

First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia, Arkansas
Morning Worship Service- February 5th, 2017

PRELUDE "Holy Manna" - Hugh S. Livingston, Jr. **Dr. Elizabeth Davis**
CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "Lord, Grant Us Victory" - Dan Dykema **The Choir**

After the Choir sits down, the liturgist will step to the pulpit & say...

"Would you join me in reading responsively our call to worship, adapted from Psalm 112 and printed in our bulletins."

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Psalm 112)

Happy are they who fear the Lord and have great delight in his commandments!

Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

Wealth and riches will be in their house, and their righteousness will last for ever.

Light shines in the darkness for the upright;

The righteous are merciful and full of compassion and they will never be shaken;

The righteous will be kept in everlasting remembrance.

They will not be afraid of any evil rumors for their heart is right;

They put their trust in the Lord.

Their heart is established and will not shrink for they have given freely to the poor,

Their righteousness stands fast for ever and they will hold up their head with honor.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... O Lord, your word is a lamp unto our feet and we give you thanks for the faithful souls who placed your words upon the written page, the courageous saints who translated it into our own language, the kind teachers and preachers who have helped us to apply it to our daily lives, and for the gift of your Spirit who causes your Word to live again in song and proclamation. Help us this day to glorify your name by all that we say and do here and to carry your light with us when we leave so that we may be salt and light to the world. We ask it in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

"Would all of you who are able, please stand and join in singing "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah", #281 in *The Hymnal*.

***HYMN OF PRAISE** "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" *The Hymnal #281*

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

We have been called to be the salt of the earth, but our worldliness has left us tasting more like earth than salt. If we are to fulfill our call, let us begin the process of restoration by confessing our sins before God and one another, as we pray together the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins, pausing at its end for a time of silent prayer. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION** (In Unison)

Merciful God, you call us to be salt and light and to live as your righteous, holy people. We want to, Lord, but we fall short! We confess that there is good and bad, light and dark within our own hearts. We want to do what is right, but our fears and anxieties lead us to self-protection rather than vulnerability, to hoarding rather than freely sharing, to self-righteousness rather than compassion. Forgive us, O God. Restore us by your mercy that having received the gift of your infinite love, we might turn to our neighbor and give your love away. For the sake of Christ, we pray. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION** (pause for about 30 seconds of silence)

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

While we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for 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 while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 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 return to the lectern and say...

“At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a message from the Lord prepared just for them by Ms. Karen and the Youth Group.”

The liturgist will take a seat until after the handbells.

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 handbell choir leaves, the Liturgist will step to the pulpit and say,

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

In obedience to God's Word, we seek to strengthen our ministry, not only among those already committed to the journey with Christ, but to our neighbors and friends and even strangers. Our giving is one way that we can be salt and light for the world. Let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

Take your seat for the offertory.

THE OFFERTORY

"Let Us Break Bread Together" - Robert F. Swift

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 pulpit and say...

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray... God of Love and Light, your truth is a lamp shining in the dark of this world's delusion, confusion, and need. Receive and follow these offerings with your blessing, so that your saving word may be heard and your light shed abroad among the nations, and so that those who sit in darkness may experience your saving power, and their lives be illumined with hope, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

“The Apostles’ Creed”

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.

The liturgist will invite the congregation to... “Be seated,” and then take his seat.

ANTHEM

"Jesu, Son of God Most Holy" - Mark Wilson

The Choir

As the choir sits down, the liturgist will step to the lectern & say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the fifty-eighth chapter of the prophet Isaiah, beginning near the end of the third verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 638 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

“Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.”

The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with his family or friends in the congregation.

The preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our gospel lesson today is found in the fifth chapter of Matthew’s gospel, beginning at the thirteenth verse. You can find this passage on page 838 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Our thanks be to God!

THE SERMON

“Sharing Salt”

For most people today, salt is a seasoning, and its use a matter of personal taste, subject only to doctors' warnings about avoiding sodium. But that's only because refrigeration and canning technology have made its historic use as a food preservative obsolete. In the centuries before refrigeration and canning, a modest supply of salt in the pantry vastly expanded the range of foods that could find their way onto the family dinner table, year-round.

That's why salt caravans -- hauling sacks of the stuff from mine to marketplace -- were among the earliest commercial enterprises. Armies have marched to secure supplies of it for their countries. Sometimes it has even been used as an alternate currency. In fact, our word salary comes from the regular generous ration of salt Roman soldiers received in return for their services along with their food rations and gold.

If hearing the word "salt" calls to mind only a saltshaker, or the tasty little crystals that adhere to pretzels, Jesus' metaphorical use of it can seem trivial. But even though we no longer use it widely as a food preservative, those who have ever been on a salt free will tell you that salt is more valuable than gold, and that in calling us the salt of the earth, he is referring to a valuable commodity indeed.

Our Lord is telling His disciples that true Christian character is like salt. Salt is totally different from the food or object on which it is placed. Believers are to be like salt, different from the world. The power of their lives and their testimony lies in their being different and distinctive. When we lose that

distinctiveness by trying to be that which we are not, we are ready to be thrown into the trash.

Last weekend I got to spend 48 hours with guys I hadn't seen in 40 years. One of them is a successful Washington tax lawyer who specializes in writing tax legislation and lobbying federal lawmakers to pass it. He is married, has a pretty wife, successful children, and happy grandchildren. You would never guess that when he was a kid, he was the biggest screw up that ever put on a Boy Scout uniform. J.D. didn't even have to touch things to make them go haywire, he could just look at things and it was as if they were cursed. He was such a contrast to the camp staff's golden boy, Jack--star football player.... from a wealthy influential family... had the best looking girlfriend any of us had ever seen. But J.D. is 65 years old, and in looking back, he confessed that the source of all of his problems was that he wanted to be Jack-- not be like him, but BE him. The saddest thing of all was that, in spite of all he had accomplished, he said, "Fifty years later, I still want to be Jack."

J.D. had lost his distinctiveness, which by the way, I think he regained over the weekend. Let's face it, J.D. was meant to be salt. Salt is never the star of the meal. It is at its best when it is unseen. It dissolves giving a boost to everything else. Beef tastes beefier.... potatoes actually have a taste.... gravy is gravier... even sweet things are sweeter. Salt becomes invisible and lends its magic essence to everything else making them taste better. It doesn't cease to exist, it just adds that needed something extra to everything else.

How do Christians do this? How do we dissolve ourselves into the world around us and make things better? What is that magic something extra that we bring to the movable feast of life?

In Jesus' time there was an almost universal recognition of a duty to show hospitality. To offer a meal, a bed, a roof, some clothes, and FRIENDSHIP & FELLOWSHIP to those who came to your door in search of help, This was especially true of Christians and Jews, whose obligation to show hospitality had been set down in the Torah, and taught by Jesus and Paul. A Jew had no greater obligation than to offer a stranger the protection of his rood and table fellowship when called upon.

Lot offered his own virgin daughters to satisfy the sexual lusts of the men of Sodom rather than violate his duty to protect his guests, who were really angels of the Lord, from being molested. Cleopas and his companion met a stranger on the road to Emmaus, and because it was near dusk, he insisted that the stranger come home with him for a meal and a night's lodging. Because he did, his eyes were opened and he met the risen Lord.

The presumption of Jesus' time, was that breaking bread with someone, established a bond of friendship and mutual trust that lasted long after the two had parted ways. A bond of trust and love was established on the flimsiest of foundations, hospitality, and yet it was a bond that the experience of a thousand years had proven true and lasting.

That is why hospitality is not optional. It's the law!

Note that Jesus doesn't say, "Try to be the salt of the earth."

He doesn't say, "It might be good for you to catch some classes at Salt and Light University to learn how to be more like salt."

He doesn't say, "Go to the rabbi and elders and have them lay hands on you to beseech God to grant you saltiness."

He doesn't say, "Take 30 minutes every morning to meditate and try to get in touch with your inner saltiness."

His comment is quite straightforward. "You are the salt of the earth. This is what and who you are. This is why you exist. Don't forget it."

But His statement is not a really a command but a description. Too often, we're afraid that we're not "salty" enough, and when we do we're essentially making this all about ourselves instead of about Jesus. Salt as an element has no value to itself. It's not about making salt better salt. Salt is salt. The value of salt is in its application to other things.

No wonder Jesus calls us "salt." We exist for others.

And we cannot remain in the salt shaker.

The job of the church is not to impact the church, but to impact the world.

It's like a huddle in a football game. 67,000 people don't pay \$500.00 a ticket to watch the Patriots or the Falcons huddle. What if you went to a Super Bowl game, paying thousands of dollars for the privilege? And when the game began, you watched 11 men stand in a circle and talk for 2½ hours? That's not what you pay for!! Millions of people around the world don't watch the Super Bowl to watch the huddle. They watch to see what difference the huddle makes. What they want to know is, having called the play in secret, does it work in public?

The challenge for the church is not what we do when we call our Sunday morning huddle, but what we do when we break our huddle and head to our Sunday morning assignment. When Satan lines up against us, what difference does it make that we are Christians?

Are we salt or not? Are we going to remain in the shaker, or will we lose ourselves for Christ's sake in the world?

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

Almighty God, eternal Father, we have come to this place with different skills and diverse backgrounds, but with a single passion, our love for your Son, and a single purpose, to be salt and light for a confused and confusing world. We acknowledge our manifold weaknesses, and join our hearts as one in asking that you hear and help us as we pray.

As each has need of strength beyond that now possessed, we entreat your presence on behalf of:

the fearful, that God may calm the fear;

the weak, that God may empower the frailty;

the strong, that God may command the might;

the sinful, that God may stir repentance;

the lonely, that God may bring comfort. In silence now, as each has need of strength beyond that now possessed, let each of us entreat God's presence in our minds and hearts.

As we summon to mind this church of which we are ourselves a portion and consider all it has been in the days that are gone, all it is now, and all it yet can be; we pray that as we assume its privileges, we will be equally willing to take up its burdens and that the service we render may involve our hands and feet, no less than our lips and tongues.

Remembering your gracious acts in Jesus Christ, we take from your creation this bread and this wine and joyfully celebrate his dying and rising, as we await the day of his coming. With thanksgiving, we offer our very selves to you to be a living and holy sacrifice, dedicated to your service. Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through this gift free us from the bondage of our sins, that we may become the salt and light needed in this world, and that we may reflect your glory with the whole of our lives. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(Sung by Congregation)

Malotte

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, & the power & the glory, forever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation

God knows that we are sinners. Yet it is for you that he gave his body and his blood that we might be fed upon the bread of life and drink from the cup of salvation. Allow him to wrap you in his righteousness, to hide your sins beneath his own perfection, and then come. Come to eat your fill and drink deeply of his pardon, for this is his feast and you are invited, not because you are worthy, but because he loves you. He has set a place at His table for you.

The Words of Institution

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took the bread, and blessed it. After giving thanks, he broke it & gave it to his disciples saying: "Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In like fashion after they had eaten, he took the cup and said, "This cup. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again in final victory.

The Distribution of the Elements

The Prayer After Receiving

Thank you, Father, for sending your light to shine in our darkness and to lead us through the days still left to us on earth. We pray that we may go forth prepared to follow where you lead as you give us the light to do. Our time together as a church may be ended but we pray that we may remain forever united in our witness, our service, and our love for you. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our closing hymn, "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me", #369 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" *The Hymnal #369*

*THE BLESSING

*THE CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE "Go, My Children, Fed, and Nourished"

Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;

Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.

Here my Spirit's power filled you, Here His tender comfort stilled you;

Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis