

## Morning Worship at First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia

Sunday, November 16, 2014

PRELUDE

"Psalm XIX" - Benedetto Marcello

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

*After the Choral Call, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,*

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Isaiah 43 and printed in our bulletins?”

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Isaiah 42)

I have put my spirit upon my servant, whom I uphold and in whom my soul delights.

**He will bring forth justice to the nations.**

He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street.

**A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench.**

The Lord has called you in righteousness.

**He has taken you by the hand and kept you;**

He has given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations;

**To open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners who sit in darkness.**

The former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare before they spring forth.

**Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth!**

Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. **Let the desert and its towns lift up their voice.**

Let them shout from the tops of the mountains.

**Let us give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coastlands.**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Ever-loving God, as the days of this year begin to unfold, remind us that, by virtue of our baptism, we are among those upon whom your favor rests. Break into our expectations with surprising newness; into our lukewarm hearts with the heat of your holy fire; into our dull eyes with the light of your creative vision; and into our doubts and fears with the certainty of your presence. Kindle in us the flame of your love, that its glow may illumine the world, and its warmth draw others to come, to see, and to follow Jesus into glory. Amen Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Baptized in Water”, number 492 in our *Hymnals*.

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

\*HYMN OF PRAISE

“Baptized in Water”

*The Hymnal #492*

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

\*CALL TO CONFESSION

God has called us to go and make disciples, baptizing and teaching in every part of the world. In how many ways and in how many places have we failed to obey His call to us? Let us confess our failings before God and one another as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God, in Jesus you entered our world with a love and power beyond anything that had ever been known, yet we have not believed with our whole mind, nor trusted Him with our whole heart. We confess that our lack of faith in the active presence of Christ and power of the Holy Spirit impoverishes our hopes, dreams, & expectations. We confess that, focused upon the world that is, rather than the world that will be, we fail to contribute to hastening Christ's reign on earth. Forgive us and heal us so that we may become the instruments of grace and channels of blessing you intend. Amen.

\*SILENT CONFESSION

*(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)*

\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 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

At our baptism, we were given the gift of the Holy Spirit who is even now making us a new and holy people. Reconciled to God, let us also be reconciled to one another and share the peace of Christ. 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 Pastor Mike.”

*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,*

“I would invite you to stand as you are able and join in singing our second hymn this morning, “I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry”, number 2051 in our *Sing the Faith* hymnal supplement.”

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

\*HYMN OF PREPARATION “I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry” *Sing the Faith* #2051  
*The liturgist will invite the congregation to, “Be seated,” and then say....*

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

If the Good News of Jesus Christ is to go forth and the Word of God is to be heard throughout the world, we must each give of our time, our talent, and our treasure. Let us give with a sense of purpose and joy, 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

"Largo" - Antonio Vivaldi

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... Baptizing God, by the power of your divine Spirit move upon the face of the earth to bring peace where there is war, healing where there is pain, freedom where there is oppression, sufficiency where there is want. And move upon us, the church, so that we may be your children in action as well as in name. We offer ourselves and these gifts and ask that you will follow them with your blessing, that the whole world may experience your glory. Amen.

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

"Aria" - Benedetto Marcello

Violin Soloist, Dalene Baer

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our Gospel lesson this morning is taken from Mark, the first chapter, beginning with the ninth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #867 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God... In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

*The liturgist will take his/her seat.*

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

Our second lesson for this morning is taken from the second chapter of Peter's first letter, beginning with the fourth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1058 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God... Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame."

To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner," and "A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall"; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

THE SERMON

"God: I Have an App for That"

We live in a day where human demand for ever increasing convenience and control is being met by a growing number of entrepreneurs creatively using their God given gifts to make our lives easier by harnessing the ubiquitous technology found in our pockets and purses-- the cell phone.

On a trip and suddenly remember that you left the oven on? No problem... there's an app for that. Take out your cell phone, poke a couple of buttons, and VOILA! The oven is off and you are free to relax and enjoy your vacation.

Find yourself overseas in a quaint little Basque hamlet in the northern mountains of Spain with car trouble, only to discover that no one speaks a word of English or French or Spanish. How do you find a repairman, a restaurant, or a hotel? No problem... There's an app for that.... Again, take out your phone, poke a couple of buttons and then speak into your phone the burning questions you desperately want answered, and out comes your questions perfectly translated into the local dialect. You find the mechanic, get your car repaired, and your on the road again.

And when a lifetime of mistakes and bad decisions finally catch up with you and you come home to find your clothes in the front yard and the locks changed, or you get that 2am knock at your door to tell you that there's been an accident, and your daughter is ... is....

Don't bother reaching for your phone. It can't help you. But if you remember that God's mercies are new every morning, and that as Mark's Gospel reminds us, baptism is the beginning the

Good News. And if you remember that you are baptized, God makes all things new. Then you have hope, direction, and renewed strength. To all you who need to reboot your lives, who need a do over, a mulligan, a second chance, who need a chance to try again to see if you can get it right.... To you GOD says: "I have an app for that. It's called baptism."

From the time of Moses, Gentiles that converted to Judaism were circumcised, and when they were healed, they were baptized, Baptism was a sign of their conversion and their admittance into the Family of God. Baptism is our reminder that we are part of a family, and that even when we behave shamefully or irresponsibly like the Prodigal Son, we have a Father who still looks for us, calls to us, and runs to embrace us the moment we turn back toward home.

Then when John came along, baptism's importance for us grew. The Baptist preached a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. But when Jesus came to the shore of the Jordan and asked to be baptized, John and his followers were left shaking their heads. Jesus was without sin, so he didn't need to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Why should he be baptized?

Well, the only other people who experienced baptism in that day were priests at the Temple. The Law dictated that the High Priest was to "washed with water." The Temple even had pools set aside for just that purpose.

In Leviticus 8:6 we're told that - by the instruction of God -- "Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water." When Aaron and his sons were washed with water and anointed with oil, they BEGAN their priesthood and were empowered to make sacrifices and to handle holy things as God's representatives. With their baptism, God put His mark of approval on the ministry of Aaron and his sons.

The Bible tells us that Jesus' ministry began with His baptism by John. And immediately after his baptism, God put his mark of approval on Jesus, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."

And while we might remember that if we are united with him in a baptism like His, we shall surely be united with Him in a resurrection like His, we forget that through our baptism, we are enrolled in the priesthood of all believers. Our baptism is, in effect, the beginning of our ministry.

We are to be channels of blessing, instruments of grace-- both recipients and conveyors of God's healing and hope. And then we become the agents of what God is doing. We do not do this by our power; we cannot do this by our power. God gives us the power and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to participate in this reign, this ministry.

I love the story about a pastor who was at a downtown city mission on skid row. In order for these transients and homeless people to sleep at this mission, they had to endure a worship service and a sermon. It was part of the bargain in order to get food and shelter. The preacher that night felt he was a gifted orator and had memorized Kipling's poem, 'If' for a high school thespian contest. The pastor recited the poem with great gusto.

"If you men can keep your heads when all about you, are losing theirs and blaming it on you. ... If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, and make allowances for their doubting too. ... If you men can wait and not be tired of waiting. ... Or being lied about, not deal in lies.... Or being hated and not give way to hating..... If you men can dream and not make dreams your master.... If you can think but not make thoughts your aim. ... If you can meet with triumph and disaster, and meet those two impostors just the same. ... Yours is the earth and everything in it. ... And what is more, you will be a man, my son."

As the pastor recited this poem, the "thespian" in him choked with emotion. He was on the edge of tears and filled with deep feelings. There was a long silent pause. During that pause and silence, a voice from the back of the room piped up, "What if you can't?"

The question persists, "What if you can't?" What if you can't master your dreams? What if you can't meet triumph and disaster just the same? What if you lose your head when everybody else

around you is keeping theirs? What if you can't trust yourself? What if you can't wait? What if you are tired of waiting? What if you are a lousy parent? What if you are a failure in marriage? What then? ...

You remember that God has an app for that. You have been baptized and are called to be a member of the priesthood of all believers. In your baptism, your burdens and imperfections and disappointments have been loaded onto the back of Christ, the suffering servant who carries the cross on our behalf. And he wants you to walk beside him.

While God has indeed looked upon you with favor, that doesn't mean privilege. God's favor is the opposite of privilege. It means a gift, graciously given by God. It does not mean comfort and avoidance of difficulty. Indeed being ordained can mean many difficulties. People of Magnolia may never lead you to the brow of a hill so that you might be hurled off the cliff, but you will experience difficulties. You will not always enjoy being priests of Christ. There may be many times when you wish you did not so enjoy God's favor.

But, by the grace of God, by the support and accountability of the church, you can and will persevere. You will continue to proclaim and live the life that is real life.

If you are going to be ministers then you must do as Jesus instructed. Be a disciple who follows and emulates the actions of his master laying down his life for others. Serve; and in service find yourself redeemed and transformed; find Jesus there, the living Christ of God.

It is important that the lion's share of ministry is not done here-- preaching, praying, singing or playing. Your proclamation of the resurrected Lord has to manifest itself out in the world for the symbols to have meaning inside the church.

The church is a subtle mistress. She is all too eager to have you serve in her sanctuary leaving the world behind, and binding your hands to the service of her own needs.

If you do not leave the comfort and the safety of the sanctuary to hold the hand of the sick, the lonely, and the dying then your prayers offered on behalf of God's people will only be names on someone else's list. God intends to know every sparrow and to count every hair upon the head of his people.

If you do not leave the Lord's Table to go out into the world and meet the hunger of God's people then his people will go unfed. For the God you serve intends to multiply loaves and fishes and call the multitudes to his banquet feast.

If you do not forsake the shelter of the church, then neither you nor the homeless will ever find that place where sorrow and pain are no more, beneath the shadow of divine wings.

So as we begin a new year of ministry together, may we begin it with a new sense of purpose. This is my prayer for each of you.

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within the heart and mind of God.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, addiction, starvation and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them, & to turn their pain into joy.

And, may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

You are created to be ministers – and today we make it so --change the church and the world by your ministry.

#### THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

We thank you, God, that though we may forget who and whose we are, you never forget us for our names are written on your heart and inscribed upon the palms of your hands. We give thanks for our unshakable place in your family, in your home, and at your table, as your children, precious and honored in your sight.

