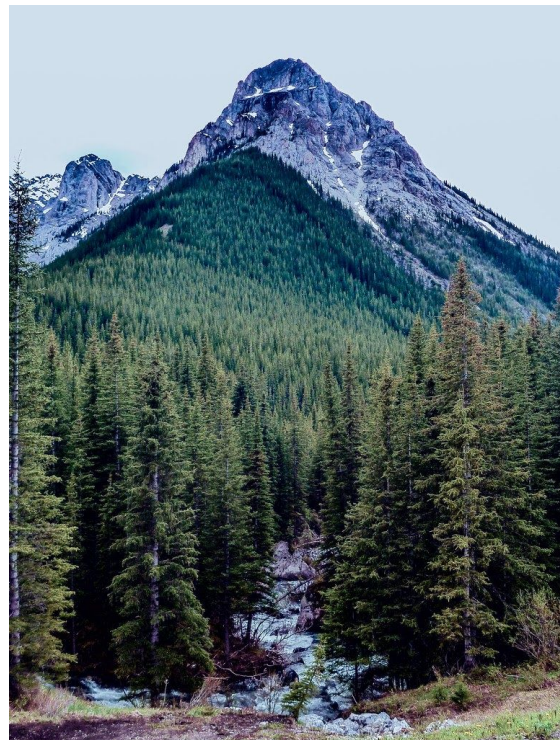


Isaiah 55:10-13

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

For you shall go out in joy,
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their
hands.
Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.



Sermon

So, many of us have found ourselves with a lot of extra time on our hands these days!

And I've heard so many different ways that people have been using that extra time. From guitar practice, to working your way through that library of unread books on your nightstand, to learning to make ice cream at home, many of us have been putting this time to good use! And I know a lot of you have been out in your gardens. In fact, amongst other things, I think this year will be remembered for how beautiful everyone's garden has turned out to be as the nurseries sell out and the weeds all get picked.

But, I wonder, if this extra time we have on our hands might not be a perfect reason to renew our commitment to reading the Bible?

One of the great blessings of being a pastor is that I have such a good excuse to keep a Bible close by, and have it in my thoughts so often.

Usually, I get to start my week by reading the passage that we will center our service around the next Sunday. And throughout the week, I just try to keep the scripture close to me, everywhere I go and in every situation that I encounter.

And I keep asking myself, how can I use this passage in a sermon this week?

What is the message that I want to use it to say?

And often, those answers do not come easy.

Because the Bible, I think, is not that kind of book. It's not a "Christian Faith for Dummies" kind of book or a reference book where we can look up all the easy answers to our questions. Often, I think it works in just the opposite kind of way. When we really dig into it, doesn't it often muddy the waters, and raise more questions than it answers? Rather than clear things up, I think it actually invites us to dive even further in to the real mystery of our faith.

And the real struggle of finding the sermon each week is never that the Bible has nothing to say. Rather, I find the struggle to be picking and choosing which message is most useful for our community at this time, because each passage has too much to fit in one sermon.

Because these stories and scriptures - we believe that they live and breath. They fall on us afresh each time we read them or remember them, because God chooses to reveal himself to us through

them and the Holy Spirit is always moving in them to make these words and these stories a source of surprising blessing and salvation.

They have so much to say about the world we live in and how we are being called to live. And the more we read and study, the more we commit ourselves to trying to remember or even memorize it. The more we make the effort to recall it at moments of crisis or decision points, or doubt in our lives. The more we will find that these Scriptures can serve like a pair of eyeglasses to help us better see the world. It gives us vision to see the truth that lives out there past the lies this world tells us, and to see what is everlasting out beyond the temporary things of today.



And each week, as I struggle with the question of what I want to use the scriptures to say in the sermon, I find that they end up correcting my vision once again. They help me see the world as it really is. And they give me a better question.

Because the real question about the scriptures is not how we will use them, but how they will use us. And that question is not just for the pastor, but for all of us Christians. Because the blessings of the scriptures is a rain that falls upon us all.

- But, will they move us to praise or service?
 - Will they speak through our mouths, the words of prophecy, or forgiveness, or promise?
 - Will we let them transform us into ever more loving and faithful people?
 - Will we let them surprise us, by who we become, when these stories take hold in our imaginations and paint a new picture of how we might see the world and be called to live in it?

However God chooses to work through these scriptures, our passage for today reminds us: they will accomplish that purpose for which they were sent. They will not go back to God empty, but will complete that work of changing our world by changing our lives - leaving us with blessing

upon blessing, with seed for the sower and bread for the eater, with exactly what it is that we need on this day and in this situation.

- And when we find ourselves surrounded by the thorns and briars that we find along the way, the stories of the scriptures remind us that God likes to surprise us. By sending up the myrtle and the cypress. To protect us and provide for us

Until even the mountains and the hills before you burst into song, and the trees clap along in praising our God, for the blessings that sprout, ever new, from God's Good Word.

Amen.

This sermon was first shared with Aurora First Presbyterian Church, by Rev. Doug Friesema. To receive future communications from the church, please contact:

firstauroraoffice@gmail.com

(303) 364-2609

1585 Kingston St.

Aurora, CO 80010

Aurorafpchurch.com

facebook.com/aurorafpchurch