

**Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia  
Sunday, January 13, 2019**

**PRELUDE**

**Dr. Elizabeth Davis**

*When the Prelude concludes, the liturgist will step to the lectern & say...*

“Would you join me in reading our responsive call to worship adapted from Isaiah 11 and printed in our bulletins?...”

*The liturgist should read only the leader’s (plain text) portion.*

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**(adapted from Isaiah 11)**

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

**The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding,**

The spirit of counsel & might, the spirit of knowledge & the fear of the Lord.

**His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;**

Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

**On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples;**

The nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

**On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people.**

He will raise a signal for the nations, & will assemble the outcasts of Israel,

**And gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

**THE PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Let us pray... Our Father, we freely admit our unpreparedness to welcome your Son into our world when he took on human flesh and dwelt with us at his first Incarnation. But today, on this side of Bethlehem, the Cross, and the Empty Tomb, we are more than ready to listen to your voice, to be obedient to your Son, and to be empowered by your Spirit. May the Christmas story of God taking on human flesh never become so familiar that it loses its power. Instill in us a willingness to listen for your still small voice, and to wrap your Word with our own flesh so that all people may see your written word become the Living Word once more. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me to make a joyful noise as we sing together our opening hymn, “Jesus Thou Everlasting Word!”, which is printed in our bulletins.

*The liturgist will step back out of the lectern for the singing of the hymn.*

**HYMN OF PRAISE**

**(tune - Duke Street)**

**“Jesus Thou Everlasting Word!”**

Jesus Thou everlasting Word! Almighty God and sovereign Lord,  
Who art from all eternity, All things were made and formed by Thee.

Jesus, the glorious Son of God, Took on Himself our flesh and blood  
When He was born the virgin’s Son, To make the sons of men His own.

That blessed Word to me reveal, My Lord! And let me taste and feel  
That powerful Word, and light divine, With life and grace in me to shine.

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION**

With our hearts open to God's light and truth, let us confess our sins before God and one another as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its end for a moment of silent prayer. Let us pray...

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Dear Father in heaven, once again we have come, afraid that you would know us as we really are: unholy mixtures of petty promises and ignored failures. We confess that we have grown far too comfortable in our darkness even as we remain disquieted by a dream half forgotten. It was you who wrote this dream into our restless souls before we ever knew it was you that we feared and longed for. Leave us not

alone in our darkness, and so encourage us with your abiding presence and Living Word that we might not be overcome with despair and begin living as the children of the Light you have called us to be; through Jesus Christ our Lord who is our only hope in this life and the next. Amen.

**\*SILENT CONFESSION**

*Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.*

**\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

“Comfort, O comfort my people,” says our God. “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” ... 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**

We who once lived in darkness have been given light. We who were far off have been brought near. Reconciled to God by the gift of his son, let us be reconciled with 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, the liturgist will step into pulpit and say...*

“At this time I want to invite our kids to come forward for a word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Kathy.”

*The liturgist 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 return to the pulpit and say...*

“Would those who are able please stand as we all join together our second hymn, “O Word of God Incarnate”, **number 327** in our *Hymnals*.

*The Liturgist will take a seat until after the hymn.*

**\*HYMN**

**“O Word of God Incarnate”**

*The Hymnal #327*

*After the hymn, the liturgist will step to the pulpit and say:*

**INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

We bear witness to the Light through our caring & sharing. God’s word is carried forth into our community and the world through the gifts we share. Let us give gladly and with us sense of purpose 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**

**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... Gracious God, you have given us life, food, shelter, and all those things we call our daily bread. You have given us all this and yet more- - for without our asking or deserving, you have also given us the supreme gift of your Son, Jesus; and the love and the hope that we need for this life, and for the next. Receive and bless we pray, Most Gracious One, the gifts we have offered for your glory and work this day. May your church shine brightly to your glory. Amen.

## \*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

## The Apostle's Creed

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith as it is expressed in the traditional version 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 & 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 sit down.*

**SPECIAL MUSIC** "Let There Be Peace on Earth" Dr. David DeSeguirant & The Children's Choir

*After the Special Music, the liturgist will return to the lectern & say...*

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our Epistle lesson this morning, is taken from Paul's Letter to the Philippians, Chapter two, beginning with the fifth verse. If you would like to follow along, you can find it on page 1023, in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God.

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."

"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

*The liturgist will return to his/her seat in the congregation.*

*When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...*

Our Gospel lesson this morning is selected verses from the first Chapter of John beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #992 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## THE SERMON

## "When Words Are Not Enough"

It was late at night and Heidi, who was expecting her second child, was home alone with her 3 year old daughter, Katelyn. Heidi started to go into labour and called 911.

Due to a power outage at the time, only one paramedic was able to respond to the call.

The house was very, very dark, so the paramedic asked Katelyn to hold a flashlight high over her mommy so he could see while he helped deliver the baby.

Very diligently, Katelyn did as she was asked. Heidi pushed and pushed, and after a little while Connor was born.

The paramedic lifted him by his feet, and spanked him on his bottom. Connor began to cry. The paramedic then thanked Katelyn for her help, and asked the wide eyed 3 year old Katelyn what she thought about what she had just witnessed. Katelyn quickly responded, "He shouldn't have crawled in there in the first place. Spank him again."

Entering the world by way of the process of human birth, is a messy, nasty, affair. It's never as clean and sanitary as we may like to think of it. Today we think of spotless hospitals with labor rooms, and delivery rooms, and nurseries with incubators. But that is a development of only the last hundred years or so.

For instance, a few years ago the Catholic League of America was up in arms about an exhibition in Napa, California... because the crib scene included a traditional Catalan figure called a 'Caganer'. A man near the crib with his shirt up and his trousers down, defecating on the hay in the Holy Stable just like one of the cows or sheep.

But that's how it would have been.

He IS GOD, but Christ became **FLESH** - and there was mess and afterbirth. Just like in real life!

And in taking on human flesh, this is the filth and mess that he was born into. His first breath of earth's good air was scented, not with Febreze, but with the bodily wastes and odors of two and four legged creatures.

It's an unappealing way to look at the entrance of God into our world as one of us. But it's a part we cannot afford to shrink away from any more than we can divert our eyes from looking upon the horrible death Jesus died to cleanse us of our sins and give us the keys to the Kingdom. No matter how highly we regard ourselves, our culture, there still remain those areas that we don't talk about, that remain strictly private. We cover our odors with perfumes and deodorizers. We hide our flaws under our clothes and make up. We remove death from our homes to hospitals and funeral homes so that we can pretend to ourselves that the approaching hoofbeats of death's dark figure are not our concern.

So the dirty, smelly, and grossly unpleasant parts of our existence we hide away from the world, and to some extent at least, even ourselves.

But to do this is to miss a big part of the miracle of the Son of God wrapping himself in human flesh and becoming fully, one of us.

For example, one of the ancient kings of Persia loved to mingle with his people in disguise. Once, dressed as a poor man, he descended the long flight of stairs, dark and damp to the tiny cellar where one of his lowliest servants, seated on ashes, was tending the furnace. The king sat down beside him and began to talk. At meal time the fireman produced some coarse black bread and a jug of water and they ate and drank. The king went away but returned again and again for his heart was filled with sympathy for the lonely man. They became very good friends as time passed. At last the king thought, "I'll tell him who I am, and see what gift he will ask."

So he did, but the fireman didn't ask for a thing. The king was astonished and said, "Don't you realize that I can give you anything—a city, a throne?" The man gently replied, "Yes, I understand your Majesty. but what you do not understand is that you have already given the greatest gift a man could receive. You left your palace to sit with me here in this dark and lonely place. You could give nothing more precious. You have given yourself and that is far more than I could ever deserve."

The wonderful thing about Christ is that as people looked at the man, Jesus... as they followed Him, and watched Him, it became apparent to them that this is what God must be like. They concluded that if there is a God at all, then He must have Christ's eyes, Christ's ways, Christ's ever-helpful hands, Christ's character... Stand upon Calvary and know that if today he loves like that, he always loves like that. Even when our hearts become hot and suspicious of Him or soured and bad-tempered toward Him for His ordering of our lives and crossing our wishes, He still loves us. To be God means not just that he is always above us, better than us, finer than us-- it also means that God is always willing to stoop lower by far than any man could stoop, to gladly bear what no human heart would dream of bearing, to give One-self with an abandon of unselfishness that leaves us staring in slack-jawed wonder. His love is a hugeness beyond all human reckoning. It is an everlasting Calvary.

So what does this mean for us? Is all of this done just so we can say "Thank you, God," like good little humans and then go about our own routines and business?

Nope. God doesn't want us to say anything with our lips and tongues. Rather he wants us to talk

with our hands and our feet. He wants us to put the Word into action in our lives, because our words will never be enough.

In our culture, everybody talks-- talk radio, talk shows. We have email, twitter, snapchat, and facebook-- all so we can talk to a whole world of people if we want to. But truer now than ever, TALK IS CHEAP! If you want to make an impact, if you want to really communicate, you have to act. Wrap your words in flesh and then make your point.

As a kid, Saturday afternoons in the Fall were filled with pickup football games in our neighborhood. We had a kid on the team named Pat Tilley, who was a football genius. He was our Beethoven with a ball, our Picasso with a pigskin. We would get in a huddle, and he would call a play that would have our receivers doing things they had never done. Run to the rock at the edge of the yard, fake left and then zig right toward the redbud tree. When he was explaining something, he frequently asked a one-word question; he would say, Catch? He wanted to know if we were catching-on to his idea. Be sure you fake left, he'd warn -- Don't let Tommy get in front of you. I'll throw you the ball when you zig right -- CATCH? Catch? "Catch what? Sure I'll catch the ball -- just -- what's a fake left and a zig right?"

Pat would look at those blank stares in our faces -- Pat was fluent in football and I only spoke English-- and then he'd say, "Look, I'll do it once so you'll know. Just throw me the ball when I holler 'NOW!'" Then he would run some intricate pass pattern, gliding with that easy shuffle of his -- and yell, **NOW, hit me.** That was how we came to understand. We saw with our own eyes the best left fakes and zigs ever! His actions made it easy for us as kids, to know what we were supposed to do, and years later he would do the same for the St. Louis Cardinals as a pro. His actions helped us to understand.

Our words are not enough. They must be incarnated into the time and culture of the hearers for 'communication' to take place. The gospel... Jesus.... must be incarnated into our world for Him to be born in people's hearts. It's no use hoping they will just 'hear the words'... get saved. We must take it to them. Put legs and arms and ears on the words.

The incarnation is a challenge to understand and live within the world of the unchurched culture. We must make the Great News culturally relevant to them, and take it into their world.

Although the incarnation first took place 2000 years ago in the life of a young girl, it continues to happen every time you share His love with others...when you speak words of life in His name...when you offer a shoulder to cry on...when you offer a helping hand...a touch to heal ...a handshake of welcome and acceptance...when you give a cup of water in His name...It happens whenever and wherever the name of Jesus is lifted up...every time you choose to forgive....

And it will continue to happen each time someone offers a prayer of simple faith..."Lord Jesus, I give you my life as you have given yours. I surrender to you all of the hidden things of my heart."

Communicating God's written word is to transform it into the Living Word. By wrapping Jesus in our flesh we can make the Good News accessible and relevant to all people. Just as God chose to become like us to prove His love, we must now choose to become like Him, and learn to walk in the Spirit, breath by breath, so that Jesus will become incarnate in every heart we touch.

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

Lord Jesus, because you have walked the dusty streets of this world and have not forgotten what it is to be tired or what it is to know aching muscles; and because you have worked long hours at the carpenter's bench and have not forgotten what it is to feel the pain of a hammer to your thumb or the stab of a splinter in your hand; and because you know what it is to be hungry, and thirsty, and tired, and lonely, and even forgotten. You remember the feel of hot and scalding tears running down your cheeks. We thank you that you were willing to come to earth and share with us the weaknesses of the flesh, for now we know that you understand all that we are called upon to bear.

But we also know that you, are God, and are still able to do far more than we can ask or imagine. Sp it is that we pray to you in hope and expectation that surrendering ourselves to your will, we may become more like you. Help us to return good for evil, to reply with soft answers for sharp criticisms; being polite when we receive rudeness, being understanding when we are confronted by ignorance, stupidity,

and mendacity.

So may we, in gentleness and love, check the hasty answer, choke back the unkind retort, and short-circuit some of the bitterness and unkindness that has overflowed your world. So bless us, each one, not according to our deserving, but according to the riches in glory of Christ Jesus, our Lord, 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, "Thanks to God Whose Word Was Spoken", which is printed in our bulletins.

**\*HYMN OF DEDICATION**      (*tune Lauda Anima*)      "Thanks to God Whose Word Was Spoken"

Thanks to God whose Word was spoken in the deed that made the earth.  
His the voice that called a nation; His the fires that tried her worth.  
God has spoken; God has spoken; Praise him for his open Word.

Thanks to God whose Word incarnate Glorified the flesh of man.  
Deeds and words and death and rising Tell the grace in heaven's plan.  
God has spoken; God has spoken; Praise him for his open Word.

Thanks to God whose Word is answered by the Spirit's voice within.  
Here we drink of joy unmeasured, Life redeemed from death and sin.  
God is speaking; God is speaking; Praise Him for His open Word.

**\*THE BENEDICTION**

May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and give you His peace-- in your going out and in your coming in; in your lying down and in our rising up; in your labor and in your leisure; in your laughter and in your tears-- until you come to stand before Jesus in that day in which there is no sunset & no dawning. Amen.

**\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

"God Be With You"

God be with you 'til we meet again; By His counsels guide, uphold you;  
With His sheep securely fold you; God be with you 'til we meet again.