



Lent 4

Me & You & Darkness in View

March 11, 2018

Scripture: Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

Focus statement: Allowing darkness and negativity to come in between people or in between people and God is sometimes easier than the vulnerability and humility of being exposed to the light. What are the things that we don't want to see that may be standing between you and me?

Summary statement for bulletin: Between Me & You, even in darkness, God's promise and God's love grow all around us.

Song suggestions

HWB 13 Blessed Jesus, at Your Word
HWB 163 Obey My Voice
HWB 372 O Healing River
HWB 401 This Little Light of Mine
HWB 557 O God, in Restless Living
HWB 570 We Walk by Faith

STJ 45 In the Morning When I Rise
STJ 54 Longing for Light
STJ 95 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
God's Love Is for Everybody by Bryan Moyer Suderman
I Will Bless You by Bryan Moyer Suderman

Between Me & You theme song

Between me and you, with pain and darkness clouding your view,
I'll give you courage to face what is true,
I choose to be there with you.

Call to worship

Leader: Who comes in the name of God? Step into the light and be known.

People: **We are coming, through darkness and fear. We come into the light by the power of God.**

Leader: People of God, God has heard your cries and is opening a way for you.

People: **We are here, through darkness and fear. We come into the light of this day by the power of God.**

Leader: You are here, and God is here. What will you do?

People: **Together we will worship our God.**

Confession

God of compassion and consequence, some days it's hard to face who we are.

We like to be in control, to know where we are going.

Relying on someone else, even you, is hard.

We get impatient and find things to criticize.

Some of us even like to complain.

Glossing over past hardships is easier than admitting that we needed your help, and still do.

We don't want to see how our attitudes and actions make things worse.

We are sorry.

Forgive our ingratitude.

Grant us the courage to face the truth.



Words of assurance

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.

Between Me & You enactment (children's feature)

Supplies: two large sheets, scarves, or blankets

Action and noticing

- Drape a large sheet over a group of volunteers.
- Ask the volunteers: Can you see well? Can you see anyone outside the sheet? How well can you see the others who are under the sheet?
- Consider adding another layer to make it darker. Ask: Now how well can you see? What would it take to help you see better?
- Remove the sheet.

Wondering

- Sometimes it's fun to hide in a tent or fort, or to be in the dark. Sometimes the dark feels safe, and sometimes it is scary. God is with us even when we are in a dark place or are having a difficult time. But we don't have to stay in the dark forever. Jesus calls us to come out of the darkness and be people of the light.
- Like this sheet, sometimes we have barriers in our lives that make it hard to know God's love or understand what God is up to. I wonder, what are some things in our lives that block our view of God's love for us? What are some things in our lives that make it hard to know and understand what God is up to?
- It can take courage to remove the barriers and step into the light, so we may need to pray and ask God for help removing the things that come in between us and God.

Responding through song: "For Me, For You"

God's promises are for me, for you, and in the darkness too.
God's love is for me, for you, and in the darkness too.

Sermon seeds

Between

Moses mediates between God and people (Numbers 21:4-9)

Sin/darkness between God and people (Numbers 21:4-9;
John 3:14-21)

Jesus lifted up between God and world (John 3:14-21;
Ephesians 2:1-10)

- God commands Moses to make a serpent to save the people from the serpents that are killing them. The thing that is killing them becomes their source of salvation. How might God also use the very things in our lives that are killing us to bring us into new life? God does not respond to the people's prayer by taking the serpents away. Rather, God brings healing when they confront their sin, look upon the source of their wounds raised up, and face their own darkness. When has God answered our prayers and brought about new life, but perhaps not in the way we had imagined?
- There are times when we may feel more comfortable dwelling in the dark for fear of what will be exposed in the light. It takes courage and vulnerability to bring our dark places to light. While painful, confronting the darkness leads us to the healing light. This is the invitation to healing and transformation. When has facing the source of our wounds brought about healing? What parts of ourselves or our experience are being invited out of the darkness and into the light?

Benediction

You may choose to speak this benediction to one another by echoing: after the leader reads each line, the congregation repeats it.

We are people of God.
We go in God's love
to extend God's love
and live God's promise.