

SYA

SIMPSON YOUTH ACADEMY

Exploring Transformative Questions

Welcome: Rev. Eric Rucker, Simpson College Youth Academy Director

Opening Song: In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful (by Taize)

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful

In the Lord I will rejoice

Look to God, do not be afraid

Lift up your voices, the Lord is near!

Lift up your voices, the Lord is near!

Scripture Reading: John 20:19-31 (excerpts) & Matthew 28:20

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the religious leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

After Jesus said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

And when Jesus said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My

Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

And Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Divine Parent has sent me, so I send you.

"And surely I am with you always, until the end of the age."

Blessings: Simpson Youth Academy students and alumni

Musical Interludes: *"Here I am Lord, All I am Lord
Here I am Lord, I am Yours"*

(*interludes by Michael Gungor)

Closing Hymn: 10,000 Reasons (by Matt Redman)

Bless the Lord O my soul
O my soul
Worship God's holy name
Sing like never before
O my soul
I'll worship your holy name

The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

(Chorus)

You're rich in love and you're slow to anger
Your name is great and your heart is kind
For all your goodness I will keep on singing
10,000 reasons for my heart to find

(Chorus)

Benediction

Announcements and Guide to Prayer and Study – Week of April 11

On April 24, from 9:30 – 11:00 am, the Church & Society committee is sponsoring a native plants workshop by Inger Lamb of Prairie Landscapes LLC. Inger has over 20 years of experience using native plants in urban landscapes, planting both prairie and native species flowerbeds. Doing so increases biodiversity and helps pollinators while beautifying the landscape. The workshop will take place at a site that Inger is maintaining at 7900 Hickman Road (meet in the parking lot behind the building on the east side). Please contact Laura Sands at 515 238.5063 or laurasands@mchsi.com if you are interested in participating. We want to limit the size of the group somewhat to ensure that everyone has a chance to interact with Inger.

Irene DeMaris, Associate Director of Interfaith Power and Light, spoke to Church & Society about actions faith communities are taking to address climate change and environmental issues. The committee decided that a good first step for Grace would be to offer this workshop. Native plants have many benefits. We hope that this may be the first of a series of workshops.



Save the Date: Spring Clean-Up Day - Saturday, April 17 starting at 9 a.m.

Please bring rakes, garden shears, work gloves, and sunscreen.

Face masks and social distancing will be required.



Guide to Prayer and Study: April 12-17

Monday, April 12

Read - Luke 23:44-46

Notice - It has been suggested that in the time of Jesus, Jewish parents taught their children Psalm 31:5 as a bedtime prayer. It seems likely that Mary would have taught it to Jesus when he was a boy. According to Luke, Jesus quoted these worshipful words of trust and gratitude from Psalm 31—"Into your hands I entrust my life"—as a way to express his unbreakable bond with God. In Psalm 31:14-15, after describing enemies seeking their life, the psalmist wrote, "I trust you, Lord! I affirm, 'You are my God. My future is in your hands....'" Imagine the inner power of that statement for Jesus on the cross. If you do not already have a chosen evening prayer, you might consider adopting the one Jesus prayed: "God, into your hands I entrust my life." What would it mean—how might it change things—to put your life fully in God's hands, not only at scattered moments of difficulty, but every night? How would it deepen your gratitude to know your life is held safely in God's eternally loving hands?

Pray - God, like Jesus I pray, "Into your hands I entrust my life," because I realize you can care for me better than I can care for myself. Thank you for the promise that you will never let me go. Amen.

Tuesday, April 13

Read - John 19:25-27

Notice - Even Jesus did not always have what we'd call a perfect family life (cf. Mark 3:21, 31-35). John 7:5 said that his brothers didn't believe in him. Jesus did not "disown" his mother in Mark 3:33-35, as his loving act of service toward her from the cross showed. But he was serious when he spoke about his bond with those who do God's will. When have shared faith and experience with God created ties for you as close as (or closer than) those you share with family members? And yet, on the cross, Jesus used some of his fading strength to serve his mother's needs. In Jesus' day a widow with no son or other male relative to protect her had few legal rights and little status. In the midst of his suffering, Jesus provided for his mother by asking one of his most faithful followers to care for her. We often tell one another that we'll "be there" for each other. What price did Mary have to pay in order to "be there" as her son was crucified? How was Jesus "there" for Mary, despite the suffering he was going through? How confident are you that Jesus will be there for you when you face difficult times?

Pray - Lord Jesus, you lived out the beauty of caring, serving, and loving. Make me into a person who can serve and care in all the relationships of which I am a part. Amen.

Wednesday, April 14

Read - Matthew 27:45-46, Galatians 1:3-4

Notice - From the cross, Jesus quotes the familiar first words of Psalm 22, a psalm of suffering and trust. Jesus asked, as we do, "Why?" Scholar William Barclay said, "We see Jesus plumbing the uttermost depths of the human situation, so that there might be no place we might go where he has not been before." * When have you felt pain so intense that you cried out to God, "Why?" How can it give you strength at times like that to know Jesus deliberately gave himself up to that experience before you, and for you? In challenging times, we don't always know what we can do. Sometimes it feels like there is nothing we can do, but we can always pray. Take some time today in prayer, lifting up friends, neighbors, members of the community or issues in our nation/world. Think of five people that might be asking 'why' today and keep them in your prayers today and the rest of the week.

Pray - Lord Jesus, sometimes I suffer and feel forsaken. It means the world to me that you, God, didn't stand aloof, but gave yourself in suffering for me. I offer you my heart, my love, myself. Amen.

Thursday, April 15

Read - Acts 13:1-3, 16:23-25

Notice - The Easter stories in the gospels tell us that as soon as Jesus' followers met him alive again, they worshipped him (Matthew 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52-53, John 20:24-28). But worship was not just a one-time, impulsive response for them. It was a continual life practice. The Antioch church commissioned Barnabas and Saul (soon to go by "Paul") for their first missionary journey "as they were worshipping." In a poignant scene of worship, Paul and Silas sang hymns in prison after a flogging, with their feet in stocks. "Around midnight [in stocks in prison], Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God." To what extent can you deal with even a long line at the store or slow traffic by praying and singing hymns (inwardly if not outwardly)? In what ways does Paul and Silas' story provide

a benchmark to help you assess how much room you have to keep growing in your personal practice of grateful worship? When have you sensed an inner nudge, large or small, from the Holy Spirit as you were worshipping? How can you maintain an openness to anything God wants to say to you in worship?

Pray - Lord Jesus, you are the ultimate Source of all that I am and have. I'm not likely to end up in stocks, but embed the habit of praise and gratitude in me so firmly that even there I could sing and pray. Amen.

Friday, April 16

Read - Acts 17:10-11, Ephesians 4:12-16; 2 Peter 3:14, 18

Notice - Paul was a methodical Bible reader. Acts 17:2-3 said Paul "interacted with [people] on the basis of the scriptures. Through his interpretation of the scriptures, he demonstrated that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. He declared, 'This Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.'" It mattered to Paul that his faith in the resurrected Jesus was rooted in the Biblical documents. What role does the Bible play in your faith walk with Jesus? Methodism's founder John Wesley urged readers to "To set apart a little time, if you can, every morning and evening for [reading the Scripture] It might also be of use, if while we read, we were frequently to pause, and examine ourselves by what we read, both with regard to our hearts, and lives."* Has the Guide to prayer and study and/or other tools helped you make daily Bible reading a habit? How can you reinforce and deepen that habit?

Pray - Jesus, you worked with many human hands and voices to bring me the Bible. You speak to my heart and millions more through this amazing book. Renew my hunger to read and understand your one-of-a-kind story. Amen.

* Found at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/notes.ii.i.html?highlight=set.apart.a.little.time#highlight>

Saturday, April 17

Read - Acts 2:42-47

Notice - The very first Christians lived out their faith as a largely unknown group, living in a city that had crucified their Lord. But their certainty that the risen Christ was with them, reinforced by the apostles' teaching, prayer, fellowship and a radical spirit of helping one another bound them together. From their earliest days, they shared their faith in ways whose powerful effects in making people's lives better showed they were part of something that would ultimately be bigger than even the armies of the Roman Empire. The foundations of the early Christians' powerful impact were based in five Christian practices: worship, study, service, giving and sharing. In which of these areas do you sense God inviting you to grow? What challenges do you face when it comes to contributing to the well-being of others? What holds you back? When have you found strength and courage for life through the encouragement you received from other Christians? How can you make it a holy habit to make your impact on others a consistently encouraging one?

Pray - Jesus, help me live in the light and hope of Easter every day. Inspire me to worship, study, serve, give, and share your grace and peace. Amen.