

**Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia
Sunday, January 27, 2019**

The liturgist will take his/her seat on the Chancel about 5 minutes prior to the start of the service--about 10:40am. The pastor will share a short prayer with the choir, and then enter, followed by the choir. 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 "When Morning Gilds the Skies" - Jason D. Payne **Dr. Elizabeth Davis**
CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "Rejoice in the Day!" - Dan Dykema **The Choir**

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 61 and printed in our bulletins?...”

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

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Isaiah 61)

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
My whole being shall exult in my God.
He has clothed me with the garments of salvation.
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.
Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

THE PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Great God, unknown to us except in fleeting glimpses, we live for the moments when your voice is heard and your will is clear. We long to walk with you beside still waters and to lie down in green pastures knowing that you are watching over us. Nourish us now by your Word and Spirit, that we may join our voices to those of the heavenly chorus who continuously sing your praises. Guide us that we may be of some good to those who cannot hear the joyful sound of the heavenly chorus, or the sweet words of reassurance we all long to hear. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me to make a joyful noise as we sing together our opening hymn, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name”, #142 in our *Hymnals*.

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

HYMN OF PRAISE “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” **The Hymnal #142**

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

How winter does seem to linger in our lives. The good we would do seems frozen within us, and our faith is cold and sluggish. Yet a voice does call us to believe and to care, to confess our doubts and failings that His light might stir us back to life with its warmth and awaken us to the Good we can accomplish. Let us confess our sins before God and one another and pray together the prayer of confession that’s printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a brief period of silent prayer. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

All-seeing and all-knowing God, we confess that we allow the world to clothe us in its colors. We can so easily slip into its pretentious garments of pride and prejudice, selfishness and superiority. We like to parade, decked out in our self-made goodness. But we now admit that though we may hide from others cloaked in our positions of importance, or hide our flaws in fancy clothes, or hide our insecurities even from ourselves, we cannot hide from you. We are naked before you; and our sin is laid bare. We acknowledge that without the clothing you provide through Christ, we will never be numbered with the saints around your throne. Reclothe us in your righteousness because we possess none of our own. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

God does not hold our sin against us, but in forgiving love, exchanges our soiled garments for clean white robes. In Christ, the lamb of God, our past is put behind; our old sinful nature is purified, and with all the host of heaven, we are freed to serve and worship the God who has saved 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

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away. Behold, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation Let us share the peace of Christ with one another. 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.*

Close with prayer and then dismiss the children.

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 in our second hymn, “Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine”, # 341 in our *Hymnals*.

The Liturgist will take a seat until after the hymn.

*HYMN

“Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine”

The Hymnal #341

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

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Surely the goodness of God overflows our lives. Its evidence is all around us working to reclothe a fallen creation in His righteousness and love. In these moments, we have the opportunity to offer ourselves and our substance to extend that work. Let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

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

THE OFFERTORY

"He Leadeth Me" - Jason D. Payne

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... God of all power, you continue to work to re-clothe the nations, to recreate the world in peace and harmony, justice and freedom. We make this offering even as we pray that we, ourselves, may be transformed, through Christ our Lord. 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.

THE ANTHEM

"Sing a New Song" - Stan Pethel

The Choir

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our Epistle lesson this morning, is taken from the third chapter of Paul's Letter to the Philippians, beginning with the seventh verse. If you would like to follow along, you can find it on page 1024, in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God.

"Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith."

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 taken from the twenty-second chapter of Matthew's Gospel beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #856 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

"Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?'

"And he was speechless."

"Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"Dress for Success"

More than 40 years ago, when Debbie and I were still newlyweds living in San Antonio, her father and her Uncle Steve called to say they were coming down to visit. I could easily have waited to see her father until Christmas--- of 2020.... but her Uncle Steve was a really interesting guy, extremely well educated and well traveled with an encyclopedic knowledge of wine, good food, and interesting stories about the people and events that were making national news at the time. Plus, he was going to take us all out to eat at La Louisianne, at the time, the only 4 star restaurant in the whole state of Texas.

When they arrived I had just gotten home from class and quickly changed into my Texas medical student dress attire-- starched white shirt, blue jeans with some of the indigo color still in them, boots, and belt with a shiny silver buckle big enough to have been stolen from a professional boxer's championship belt. I felt pretty doggone spiffy. Uncle Steve tried to tell me that my attire my not be appropriate for La Louisianne, but I figured, what the heck, I looked good. I was comfortable. If they had a problem with my haberdashery, then that was their problem, not mine.

When we arrived at the restaurant a half hour later for our reservation, we were met by a maitre d' bearing some resemblance to a wormy Clark Gable impersonator. He discreetly pulled me aside and informed me that there was a dress code which required a coat and tie. The only restaurant dress code I had ever seen was the one on the little signs posted on the back of the cash register at my favorite joints-- "No Shirt... No Shoes... No SERVICE!" I whispered that I didn't know about their dress code and that I was just a guest of the man in front of me. "In that case, monsieur, none of you will be seated as long as any of you are not properly attired." I was starting to get really miffed by this little self important head waiter who had never been closer to France than the night he spent in jail for drunk and disorderly in Paris... Texas. Try as I might, I could not convince him to let us in. I felt bad for embarrassing Debbie's Uncle Steve, so when this little twit with the pencil thin mustache suggested that the restaurant might loan me a coat and tie for the occasion, I was willing to try anything. He went to a closet, pulled out a skinny black tie that had to have been there since the 1950's and a gold jacket with satin lapels that had been abandoned there by Liberace or the local pimp. I was somewhat taken back, but reluctantly, I tried the jacket.

Have you ever tried to stuff a 50 long torso into a 44 regular coat? It just can't be done-- at least not without ripping the back out of it the first time one reaches for a water glass. I asked him if he had anything larger, and the smirking sack of sheep dip assured me, "No, monsieur... that is the VERY largest coat we have.." I took it off, humbled, angry, disappointed, and embarrassed, and handed it back to the officious gnome who took the jacket with one hand, while placing the other in the small of my back to nudge me out the door. He might just have said to Debbie and her family, "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, *sil vous plait*."

Many people fear the same will happen to them in heaven. They fear being turned away at the door. To be turned away from a once in a lifetime dining experience is one thing, but to be refused admission into heaven is quite another.

We may be God-fearing and church-going people but the possibility of being turned away still makes us nervous. Should any of us spend the rest of our lives wondering if we will be turned away at the door?

According to the Bible, it is possible to "know with certainty" and curiously, it all has to do with the clothing we wear.

Jesus told the parable of a king who planned a wedding party for his son. Invitations were given, but the people "refused to come". The king is patient and offers another invitation. This time the servants of the king are mistreated and killed. The king is furious. The murderers are punished, the city is destroyed, and the invitation is re-extended, this time to everyone.

The application of the parable is not complicated.

God invited Israel, his chosen ones, to be his children. But they refused. Not only did they refuse, they killed his servants and crucified his Son. The consequence was the judgment of God. Jerusalem was burned, and the people were scattered.

As the parable continues, the king offers yet another invitation. This time the wedding is opened to everyone "good and bad", or Jews and Gentiles. Here is where we non-Jews appear in the parable. We are the beneficiaries of a wide invitation. And someday we will stand at the entryway to the king's castle. But the story doesn't end there. Standing at the doorway is not enough. A certain wardrobe is required. The parable ends with a chilling paragraph.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?'

"And he was speechless."

"Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

Jesus loved surprise endings, and this one surprises . . . and frightens. Here is a man who was at the right place, surrounded by the right people, but because he wore the wrong clothing, he was cast from the presence of the king.

"Wrong clothes?" Mike, are you telling me that Jesus cares what clothes we wear?"

Apparently *so*. In fact, the Bible tells us over and over again exactly the wardrobe God desires.

"But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and forget about satisfying your sinful self" (Rom. 13:14).

"You were all baptized into Christ, and so you were all clothed with Christ. This means that you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-27).

This clothing has nothing to do with dresses and jeans and suits. God's concern is with our spiritual garments. He offers a heavenly robe that only heaven can see and only heaven can give. Listen to the words of Isaiah: "The Lord makes me very happy; all that I am rejoices in my God. He has covered me with clothes of salvation and wrapped me with a coat of goodness" (Isa. 61:10).

Remember the words of the father when the prodigal son returned? He wanted his son to have new sandals, a new ring, and what else? New clothes. "Bring the best clothes and put them on him" (Luke 15:22). The father wanted the son to have the best clothing available.

Your Father wants you to have the same.

This discussion of clothing has nothing to do with what you can buy and everything to do with what God gives you when you give your life to him.

When a person becomes a follower of Christ, when sins are confessed and the grace of Jesus is accepted, a wonderful miracle of the soul occurs. The person is placed "in" Christ. The apostle Paul described himself as "a man in Christ" (2 Cor. 12:2). When he described his colleagues, he called them "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3). "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are *in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 8:1). John urges us to "live *in him* so that when Christ comes back, we can be without fear and not be ashamed in his presence" (1 John 2:28).

What does it mean to be "in Christ"? The clothing illustration is a good one. Why do we wear clothes? There are parts of our body we want to hide.

The same can be true with our spiritual lives.

Do we want God to see everything about us? No. If he did, we would be fearful and ashamed as John suggests. So God clothes us in Christ.

Listen to how Jesus described the inhabitants of heaven: "Those who win the victory will be dressed in white clothes like them. And I will not erase their names from the book of life, but I will say they belong to me before my Father and before his angels" (Rev. 3:5).

Listen to the description of the elders: 'Around the throne there were twenty-four other thrones with twenty-four elders sitting on them. They were dressed in white and had golden crowns on their heads' (Rev. 4:4).

And what is the clothing of the angels? "The armies of heaven, dressed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rev. 19:14).

All are dressed in white. The saints. The elders.

The armies. How would you suppose Jesus is dressed? In white?

You'd think *so*. Of all the people worthy to wear a spotless robe, Christ is. But according to Revelation 19:11-13 he doesn't.

"Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God."

Why is Christ's robe not white? Why is his garment dipped in blood? Let me answer by reminding you what Jesus did for you and me. Paul said simply, "He changed places with us" (Gal. 3:13).

He did more than remove our coat; he put on our coat. And he wore our coat of sin to the cross. As he died, his blood flowed over our sins. They were cleansed by his blood. And because of this, when Christ brings us to heaven, we have no fear of being turned away at the door.

Speaking of being turned away at the door, I'm sure you are dying to hear whether I ever made it into La Louisianne. I'm sorry to say, I didn't. We ended up at the Old San Francisco Steakhouse, which was nice. But I realized what an opportunity had been missed, when Uncle Steve asked the waitress what red (wine that is) was recommended and she replied with a heavy Texas twang, "We got a Claw-rette but most folks like our Bo Jollis." I think that was her way of saying "Claret and Beaujolais".

I always thought that someday, maybe for our fiftieth wedding anniversary, I'd take Debbie back there, this time all dressed up with coat and tie, and try again at La Louisianne. But alas, they closed forever 24 years ago. I had been so close, made it to the door only to be turned away, as it turns out, forever.

But one of these days, I will receive another dinner invitation. If I want to show off my taste and the superb quality of my clothing, I can go to hell and enjoy their perpetual BBQ. But I won't be on the dais--- oh no... I'll be on the menu.

Or I can accept the invitation to a meal that will make La Louisianne look like Dairy Queen. Sure, I won't be dressed in the right clothes for the Feast of the Lamb, but there, St. Peter is the Maitre'd, and when he reaches into the closet for a loaner, he will pull out the first "one size fits all" garment in the history of the universe that really does, fit me-- and you, and any one humble enough to wear it. And the robe will gleam, and I will be beam, as he wraps it around my shoulders and says, "You've never looked better. Enter into the joy of your Master, your host, your King!"

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, we are all dressed up in our Sunday best, and we have come to church. We are all dressed up, not, we hope, in dishonesty about our true selves, but rather in the hope that we might be more than our present selves.

Lord, wrap us in your love. Clothe us in your grace. Because for your sake and ours we would like to look and to do our "Sunday best" all week.

In life, we feel frail, vulnerable, exposed to the pain, the threat, the difficulties of life. Clothe us with power from on high.

Wash us and we shall be clean. Take our soiled garments and wash them. Make us ready to live with you, not just on Sunday, but for all eternity, 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 dedication, "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less", hymn number 379 in our *Hymnals*.

***HYMN OF DEDICATION "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" The Hymnal #379**

***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**

"Sanctuary"

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, Pure and holy, tried and true;
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for You.