



Week Three: Revival

OPENING PRAYER:

Dear God, we adore you. We give you thanks for your grace and mercy. Awake us from our slumber, make us aware of your presence and renew a right spirit in us. Lord send a revival. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray, Amen.

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

**Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?
What good have you done for others this week?**

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WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

Jonah 3:1-10

“The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, ‘Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.’ So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, ‘Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!’ And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: ‘By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.’ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.”

REFLECTION:

I was 16 years old when I heard God speak to my heart, calling me to make a first-time public profession of faith. Our small, rural Mississippi United Methodist Church, Seven Springs, did not have confirmation classes. We had an annual youth revival. Revivals were evangelistic events that generally took place in the evening over the course of three to five days. Our church invited a guest preacher, guest choirs, and people from the community to participate in the revival.

It was the final night of a week-long youth revival when I said “yes” to Jesus, in response to a sermon I heard by Rev. Leon Collier. Collier preached with both learning and burning, meaning he was both scholarly and spiritually moving (not to be confused with hell and brimstone). I aspire to be that kind of preacher one day. Over the years, Collier and I have maintained contact, and I count him among my mentors. I experienced a spiritual awakening during the revival, but I was not the only one. Adults and youth experienced a powerful move of God’s

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM

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presence. Some made first-time professions of faith and others reaffirmed their faith in Jesus Christ. God breathed new life into our community which helped us live the message we had heard during the revival.

We give so much of ourselves in the pursuit of financial security and happiness. If we are not mindful, slowly our spiritual practices slide down our list of priorities. We can drift into a spiritual slumber which can lead us down the path of sin. Revivals shake us from slumber. Given the state of the Church (meaning all churches), and the problems facing our country and the world, it is safe to say that we need a revival.

God used Jonah, the reluctant messenger, to start a revival in Nineveh. Jonah walked the streets proclaiming the Ninevites' worst nightmare: "Nineveh shall be overthrown." Rather than giving up, the people heard an opportunity for repentance. The prophet's proclamation shook them from their slumber and made them aware of their communal need for deliverance from destruction. The people proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, which are outward signs of repentance.

The king displays humility. The king follows the lead of his people. He issues a royal decree which formalizes what the people have already done. The king rises and from his throne, removes his royal garments, puts on sackcloth, and sits in ashes. Outwardly, making himself appear like one of his subjects, the king displayed his need for God.

The first step to revival is to acknowledge we need God regardless of our station in life. Universally, humanity needs God. We shouldn't think too highly or lowly of ourselves because we are all children of sacred worth in the eyes of God. God made us all. We all need our Creator to revive us when: we find ourselves asleep below the deck of the ship like Jonah, when our dream turns into a nightmare like the Ninevites, or when we fall asleep from the exhaustion of 'trying to keep up with Jones' or just trying to survive.

The king called the city to prayer. Prayer can change things, and prayer can change us. If we desire to experience revival as a church, community, or as a nation, we need to individually and corporately pray for a revival. Often, I hear people talk about "the good ole days." When turning to the past, we may romanticize or see it through the lens of rose-colored glasses. Perhaps, we should pray for a revival like the world has never seen before, that we will love like the world has never seen before.

The king told the people to stop doing evil. Revival occurs when we accept the grace that God has given us - when we accept Jesus, to do good, and to reject evil. Grace is the answer to our prayers. Grace is the unmerited love of God, which pursues us, pardons us, purifies us, and empowers us to live and love like Jesus. During the revivals at Seven Springs, we used to sing a song "Lord Send a Revival" and one of the verses said, "Lord send a revival and let it begin with me." The grace of God starts the revival in the heart of every person. God's grace went ahead of Jonah and it prepared the hearts of the people to hear Jonah's message from God. The people responded to the grace of God by repentance and God's response was mercy.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Encounter the Head:

What is revival?

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What is grace? What is the difference between grace and mercy?

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Encounter the Heart:

What was the most impactful thing that you learned from the podcasts, sermon series or sermon discussion guide?

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Share a time when you experienced revival in your life.

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GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Share a time when prayer changed you, resolved a problem, or changed an outcome.

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How do you create space and time in your life for spiritual disciplines such as fasting and prayer?

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Encounter the Hands:

Share your prayer concerns and celebrations.

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PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Encounter The Hands:

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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