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give each one the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. (Ephesians 1:16-17)

Week of May 4: Lord, we pray for every Asbury believer, that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened, that they would know the hope to which You have called them, the riches of their inheritance in the saints and the immeasurable greatness of Your power toward those who believe. (Ephesians 1:18-19)

Week of May 11: Lord, according to the riches of Your glory, grant that we may be strengthened with power through Your Spirit in our inner being so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, being rooted and grounded in love. (Ephesians 3:16-17)

Week of May 18: Lord, strengthen each believer at Asbury to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth, length, height and depth of Your love and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, filling all of us to the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:18-19)

Week of May 25: Lord, help Asbury believers be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as in Christ, You forgave us. (Ephesians 4:32)

Week of June 1: Lord, as beloved children, help us be imitators of Christ, walking in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1-2)

Week of June 8: Lord, awaken all who sleep among us and fill us with the Spirit, helping us to give thanks always in all things, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:14, 18, 20, 21)

Week of June 15: Lord, we pray for every Asbury believer to abound in Your love more and more with all knowledge and discernment, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. (Philippians 1:9-10)

Week of June 22: Lord, help Asbury believers press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

Week of June 29: Lord, help Asbury believers to continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. (Colossians 4:2)

Week of July 6: God of peace, equip every Asbury believer with everything good that each one may do Your will, working in us that which is pleasing in Your sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. (Hebrews 13:21)

Week of July 13: God of hope, fill every Asbury believer with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may abound in hope. (Romans 15:13)

Week of July 20: Lord, make us increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for You, so that You may establish our hearts blameless in holiness before You, our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13)

Week of July 27: Lord, we pray for all beloved Asbury members to prosper in all things and be in health, just as each soul prospers. (3 John 2)

Week of August 3: Gracious God, help all Asbury believers renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, living self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who redeemed us and purified for Himself a people belonging to Him who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11-14)

Scripture Readings

SHIFT

GOD'S GOOD PURPOSES

- ❑ 4/27 Genesis 50:15-21
- ❑ 4/28 Romans 5:1-11
- ❑ 4/29 Romans 8:18-30
- ❑ 4/30 Romans 8:31-39
- ❑ 5/1 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12
- ❑ 5/2 1 Peter 1:3-12
- ❑ 5/3 Genesis 50:15-21

LETTING GO

- ❑ 5/4 Exodus 2:1-10
- ❑ 5/5 1 Samuel 1
- ❑ 5/6 1 Samuel 2
- ❑ 5/7 Luke 1:5-25
- ❑ 5/8 Luke 1:26-45
- ❑ 5/9 Hebrews 11:23-28
- ❑ 5/10 Exodus 2:1-10

A DEFINING MOMENT

- ❑ 5/11 Exodus 14:10-25
- ❑ 5/12 Exodus 14:26-31
- ❑ 5/13 Numbers 14:1-12
- ❑ 5/14 Colossians 1:9-14
- ❑ 5/15 Hebrews 3:7-19
- ❑ 5/16 James 3:1-12
- ❑ 5/17 Exodus 14:10-25

THE FINAL SHIFT

- ❑ 5/18 Deuteronomy 34
- ❑ 5/19 Ecclesiastes 9:1-6
- ❑ 5/20 John 3:16-21
- ❑ 5/21 John 10:22-30
- ❑ 5/22 1 Timothy 6:11-16
- ❑ 5/23 Hebrews 2:5-18
- ❑ 5/24 Deuteronomy 34

ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE

- ❑ 5/25 Joshua 1:1-9
- ❑ 5/26 Numbers 13
- ❑ 5/27 Psalm 27
- ❑ 5/28 Ephesians 5:15-20
- ❑ 5/29 Ephesians 6:10-20
- ❑ 5/30 2 Timothy 2:1-13
- ❑ 5/31 Joshua 1:1-9

Scripture Readings

BUT...

FROM RESTRICTION TO REDEMPTION

- ❑ 6/1 Genesis 3:1-9
- ❑ 6/2 Genesis 2
- ❑ 6/3 Luke 19:1-10
- ❑ 6/4 Romans 5:12-21
- ❑ 6/5 1 Corinthians 15:20-28
- ❑ 6/6 1 Corinthians 15:35-49
- ❑ 6/7 Genesis 3:1-9

FROM WEAKNESS TO STRENGTH

- ❑ 6/22 1 Samuel 17:41-49
- ❑ 6/23 1 Samuel 17:1-23
- ❑ 6/24 1 Samuel 17:24-40
- ❑ 6/25 Acts 13:13-25
- ❑ 6/26 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
- ❑ 6/27 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
- ❑ 6/28 1 Samuel 17:41-49

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

- ❑ 6/8 Judges 16:18-22
- ❑ 6/9 Judges 13
- ❑ 6/10 Judges 14
- ❑ 6/11 Judges 15
- ❑ 6/12 Judges 16:1-17
- ❑ 6/13 Luke 15:11-32
- ❑ 6/14 Judges 16:18-22

FROM FLIGHT TO FIGHT

- ❑ 6/29 1 Kings 19:9-18
- ❑ 6/30 1 Kings 18:1-19
- ❑ 7/1 1 Kings 18:20-46
- ❑ 7/2 1 Kings 19:1-8
- ❑ 7/3 1 King 19:19-21
- ❑ 7/4 Matthew 11:1-18
- ❑ 7/5 1 Kings 19:9-18

FROM THE FACE TO THE HEART

- ❑ 6/15 1 Samuel 16:6-13
- ❑ 6/16 Matthew 5:1-16
- ❑ 6/17 Matthew 5:17-32
- ❑ 6/18 Matthew 5:33-48
- ❑ 6/19 Matthew 6:1-15
- ❑ 6/20 Matthew 6:16-34
- ❑ 6/21 1 Samuel 16:6-13

FROM SILENCE TO SUCH A TIME AS THIS

- ❑ 7/6 Esther 4:12-17
- ❑ 7/7 Nehemiah 6:10-14
- ❑ 7/8 Lamentations 3:19-27
- ❑ 7/9 Daniel 3:8-25
- ❑ 7/10 Luke 24:1-12
- ❑ 7/11 John 20:11-18
- ❑ 7/12 Esther 4:12-17

Scripture Readings

LOOK UP

BE BRAVE

- ❑ 7/13 Joshua 2:1-7
- ❑ 7/14 Joshua 2:8-24
- ❑ 7/15 Joshua 6:1-25
- ❑ 7/16 Psalm 121
- ❑ 7/17 2 Corinthians 5:6-10
- ❑ 7/18 James 2:18-26
- ❑ 7/19 Joshua 2:1-7

KNOW GOD'S LOVE

- ❑ 7/20 Matthew 2:1-12
- ❑ 7/21 Psalm 8
- ❑ 7/22 Psalm 19
- ❑ 7/23 Psalm 136
- ❑ 7/24 John 12:27-36
- ❑ 7/25 Ephesians 2:1-10
- ❑ 7/26 Matthew 2:1-12

GOD DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE

- ❑ 7/27 John 11:38-44
- ❑ 7/28 John 11:1-16
- ❑ 7/29 John 11:17-37
- ❑ 7/30 Matthew 17:14-21
- ❑ 7/31 Matthew 19:23-30
- ❑ 8/1 Mark 14:32-42
- ❑ 8/2 John 11:38-44

GOD IS WITH US

- ❑ 8/3 Matthew 28:16-20
- ❑ 8/4 Acts 1:6-11
- ❑ 8/5 Psalm 46
- ❑ 8/6 Isaiah 41:1-10
- ❑ 8/7 John 14:15-17
- ❑ 8/8 John 14:25-31
- ❑ 8/9 Matthew 28:16-20

SHIFT

April 27 - May 31, 2020

Shift

The word “shift” reminds me of driving. I laid a lot of rubber when learning to drive a standard transmission. My friend, Dale, pleaded with me not to grind the gears of his car. It was not intentional. I didn’t know how to work the clutch. Learning to shift meant thinking differently when driving a standard rather than an automatic transmission.

Likewise, life is about learning how to shift. We are stuck in a low gear until we learn this skill. It is not wise to drive on the B.A. Expressway in first gear. We must be flexible and make transitions to advance in life. However, nobody does it perfectly. It takes time to figure out how things work. Seldom do we go immediately from rookie to pro. Just as the Israelites did not go directly from Egypt into the Promised Land (there is always a wilderness wandering), so we must manage transitions to make the most of change. Even experts can still grind the gear.

This series is about shifting. Each gear has a valuable place. Graduates, parents, and Memorial Day are shifts. We will look at how folks have gone from “A” to “C” by learning to shift through “B.” We will study three examples of leaders who shifted well: Joseph, Moses and Joshua.

Monday, April 27, 2020
Genesis 50:15-21

Who do you think was our greatest president? I think it's a tie between George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. They both faced overwhelming circumstances and overcame unbelievable odds to birth America and to hold it together. The two men kept their focus. They shared a common virtue: confident humility. Washington resisted the voices requesting him to become a king. Lincoln assembled a team. As Doris Kearns Goodwin's book explained, Lincoln ended up with a "Team of Rivals." Washington had his Benedict Arnold and Lincoln had a group of malcontents in his cabinet. Both presidents showed confident humility during seismic shifts throughout the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The improbable outcomes make me believe Ben Franklin was right when he told the Constitutional Congress in 1787: *"I have lived, sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of the truth – that God governs in the affairs of men."*

We see the governance of God in the Bible. Joseph, like Washington and Lincoln, had a team of rivals, saboteurs and would-be assassins. He had to deal with his treacherous brothers who sold him into slavery. Joseph was falsely accused, was forgotten and left to rot in an Egyptian prison. Yet, through all the shifts he endured. Joseph never lost his belief that God was with him and had called him to a unique time and place. Life is an unpredictable struggle, but maybe some of our "bad luck" is a great opportunity for God to show off His glory.

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPLICATION: When have you questioned God's good purposes? Who do you know who has grievances against the Lord? How do you respond to these challenges? We often begin with our own reason and experiences in these matters. These are two of the four parts of how Methodists understand their faith. They are both internal and personal. These should be viewed through external lenses of Scripture and tradition. We get into trouble when we begin our conversation with "I think" or "I feel" rather than, "Scripture says" and "the church teaches." What Scriptures have spoken to your life and what has the church taught you about God's good purposes?

Tuesday, April 28, 2020
Romans 5:1-11

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, April 29, 2020
Romans 8:18-30

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, April 30, 2020
Romans 8:31-39

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, May 1, 2020
2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, May 2, 2020
1 Peter 1:3-12

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, May 3, 2020
Genesis 50:15-21

Sermon Notes:

Monday, May 4, 2020
Exodus 2:1-10

When life overwhelms us, we must make hard decisions most prefer to avoid. This often includes parenting. On the one hand, our moms will always be our moms. On the other hand, the role comes with times of transition. Certain rites of passage are essential and must occur. Moms must shift into letting go.

While a few moms abandon, many moms become overprotective. The comedian, Sam Levenson, said on his first day of school, his over-protective mom told the teacher not to punish him if he misbehaved. Instead, the teacher should punish the child sitting next to Sam because, *"My little boy learns best by example."*

Moses' mother had little choice. Had she clung to her son; Pharaoh would have him killed. Though incredibly painful, she made the responsible choice to let him go. She entrusted her infant to God's care. Hannah let Samuel go; Elizabeth let John go; Mary did the same with Jesus.

The nurture of a mom is enormously important in shaping her child. While exceptions may exist for special needs, we raise children to let them go to find their own call and place. Letting go doesn't mean we don't care; it means we can't live our kids' lives for them. We cannot control them. Their outcome is not in our hands. They must learn to face their own reality. Letting go is not fear-based but views the future with optimism and opportunities to grow. We support, affirm, trust and believe in our kids; but we must also release them to the Lord. Our kids aren't really ours; they belong to the Lord.

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPLICATION: In addition to releasing our children to the Lord, we may need to release other things. Do you need to let go of bitterness, anger, anxiety, worry or fear? Is there someone who comes to mind that you need to release from your heart? We may not prefer our present situation, but we always have options. Remaining a victim is a tragic choice we do not have to make. Trust the Lord. Lean into Christian community. Don't be passive. What do you need to do to actively start letting go?

Tuesday, May 5, 2020
1 Samuel 1

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, May 6, 2020
1 Samuel 2

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, May 7, 2020
Luke 1:5-25

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, May 8, 2020
Luke 1:26-45

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, May 9, 2020
Hebrews 11:23-28

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, May 10, 2020
Exodus 2:1-10

Sermon Notes:

Monday, May 11, 2020
Exodus 14:10-25

It was a watershed moment – the Israelites were being transferred from one location to another and from bondage to freedom. Not only were they moving residence, but they had to shift out of neutral and commit to driving forward.

Slavery was all this generation had known. After being granted their release, they anticipated smooth sailing. When Pharaoh reversed his promise to let them go and pursued them with the world's greatest army, their besetting sin reared its head – fear expressed through grumbling. The Israelites refused to trust God or their leadership. They preferred returning to a dysfunctional relationship instead of seizing an unprecedented opportunity.

The Israelites were asked to make two transitions – an EXIT from the kingdom of darkness and an ENTRANCE into the kingdom of light. Unfortunately, they never made the shift. After their miraculous delivery from Pharaoh, they never learned to trust the deliverer. They chose complaint, criticism and grumbling. They forfeited their entry pass into the Promised Land because of their hard hearts and bitter tongues.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPLICATION: Defining moments can be both corporate and personal. Even the best companies, corporations and organizations must shift and change. Jesus said, *"No one puts new wine into old wineskins."* John Wesley knew it was time to change rather than be stuck in neutral, so he shifted to a new movement: Methodism.

What are your defining moments? Was it a change in family or relationships, schools, jobs, health, finances or something else? Were you more afraid to exit the old place or enter the new one? What have been your defining spiritual moments? How have these affected your life? What corporate changes do we need to make, too?

Tuesday, May 12, 2020
Exodus 14:26-31

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, May 13, 2020
Numbers 14:1-12

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, May 14, 2020
Colossians 1:9-14

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, May 15, 2020
Hebrews 3:7-19

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, May 16, 2020
James 3:1-12

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, May 17, 2020
Exodus 14:10-25

Sermon Notes:

Monday, May 18, 2020
Deuteronomy 34

We see the sorrow and grief of the Israelites after the greatest man in the Old Testament died. Moses lived to be 120 but still did not get to do everything he wanted. Ecclesiastes describes the inevitability of death. The limited revelation in the Old Testament makes me grateful for the opportunity to tell people that even when this life is over, it is NOT over. We are Easter people. Our earthbound exit is transformed into a heavenly entrance.

Eugene O'Kelly was the CEO of the huge accounting firm, KPMG. He had the world by the tail. In his book, "Chasing Daylight," he wrote, *"I was blessed. I was told I had three months to live."* What an odd statement. O'Kelly was 53 years old when diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. He described how he would face his final shift – death.

It's painful to realize a person who is so important in our lives can be gone in a second. Yet, we ALL die. No one here gets out alive. I recently saw my life expectancy is 19½ years. I plan to beat that. However, the end is relatively near for all of us. We never know. James 4:14 is correct, *"Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."* We all want to live long and healthy lives, but what happens beyond this life? Many prefer not to think about it. Let's read about the tremendous gift God has given us – eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

APPLICATION: Look at how the Israelites remembered Moses. Consider how he handed off leadership to Joshua. We grieve when significant people leave us. We also know our day will come. If you knew you would die in three months, what would you do? How do you want to be remembered? Are you building that legacy today? The end of one thing means the start of something else. Let's try to end well, remember well and be courageous in our new beginnings.

Tuesday, May 19, 2020
Ecclesiastes 9:1-6

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, May 20, 2020
John 3:16-21

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, May 21, 2020
John 10:22-30

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, May 22, 2020
1 Timothy 6:11-16

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, May 23, 2020
Hebrews 2:5-18

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, May 24, 2020
Deuteronomy 34

Sermon Notes:

Monday, May 25, 2020
Joshua 1:1-9

Moses may have been the best leader in the Old Testament, but it was time for a shift. God's mission is always greater than one person. Joshua was given the challenge of leading a new generation of Israelites. He would face some difficult times.

The Lord told Joshua to *"be strong and courageous."* How can people be strong and courageous? As the text states, God promised to be with Joshua. He was told to maintain his relationship with God through His Word. Joshua has to focus on the Lord and not lose his nerve.

We believe God speaks to us through Scripture, tradition (the church), reason and experience. All are vitally important, but we begin by implementing God's will with Scripture. A follower of Jesus is devoted to understanding and applying God's word to daily life.

My first attempts to read the Bible after becoming a Christian were as a young teenager. Thankfully, someone led me. I learned the parable of the Sower (Matthew 13) explains how our hearts are like one of four soils God's word falls on, each yield a different result. Someone else explained the book of James. That little book applied to me. I slowly learned the Gospel stories like the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Another friend challenged me to memorize Scripture. I began to read, understand and apply the Bible. The pursuit that started as a young teen has lasted *all the days of my life too.* The Bible has been my guide, light, instructor, counselor and source of revelation to the identity of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to follow Jesus if we don't know the Bible.

I believe the goal of life is about two things: wisdom and relationships. If we have neither, we are a mess. If we have wisdom without relationship, what good is it? If we have relationships without wisdom, watch out! The best way to have wisdom and meaningful relationships is to know the Lord. The best way to know Him is to follow the instructions He gave to Joshua.

APPLICATION: The most productive people embody two things: they are emotionally healthy, and they desire to grow. Faith in Jesus helps us do both. So does Christian community. How is your emotional health? What are you doing to grow in your faith? How are you doing with your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness?

Tuesday, May 26, 2020
Numbers 13

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, May 27, 2020
Psalm 27

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, May 28, 2020
Ephesians 5:15-20

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, May 29, 2020
Ephesians 6:10-20

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, May 30, 2020
2 Timothy 2:1-13

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, May 31, 2020
Joshua 1:1-9

Sermon Notes:

BUT...

June 1 - July 12, 2020

But...

This may be the strangest sermon series title I've ever developed, BUT there is a reason for it. The origin of this series comes from Yoav, our guide in Israel. When he talks about the Bible, he repeatedly says, *"But, there's always a but..."* There are a LOT of "buts" in the Bible. When things are going in one direction, they often have a sudden reversal. A Pyrrhic victory is when someone wins a battle, but the cost is so staggering to the victor that it is virtually a loss: *"We won the battle, but we lost the war."*

The impact of this little word hit me when we were in our Isaiah 40 Advent series. I saw the contrast between human flesh and the Word of God (verse 8). I noted the difference between human strength and the strength and resilience that comes from God when we wait on Him (verse 31). I said in an Advent sermon, *"I think BUT is the most important word in the Bible."* I thought of the horror of the Crucifixion and saw the first word Luke used to announce the Resurrection. Can you guess? *"But on the first day of the week…."* When all seems hopeless, a victory is snatched from the jaws of defeat. It is the great transition in Ephesians 2:4 when the focus shifts from our sinfulness to God, who is rich in mercy and grace.

Yoav is right – there always seems to be a "but" in Scripture. It identifies something new, different, surprising, unlikely and unexpected. It can mean "however," or "on the contrary," "except," or "nevertheless." "But" can be exclusive or inclusive. "But" indicates a movement FROM one thing TO another. The word is hopeful. It means a complete reversal might happen. "But" is the little hinge on which the big door of Scripture swings.

This series continues our theme of transforming moments. We will look at some key figures from the Old Testament and pivotal points in the biblical narrative.

Monday, June 1, 2020
Genesis 3:1-9

Everything was great in the garden God created for the original pair, Adam and Eve. However, the first "but" in the Bible is when God said, *"…but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* (Genesis 2:17) There is one and only one restriction. The first problem is introduced three verses later: *"But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him."* In the next chapter (verse 4) the simple word introduces us to what's going to be a big problem: *"But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'"* Uh oh. No longer could Adam and Eve live without guilt and shame. Their innocence was gone. They didn't die physically, but death had spiritually entered the world. We are all affected by this. The second Adam, Jesus, came to undo the work of the first human. I love how Paul wrote it: *"But the free gift is not like the trespass."* (Romans 5:15)

The Bible, from cover to cover is about one thing: redemption. Redemption is buying back something that was lost. In the Bible story that introduces sin, we see God's heart for redemption: *"But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'"* The Lord is always seeking to save the lost (Luke 19:10).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPLICATION: I learned Isaiah 51:11 as a song from the King James Version: *"Therefore, the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."* People who are redeemed (ESV calls them "ransomed") do not have to feel ashamed. The redeemed don't have to hide from God. What is your story of redemption? What has God brought you out of and taken you into? Like this verse says, *"and come with singing…"* A characteristic of the redeemed – we sing. Methodists have always been singers. It brings joy. What's your song? How do you express your redemption?

Tuesday, June 2, 2020
Genesis 2

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, June 3, 2020
Luke 19:1-10

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, June 4, 2020
Romans 5:12-21

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, June 5, 2020
1 Corinthians 15:20-28

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, June 6, 2020
1 Corinthians 15:35-49

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, June 7, 2020
Genesis 3:1-9

Sermon Notes:

Monday, June 8, 2020
Judges 16:18-22

The final verse in the book of Judges states: *"In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."* (21:25) It was a chaotic time. "Judges" weren't what we experience in a courtroom but were military action figures.

Samson, like Rahab, was quite a character. Someone said, *"Samson was a he-man with a she-weakness."* If we play with fire, we may get burned. Samson had wandered so far away he didn't realize the shift. We see again the little word, "but," as it introduces a new reality. *"But he did not know that the Lord had left him."* Actually, Samson left the Lord. What we sow, we reap. After Delilah deceived him and he fell and experienced the consequences, Samson's heart turned back to the Lord. Once again, we spot this transition in the verse with the word, *"But the hair of his head began to grow again..."*

There are times when we come to our senses and turn back to the Lord. That's what happened to the prodigal son: *"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!'"* His older brother also had a "but" in the opposite direction: *"But he was angry and refused to go in."* (Luke 15:17, 28)

This is a story about repentance. When we've left the Lord, we can turn back to Him and get our hearts right. The Lord will graciously receive us and welcome us home.

_____

_____

_____

APPLICATION: I've never preached a sermon on Samson. It's hard to share a message where the hero is such a personal disaster and it results in carnage. The book of Judges is full of these stories because *"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."* (Judges 21:25) Like the garden party of Genesis 3, death and destruction result when people listen to the wrong voices and leave the Lord. When we become overconfident and self-sufficient, watch out. *"Anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man."* (1 Corinthians 10:12-13) One of my axioms is, *"Show me your friends and I'll show you your future."* Is there something or someone you need to avoid?

Tuesday, June 9, 2020
Judges 13

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, June 10, 2020
Judges 14

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, June 11, 2020
Judges 15

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, June 12, 2020
Judges 16:1-17

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, June 13, 2020
Luke 15:11-32

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, June 14, 2020
Judges 16:18-22

Sermon Notes:

Monday, June 15, 2020
1 Samuel 16:6-13

The selection of David as the second king of Israel is a beautiful story. We think one way, but God often takes a different approach. We see the outward appearance, but God sees the heart. This is counterintuitive.

Jesus took this approach in His Sermon on the Mount. The human worldview is one thing, but God's perspective is entirely different. "But" is found 27 times in Matthew 5-7. Jesus' ministry had one overall objective – introduce people to the kingdom of God.

As is in the case of David, it is so easy to overlook and marginalize people. We see their limitations and weaknesses. They are too young and inexperienced. We want them to wait their turn and not disrupt the status quo. Or maybe they are too old and out-of-touch. We want them to move aside and give us our day in the sun. We tend to be preoccupied with outward appearances, but God has an entirely different way of seeing things.

Our readings this week will be from the Sermon on the Mount (read Matthew 7, too).

APPLICATION: Have you ever been surprised, when what you thought would be terrible turned out to be great (or vice versa)? As you read the Sermon on the Mount what seems strange to you? How does knowing God looks at the heart encourage you? How might it concern you?

Tuesday, June 16, 2020
Matthew 5:1-16

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, June 17, 2020
Matthew 5:17-32

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, June 18, 2020
Matthew 5:33-48

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, June 19, 2020
Matthew 6:1-15

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, June 20, 2020
Matthew 6:16-34

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

FROM THE FACE TO THE HEART

Sunday, June 21, 2020
1 Samuel 16:6-13

Sermon Notes:

Monday, June 22, 2020
1 Samuel 17:41-49

Malcolm Gladwell's book, *"David and Goliath,"* discusses fighting a battle with the wrong weapons. David used artillery to fight an infantryman. As Gladwell explains, Goliath didn't stand a chance. He, not David, was at risk. The giant Philistine hurling insults at the God of Israel did not endear him to David. David, a man after God's own heart, was infuriated. He stood up and spoke up for the Lord. David was a great illustration of "confident humility."

We can trust in the wrong sources. I love this verse: *"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright."* (Psalm 20:7-8)

Paul noted in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 that God prefers the foolish over the wise and the weak over the strong. I love this line from the text: *"He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"*

Paul also recognized *"when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Corinthians 12:9) because he depended on the Lord. Courage gets up and goes into battle even without guaranteed success. Some prefer to sit on the sideline because we feel another is better qualified or we have limited resources, or there is a chance of failing and looking like a loser. David's story illustrates the power of what a young person can accomplish. We can't get to success without taking that first, scary step.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPLICATION: Note the contrast and reversal in verse 45: *"You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."* Goliath paid the ultimate price by dismissing the Lord. When have you gotten too big for your britches or knocked off your high horse? In what situations do you need to model confident humility and stand up to others or speak up for the Lord?

Tuesday, June 23, 2020
1 Samuel 17:1-23

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, June 24, 2020
1 Samuel 17:24-40

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, June 25, 2020
Acts 13:13-25

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, June 26, 2020
1 Corinthians 1:18-31

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, June 27, 2020
2 Corinthians 12:1-10

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, June 28, 2020
1 Samuel 17:41-49

Sermon Notes:

Monday, June 29, 2020
1 Kings 19:9-18

Elijah, the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, like John the Baptist, hit a rough spot. Elijah wasn't in prison like John, in fact, he had just won the Super Bowl of the Old Testament on Mount Carmel. But he crashed when Queen Jezebel threatened him. Instead of standing on the conviction he displayed in 1 Kings 18, his knees buckled, and he fell apart. He took flight and ran for his life. Depressed and isolated in the Valley of Jezreel, he wanted to die.

While David Brooks' insightful book, "The Second Mountain," doesn't mention the Elijah story, it illustrates even the best among us have valleys. It's easy to be intimidated, bullied and sabotaged. It can result in us losing our nerve. Bad situations can illustrate how easy it is to forget how God has blessed and equipped us previously, and even recently.

I have experienced a loss of confidence in ministry, too. Confusion and exhaustion can put us in a place where we crash. Living in an emotional and spiritual valley is not fun but we can learn from it. God's will for us is not to remain in those valleys. God spoke to Elijah in an interesting way. It was time to get his legs and voice back and to re-enter the fight.

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPLICATION: Everyone is carrying something. We don't live forever on the mountaintop. I say repeatedly the biggest need for Christians in America is to have a "theology of suffering." YOU will have problems. You will suffer. You will have down times in the valley. It is inevitable. Sometimes we end up there because of our mistakes and sometimes because of the mistakes of others and sometimes we have no answers as to "why?" we were sent to timeout corner.

How is it with your soul? Are you running away from something? Are you afraid, alone, depressed or discouraged? We all pass through valleys – let's make sure we don't get stuck there. Sometimes we need a friend and sometimes we need professional help. Where are you and what are you doing there?

Tuesday, June 30, 2020
1 Kings 18:1-19

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, July 1, 2020
1 Kings 18:20-46

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, July 2, 2020
1 Kings 19:1-8

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, July 3, 2020
1 King 19:19-21

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, July 4, 2020
Matthew 11:1-18

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

FROM FLIGHT TO FIGHT

Sunday, July 5, 2020
1 Kings 19:9-18

Sermon Notes:

Monday, July 6, 2020
Esther 4:12-17

Since Pharaoh in the time of Moses, it seems the Jewish people have been the objects of hatred. The same narrative shows up again in the book of Esther. The situation was dire. The story from Esther shows the evil Haman had devised a sinister plan to trap and kill the Jews. Then there was a transition from defeat to victory. Queen Esther's uncle Mordecai showed the confidence of a child of God. Once again, the word "but" shows there will be a critical transition. Esther's fate was bound up with her people. Mordecai helped her see the true value of her position.

Nehemiah was another Jew with murderous enemies, but he discerned the plot against him. The wonderful story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Daniel, shows how desperate things looked but God wasn't finished. Once again, there was a great reversal.

God is in the reversal business. When it seems things are finished, God surprises. The greatest surprise in history was the day the Crucifixion turned from stoned-cold silence to resurrection (Luke 24:1-12) and witness (John 20:11-18).

APPLICATION: Humor often comes from painful experiences. *"We'll laugh at this later"* is a great way to frame things. I heard someone say maybe this is why some of the greatest comedians are Jewish – they've had so many obstacles to overcome as a people. Laughter can be one way to handle adversity. How do you handle difficult moments? Esther had an advisor and an advocate who gave her great advice. Do you have such a mentor? Are you a mentor to someone? The goal at the end of life is two-fold: First, to have learned wisdom. Second, to have shared it with someone. Mordecai was wise. Esther sought him out, listened and applied. How are these things happening in your life? What unique thing is God calling you to at such a time as this?

Tuesday, July 7, 2020
Nehemiah 6:10-14

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, July 8, 2020
Lamentations 3:19-27

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, July 9, 2020
Daniel 3:8-25

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, July 10, 2020
Luke 24:1-12

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, July 11, 2020
John 20:11-18

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, July 12, 2020
Esther 4:12-17

Sermon Notes:

LOOK UP

July 13 - August 9, 2020

LOOK UP

This July is BIG! at Asbury because it is one of our greatest opportunities to invite people to follow Jesus. Vacation Bible School is July 21-24. Our VBS theme comes from Psalm 121:1-2 *"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."* This is from the Psalm of Ascents, which the Israelite pilgrims would sing as they walked up the hill toward Jerusalem and the house of God. Each day's curriculum and bottom line points to a different way God helps us: Look up and be brave. Look up and know God loves us. Look up and know God does the impossible. Look up and know God is always with us.

The two-letter word, UP, is found more than 2,000 times in the Bible. Many voices in our culture tell us to look down on others, on ourselves and on the Lord. Looking down resonates with criticism, shame and despair. We get in trouble when we forget to look up. We want to raise up leaders. We want to lift up those in need. We want to rise up from the grave. In "The Last Battle," C.S. Lewis wrote, *"Come further up, come further in!"* In this series we will go further up and further into the fullness of life God has called us to. We will look at more transforming moments in Scripture.

Monday, July 13, 2020
Joshua 2:1-7

Rahab. She's a real outlier. How can a prostitute be in Jesus' genealogy (Matthew 1) and be listed as a hero in the "Hall of Faith" (Hebrews 11)? Why do you think the Israelites would include her story in Scripture? Rahab was not an Israelite, but she had heard of God and chose to align with Him and His people at risk to her own life. She acted courageously when she decided to take the spies up to the roof and hide them
Her bold choice saved her family and gave her a better future. Isaiah reports that God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55). God uses the insignificant, the small, the rejected, the marginalized, the forgotten, the lost, the overlooked and the despised for His kingdom purposes. If God can use Rahab, no one can be discounted in God's plan. Redemption can happen to anyone, no matter his or her background.

Why was Rahab included? She had faith in God and the courage to act on it. James 2:24-25 insists that faith has a witness. Faith is not simply an internal belief; it is something we do. Faith and action are bound together. Rahab believed. Rahab acted. Rahab was brave.

APPLICATION: Having faith is one thing. Acting on faith is another. What is the bravest thing you have ever done through your faith? What step of faith is God calling you to now? How will you do it? Who can you enlist to help? Will you volunteer in Vacation Bible School in some capacity? Or invite a family to attend? Redeemed people are on a mission to help others be redeemed. We all have work to do.

Tuesday, July 14, 2020
Joshua 2:8-24

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, July 15, 2020
Joshua 6:1-25

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, July 16, 2020
Psalm 121

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, July 17, 2020
2 Corinthians 5:6-10

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, July 18, 2020
James 2:18-26

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, July 19, 2020
Joshua 2:1-7

Sermon Notes:

Monday, July 20, 2020
Matthew 2:1-12

It's unfortunate that science and faith have been pitted against each other. While science and faith are different disciplines, they do not have to be contentious. The heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19). Humans have a special place in God's heart (Psalm 8). If we look up to the Lord (Psalm 121), we can encounter the tremendous love of God (Psalm 136).

The Bible is so interesting. Rahab, the prostitute, is listed as an example of faith. Humble and lowly shepherds received an angelic visit. Wise men traveled hundreds of miles from the east to bring gifts in worship to the newborn King. Ironically, the only one in the story who refuses to look up is the most rich, famous and powerful person in the narrative – King Herod. Herod looked down on and despised a potential rival. Trapped by trying to establish his own kingdom, Herod completely missed the greatest moment in human history: God becoming a human being. Herod, a liar and murderer, was hateful and hated.

Herod reminds me of Paul's description of how humans respond to God (we make God into our enemy). It is sad when we close our hearts to the "but" in Ephesians 2:4-7: *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPLICATION: God's love is available for all people. All we need to do is look up to Him to receive Jesus. There are two questions to ask this week: "Will you pray for children at VBS to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior?" This message of the wise men finding Christ will be the Scripture used when the gospel is presented to our VBS kids. Second, when we find Christ, we *"rejoice exceedingly with great joy."* How's your "joy factor?"

Tuesday, July 21, 2020
Psalm 8

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, July 22, 2020
Psalm 19

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, July 23, 2020
Psalm 136

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, July 24, 2020
John 12:27-36

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, July 25, 2020
Ephesians 2:1-10

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, July 26, 2020
Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon Notes:

Monday, July 27, 2020
John 11:38-44

It's curious Jesus didn't respond immediately to the news that his close friend, Lazarus, was near death. Only after Lazarus died did Jesus arrive at Bethany. That was confusing, perplexing and bewildering to Lazarus' two sisters, Martha and Mary who have opposite temperaments and expressions.

People have asked how I could believe in the miracles in the Bible like the Red Sea parting, a big fish swallowing a bigoted and disobedient prophet (Jonah), and another prophet (Elijah) calling down fire from heaven? All miracles are small potatoes in comparison with Genesis 1:1. If there is a God who made everything—out of nothing—then what is a fish, a river or fire in comparison? It's all about perspective. I believe in two "impossible" things: First, God made the heavens and the earth. Second, God became human in the person of Jesus Christ. When Gabriel announced the news of the incarnation to Mary he said, *"For nothing will be impossible with God."* (Luke 1:37) Our readings this week repeatedly state that God has done the impossible in Jesus. The God of possibilities gives us hope for a bright future.

APPLICATION: It's easy to lose perspective of the larger picture when things fall apart in life. Just as there are term limits for some government positions (a great idea, IMHO), so WE are term limited. Death is 100% certain. No one gets out alive. Lazarus may be the only person who had two different funerals. The second one stuck. Regardless of anything else, we need someone we can always look up to for help. The Creator God came in Jesus to do the impossible – to be the Resurrection and the Life. What impossible thing do you need to trust Him with?

Tuesday, July 28, 2020
John 11:1-16

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, July 29, 2020
John 11:17-37

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, July 30, 2020
Matthew 17:14-21

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, July 31, 2020
Matthew 19:23-30

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, August 1, 2020
Mark 14:32-42

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

GOD DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE

Sunday, August 2, 2020
John 11:38-44

Sermon Notes:

Monday, August 3, 2020
Matthew 28:16-20

One of the most overlooked parts of the Gospel stories is the ascension. As His disciples watched in utter amazement, Jesus ascended to heaven. We don't know the location where He went. Heaven isn't up here or out there, so we must live with some mystery. Ironically, Jesus' ascension reminds us that God hasn't forgotten us. He has given us His Spirit to advise, comfort, direct, empower encourage and strengthen. The ascension also points to what the angels said to the disciples, *"What are you guys looking at? Go on. Get to work."* We can't forget that the Ascension also means Jesus will return. Jesus is coming back but only the Father knows when. We should not become preoccupied with the times and seasons, but we should live with prepared hearts. We should be caught up in mission, not caught up in idle speculation.

APPLICATION: It seems strange Jesus had to leave so He could be with us always. While Jesus will return, our commission is not to figure out when, but to get to work. What work is the Lord calling you to do for Him? This week's readings should encourage you that whatever He is calling you to, He will help you. Wherever you are, He will be with you.

Tuesday, August 4, 2020
Acts 1:6-11

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, August 5, 2020
Psalm 46

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Thursday, August 6, 2020
Isaiah 41:1-10

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Friday, August 7, 2020
John 14:15-17

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Saturday, August 8, 2020
John 14:25-31

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Sunday, August 9, 2020
Matthew 28:16-20

Sermon Notes: