

Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia

Sunday, February 28th, 2016

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 Choir. The preacher will step to the lectern, 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 "Surely He Died on Calvary" - Arr. Anna Laura Page

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

THE CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

The Choir

"What Wondrous Love Is This" - *Walker's Southern Harmony 1835*

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 63 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 63)

O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you;

My flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

So I will bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands and call on your name.

My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast.

My mouth praises you with joyful lips

I meditate on you in the watches of the night for you have been my help.

In the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.

My soul clings to you for your right hand upholds me.

Let us all rejoice in God,

And all of us who swear by him exult.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Merciful Father, we come before you this day with wonder at the extent of your love, grateful for your presence with us in our daily living. We have come knowing that you welcome us as we are, flawed and imperfect, content to remain as we are. We have also come knowing that you love us too much to leave us as we are, grateful that you know how to bind our wounds, heal our brokenness, and give us lives with real purpose. Bless our worship of Word, and prayer, and song so that you may be glorified and we may be strengthened in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing”, hymn number 466 in our Hymnals..

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

“O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing”

The Hymnal #466

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us be honest with God and ourselves 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 or reflection. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Patient God, forgive us for growing comfortable in our sins. We see ourselves as “good” people, with little or no need to repent. Forgive us also for our impatience with others whose petty sins are also

our pet peeves. Deliver us from the hypocrisy of being tolerant of our own wrongdoing, and intolerant of the transgressions of others, no worse than ourselves. Pardon our continued failure to bear fruit for you. Break open our lives so that your living water can reach our parched roots. Feed us upon all those things, however unpleasant, that will sweeten our disposition and make us willing bearers of good fruit for your kingdom. Be patient with us yet a little longer so that we may be changed and be saved from the destruction we deserve. Amen.

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

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The Lord 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 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 step to the lectern and say,

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

St. Paul tells us that the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Let each of us give as we have made up our minds, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Let us share as we have been blessed and 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

"Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" - Arr. Marianne Kim

*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... Bless, O God, the offering of these gifts. Use them in your work. Help us to produce the fruit that you expect to receive and to offer it to you as you have commanded. Bless the fruit of our labor that we bring forth in this offering. Bless too every thought, word, and action that we have that they may be the fruit of true repentance, and of strong faith and a caring love. We ask it in the name of Christ Jesus, our crucified redeemer. 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 then say...

This morning we have the third of our Lenten videos from the Skit Guys, this time relating the story of Malchus, who first encountered a sword and then Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE CROSS

"Malchus in the Garden"

Video

ANTHEM

"Christ Went Up Into the Hills Alone" - Roberta Bitgood

The Choir

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from the fifty-fifth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah, beginning with the sixth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #635 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways & my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

The liturgist will return to his seat.

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

Our Gospel reading this morning is taken from Luke, the thirteenth chapter, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #906 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God...

"There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Silo'am fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, `Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?"

And he answered him, `Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"One More Year"

Jesus told a parable about a man who owned a vineyard. In that vineyard was a fig tree--a fig tree that had no fruit on it. "Cut it down," the owner said to his vine-dresser. "For three years I have been

looking for fruit on this tree and have found none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?"

There are those who might be tempted to think that Jesus would never threaten those he loves with destruction. It seems so un-Christlike. But pay attention to the words of St. Augustine who said, "God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination."

Trying to understand who Jesus is, how much he loved you, what it means to follow him, without loving others, without knowing and keeping his words, without producing fruit for the kingdom, is like trying to smell the number 9.

The grace in this parable is found within the landowners patience and his willingness to pay his vinedresser to do everything possible to make the fig tree productive. We also have no right to plead ignorance when the judgment comes because we have been warned. There is a limit to God's patience with those he loves.

Time and time again God has shown his impatience with people who do not take advantage of the opportunities he has given them.

The people of Israel in the Wilderness had seen God's goodness, and they opportunity to praise and to trust God - but they grumbled and complained instead.

They had been given all that they needed to have by God, they had been given freedom from slavery, but rather than placing their trust in God, they worshipped the golden calf and the success it was supposed to bring - and 120,000 of them died in a single day.

Seven hundred years later, Israelites had abandoned the worship of God, become no different than the pagans among them, and the nation of Israel was destroyed, the people enslaved, and their religion totally lost, dooming them forever to be known as the lost tribes of Israel.

Two hundred years later the apostate southern kingdom abandoned God and suffered almost exactly the same fate.

There is an end to the waiting for fruit. Fig trees will produce figs or firewood. Chickens will produce eggs for breakfast or be served up for Sunday dinner.

And so it goes for all of the rest of the world. Pecan trees are supposed to produce pecans, peach trees are supposed to make peaches, Cows produce milk or calves. Fig trees produce figs. And Christians-- we are supposed to produce the fruit of Christians. And we are only kidding ourselves when we ignore the warnings we have been given.

So.... What fruit will you produce for the God who made you, the Savior who redeemed you?

What is it that you are passionate about? What is it you are giving your life to accomplish? What fruit are you bearing? Will you be able to stand when the time of judgement arrives? Or will you be cut down and tossed onto the fire?

Note, FIRST OF ALL, from the parable of the Fig Tree that the fig tree isn't asked to produce bananas.

The Owner of the Vineyard doesn't ask anything extraordinary out of the fig tree. He isn't asking the fig tree to become an oak or a redwood. He asks only that it accomplish what fig trees ought to accomplish.

You and I have differing gifts. Some of us have nice singing voices. Some have high IQ's. Some are artists. Some are good with numbers; others are good with people. All of us have some natural ability, though. The secret is to find our natural abilities and give them all we've got.

That's what genius is. When we say that someone is a genius, all we are saying is that they gave maximum effort in the area of their lives where they have natural ability. That's it. That's the secret of being fruitful - find what we're naturally good at and give it our best.

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A person who can't carry a tune will never sing with the Met no matter how hard they work. On the other hand, there are many performers who as young people had quite ordinary voices, but through hard work--thousands and thousands of hours of practice - have become accomplished singers.

It was not that they had extraordinary talent to begin with. It was that they took what they had and used it to the utmost of their ability. Enrico Caruso was told by one music teacher, "You can't sing. You have no voice at all." Yet he became of the best-loved singers of his time.

Beethoven's music teacher said about him, "As a composer he is hopeless."

An editor told Louisa May Alcott that she was incapable of writing anything that would have popular appeal. That, of course, was before LITTLE WOMEN.

Walt Disney was once fired by a newspaper editor because he was thought to have no "good ideas." Tell that to the millions of people thrilled by Walt's movies.

When F. W. Woolworth was 21, he got a job in a store, but was not allowed to wait on customers because he "didn't have enough sense."

Each of these famous people proved to have a certain genius - but was it innate or did it grow out of their dedication to developing what they had been given?

The point is that God does not ask us to become what we are not. The fig tree was only required to produce figs. No more. You and I are asked only to accomplish what our God has given gifts allow.

BUT WE ARE ASKED TO ACCOMPLISH THAT.

He is not asking that we produce more fruit than everyone else - or better fruit than other Christians produce-- but he does expect us to produce the fruit that we are able to produce.

And each one of us is able to bear fruit - each one of us is gifted by God with the ability to produce what the Scriptures call in some places "the fruit worthy of repentance" and in other places "the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the fruit that is described in the fifth chapter of the Letter to The Galatians as consisting of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control"

The question is, is it that important to us? Are we willing to give it our best? Are we willing to love our enemies? To forgive those who have hurt us? To bring hope to those who despair. To encourage those who are faltering? To share the good news of Jesus with those who are looking for new life? To sacrifice our possessions and our time for those who are in greater need than us? To judge others by the standard that we would be judged by? To render unto God the praise that He deserves? To show others that we believe fully in a living and loving God, - a God who lives and acts in and through us - a God who seeks to heal others and make the world a better place for all? To a man by the name of Jim Mertz the question was phrased like this: Do we really love Jesus that much?

Jim once watched a movie on television. In it he saw a Muslim from India fall on his knees in the dust and heat of the day. Five times a day this Muslim stopped, faced his holy city of Mecca and worshipped Allah. Jim asked himself the question - do I really love Jesus like that? Jim read of a young mother who was seen throwing her precious, new-born infant child into the Ganges River! She told someone that her child was a sacrifice, a love offering to her god! "You see," she said, "we always offer our very best in sacrifice to our god!" Jim then asked himself the question - do I really love Jesus that much? What have I sacrificed for him? Have I truly given my best to him?

Jim once lay in a hospital for 10 days recuperating from a bout with pneumonia. It was a Saturday morning in the wintry days of January. He glanced outside at the cold, grey skies and watched the blowing rain that came down all day. How thankful he was to be inside! Then, he happened to see at a busy intersection of the city, below his hospital window, a young lady - a teenager perhaps - who was standing on the street corner selling roses. She never stopped smiling all day in that cold rain, in the midst of congested traffic, in spite of jeers and sneers of those who on occasion nearly ran her down. She never stopped, all day, in the rain to sell flowers for her cult leader -The Reverend Sun Yung Moon. Jim wept as he asked himself that question again - do I really love Jesus that much?

Early one Saturday morning Jim's doorbell rang. He hastened to the door and was met by two lovely and enthusiastic young people. They were smiling and anxious to talk about the doctrines of their religious sect. They were not doctrines Jim could accept, but these two young people were so sincere, and so dedicated to their cause that Jim couldn't help but be impressed. As Jim closed the door, he peered out the window to watch as they left his driveway. Jim then asked himself the question again - do

I really love Jesus? Am I ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Would I go out and knock on doors and tell others about Christ?

It is not a matter of opportunity, is it? It's not for want of ability. It is a matter of passion, of desire, of giving one's best to the Master. Of the barren fig tree the owner of the vineyard said to his vine-dresser, "Cut it down; why should it use up ground?" And the vine-dresser answered: "Give it another year, sir. Let me put fertilizer around it and if it bears fruit, well and good; but, if not, you can cut it down." There's still time.

The question is-- how will we spend our time and the gifts of grace lavished upon us in that time before the landowner returns and looks for fruit?

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not without first watering the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall God's word be that goes forth from His mouth; it shall not return to Him empty, but it shall accomplish that which He intends, and prosper that for which He sends it.

The grace, the patience, the love, the waiting of God is still with us. We still have the grace of God with us. And God said, "I'll wait on them. Those presbyterians in Magnolia. I'll wait on them-at least another year."

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

We give you thanks, O God, for the growth that we see in the world around us -- for life produces life and everything has its place, its purpose, and its season. Prune and clip us as you desire. Feed us what we need, bitter or sweet, as we need to bring our hearts and minds to the place where they should be.

Thank you God for the love that we see in the world around us. For the mercy and the grace that we experience from your hand. For the chances you grant to us to begin anew. For the vine-dressers you have sent to us-- those who love and care for us. Help us grow in faith, O Lord, and to produce the fruit of goodness, and so be a blessing to you and your world.

Equip us, O Lord, to be a forgiving and loving people that we may also serve as vinedressers where we can. May we be a church that seeks the lost and works to bring hope to those who despair. May we be salt and light, speaking truth with compassion, giving to those who are in need, praying for those who our enemies, and blessing those who are strangers to us. Show us God the work you have for us to do this day-- the acts we should perform, the people we should see or call, and the prayers that we should offer. Take the burdens of our hearts from us and put in their place your peace and your guiding word, in the name of his who waits patiently to taste the fruit of our repentance, and 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 us who are able stand as we all join in singing our closing hymn, "Living for Jesus" #2149 in our *Sing the Faith* hymnal supplements.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Living for Jesus"

Sing the Faith #2149

*THE BENEDICTION

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, remain with you always. Amen

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Change My Heart, O God"

Change my heart, O God, make it ever true. Change my heart, O God, may I be like You.

You are the Potter, I am the clay; Mold me and make me, this is what I pray.

Change my heart, O God, make it ever true. Change my heart, O God, may I be like You.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis