

**Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia**  
**Sunday, January 18, 2014**

PRELUDE

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 Psalm 40 and printed in our bulletins?”

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 40)

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

**He drew me up from the desolate pit, and set my feet upon a rock.**

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

**Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.**

Then I said, “Here I am; I delight to do your will, O my God.”

**I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation.**

I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord.

**I have not hidden your saving help within my heart.**

I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation.

**Let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.**

Let those who seek you rejoice and be glad in you.

**May those who love your salvation say continually, “Great is the Lord!”**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Lord Jesus, there is within us a deep desire to know you, to rest in your presence, and to trust in your mercy. Rather than heed your call, we have become frantic in our searching. All the while, you have been with us, calling us, wooing us, guiding us. The voice we drowned out with the noise of our lives was you. As we come before you in worship, remind us to slow down, to be still and silent, and to listen. May we be challenged by your words, experience your healing, and finally find our rightful place serving, loving, and following you, our God and King. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim”, number 477 in our *Hymnals*.

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

\*HYMN OF PRAISE                      “Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim”                      *The Hymnal #477*

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

\*CALL TO CONFESSION

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In penitence and faith let us confess our sin to God. Let us pray...

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord Jesus, who bid your disciples to shine as lights in a dark world, in shame and contrition do we acknowledge before you our many failures to extend your call and invitation to our brothers and sisters who have not yet made your acquaintance. Forgive us, we pray, the wanderings of our minds, the feebleness of our witness, the smallness of our charity, and the tepidness of our zeal. We beg your pardon, good Lord, and pray that you might deal gently with us, not according to our faults, but according to our great need and your abundant mercy. Amen.

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

\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The proof of God's amazing love is this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us. I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. May the God of mercy, who forgives you all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. 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

Jesus has called us to come and see his glory, to taste of His forgiveness, and to discover the deep, deep love of God for us. Through Him, we have been reconciled to the Father. Can we not also be reconciled with one another and share His 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,*

“I would invite you to stand as you are able and join in singing our second hymn this morning, “Be Thou My Vision”, number 339 in our hymnals supplement.”

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

\*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“Be Thou My Vision”

*The Hymnal #339*

*The liturgist will invite the congregation to, “Be seated,” and then say....*

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who are in it. Freely you have received, freely give. Let us return to God the offerings of our life 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... In gratitude for all that we have been given, we return this portion of that bounty to You, O God. May what we give bring comfort to one who is sorrowful, food to one who is hungry, kindness to one who is weary, warmth to one who lives without shelter, and hope to those who long for the touch of your mercy. Receive and bless these gifts to the service of your kingdom, and let us not forget that with these offerings we also give our very selves, through Christ our Lord. 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**

**Soprano Soloist, Brittany McDaniels Johnson**

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

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from the third chapter of First Samuel, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #236 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God... Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down within the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down.

And the LORD called again, "Samuel!" And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again."

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me."

Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for thy servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And the LORD came and stood forth, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

And Samuel said, "Speak, for thy servant hears."

*The liturgist will take his/her seat.*

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

Our Gospel lesson this morning is taken from John, the first chapter, and I will be expanding the lesson as printed in your bulletins. Instead of beginning at verse 43, we will start reading at verse 35..

Listen now for the word of God...

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him, and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

Now Philip was from Beth-sa'ida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathan'a-el, and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Nathan'a-el said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Jesus saw Nathan'a-el coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

Nathan'a-el said to him, "How do you know me?"

Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Nathan'a-el answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these."

And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## THE SERMON

“Come and See”

Presbyterians for generations have had trouble with the whole concept of evangelism. We don't see ourselves knocking on doors to witness about how Jesus has made us into wonderful human beings and how God can do the same for the poor godless heathen cowering behind the door of their homes looking disbelievingly at a presumptuous, if not downright insulting stranger.

We're not keen on the idea of putting church signs about prayer, or spiritual warfare in our yards. We're much more comfortable putting an ad in the paper, or a banner in the church yard.

We're much more willing to put a bumper sticker on our car that says "My child is an honor student at Eastside Elementary" than we are to plaster it with one that says, "It's OK if you follow me--- because I am going to heaven."

The whole idea of personal evangelism is so unsettling that for at least the last 60 years most Presbyterians refer to Evangelism as hushed whispers or in code as the "E-word".

Yet personal evangelism is our primary mission and it is what grows the church. There have been any number of studies over the last ten years asking respondents why they joined a particular church. Every single one of these studies reported the same finding-- that somewhere between 75% and 90% say "I began attending church because someone invited me."

About half of those say they were invited by a friend and about half by a relative.

Sadly, only 2% of church members ever invite an unchurched person to come to church with them in spite of the fact that 37% of Christians link their conversion to being invited to church.

But when we are confronted with the opportunity to invite someone to church, many of us find ourselves suddenly tongue tied or in the middle of an acute brain freeze. We don't know what to say, or how to say it.

Some of us have a terrible fear of rejection and we don't want to appear pushy. Jesus doesn't demand that we be successful, just that we be faithful. And when we are, success does follow. In one survey of non-church attenders, it was revealed that 65% said they would respond favorably to an invitation from a friend. 15% said they would respond favorably to an invitation from a stranger!

One of my favorite reasons given for not inviting someone to church is, "But I don't know who to invite. All my friends are members of a church. But in his book, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, Tom Rainer tells us that only 41% of Americans attend church services on a typical weekend. Each new generation becomes increasingly unchurched. Only slightly over one half of those 70 and up attends church in a typical weekend. Only 41% of those aged 50-70 and 34% of those in their 40's attend church on the weekend. And those aged 20 to 40 only attend church 30% of the time. Roughly two-thirds of those who identify themselves as church members attend church less than twice a year.

Others among us excuse our lack of sharing the Good News by saying, "I'm no Biblical scholar," or "I'm no theologian." When the reality is that in today's lesson, all of the principle characters are hardly scholars-- Andrew, Peter, John, and James were simple fishermen; Philip and Nathanael, probably farmers. They don't win their friends to Christ. They simply invite them to meet him.

Frankly, when we talk of nothing except Jesus, we miss the opportunity to build on what we have in common with our friends and neighbors. It's not about our words-- it's about getting them to

hear his. And, as far as those who don't know Jesus are concerned, we bore them to tears. For years Marj Carpenter has submitted little anecdotes to the Presbyterian Outlook from her travels to Presbyterian churches around the country. Not too long ago, she shared the story of a 6 year old who visited Sunday School for the first time. When asked by his mom, "Who was your teacher?", he replied, "I don't remember her name, but I think she was Jesus' grandmother." "What makes you think that, dear?" asked his mother. "Because Jesus was all she talked about."

If we take church and Jesus out of the picture for just a minute and ask ourselves, "What makes me want to try a new product or service? They can run all the commercials on TV that they want touting a brand of detergent, but all I need is one friend to say, "Man, I tried that new stuff and it's great." A new movie opens and you hear all the buzz, read a review or two online or in the paper, but what gets you to plunk down the money and buy a ticket is when a friend sees it and says, "What a great movie!"

That is in effect what John the Baptist does. While standing there with Andrew and another of his original disciples, John the Baptist sees Jesus walking by. And he does is what he's been doing all along – drawing our attention to who Jesus is. Once again he proclaims in a loud voice, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

So what do these disciples of John do? They leave John and go after Jesus! And Jesus doesn't start out with a sermon or lecture or miracle. He just invites them to follow him and says, "Come and see." And after going and seeing for themselves that he is the real deal, Andrew leaves and immediately finds his brother Simon and says, "We've found him. I have seen the Messiah."

And Jesus moves on down the road to their hometown in Bethsaida, and someone invites Philip, who sees enough to convince him. He finds his friend Nathanael and tells him. And Nathanael, more skeptical that the others answers, can anything good come from Nazareth? I would probably do the same if I heard that the Messiah was in Washington D.C. And to his credit, Philip doesn't get into an argument, or a debate, or drag out a laundry list of proofs. He simply invites his friend to "Come and see."

A few chapters later in John's gospel, Jesus would meet a Samaritan woman at a well. She has a short conversation with Jesus and becomes a witness that ends up leading her whole village to faith. "She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He can't be the Messiah, can he?'" As one commentator said, "this is not exactly a recitation of the Apostles' Creed."

She is a tentative witness, to be sure. She's not a likely witness and not even a thorough witness. She is not even a convinced witness. Even so, her witness is enough because she is a faithful witness.

Jesus asks John's disciples, "What are you looking for?" He asks each one of us this same question. Whether we realize it or not, each of us is looking for something. Whether we realize it or not, each of us is looking for a specific **Someone**; that is, God. And Jesus is the one who can show us who God is, because "God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart . . . has made him known."

You want to know why I think so many of us have trouble asking others to "Come and see." I think it's because it has been so long since we have really come close, and seen for ourselves who he is and what he can do.

That's why the invitation to come and see is not just for the unchurched, it is for us. **We** are still invited to "Come and See", to follow him down deeper paths of discipleship, obedience, and faith. We can always learn more. We will never know Jesus completely. Our relationship with him never reaches a point of perfection when we can say, "Well, that's about as far as I can go!"

But if you're sitting here today and wondering who this Jesus is and you've never made the decision to follow him, I hope and pray that you will consider making that decision today. Jesus invites you to "Come and see." Eventually Jesus wants you to know him as Lord and Son of God. But it all starts with an initial response to what he says to those first two disciples: "Come and see."

So all of you-- "Come and see."

I am here today to tell you will not be disappointed.

He is bigger than you think. He is not a child you can hush or stranger you can shut a door on.

He is the hope beyond the grave.

He is the answer to your riddles.

He is the exclamation mark at the end of your doubts.

He is your father.. who only became a human being so you could hold him... and became a slaughtered lamb so he could hold you.

And he became the King of Eternity so you can trust him with all your fears.

The tomb next Easter maybe empty but his promise of eternal life is not.

Nathaniel's' question still lingers today. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?... or even... Is there anything worth finding at church?"

### **The invitation of Philip is still open "Come and See"**

Come and see the rock that has withstood the winds of time.

Come and see the flame that critics and scoffs for 2,000 years have not extinguished.

Come and see the hospitals and food pantries and schools that are built in the midst of Satan's most fertile fields-- disease, hunger and ignorance.

Come and see the changed lives!

The alcoholic now dry, the sex-addict freed, the embittered now joyful, the shamed now forgiven.

Come and see marriages rebuilt, orphans embraced, the imprisoned inspired.

Come and see the pierced hand of God, that can still wipe away a tear from sad eyes and unwrinkle the worried face.

Come and see Him who heals the lame, makes the blind to see and the deaf to hear.

Come and See and see him who can raise dead hopes, rebuild dashed dreams, mend broken relationships, restore forlorn faith, and deliver souls sick to death with sin.

Come and See! And invite a friend to come with you.

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

Eternal God, you have made us and you have redeemed us. You call us to new life and a new sense of purpose. We are here because we have heard you speak in us and through others. Help us, dear Lord, to ever respond to you and your invitation to your grace. Awaken us Lord, to hear what you would say to us. Help us to open our ears, our eyes, and our hearts to your presence. Help us to know when it is your voice we are hearing and it when it is our prejudices, our fears, our laziness, and our ignorance to which we listen and answer. Lead us to rise up with renewed commitment in answer to your call, that we may be instruments of your grace.

We pray for those who consider themselves inadequate and dismiss or avoid your calling in their lives. Give them a new vision, a vision in which you are their strength and their hope. We pray for those who, in answering your call, must leave the known for the unknown, the comfortable for the painful and difficult. Grant them courage and steadfast faith.

Loving Father, bless us all with an abundant faith, a fruitful ministry, a joyful life. Bless all your children who respond to your invitation to "Come and see." Remove every hindrance that might prevent their coming so that they may see, and, in awe and love, behold you in all your glory, through Jesus Christ, 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 invitation, "Christ for the World We Sing", printed in our bulletins.*

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION

“Christ for the World We Sing”

Christ for the world we sing, The world to Christ we bring, with loving zeal,  
The poor and them that mourn, the faint and overborne,  
Sin sick and sorrow worn, whom Christ doth heal.

Christ for the world we sing, The world to Christ we bring, with fervent prayer;  
The wayward and the lost, by restless passions tossed,  
Redeemed at countless cost, from dark despair.

Christ for the world we sing, The world to Christ we bring, with one accord;  
With us the work to share, with us reproach to dare,  
With us the cross to bear, for Christ our Lord.

Christ for the world we sing, The world to Christ we bring, with joyful song;  
The newborn souls, whose days, reclaimed from error's ways,  
Inspired with hope and praise, to Christ belong.

\*THE BENEDICTION

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

“Pass It On”

I wish for you, my friend, this happiness that I've found--  
You can depend on Him, it matters not where you're bound;  
I'll shout it from the mountaintop, I want the world to know:  
The Lord of love has come to me, I want to pass it on.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis