



# #pictureLent

## Sermon Series Ideas

*#PictureLent 2016 is built around the “I Am” statements from the Gospel of John. The Sunday theme words and devotions follow the Year C Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. The Monday theme words and devotions focus on the selected I Am statement for the week. The remaining theme words and devotions explore the depth of the “I Am” statement across the Old and New Testaments.*

### The Bread of Life

*Week One (beginning Ash Wednesday) (Feb. 10-13)*

Consider this: This week, beginning with Ash Wednesday, focuses on resetting our lives by refocusing our delights and appetites on what pleases God rather than ourselves. We ask God to create clean hearts in us and to fill us with what truly satisfies. Jesus desires for us to be nourished by his good news. What teachings of Jesus are truly nourishing for your congregation? What teachings of the world do you or does your congregation need to disregard so you can feast with joy on Jesus' good news?

### The Good Shepherd

*Week Two (Feb. 14-20)*

Consider this: As the good shepherd Jesus is attentive and persistent. He is not absent or tardy. He does not shrug off his responsibilities. Jesus is committed and will be committed until death for the sheep of his flock. We are Jesus' sheep. Jesus knows us, seeks us out, cares for us, and nurtures us back to the path when we wander. How does Jesus accomplish these tasks? By placing influential and caring people in our lives. Invite your congregation to discern who these influential and caring people are in their personal lives and in the life of the congregation. These persons recognize Jesus as their shepherd and have accepted the call to shepherd others in Jesus' name. How might your congregation become invited, challenged, and/or encouraged to become shepherds for others?

### The Gates

*Week Three (Feb. 21-27)*

Consider this: A gate is a fence's threshold that indicates the designated place through which individuals come and go. In calling himself “the gate” Jesus says that he is the designated place of entry to come into God's Kingdom. When we enter through Jesus' gate we enter a world where sin is forgiven and salvation is granted. We enter a world where we will not die to sin but live in eternal life. Passing continually through Jesus' gate reminds us of who we live for and where our identities lie. What gifts has your congregation experienced because they reside in Jesus' pasture? How has that pasturing solidified their identity? How have they experienced salvation by walking through Christ's gate?



# The Light of the World

**Week Four (Feb. 28 – Mar. 5)**

Consider this: Throughout his life Jesus was in constant conflict with the Pharisees and legal experts. Jesus upset their authority not only over the people but over the interpretation of Scripture as well. The Pharisees and legal experts used the Law not as a means for correction and upbuilding but as a way to isolate people and make them feel entirely alone in their sin. As the light of the world Jesus illumined people's darkness, revealing that there is more to life than retribution. In Jesus, there is restoration. To be redeemed of and restored from our sin, we first have to confront it. What sins are causing conflict in the life of your church and in the lives of your congregants? How is the light of Christ illuminating those shadows and drawing people towards his marvelous light?

# The Resurrection and the Life

**Week Five (Mar. 6-12)**

Consider this: In his resurrection Jesus defeated death and delivered us from slavery to sin and death. When we confess that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior our eternal lives begin in that moment. Sin no longer has hold on us. We are no longer under the law that says the wages of sin is death. Through our confession we come under the abundant grace of Jesus Christ that gifts us eternal life. But there is still loss in the world. We continue to struggle with hurt and experience pain as we wait for complete resurrection. Take care to explore the pain and suffering caused by loss. How might the hope we have in Christ bring healing in the present?

# The Way, Truth, and Life

**Week Six (Mar. 13-29)**

Consider this: We struggle to trust Jesus. Jesus led the way to God. Jesus will not lead us astray. And yet we struggle to trust Jesus. Following Jesus may at times put us in uncomfortable or messy or fearful situations, but Jesus has already walked the hardest walk there is. Jesus boldly walked to the cross for us. He took upon himself all the sin, hurt, and brokenness of the world so that our path to the Father would not be so toilsome. Where has your congregation experienced struggle in following Jesus? What are some ways your congregation can mature in their faith so their trust in Jesus will flourish?

# The Vines

**Week Seven (Mar. 20-27)**

Consider this: Jesus' final "I Am" statement describes the interconnectedness Jesus feels between himself and the disciples, which extends to all who are faithful to him through the generations. It is vital that we remain connected to him so that as we grow in years we grow in our faith and in our understanding of how Jesus desires us to engage our faith in the world. By remaining connected to Jesus and to his people, we will be strengthened and equipped for any and every service Jesus will ask us to do. How have you seen or experienced this interconnectedness in your congregation? How has this interconnectedness strengthened the ties that bind your congregation to one another and to Jesus? How has this interconnectedness led your congregation to connect other branches to the true vine?

