



Called to More | Sunday Sermon Supplements During COVID-19

Week 4: There is More

The current situation is one of those “challenging times” this sermon refers to. While we can fall back into sinful and unhealthy patterns of coping at this time, the pastor/ leader needs to be a voice of compassion and love. This is not the time to beat ourselves or others up for how we’re handling this (or not handling it). But it can be an *opportunity* to look for grace and pay attention to how God is calling us to manage our thoughts, feelings and actions. How is God calling us to practice habits that are life-giving?

For some who are stuck at home, this time is a chance to refocus, recenter and pray. You can draw attention to this but be aware that for many (healthcare workers, grocery store workers, people who are dealing with kids at home and working from home, those in economic distress), this time is not one of rest and retreat. This doesn’t *need* to be one of those times.

Are there small pockets of rest and retreat that can be created? A 10-minute devotion? Maybe it’s just a prayer like the Lord’s Prayer, while we’re washing our hands to stay connected to God? What types of things fill us back up to handle life’s demands and how can we focus on giving ourselves that care – and providing it to others (safely and without physical contact).

Week 5: The Gods We Make

For some, this time of social distancing and isolation may actually help them let go of the “idols” they usually worship. When we are forced to be at home, many of this world’s “gods” might fall away – the importance of productivity, physical appearance, prestige at work, wanting the newest and nicest car or tech gadget. It can be a reality check about what is really important and a reminder that, in the end, we can only rely on God for security, protection and self-worth. It might be helpful to think of ways to remember this “reality check” and stay focused on God, when things go back to normal.

For others, the current situation may not change the “gods” they allow to come between them and the living God. Maybe the need to be productive, being preoccupied with wealth, or meeting others’ needs have actually increased in this time. For others, still, perhaps the “gods” they worship have shifted from what they typically are.

We are all human and we all cope in different ways. This is not about shaming people for how they are coping. It is a call to turn back to the God who turns to us in love, even when that God seems far away, like God did to the Israelites. It is a call to take down what stands between us and God so we can see more fully how God is leading us through the chaotic time.

Consider this exercise: Have your people think about what they are allowing to come between them and God right now. Visualize wrapping that thing up in a box and handing it to God. They can pray something like, “God, I give you _____, which has taken me away from you. Thank you for taking this burden away from me so I can focus on you. Help me to know and feel your presence through this time. Amen.”

Week 6: Passion/Palm Sunday



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It may seem a little bit ironic that we are talking about the power of crowds right now at a time when we cannot be congregating together. It's okay to name this irony. It doesn't take away from the power of this message; in fact, it might even help to emphasize it.

The way viruses spread through crowds is a physical illustration of the power of crowds. But the energy and influence of others affects us in all sorts of other ways too – our thoughts, feelings, and actions. That's what this sermon is about. We can see both the positive influence of community and the negative impact of “group think” in the scriptures for today.

We might be tempted to think that this message doesn't apply to us right now, while we are social distancing. However, we are still influenced in all sorts of ways by people – on the internet, tv, newspapers, etc. These can still become “crowds” for us, for better or for worse. We can still think about which voices need to increase or decrease in our awareness so that we can model a Christ-like life. Right now might be the perfect time – while daily routines are thrown off – to pause and critically reflect on how we can follow Jesus and how others affect us in that.

Easter Sunday: Raised to Life

In the “Me” and “We” sections of this sermon, the preacher is encouraged to talk about how a change or surprise led to an unexpected blessing. If you (the preacher) have found unexpected blessings through changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, you can share your own personal experience. If you choose to do so, be sensitive to the fact that for many of your congregants, this pandemic is devastating and does not feel like a blessing at all. You may decide another example is better at this time.

The important part is that the great surprise of Jesus' resurrection from the dead is a blessing for us all. It has changed the whole course of our lives. The good news that we have been given new life amidst death is more important now than ever. Consider talking about the importance of resurrection hope for Christians (hope for life beyond death), as we are seeing the world devastated by this deadly pandemic. And consider also talking about the way the gospel enables us to claim life in the here and now, even when we are afraid. As always, be sensitive to the specific circumstances of your congregation and particularly how this pandemic is affecting them. Make sure any concrete commitments or actions you suggest are things people can do safely and healthily during social distancing.



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