

## Reason To Believe

1. Warm-up Question: Many of us just celebrated Thanksgiving by sharing a meal with people that we love. What are some things that you are thankful to God for this year? This week?
2. Sunday marked the beginning of Advent, a season in which we anticipate the birth of Jesus. The Advent/Christmas season often brings back positive memories from years past. What Advent/Christmas memories or traditions do you have that bring up positive feelings or emotions? Sharing these may inspire new traditions in others.
3. Sunday's Scripture reading took place near the end of Jesus' public ministry. Let's read Matthew 16:13-18, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. What may have prompted Jesus to ask his disciples who people were saying he was?
  - b. The disciples told Jesus that people were saying he was John the Baptist or Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. What would you guess Jesus thought when he heard this feedback? Was he pleased, saddened, frustrated, or what?
  - c. When Peter said Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, Jesus replied that Peter was a rock on which Jesus was going to build his church. What do you think that meant? Was this a reference to Peter alone or to something broader? Who or what was the "rock" upon which Jesus would build his church?
4. One of the key points in Sunday's message was that we are God's vessel for spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. In the Gospels, when people were impacted by Jesus, they naturally began telling others about him. When the shepherds encountered angels and saw baby Jesus, they began to tell everyone. When the Samaritan woman encountered Jesus, she told everyone. Their witness, along with others like them, impacted many and created a ripple effect that eventually swept across the globe. Jordan said, "Now it's our turn to grow the kingdom of God. This is our time in history to point the lost to Jesus. You are here for someone else. Your gifts, your voice, your experience, your smile, your testimony are intended to make a way to Jesus for those around you."
  - a. Do you agree or disagree with the perspective that we are meant to be God's vessels for spreading the Good News about Jesus? How do you see it?
  - b. How have you seen the love of Christ spread in your lifetime? Which ways have you seen that are the most effective? What are some approaches that people use to try to spread the Gospel that are not helpful?

- c. Most of us have gained a curiosity about Jesus from the people in our lives along the way. Who is someone that encouraged your curiosity about Jesus? What sticks out about how they talked about God? What did you see in them that you found yourself wanting?
  - d. How have you seen the love of Christ spread in your lifetime? Which ways have you seen that are the most effective? What are some approaches that people use to try to spread the Gospel that are not helpful?
  - e. What are some ways that God reveals God's self – other than through people?
  - f. C.S. Lewis once said, "Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important." What do you think Lewis meant?
5. In Sunday's sermon, Jordan identified Life Journey Church as a safe space to ask questions.
- a. Aren't all churches safe places to ask questions? Why or why not?
  - b. Do you believe it's important to hear questions that challenge our beliefs? Why or why not?
6. Jordan said, "Belief is experienced, and not taught. It is a gift from God." Do you agree or disagree – and why? If belief is not taught, why then, is teaching/learning about belief important on our spiritual journey?
7. Name one person in your life who may not yet know the love of God.
- a. How can you be a vessel of an expression of Jesus' love to them?
  - b. Once we share those names, let's say a prayer for those we have named, that God may reach them in an extraordinary way.

***Sharing out faith can sometimes be as simple as handing someone a church business card. Church cards sit at Usher's Desk each Sunday. Pick up a few on Sunday to keep with you!***

## **Matthew 16:13-18**

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" 14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.