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Guided by the Promise

Renewed in Mercy

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT, YEAR A

This Sunday, the gospel reading from John 3 is one that many people know by heart. Its familiarity is a comfort, yet we must not let comfort become complacency.

REFERENCES

Genesis 12:1-4

Psalm 121

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17

COLORS

Purple

Think about when you hop in the car and get ready to go to the grocery store or your favorite coffee shop that you've been to a thousand times before. Do you look up the address on the GPS to remind you how to get there, or do you just go, sometimes zoning out until you pull up and wonder how you got there? I'll admit, there are many times I fall into the latter category. But sometimes, when traffic is heavy, or I'm running behind, or I remember the construction I ran into the last time, I consult the GPS to see if there's a better route to take. Lent invites us to reassess our journey of faith in light of God's promise of life.

This Sunday, the gospel reading from John 3 is one that many people know by heart. Its familiarity is a comfort, yet we must not let comfort become complacency. As you plan worship this week, consider how to bring this text to life in new ways. Perhaps you could have a few children, or a child and an adult, act out the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. (And hey—what if the child played Jesus?) Perhaps you turn the pericope into a responsive reading where the

congregation reads portions of the passage aloud together. You could also weave a song into the scripture reading, alternating portions of John 3 with a verse of a hymn like “Depth of Mercy” (*United Methodist Hymnal* 355) or “What Wondrous Love Is This” (*United Methodist Hymnal* 292).

Consider, too, how you might incorporate time for meditation and discernment as a response to the Proclamation of the Word. You might want to lead the community in a guided meditation centered around the Romans 4 reading for this week. What are the places you, as individuals and as a community, need to reorient to salvation as a gift of grace instead of a work? How might you sit with the blessedness of God’s gift and recognize the work we do as the church as a response to the gift, not a means of earning what has already been given? You might want to pray a litany after the sermon, naming the gracious gifts of God all around you and seeking the Spirit’s guidance in how to share the gift of grace in your neighborhood. Find ways that suit your congregation and context to renew your community’s encounter with grace, to rest in and be inspired by mercy in this Lenten season.

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