

## Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia

Sunday, January 10th, 2015

*The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am. The liturgist will enter followed by the pastor. The pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make announcements....*

*The preacher will then ask...*

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

*The preacher will take a seat.*

PRELUDE

"Allegro in G" - Anton Bruckner

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

*After the Prelude, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,*

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 29 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 29 NLT)

Honor the Lord, you heavenly beings, for his glory and strength.

**Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.**

The voice of the Lord echoes above the sea.

**The God of glory thunders over the mighty waters.**

The voice of the Lord is powerful and majestic.

**The voice of the Lord shatters the cedars of Lebanon.**

He makes Lebanon's mountains skip like a calf and Mount Hermon leap like a young wild ox.

**The voice of the Lord strikes with bolts of lightning and makes the barren wilderness quake.**

The voice of the Lord twists mighty oaks & strips the forests bare.

**In his Temple everyone shouts, "Glory!"**

The Lord rules over the floodwaters and reigns as king forever.

**The Lord gives his people strength and blesses them with peace.**

Let us worship God beginning today with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Gracious God, we lift up our hands and open our hearts before you. You are the fountain of life to whom we come for refreshing. You are the cleansing spring to whom we turn for healing. You are the well from which we drink and are satisfied. Make plain your presence among us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and tongues to confess your everlasting love and mercy. Inhabit our prayer and our praise. We ask it in the name of the one who does all things well, Christ Jesus, our friend, our brother, and our Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Spirit Song”, printed in our bulletins.

*The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.*

\*HYMN OF PRAISE

“Spirit Song”

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you with his Spirit and his love;

Let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.

Oh, let him have the things that hold you, and his Spirit, like a dove,

Will descend upon your life and make you whole. *Refrain*

*Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.*

*Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.*

Oh, come & sing the song with gladness as your hearts are filled with joy.  
Lift your hands in sweet surrender to his name.  
Oh, give him all your tears and sadness, give him all your years of pain,  
And you'll enter into life in Jesus' name. *Refrain*

*After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...*

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION**

The psalmist reminds us, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.” With this knowledge, we may confess our sins before God and one another with confidence as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing for a moment at its end for a brief period of silent prayer and reflection. Let us pray...

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Searcher of hearts, you know us from the beginning. You see in us more good and beauty than we have dared to believe. You beckon us to do more than we have dared to try. You never cease to call us by name to return to your fold, but we have filled our ears with the sounds of the world. We speak timidly of your great love; and doubt the gifts hidden within each of us. Lord, have mercy on us and forgive us. Shine your forgiving light into our darkness, and embolden us to live with such joy and fire that all the world may know of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**\*SILENT CONFESSION** (*Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.*)

**\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

“God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.” Friends, believe the Good News!

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!**

**\*GLORIA PATRI**

*The Hymnal #579*

***Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,  
World without end. Amen, Amen.***

**\*PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Having been reconciled to God through the grace of His Son, let us also be reconciled to one another and share Christ's peace. The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

*Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.*

*After a few moments, liturgist will step into the lectern and say...*

“At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Karen.”

*The preacher will take a seat.*

**CHILDREN'S SERMON**

*(All Singing)*

**Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;  
Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;  
Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.**

*As the children leave, the liturgist will step to the pulpit and say,*

“Let those of us who are able, stand and join in singing our next hymn, “Baptized in Water” #492 in our *Hymnals*.

\*HYMN OF PRAISE

“Baptized in Water”

*The Hymnal #492*

*After the hymn, the preacher will step to the lectern microphone & say:*

### THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

When we come to the time for the offering each week and we tend to operate on automatic. This week, as never before, let us think about what we are doing:

As our gifts pass through our hands, let us be reminded to use our hands to help another.

As the Doxology passes our lips, let us remember to speak kindly to one another.

As we hear the words of the prayer, let us be aware of those around us with burdens too heavy to speak of.

Let us give in proportion to our blessings, more mindful than ever of their purpose and ours, as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

*The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.*

THE OFFERTORY

"Andante" - Alexandre Guilmant/Todd Kendall

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

\*DOXOLOGY (In Unison)

*The Hymnal #592*

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;***

***Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

*After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...*

### \*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray... Loving and Eternal God, we present ourselves and our offerings to you this day as a sign of our thanksgiving and an expression of our trust in you. We pray that you will bless all that we give to you, touch it with your Holy Spirit and use it to accomplish your purpose, both in heaven and on earth, now and forevermore. Amen.

*The liturgist will take a seat until after the Anthem.*

### THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Invite the congregation to... “Be seated,” and take a seat.*

### SPECIAL MUSIC

**Soprano, Joanna Smith**

*After the soloist finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....*

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from Paul's Letter to the Church at Rome, the sixth chapter, beginning with the third verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #981 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

*The liturgist will take his seat, or, if you prefer,  
you may return to the congregation to sit with your family or friends.*

*Thanks for your service.*

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*The preacher will then return to the pulpit and say...*

Our second reading this morning is taken from the prophet Isaiah, the forty-third chapter, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #881 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

“But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.

Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, every one who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Leader: ...This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## THE SERMON

“Because I Love You”

As we look at the news reports on television, in newspapers, or on our computer screens, terror is the order of the day. We fear not just muslim madmen, but the evil, ignorant, and slothful raised of our our blood, whose strike is just as deadly and just as unpredictable. So it was in the time of Isaiah, when a people specially blessed by God, took that blessing and perverted it into every manner of evil and vice, and as Paul would later describe it, worshipped the creature rather than the Creator.

So God raised up a prophet to tell the people of the impending judgment, and to fill them once more with the fear of God and the Babylonians which He was sending to defeat them and lead them out of the promised land they had defiled with their evil, and into the land of a godless people more evil than they themselves. God would lead his prophet Isaiah to marry a prophetess who would bear him 2 sons.

One of these sons was named to remind the people of their well deserved punishment at the hands of the Babylonian horde. His name was, in English, “Spoil speedily, plunder quickly,” or in other words, “Resign yourselves to your fate, for the the evil in you will rot the sweet flesh of the fruit

I made of you to nothing.”

But, this was the name of the second child. The first was named as a promise to his people, “A remnant shall return.” So that even in the punishment promised in the naming of the second, they would also be reminded of the promise in the first--- when the evil in you has consumed itself along with the blessings you have received at my hand, still I will not remove my favor from you. When the flesh of the fruit of Judah is but a memory, there will yet remain a seed that I will cause to take root, and bloom, and bear new fruit, even sweeter and more enduring than before.

From there afterward when the Prophet speaks a word of promise, he will begin by setting aside Judah’s fears, and taking their minds off the present terrors and sufferings, and setting them firmly on their redemption and their eventual return to the land of promise.

That is what is happening in today’s reading from Isaiah.

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”

And a couple of verses later

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth.”

Why would God make this a people of endless second chances. Why does he keep forgiving them? Why doesn’t he just wipe their ungrateful hearts and unbearably short memories from the face of the earth, and begin again. Why indeed?

Truth is, they and we are a sorry lot. Our hearts and minds are poisoned by self-interest and pride. **This** is a truth that no amount of wishful thinking can erase. A truth that no self-improvement program or new age optimism can eradicate.

We are flawed. Every one of us. Not one of us is without sin.

So why should we not be afraid when God speaks to us? - the Holy to the unholy? - The giver of the law to the breakers of the law?

Why should we not be afraid?

Hear the word of the Lord: “Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you.”

Because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, people in exchange for your life.

Because God loves us - we need not fear. Because God loves us - he has redeemed us. Because God loves us - he has bought us back from our slavery to sin, Because God loves us - he has given himself - he has given Jesus - in exchange for us.

Because he loves us, because we are precious and honored in God's sight, he will gather us, as he gathered Israel, from those places to which judgment and evil have scattered us-- those places of the heart and soul in which we hide or to which others have consigned us.

He is our Redeemer, our Savior. We need not be afraid - for he is with us.

How does the Christmas Story begin?

Be not afraid Mary-- God has favored you. You will conceive and bear a son and you will call him Jesus-- for he will save his people, Emmanuel, for God is with us.

That story is meant to be heard by all of us because God **is** with us.

Be not afraid Martine; be not afraid Pierre; be not afraid Rochelle or Doug for I have called you by name, and you are mine. You will not perish in the waters or in the fire.

Because I love you James; because I love you Katherine; because I love you T.G.; I have given Jesus for you-- Jesus who descended into the waters of the river and who was drowned, Jesus who entered into the fires of hell and preached to the souls there. I have given Jesus for you-- and he was, in the end, not swept away by the waters of death, nor set ablaze by the fires of hell.

Be not afraid because I have come; because I have given Jesus for you; because I have lifted him up out of the grave and glorified him.

Sin and Evil do not have the last word. Be not afraid.

And what does it mean for us today.

It means it is never too late.

It means that we do not have to carry our sin around with us for all of eternity.

It means that we can begin afresh - no matter what others may say about us, no matter what others might do to us, no matter what we feel about ourselves.

And it means we should approach God-- that we should come to God much as the prodigal son approached his Father, with humility and with faith: - the humility to know that we are not worthy, and the faith to believe that God loves us no less because of it.

It means if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

Repent and return to God for he loves us and does not want us to be destroyed. Join yourself to the holy one who has come to cleanse you and redeem and make you safe. Allow Christ to baptize you with water and fire and the fullness of the Spirit. Live by him and through him as a brother to him, as a sister to him, for now and for eternity.

You know that a new "spirituality", a repackaged version of the ancient Gnosticism and the Gnostic gospels, are all the rage these days.

Our modern day gnostics, many parading about as followers of Christ, even though the Church of Christ rejected the Gnostic Gospels over 1900 years ago, tell us that we do not need the baptism of which I have been speaking today; that we do not need, and never did need, Jesus to undergo the agony of the cross and the darkness of the grave; that no one needed to be given in exchange for us; that a savior is not necessary for our salvation.

They tell us that all that is needed to be made whole is the proper attitude, the realization that God dwells in all of us, and the wisdom to heed the still small voice that is found in us and in nature around us.

There is truth to some of the claims of Gnosticism.

God does dwell within us, and a proper attitude is important to have, but mostly what you hear on television shows and read in books about Gnosticism or study in seminars regarding Spiritual Fulfillment is false - or at best, terribly inadequate.

It is not knowledge or a proper attitude that makes us fit for dwelling in the presence of God forever.

It is not insight or our own inherent good looks, sharp minds, or oily charm that makes us worthy.

Rather it is the active and powerful love of God for each one of us that saves us.

It is God coming among us as one of us that saves us, it is the life and the actions of Christ that heal us, and the sacrifice of Jesus that delivers us from sin and death.

It is a dynamic love that redeems us, the kind of love a parent has for a child, the love that says, "I will stand in front of my beloved and shield her from all harm." The love that says, "I will forgive and give my son another chance." The love that says, "I will take my child's place and suffer the injury meant for her." The love that says, "I will defend him against all accusers, even as I chastise him myself." And, "I will give to her the tools she needs so that she does not offend over and over again."

New age spirituality or old age Gnosticism - it is all the same, it takes the truth and the power out of the story, the story of how Jesus was immersed in the waters that would sweep us away, and how he walked through the fire that would set us ablaze.

"Because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life."

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'"

"Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth -- everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

"All..... Because I love you."

## THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gracious Lord God, we give you thanks today that there is something more to our baptism than mere water and something more to salvation than simply thinking right thoughts. We thank you for the love that you have for us, the love that entered into our human condition, which leads us safely through those things that would destroy us. We praise you for pouring out your Spirit upon Jesus as he ministered among us, and for granting us the same Spirit when we turn to him, the Spirit that cleanses and brings us to new birth.

Father, we pray for those who this day are called to pass through the waters and are afraid, and for those who must go through fire and who worry that they may be consumed, be with them, remind them of your love and your promise to never let anything come between us and the love and trust we have in Christ that makes all things possible.

Merciful God, we pray for those who despair over their sinfulness and the sinfulness of others, for those who have not found the peace that Christ grants, nor the transforming power that he bestows upon his brothers and sisters. Remind them that you have begun a good work in them and that you will bring it to completion.

Compassionate God, we pray for those who do not know themselves, or knowing themselves, do not know you and your healing and forgiving love. Help all those who cry to you for help may find your strong and everlasting arms beneath them to lift them above their distress, through the power of Him who taught us to pray saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus", printed in our bulletins.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus"

O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see?

There's a light for a look at the Savior, And life more abundant and free! *Refrain*

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.*

Through death into life everlasting He passed, and we follow Him there;  
Over us sin no more hath dominion— For more than conquerors we are! *Refrain*

His Word shall not fail you—He promised; Believe Him, and all will be well:  
Then go to a world that is dying, His perfect salvation to tell! *Refrain*

\*THE BENEDICTION

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"God Be With You"

God be with you till we meet again; By His counsels guide, uphold you;

With a shepherd's care enfold you; God be with you 'til we meet again.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis