EASTER SUNDAY
Sermon: “The Bridge”

Notes from sermon on 4/14:

Prayer requests:

Family Focus Questions (before sermon):
When did death first invade your life?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):
1. What difference does it make to believe that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead?
2. How does your faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ change the way you think about sin and death?
3. How does it change the way you live?

Monday, April 15: Read 1 Corinthians 15:19-26
Here we are – Holy Week – the end of our Lenten journey and the beginning of our celebration of Christ’s victory over death. This week, we will take time to reflect on what that really means...victory over death. We cannot truly embrace and appreciate the miracle of Easter without facing death – both Christ’s death and our own. Death invades our lives. It steals from us those we love. It breaks our hearts. Our readings this week, and Reveille’s 7:00pm observances of Holy Thursday and Good Friday help us avoid skipping from the joy of Palm Sunday to the joy of Easter morning while skipping over the agony of Christ’s torture, crucifixion, and death. Truly, if death had the last word, we are all to be pitied, as Paul states in the opening of today’s scripture. “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.” This changes everything for all of us who have lost a loved one or are facing our own mortality (in other words, all of us). As we begin our journey into Holy Week, we can already rejoice in the miracle that all pain and death we face is temporary, Easter is God’s answer to death’s invasion, and it tells us just what kind of God we have. Christ’s victory over death gives us hope—hope for our lives and the lives of those we love. Alleluia!
**Tuesday, April 16: Read Psalm 22**

Our remaining readings for the week are long and sometimes difficult to read. They force us to face pain and death - our own, the world’s, and Christ’s. We may recognize today's opening verse, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” as Christ’s words cried from the cross in Matthew’s gospel. Christ so empathized with the pain of the human condition that he shared the psalmist’s words with some of his final breaths. Today, let us read this psalm carefully, communing with all people, past and present, who have ever felt the shame, despair, isolation, self-loathing, and hopelessness of the first 18 verses. How much do these people need the hope and joy of Easter morning? How much do they need to know that a Savior who fully understands their pain willingly took on their sins and weaknesses and sacrificed himself so they could have the joy of redemption and eternal salvation? Who could we invite to our Holy Week services who desperately needs this forgiveness, understanding, acceptance, and hope right now?

**Wednesday, April 17: Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

We sometimes have to do a double-take to realize today’s scripture was written centuries before Christ’s scouring and crucifixion. Because of the breadth of this week's readings, we will not reserve a day for scripture memorization, but there are plenty of verses today worthy of committing to memory if not done so already. The truth of today’s words transcend time, reflecting the pain and humiliation of God’s ambassadors on Earth yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Their truth also comes to a pinnacle in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The beauty and truth of these words can take our breath away. Let us read them slowly, in awe and gratitude for what Christ has done for us.

**Thursday, April 18: HOLY THURSDAY: Read John 13:1-35**

“If you had one day left to live, how would you spend it?” This question has been asked of everyone from Miss America contestants to friends sitting around a campfire. Rarely does the answer involve washing dirty feet. Today, we read how Jesus chose to spend his last free day on earth before his resurrection. With friends. In gratitude. In servitude. In humility. Jesus chose the actions of the lowliest servant to reveal the love of the Most High. Christ’s life, death, and resurrection teaches us how to live both as people whose hours may be numbered and as people guaranteed of eternal life. How will we respond?

**Friday, April 19: GOOD FRIDAY: Read John 18:1-19:42**

It’s time to walk to the cross with Christ. Last week, we read Luke’s Passion account. Today, we turn to John’s. Hopefully we will all be able to attend Reveille’s Tenebrae service tonight, where the holiness of the Sanctuary and the beauty of the Chancel Choir will help bring Christ’s sacrifice to life for us. All of us can find a quiet place today to walk to the cross with Christ, beginning at the Last Supper and ending at the tomb. What difference does it make Easter morning, having taken the time to celebrate Good Friday? What difference does it make in our lives, knowing our salvation and eternal joy was earned through the willing sacrifice of the Lamb of God?

**Saturday, April 20: Read John 20:1-18**

In Paul’s opening words of our scripture readings this week, “If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people to be most pitied.” Were it not for the Good News of today’s gospel, there is no way we would be celebrating the previous days’ events. We, like Mary Magdalene, would simply be weeping at the injustice and pain and loss of it all. But today we, like Mary, are approached by a living Savior who asks, “Why are you weeping?” and we, like Mary, have the chance to announce Christ’s resurrection to the world! Will we do it? Let us allow Easter to change everything for us, and prompt us to share Christ’s love and victory over our pain, sin, and death with everyone who so desperately needs it. Alleluia!

**Sunday, April 21: EASTER SUNDAY: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Opening Prayer:** Alleluia! We praise you, O God, for the power of your saving love revealed in the resurrection of our Lord. As you have raised Jesus from the dead give to us the gift of everlasting life, that we may worship you forever; through Christ, our risen Savior. Amen.