



# grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

**December 10-16, 2018**

**Sermon by Rev. Kelley Lane**

***Journey to Bethlehem: "What Then Shall We Do?"***

**Third Sunday of Advent**

Notes from sermon on 12/09:

Prayer requests:

**Family Focus Questions (before sermon):**

How does our anticipation of Jesus's birth call us to change the way we live our lives?

**3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):**

1. Do you remember your baptism? Your confirmation? Your decision to join a church?
2. How does your faith help to inform your ethics?
3. How might today's message impact the way you celebrate Christmas?

**Monday, December 10: Read Luke 3:7-14**

What Christmas preparations do you have left to do? Most of us could probably rattle off a long list involving shopping, wrapping, addressing envelopes, cooking, and cleaning...but would "REPENT!" make the list? John the Baptist's call to repentance in today's reading may catch us by surprise as we are preparing for the third Sunday of Advent. However, part of our preparation involves deliberate self-examination and recommitment to living out our baptismal vows.

This week's reading is full of practical and ethical advice on what we should DO to better prepare to receive Christ and his calling on our lives. "What should we do?" is asked three times in today's gospel. The crowds, the tax collectors, and the soldiers, all ask this question. Like Micah, John calls for mercy and justice. He instructs them to share, to be fair, to treat others with care, and to be honest. The question for us is how to live lives that reflect our faith in God and in Jesus, whose arrival we once again await and anticipate.

**Tuesday, December 11: Read Luke 3:15-18**

As we read in the first verse of today's scripture, the crowd who came to be baptized by John came with *expectations* and *questions*. Chances are we approach both Christmas and baptism the same way. Maybe we are expecting certain feelings, gifts, or behaviors from our loved ones or ourselves. Maybe we question our choices, are confused about the meaning of the sacrament, or wonder what exactly we have taken vows to do, either as a parent or a member of the congregation. Like the crowd, we will not have all of our expectations met nor our questions fully answered at this time, but we can have faith and hope that something even better than we could imagine is coming, and all of our fears and questions will ultimately be answered. The crowd expected a messiah in John; instead they ultimately received a messiah in the Son of God. We may expect a postcard-perfect Christmas, instead we will receive the perfect gift of Christ. We may expect a smooth baptism ceremony with charming babies and a successful family party afterwards. Instead we will receive a new family, a new identity, and an eternal lifetime of love and support. What can we do for this? Well, nothing...these are free gifts.

**Wednesday, December 12: Read Isaiah 12:2-6**

Trust. Sing. Shout with joy. Give Thanks. Call on his name. Make known God's deeds. These are all tangible, practical things that help us remember all that God has done for us and helps draw others into the joy and peace of God's kingdom. Why are we so joyful? Because "great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel." We can live in perpetual joy because of the gift of Christ, which is what we celebrate this season. It's so easy to fall into the temptation of complaining about the hassle, expense, waste, busy-ness, and commercialism of what this season has become for much of the world. Today's scripture tells us what we do to help turn others' eyes back to God and the reason we all have to be joyful.

**Thursday, December 13: Read Philippians 4:4-7**

It was tempting to make this entire passage our scripture memorization for the week because it is so powerful and useful. Feel free to memorize it for bonus points! In a culture plagued by anxiety and depression, Paul's words give us a mantra we can repeat throughout our day to help us refocus, calm down, cheer up, and view ourselves from the outside (are we being "gentle" with our actions and words right now?). Paul doesn't give us a specific set of circumstances upon which we are to do these things...we are to act like this *all the time*. By showing the world joy, gentleness, peace, and prayer, we become ambassadors for the Christ in Christmas and can help draw people to the manger and all the gifts the Christ child can bring.

**Friday, December 14: Read Zephaniah 3:14-20**

The expression of joy of what God has done for us is continued in today's passage from the Old Testament prophet Zephaniah. It calls us to rejoice in anticipation for the good fortunes God will bring. When we can truly follow this advice...rejoice now because we have faith in the good things that will come...we can really *live* in the promises of the Kingdom. What fears and bitterness do we need to hand over to God now, replacing them with gratitude and peace? Just as we feel such joy at seeing wrapped gifts under a tree, can we adjust our eyes to see the wrapped gifts God is waiting to give us? We can live every day in that joyful anticipation of the gifts of Christ the way children spend this week in joyful anticipation of Christmas morning – let's just start singing and praising God for those gifts right now.

**Saturday, December 15: SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Isaiah 12:2**

"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation."

**Sunday, December 16: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of**

**Common Confession:** *In your presence, Holy God, we confess that we need repentance. We have broken your commands against idolatry. We do not live in peace with your creation or your people. We have not trusted your word, and we are afraid. Forgive us, restore us, and turn our shame into praise, for the sake of the One who proclaims the good news and for the sake of the world. Amen.*