

Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia

Sunday, February 14th, 2015

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 pastor. 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

"Chorale" - Heinrich Schutz

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

The Choir

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

After the Prelude, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 91 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 91)

Blessed is he who dwells in the shelter of the Most High.

He who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, "My refuge & my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."

Because you have made the Most High God your habitation, no evil shall befall you, nor scourge come near your tent.

He will give His angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways.

On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the adder,

The young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

Because you cleave to the Lord in love, He will deliver you;

He will protect you, because you know His name.

When you call to Him, He will answer you and be with you in trouble,

He will rescue you and honor you.

With long life He will satisfy you, and show you His salvation.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... God of lonely journeys and difficult decisions, we seek the guidance of your word. You welcome us and provide us refuge and refreshment, then you challenge us and send us forth. Surrounded by temptations, we pray that you would direct us to a better way. In our troubles, please lift us up and guide our steps along the path of salvation. Show us how the place of defeat can become a place of victory; and help us so to bear our own cross, that men and women everywhere may recognize in us the victory of your grace.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”, hymn #260 in our Hymnals.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

The Hymnal #260

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

Like errant children, we often sin because we have allowed too much distance to come between ourselves and the loving parent who can and would guide us. We have forgotten who and whose we are. Let us return to the side of God who has given us life as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of mercy, we confess that, unlike Jesus, we remain blissfully ignorant of your word. We avoid writing it upon our hearts & minds because it makes demands we would prefer to avoid and confronts us with truth of which we would rather remain uninformed. We admit our preference for acting on our own authority, instead of submitting to yours. Because we value worldly acclaim more than faithfulness to you, we prefer promises to principles and lives lived without taking responsibility for ourselves or others. Because we have chosen to remain in the dark, we have made ourselves vulnerable to evil, & have become instruments of Satan's disruptive power. Confront us with your Truth and transform us by it into faithful disciples & children of light, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Jesus the Christ has defeated Satan, and won the victory over the accuser of our souls! We who have confessed our sin are assured that God is faithful to forgive us through Christ, who on our behalf overcame the power of sin and death. ...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 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,

"Let those of us who are able, stand and join in singing our next hymn, "Jesus Walked this Lonesome Valley" #264 in our Hymnals.

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

"Jesus Walked this Lonesome Valley"

The Hymnal #264

After the hymn, the liturgist will step to the lectern microphone & say:

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

All we have is from God. Our best is to be returned to God, freely given to minister in Christ's name. Out of gratitude for a land flowing with milk honey, we bring our first fruits to be blessed through the outreach of the church. 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

"Largo" - Benedetto Marcello

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... Lord, from the abundance entrusted to us, we offer up the best we can give. Guide our use of this precious trust, that it may be spent in ways you choose, in places you would send us, for the sake

of people you wish to help. Allow us to be instruments of assurance and compassion wherever our journeys lead. 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 take a seat.

THE ANTHEM

"A Lenten Meditation" by Douglas E. Wagner

The Choir

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from Paul's Letter to the Church at Rome, the tenth chapter, beginning with the eighth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #985 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, "every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

The liturgist will take his seat. Thanks for your service.

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

Our second reading this morning is taken from the Gospel of Luke, the fourth chapter, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #892 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, `Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours."

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, `You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

And he took him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; for it is written, `He will give his angels charge of you, to guard you,' and `On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

And Jesus answered him, "It is said, `You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Nobody Else but Jesus”

Identity. Who are you? Who are your people? Where do you come from? Every human being alive has to answer this question for themselves and then for others. If you want to totally bugger someone's mind, just tell them they are not who they think they are or tell them they are someone that they think they're not.

Little boys, mean little cusses that we are know this well. When my little brother, Doug, was about 6 he developed a real talent for irritating Chuck and myself. To get even, we would tell him he wasn't our brother at all, that he was the milkman's baby. We weren't suggesting anything nefarious, after all, we were totally ignorant of reproductive biology. We just had a picture in our minds that the milkman had dropped him off with our usual quart of milk one morning. We pointed out the lack of family characteristics-- shorter stature, ears set at right angles to his head that made him look like a ship under full sail. Doug's teeth protruded more prominently than the rest of the family, so much so that everyone always said he could eat an ear of corn through a barbed wire fence.

Doug's own meanness and impishness, quickly evaporated into the ether, replaced by genuine tears that flowed in torrents as he ran off screaming for my mom to reassure him-- which she did-- just before unleashing a sudden and unholy fury on Chuck and I.

All of us have a deep seated if unspoken need to know who we are. That's why after 40 days of starvation, when Jesus is at his weakest, Satan shows up questioning his identity-- “If you really are the Son of God, prove it.”

Fortunately for us, Jesus knows who he is. He can answer the challenges that Satan spits in his face. Whether in the wilderness, or later in Gethsemane, that more opportune time for which Satan had waited and hoped for in vain, Jesus knew who he was, and that Satan could never defeat him. Not even when we put him to the test challenging him with words like, “O Lord, if you love me.... Lord, if you really are there and are listening....” He doesn't leap to answer the foolish lies we tell ourselves and others like, “MY God wouldn't do something like that.... My God loves everyone and would never send anyone to hell....”

Would that we were as successful. How often do we fail! Why do we fail? Why do we fail? And why with such regularity?

Though few of us get needed for thinking we are Chosen, the tone of that taunt should remind us of outward or inward voices in our lives: "If you are to able ... " "If you are a real woman or man ... " "If you truly care ..." "If you are such a good parent ..."

The root temptation here is almost irresistible. It is not the temptation to show off, to demonstrate a unique power or ability. It is the temptation to prove our identity.

Truth be known, most of us at one time or another like to forget that we are each a child of God, redeemed at a terrible price after we had sold ourselves in bondage to sin. When we feel like doing something that seems pleasurable even though it is wrong-- and it can be anything from indulging our fantasies by cheating on our spouses to sleeping in on Sunday morning and skipping church-- we are called to remember who made us and who redeemed us. To acknowledge that we are not our own and that neither our money or our time are our own. Everything we have and everything we are belongs to God. We are called to remember what Chuck and I forgot-- that even when others are less than lovable, we are to love them anyway because we are brothers and sisters by the grace of God. We cannot excuse our neglect in a Cain-like fashion by asking, “Am I my brother's keeper?”

Tony Campolo told of an experience he had on a recent trip to the Caribbean. He said, "When I was in Haiti, I was at this restaurant table, ready to eat my meal. I looked to the right, and there were three boys.... Dirty and filthy, with distended bellies and thin, rust-colored from malnutrition. The boys pressed their noses against the glass, staring at the food on my plate. The waiter, seeing my discomfort, moved in quickly and pulled down the shade, and then he said to me, 'Don't let that bother you; enjoy your meal.' As if could. But isn't that what we all do! Don't we all pull down the shade! Close our eyes to the problem before us, or to who we are and who we are called to be.

Yet we know that while they are few, there are other ordinary men and women who, like Jesus, manage to spit right back into Satan's face the right answer when they are challenged.

One such man was Hugh Thompson. On March 16, 1968, Thompson was a young helicopter pilot flying on patrol over the countryside of Vietnam. When he and his crew flew over the village of My Lai, they saw a nightmare taking place below them. United States Army troops in Charlie Company, under the constant pressure of danger and the madness of war, had lost control of their discipline, reason, and humanity, and had begun slaughtering unarmed civilians in the village, most of them women, children, and elderly men. 504 people had already been killed. Thompson set his helicopter down between the troops and the remaining villagers. At great risk to himself, he got out of the helicopter and confronted the officer in charge, William Calley. With the help of a couple of friends who flew Huey helicopters, he then airlifted the few villagers still alive out of My Lai, and also radioed a report of the scene that brought a halt to the action, thus saving thousands of civilian lives.

For almost twenty years after the incident, he was the subject of ridicule and scorn within the military. He received death threats by phone and mail. Neighbors left dead animals on his porch. Why, because he had chosen to do the right thing when much of the rest of the world had gone mad with evil. Finally after thirty years of abuse, America awakened to the great good he had done and the great evil he had kept us from doing. In 1999, he was awarded the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award. At the awards ceremony, Thompson was given the microphone, and he answered the question on everyone's minds. How could he have found the moral courage and strength to do what he did that day? His answer surprised the audience of graduates, brought them to a thoughtful silence. "I'd like to thank my mother and father for trying to instill in me the difference between right and wrong," he began. "We were country people. I was born and raised in Stone Mountain, Georgia, and we had very little. But one thing we did have was the example of Jesus and the Golden Rule. My parents taught me early, 'Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.' That's why I did what I did that day. It's hard to put certain things into words. You're going to have to make many decisions in your life. **Please remember who you are** and what you have been taught and make the right decisions because we're depending on you. God bless you all."

Why did he do what he did? Where did he find the moral courage! Words taught to him in childhood, repeated over and over, "Do unto others ... do unto others ... do unto others." "It is written ... it is written ... it is written."

So why do WE sin with such regularity?

Paul tells us, "if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

We fail because we first fail to remember whose we are and to call upon Jesus, affirming that he is Lord and acknowledging that he does indeed have the last word over sin and death. Jesus spent 40 days in prayer before he was challenged by Satan. Understanding that man does not live by bread alone, he may have been physically hungry, but he was spiritually filled with the power and presence of His Father, the one true and living God. Having called upon his Father, he knew who and whose he was, and so could resist the challenges to prove his identity.

We need to remember who he is. He is our Rock, our fortress, our redeemer, our salvation. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. There is no other name upon which we can call when we are confused, or in trouble. There is nobody but Jesus!

In praying to God to deliver us, we acknowledge that He is greater than any foe. The power of evil must be admitted and taken seriously, even as we remember that we have one way out of our dilemmas, one source of help and hope. Perhaps that is why, though the Lord's Prayer honestly deals with trial, temptation, and evil, it never mentions Satan by name.

And that's probably the way we ought to think about Satan. Evil is not a mere projection of our conflicted egos. Evil is real. Yet the cross and resurrection of Christ tell us that evil does not have the last word. Evil is a threatening power, **but it is a defeated one!**

Though the battle rages Monday through Saturday, every time we come to church we say that we

know who has won the war. Nobody but Jesus!

When it was time for someone to stand against evil and answer the lies of Satan, Jesus stood alone. We weren't there. Neither were Moses and Elijah. Mohammed sure wasn't there-- and neither were we. There was nobody-- but Jesus! By the grace of God, when our time of trial comes, it won't be the government who stands with us. It won't be the courts. It won't be the police or even the army. It won't be our friends or our family. But we won't be alone. It will be us and nobody else but Jesus!

As our opening hymn from this morning tells us, "The prince of darkness grim-- we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for lo His doom is sure. One little word shall fell him."

Here, the good news this First Sunday in Lent: Although temptation is real, Satan does not have the last word. One little word **shall** fell him. That word is Jesus. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

There's is no other source of help, no other guarantee of victory-- nobody but Jesus. So as Hugh Thompson reminded his listeners, so I now remind you:

Please remember who you are and who Jesus is. Remember what you have been taught and make the right decisions, because we're depending on **you**. God bless you all."

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

We thank you, God, that Jesus understands our temptations, and in him we have victory, for the power of Christ within us is greater than the power of Satan which comes against us. We thank you that Jesus has given to us as his disciples "authority... over all the power of the enemy"

Bless us with a strong, steadfast faith in the victorious power of the risen Christ over all powers and principalities of heaven and earth. Grant us discernment so that we may recognize Satan's distortions and half-truths for what they are and make peace where it is destroyed by partisan bickering and misguided loyalties. Equip us to preserve the well-being of your children and your church.

Return us to a sense of the value and purpose of scripture. Reach out and restore to a right way of thinking and acting those whose ignorance or disbelief leaves them vulnerable to deception. Restore the devotion and capture the attention of all your children, and never let us forget that we are doubly yours-- by creation and by the redemption of Christ. Remind us of who and whose we are that we make choices will glorify Jesus as we follow him along the way that leads to abundant and everlasting life. This we pray in the name of the one who loves us more than life, 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, "Take the Name of Jesus with You", printed in our bulletins.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Take the Name of Jesus with You"

Take the name of Jesus with you, Child of sorrow and of woe,
It will joy and comfort give you; take it then, where'er you go.
Precious name, O how sweet! Hope of earth and joy of Heav'n.
Precious name, O how sweet! Hope of earth and joy of Heav'n.

Take the name of Jesus ever, as a shield from every snare;
If temptations round you gather, breathe that holy name in prayer. *Refrain*
At the name of Jesus bowing, falling prostrate at His feet,
He will lead us all to Heaven, where our joy will be complete. *Refrain*

*THE BENEDICTION

*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.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis