

## WGCC Scriptures and Sermons March 24 through Advent 2026

March 24

Psalm 130                    “Down in the Hole”

The Psalmist cries out from the depths – from down in a hole, as it were. Is only a Psalm of lament and resignation, or is it something much different? Like many Psalms, it starts with dismay, and despair, and then moves toward expressions of hope and expectation.

Sometimes, I wonder whether we either “hunker down,” and get comfortable in the depths – as if there’s no way out anyway – or passively “wait” for God’s initiative. The Psalmist doesn’t just wait, though. They expect and hope – “watch and pray,” as the song goes.

March 29      Palm Sunday Combined Worship (Terrell and Jeff preaching)

Matthew 21:1-11

April 5            Easter Sunday Combined Worship (Terrell and Jeff preaching)

John 20:1-18

April 12

John 20:19-31                    “Passing the Baton”

We tell this story in many ways, most of them retrospectively – in the rearview mirror. Jesus was raised. Here is some proof. What is perhaps most important about this text, I think, sometimes gets lost. This is a scene about what we do with our resurrection faith, about how it affects our lives and the lives of those around us. What will we do with our leg of the race?

April 19                    Breona Hawkins Preaching

April 26

Luke 24:13-35                    “Getting to the Table”

It's so strange how the two disciples didn't recognize Jesus. Of course, expectations (have you ever run into someone where you wouldn't expect them and been disoriented?), and resurrection body (Paul says there's something altogether different about that). But still... Once they get to the table though. They recognize him in the breaking of the bread. Breaking bread together – “com-panionship” – changes things. Especially in a world where it seems we know one another less and less well, it matters that we get to the table. How does breaking bread help us to recognize Jesus? One another?

May 3

John 14:1-14

“Taking the Lord's Name in Vain”

Here we have Jesus, as so often in John's Gospel, explaining something that others seem not to understand. He's talking to them about a way of going and a way of being. Thomas asks, “How can we know the way?” Jesus tells them what they, perhaps, should have seen all along. He is the way (and the truth – pay attention Pilate! – and the life – pay attention, tomb!). If Jesus is the way, then asking for something in his name that is against the Spirit he lived, taught, and breathed on his followers, is taking his name in vain. How can we recognize and follow the way of Jesus and honor him by doing God's will in his name?

May 10

Elyse DeLoach Preaching

May 17

John 17:1-11

“Welcome to Eternal Life”

Sometimes terms like “eternal life” can seem slippery. What are we talking about here? It is certainly something wonderful, desirable, hoped-for. What does Jesus in John's Gospel think it is? Well, here in verse 3 we seem to have an answer. Knowing God and knowing the one God sent. Whatever eternal life is, is clearly involves deep connection and intimacy with God and Christ. Jesus prays that those he has gathered will be strengthened and protected as they live in and live into this way of being. How might we move more into the eternal now through knowing and loving God?

May 24

Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21

(Terrell and Jeff preach)

May 31

Matthew 28:16-20

“Making or Being?”

The “Great Commission” at the end of the Gospel of Matthew has been a topic of interest and concern for people interested in mission and evangelism for millennia. There’s clearly something the disciples, and we, are supposed to be doing. Unfortunately, it’s often gone wrong when people have misunderstood the assignment. Beliefs and practices have been forced upon people in the name of love, for purposes of control, and under the guise of “Good News.” The thing is, my very best teachers have never succeeded at “making” me a student. They’ve excited me about learning by being great and engaged students themselves. Who better from whom to learn music than someone who loves learning about music (or Greek, or Mathematics, or Social Studies...). The Greek here can (and, I think, should) be translated, “Go, and *be* disciples.” What a difference that could make!

June 7

Acts 17:1-9

“Turning the World Upside Down”

Seeing things rightside up can be hard – especially when we have things upside down. Sometimes we need people to help set us right. I learned this – almost the hard way – in Thessaloniki on my last sabbatical. It seems some Thessalonians in Antiquity thought the early Christ-followers had it all wrong. Which is it? How can we know?

June 14

Breona Hawkins Preaching

June 21

Romans 6:1-11

“Living a New Life for God”

What does it mean to truly live out of and truly live into our baptisms? Many of our texts talk about newness of life, transformation, and renewal. What might it look like to see each moment of our lives as oriented toward God. How might justice, love, and gratitude change our experiences of life and one another?

June 28

Jeremiah 28:5-9

“When God Truly Sends a Prophet.”

We’re often surrounded by seeming prophets of war, doom, and destruction. How would we recognize a true prophet of peace? Would they proclaim a shallow peace? Would it be deep, comprehensive, and just? Sometimes prophecies of peace are the hardest to hear and the hardest to believe. What does Jesus call us to as a prophet of peace?

July 5

Romans 7:14-25

“Understanding Our Actions”

The Revised Common Lectionary omits verse 14 and the end of verse 25, I think, because of the language of enslavement. I think these verses might be helpful for us to understand how Paul was trying to make his point to his first century audience. Paul sees flesh, Spirit, law, and sin, as actual entities with power and force in our lives. How might we make sense of this and work to determine how God is working in and through us for grace and renewal?

July 12

Matthew 13:1-23

“Good Soil”

Can you see yourself in this parable? Have you been like the path or rocky or thorny ground before? When have you felt like good soil? What cultivating can our lives use? How can we help one another to be good soil for the seed of the gospel?

July 19

Genesis 28:10-22

“Stairway to Heaven”

It must be quite a vision to have seen a ladder to heaven and to have heard God’s promises. I can imagine Jacob definitely felt it necessary to mark the place. As important as the idea of place is, what about the actual message? God repeats the promise God makes to Abraham about blessing the families of the earth and adds God’s presence wherever Jacob goes. Jacob responds with an if/then – *if* God does thus and such, *then* I will do such and thus. Really, Jacob? Build a memorial and then promise to serve God only if God blesses you? How can we move beyond this kind of response?

July 26

1 Kings 3:1-14

“Wisdom Is a Good Idea”

Solomon is offered a chance to make a request. This may sound crass, but this is sort of a genie in a bottle moment. Solomon wisely asks for wisdom. Nice move. Wisdom, however, is not just something to have. It's something to do. God admonishes Solomon: “If you will walk in my ways...” “Wisdom is as wisdom does,” Forrest Gump's mother might have said. What does wisdom look like in our world and lives? How do we often misunderstand what it means to “walk in God's ways”?

August 2

Psalms 23

Matthew 14:13-21

“The Lord prepares a table...through me?”

“You give them something to eat.” Wait, what? What are we supposed to do? We don't have very much. Do you have any idea what it takes to feed this many people? We either need to send them away or, who knows what. Jesus blesses. Jesus breaks. Jesus gives. And then the disciples give to the crowds. What is Jesus blessing, breaking, and giving in our lives? How can we give to those in need around us?

August 9

Psalms 85

“Oops, We Did It Again...”

The Psalmist remembers God's sustenance and providence, AND ALSO how the people strayed and messed up A-GAIN. Can God forgive us again? What will we need to learn? What do we hope for and expect? How should we change our behavior, expectations, and relationships? What does it look like when “steadfast love and faithfulness meet, and righteousness and peace kiss each other”?

August 16

Matthew 15:21-28

“She Knew What She Needed”

How often do we assume we know better than others what they need? Maybe because they're different from us. Maybe because we think we're smarter. Maybe because we think resources are just for certain groups and people. How often do you think we're actually right about that? People tend to know what they need. Jesus is changed in this story. The great faith of the Canaanite woman changes the trajectory of the encounter. Never assume we're too special to listen closely when people articulate their needs.

August 23

Exodus 1:8 – 2:10

“When Rulers Try To Hurt Children”

Whose responsibility is it to protect the vulnerable when powerful leaders seek to do them harm? Anybody? Nobody? Somebody?... Specific, named, people. In this case, Shiphrah, Puah, Moses' mother, Jochebed, Moses' sister, Miriam, and even Pharaoh's daughter, Bithiah. Real people need to take real action when and where they can. Same for us. Insert your name. Insert your situation. How can we each creatively subvert the hateful and death-dealing policies and actions of those who harm the most vulnerable?

August 30

Exodus 3:1-15

“The God Who Hears and Knows”

Here we, and Moses, meet God and hear about God's purposes and intentions. God hears and responds to suffering people, and intends good for them. Notice, that this text, different from some later texts, doesn't say God is going to give the land to Moses and his people. God promises to bring them to the land of those people – the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. A land where, apparently, those people are thriving with milk and honey. Never assume, it seems, that God can't hear the voices of the oppressed, and never assume that God will stand for the oppression of others. To do so is shortsighted and selfish. This story is always bigger than people seem to think.

September 6

Matthew 18:15-20

“Addressing Sin”

This text represents 2 of only 3 times the word we translate “church” appears in any gospel (the other is where Jesus names Simon, “Peter,” the “rock” on which he will build his

church. Here in Matthew 18 it addresses the issue of sin, and provides a pretty helpful, I think, interpersonal and community model for individual, interpersonal transgressions with people of equal power and status (“siblings”). What it does **not** provide, or even suggest that it is providing, is a model for addressing systemic sins, or sins that abuse or dehumanize others because of power imbalances. How has this text been used helpfully? How has it caused harm? What can we learn from this text of the early church?

September 13

Exodus 14: 19-31

“Because We Were Being Oppressed”

This is a great story - fear, suspense, armies, action, Divine intervention, salvation. No wonder Cecil B. DeMill made it into a huge movie. The thing is, and many texts in the rest of the Bible remind us of this, this isn't just a text about how only one people always has God on their side. This is a story about how God hears the cries of people, sees injustice, and acts for liberation. Thanks be to God, in this story, God rescues the Israelites from their Egyptian enslavers. How can we find God's presence in power acting with us against oppressors? What is God doing when we are the oppressors?

September 20

Matthew 20:1-16

“A Parable “Capitalists” Love To Hate”

First of all, if you call yourself a Capitalist, I want to clarify terms. In addition to someone who believes that Capitalism is the best economic system, what I am also talking about is actual Capitalists – those who use the power of their capital investments to have other people and the markets do their earning for them. If we step outside the assumptions of this system for a few moments, what might this parable tell us about the value of labor, the dignity of humanity, and the importance of a good harvest? An actual Capitalist likely sees this parable as par for the course. Sometimes a tight labor market or a product deadline means you have to pay more for labor. Actual workers, however, begin to see how the system works behind the scenes, and treats workers only as a commodity. As is often the case, Jesus' parable makes us rethink...

September 27

Philippians 2:1-13

“What Kind of Lord Do We Serve?”

The “Christ Hymn” that appears in verses 6-11 of this text, may be one of the earliest doctrinal and theological proclamations of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church. What it tells us about Jesus can, if we pay attention, show us much about the kind of God that God is, and the kind of Christ, Christ is. Can humility truly be glorious? Is this Christ’s true nature, or “mind,” or is it just an act or a phase? What are we called to do and be?

October 4

Exodus 20:1-20

“Best Rock Record of All Time?”

People are still trying to get the Ten Commandments up on walls everywhere. Not the actual biblical texts, exactly, but the Cecil B. DeMill movie adaptation version. If we can just post the commandments, they say, our society will be better. Really? Let’s unpack the commandments and those assumptions. These commandments call us to important ways of being in community together, and they can also, unfortunately, be used as tools of subjugation by some over others.

October 11

Exodus 32:1-14

“Meanwhile, Back At the Ranch…”

While God is up on the mountain with Moses, telling him all about the commandments and how Aaron will be a priest and stuff, Aaron is down below leading the Golden Calf affair. As you might imagine, God is mad. How do God and Moses interact in this story in a way that allows the relationship between God and Israel to continue? Why are important relationships hard to maintain? What if Moses had not spoken up? What if God had not changed God’s mind?

October 18

Exodus 33:7-23

“It Was Like This; And Like This”

The lectionary suggests we only read verses 12-23 today, but if we did, we’d miss another beautiful description of the relationship between God and Moses. Scripture describes, explains, wonders, hopes, and laments in various keys – sometimes on the same page. That’s what it’s like to relate with God and one another. What will our story about our relationship with God look like? If God’s not with us, is it worth the trip?

October 25

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

“The O G”

This text is Moses’ final moments and obituary. It also provides succession information and acknowledgement for Joshua. Notice, though, that Moses’ life and actions are to provide the key notes for faithfulness. Sometimes the successors of liberators don’t quite get it right. It’s different when you have power and history. There are some lessons we fail to remember, and are unable to learn – often before it’s too late. What are we told about Moses and God in this brief obit?

November 1

All Saints Day

Revelation 7:1-17

“The Story’s Bigger Than We’ve Heard”

This is another one of those times when the lectionary suggests a narrower text selection, and unfortunately misses important points. Yes, we’ve had to hear 21<sup>st</sup> century midwestern pronunciations of “Issachar,” and “Naphtali,” but we can hear and see what John hears and sees – a movement from an initial, smaller group, to a group so big you can’t count them. Revelation here, reveals to us much about God’s glory, God’s Grace, and a life of faithfulness. Who are the saints? Probably more than you thought...

November 8

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

“We Have Hope in the Lord”

This text has been interpreted in lots of ways to exclude and even confuse people. Paul seems to have meant it to reassure the Thessalonians. We often read it at funerals, but it’s important for regular days in November, too. Jesus’ resurrection started something big, Paul believes, and we’re included – even if we die. What does it mean to hope and trust that we have a future with God in Christ?

November 15

1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

“The Best Offense is a Good Defense?”

Live like there's no tomorrow, is part of Paul's strategy here. My "live like there's no tomorrow strategy is ice cream for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Paul's is a little different. Be prepared in all you do – in your whole self (your spirit, and soul, and body), as if Christ has a claim on your life. How – with the protective armor of love and hope, and by loving and caring for others. In this we can rejoice. This seems really important. Paul "solemnly commands" that it be read to the whole community.

November 22

Matthew 25:14-30 and Matthew 25:31-46

"Who's Your Kyrios?"

(Please have two different liturgists read these, with no break in between, and use a translation that includes, "But" at the beginning of verse 31.)

One parable. Two scenarios. This is how it is with your current boss: Numbers, profits, punishments and rewards. But, this is how it is with God – compassion, care, punishments and rewards. Which economy will you choose? Who will be your Lord? Imagine a world, Jesus seems to say, with heavenly actions and consequences.

November 29

First Sunday of Advent

HOPE

Isaiah 64:1-9

"Tear Open the Heavens!"

If only God would intercede. God's done it before, will God do it again? What do we hope for. What does it look like? How will we know when it arrives? Will it be Christ-shaped? Will we try to remake it in our own image to meet our desires? Will we actively watch? Will we "gladly do right, and remember God in God's ways"?

December 6

Second Sunday in Advent

PEACE

Isaiah 40:1-11; Mark 1:1-8

"The God Who Shepherds Us"

The way of the Lord brings comfort. How does God provide comfort in the midst of distress? What mountains must be disturbed? What valleys filled in? Which paths straightened? How do we find comfort and hope in the coming of Jesus? How can we share this and make it possible for others through lives lived in peace?

December 13

Third Sunday in Advent

JOY

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

“Rejoice Always!”

Joy is to be our way of life! The joy of this season – the symbols, the carols, the stories, the memories – is how we’re encouraged to live our lives. How can we sustain it? What empowers and encourages this rejoicing? Prayer and gratitude and community life, writes Paul. Let’s keep it going by viewing everything through the lens of God’s love and Grace. Don’t quench the Spirit. Rejoice!

December 20

Fourth Sunday in Advent

LOVE

Luke 1:46-55

“I Want to Know What Love Is”

Mary tells it like it is. Using her knowledge and awareness of the story of those who have gone before her, she sings a song of God’s love – a love infused with justice. Mary’s song sets the tone for the Gospel of Luke and for our understanding of Christmas and every season. How can we truly receive this divine love? How will we share it? Will our souls magnify the Lord?