[[1]](#footnote-1)Week 1 Preaching Resources: Things That Go Bump in the Night

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| Scripture Passage | John 1:4-5 The Message (MSG) |
| Focus Statement | In the darkness of fear, uncertainty and anxiety, Christ’s light gives us a hope that we can share. |
| ME | Tell a story about you or someone else being afraid of the dark. What effect does the dark have on you? There are a number of children’s books about being afraid of the dark you could use.  |
| WE | How about you? Are you kept up at night in fear of the things that go BUMP! Are your sweet dreams filled with nightmares? Sleep can be a wonderful comfort, but it can also be a hard time, filled with dreams and restlessness. There is an old Scottish prayer for the late-night jitters*: From ghoulies and ghosties and long-leggedy beasties and things that go bump in the night, Good Lord, deliver us!* |
| GOD | In the Bible there is a dramatic contrast between the dark and the light. There is a direct connection between life and light. Fullness in life is found when our life is illuminated by the light of Christ.Our fears are displaced by the light. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn’t put it out. People are drawn to the light. Light is a symbol of hope in the gospels. Jesus breaks through the darkness and draws us closer to God.  |
| YOU | What if we looked at the darkness and instead of fear, and we exchanged it for faith. What if we gave into the movement of God and settled into resting in his care and protection. What would it look like if we took it a step further and trusted that God presence would be more available to us in the dark. I don’t know about you, but I have some of most intense moments in prayer when I am scared.  |
| WE | It is in the places where we run out of ways to fix things on my own that I fully rely on God. If you really find yourself struggling with hard issues at night, don’t be afraid to reach out to a friend in Christ to talk through – and pray through – the things that are troubling you. How are we living that we are offering the hope of Christ the light of the world?  |

Week 2 Preaching Resources: Ghost Sightings

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| Scripture Passage | Mark 6: 45-52 |
| Focus Statement | When fear is consuming you, remember that Jesus is right by your side. |
| ME | Tell a story about what scares you, or maybe how you tried to startle someone when you were younger. |
| WE | Ghost stories are a mainstay for fall. Cartoons have been filled with ghostly characters from Casper the friendly Ghost, and Scooby Doo who are always encountering ghosts. There are plenty of TV shows and movies with ghostly encounters. Some people just love these scary offerings where others are not.  |
| GOD | Probably most of our ghostly encounters are our imagination. When fear and anxiety take over we can experience things that seem out of this world. The disciples had quite the ghostly encounter of their own. Jesus and the disciples are still reeling from the murder of John the Baptist. They might have wondered what was their relationship with Jesus going to cost them? It's a dark and stormy night, the disciples are having a hard time navigating the boat, when suddenly their fear is no longer the storm, but they watched in terror at a ghostly figure walking on the waves. The thing that frightened them was the very thing that leads them into a deeper faith. While they were struggling, Jesus had been praying, when their fears were consuming them, Jesus was by their side. Do not be afraid.  |
| YOU | All of us will face similar scenarios in life. What brings you anxiety, maybe it’s watching the news, worrying about the safety of your family. Concerned about how you will manage when the storm hits your life. Knowing that Jesus is with us, can bring us comfort and peace.  |
| WE | Jesus’ words do not be afraid resonate with us today. Sure, there will always be plenty of circumstances that are scary, but we do not need to be afraid. In Mark’s gospel often the receivers of God’s messages, do not change. They do not trust and remain afraid. How can we reach out to those who are struggling with the message of “do not be afraid”? With Jesus fear does not win. We need not summon up courage within ourselves, because Jesus is interceding for us and is journeying with us |

Week 3 Preaching Resources: Creepy Happenings

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| Scripture Passage | Daniel 5:17-30 |
| Focus Statement | Even amidst trouble and challenge, God is making a way.  |
| ME | Tell the story about an encounter with something unnerving. Something that there seemed to be no logical explanation. |
| WE | Likely many of you have seen the Adams family, either the movie or the original TV series. This ghoulish clan was inspired by a 1930’s cartoon strip, where this odd conglomeration of characters frequently relished and delighted in the macabre. However strange the others, the most bizarre was that disembodied hand that runs around snapping to get attention that has a mind of his own. It would be a strange scene to see a hand like Thing, just running around doing things without a body.  |
| GOD | This is what we find King Belshazzar witnessing in our scripture lesson. Belshazzar, who comes from the line of the evil King Nebuchadnezzar, is hosting a huge party, thousands of people, the wine is flowing. In an act of total disrespect, Belshazzar orders that the silver and gold goblets stolen from the Temple in Jerusalem, to be filled with wine. Then all those raised their glasses to praise their many false gods. During this debauchery, our friend Thing appears, well not Thing, but hand writing that eerily appears on the wall, and Belshazzar freaks out. In this situation, who will you call? Ghostbusters. This is who he calls is as he is bringing in all these enchanters, soothsayers, magicians, to figure out what the writing on the wall says. But no one can figure out what the words mean. Finally, the queen remembers Daniel. In contrast to Belshazzar’s arrogance is Daniel’s humility. He cannot be bribed or pressured into reading the message, instead he boldly pronounces God’s judgment on Belshazzar. He had not learned from the misfortunes of Nebuchadnezzar, and now he too would lose his kingdom. But Daniel’s life and ways were measured, and he was honored by God. |
| YOU | Some of you are here this morning are in the middle of difficult circumstances. Life has been hard. People have treated you unfairly. You may wonder where is God amid these situations? Belshazzar was full of pride, pushing people around, some of us face monstrous creatures who torment and create in us fears. But there comes a time when the writing on the wall appears and what was that writing? The revelation is that God’s hand is in all things. Maybe not a literal hand like Thing from the Addams Family, but a saving hand.  |
| WE | All through scriptures God steps in to save the oppressed, to lead them by the hand to freedom and safety. God’s hands are the hands of liberation. They had the power to stop and transform then and the have the power to do so today. Whatever monster, bully we are facing today, this week, this year, I would encourage us remember that God is always reaching out to us, we must be willing to take the hand of God and trust, that these hands will get us through whatever monsters we are facing.  |

1. To find more information, please reference *Breakthrough: A GNJ guide to best practices for worship*, pg. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)