Leading Causes of Life

***“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.” — Deuteronomy 30:19b***

**This is a season of saying “yes” to life. This is a season of noticing the flourishing and abundant life all around us. This we do instead of focusing on what isn’t working. In the picture on the book that inspired this series, there is a (beautiful) dying leaf in water. Are we focused on the dying of the leaf and its disconnection to its source? Or do we notice that it is carried along by water teeming with life — signs of renewal? Saying “yes” to life in Christ offers us the opportunity to see the assets that create possibility and that create new ways of flourishing together in this world.**

**Week One — Choose Life**

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Luke 24:5b*

The first Sunday introduces the theme and invites the congregation to adjust their lenses to recognize life rather than focus on death — what feels like it is destroying us. We pose the questions this Sunday, “What is the focus of our attention? What dominates our imaginations?” And it introduces the five leading causes of life through which we will journey: connection, coherence, agency, blessing, and hope.

**Week Two — Healing Power: Connection**

*Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. — Colossians 3:12*

Churches can be places of healing — places of connection. This Sunday focuses on this first “leading cause of life” which is the root of our word “religion,” meaning “to bind together.” Physical healing happens when two sides of a wound reach toward each other and bind. All kinds of healing happens for us when we connect to the Source of All Being, to the Teacher Jesus, who guides us toward the “other,” and when we know deeply that we are all connected to each other.

**Week Three — Purpose & Meaning: Coherence**

*When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. — Luke 9: 1-2*

When we know in our bones what we are here to be and do, we have coherence. Knowing where we belong and finding meaning in our lives gives us purpose that holds up even (and especially) in the storms of life. Jesus said he had “come to set the prisoners free.” Bottom line. So if the “prisoner” in front of him was someone he wasn’t “supposed to” associate with in the social norms of his day, it didn’t matter because setting this person free was the bottom line. To have a life-leaning bottom line invites adaptability and choice, it doesn’t restrict it. Where do we find our meaning and purpose?

**Week Four — We Do, We Live: Agency**

*“…Do this in remembrance of me.” — Luke 22:19b*

Agency is about doing, even if it is just doing only what we can do in this moment — which doesn’t feel like much sometimes. When our purpose joins with our doing, when we have found our “calling.” Before he dies, Jesus invites his followers to no longer be servants, but friends who understand they must carry on his actions in the world. They are to become agents of change and possibility. Instead of focusing on problems, we focus on the assets of our community, our friends in Christ, and what is possible.

**Week Five — Generations of Love: Blessing**

*From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. — John 1:16*

Blessing is not just a nice thing to say, it is “generative” of life. It is what we do that creates more and more life within ourselves and others and it has been going on for, well… “generations.” Blessing is about opening to the channels of love that have been flowering before we came into this world and will flow after we leave it. We are part of a long river of life-giving actions of generosity, kindness, hospitality, and humor. We will have blessed another when we can answer “yes” to the question, “Have I helped them to be fully alive?”

**Week Six — Not Just Wishful Thinking: Hope**

*Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord. — Psalm 31:24*

Humans have the capacity to imagine the future, drawing us together to take risks and face dangers because hope moves us forward. Hope held and spoken in community is not just wishful thinking, it is a bold announcement and celebration of a future in God.

**Week Seven — Let Your Life Be About Life**

*I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may. know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. — Ephesians 1: 18-19*

From death to life, from fear to blessing, from despair to hope… this is what we have been about in this series. In this final worship experience we will hear testimony to the “Leading Causes of Life” that we have witnessed and small or big ways in which we have refocused in order to let our lives be about life. We will pray for these life-giving practices to “go viral” — infecting our communities so that there is more connection, more meaning, more action, more blessing, and more hope.