

Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia

Sunday, March 20th, 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 "Ride On, Ride On in Majesty!" - Dan R. Edwards 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 118 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Psalm 118)

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God, and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

You are my God, I will extol you.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,

For his steadfast love endures forever.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Almighty and Eternal God, your presence among us in Jesus is our hope for salvation, our cause for celebration. Grant that we may continually turn our eyes upon Jesus and praise him with the whole of our being. Through a new hearing of your Word, with our very souls made attentive by your Spirit, help us to be faithful disciples, to follow where he leads, to trust his ways and purposes for us and for the world. Rule in our worship, our hearts, and our lives, not just today, but always. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “All Glory, Laud, and Honor”, hymn number 88 in our Hymnals..

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” *The Hymnal #88*

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

We may be waving palm branches today, but we know what happens to our palm waving when things get tough and our faith is challenged. Aware of our need for a faith more deeply grounded and a love more deeply committed, let us pray together the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord Jesus, though we want to follow you faithfully, we confess how foolish and fickle we are. We sing psalms of praise on Sunday, and then deny you in daily living. When personal and public pressures assail us, we turn away. We are quick to show national patriotism, but too often fail to. We rarely wave the flag of our faith with the same enthusiasm as that of our country. Forgive us for failing to give you the full loyalty and devotion you deserve and help us to learn the joy and experience the glory of total surrender to your will for us. Amen.

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

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" 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 the Father 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

If Jesus is to reign among us, much more will be needed than our praise and rejoicing when we are together. How much of our time and treasure will we put to use in his service? Let us give as we are able 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 "Variations on 'Hosanna, Loud Hosanna!'" - Jon Spong 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 Jesus, you gave your life that we might know the fullness of God's love for us and the whole world. In your spirit of com-compassion and humility we make this offering of worldly possessions, and of ourselves. We ask that our love and caring may be a witness for you to those in need. Receive and bless our giving, we pray, to your glory. 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 fifth of our Lenten videos from the Skit Guys, this time with Simon Peter relating the story of his denial.

ENCOUNTERS WITH CHRIST
ANTHEM

“Simon of Cyrene”

Video

“Take My Life and Let It Be”

The Handbell 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 ninth chapter of Zechariah, beginning with the ninth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #824 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim & the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,

and he shall command peace to the nations;

his dominion shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

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

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

Our Gospel reading this morning is taken from Luke, the nineteenth chapter, beginning with the twenty-eighth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #913 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They said, “The Lord needs it.” Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Sometimes Glory Happens”

Our world is full of things that we say or do that no longer have any meaning. Someone sneezes and someone else will reflexively respond with, “God bless you.” Only in the rarest of cases is the idea of prayer remotely connected with the sneeze. It’s just something we do.

After much conflict in the last 10 years over whether their employees should say “Merry Christmas” to customers, and risk offending those who weren’t Christian, most merchandisers have decided in favor of allowing the greeting “Merry Christmas”, because in the words of one company, “people don’t really attach much religious significance to the saying of ‘Merry Christmas’ anymore.

There was a time perhaps when one was surprised that one would spontaneously exclaim "Lord, have mercy". As if one wasn't sure exactly what was happening but that the matter was in God's hands and we should pray for mercy. It has been said of some devout Jews that, when they pray the prayer "Lord, have mercy," they speak the words "have mercy" as quickly as possible after they have said "Lord," fearing that God would appear in terrifying might before they have petitioned for mercy. In our culture, of course people say "Lord, have mercy!" all the time without fear or even a second thought. George got a date to the dance! "Well, Lord have mercy!" Hardly anyone expects such a phrase to summon either the Lord or mercy. It's just a saying.

In Jesus' day, "*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord,*" was one of the phrases said that had no real significance attached to it. The phrase from Psalm 118 was originally part of a liturgy recited when the king returned victorious in war. As the king, grateful to God for success on the field of battle, approached the temple to engage in thankful worship, the priests would say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord." (Ps 118:26). But by the time of Jesus, this phrase had become the standard greeting for pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for a festival. As the travelers streamed into the city, people would say to them, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." It was, in effect, "Welcome to Jerusalem. Enjoy the festival. Have a nice day. "

No one really expected anything to come down the road except yet another festival tourist.

If we want to know what the festival crowd was really expecting when they greeted Jesus that day, a better clue can be found in the palm branches they waved than in the words they uttered.

Palm branches were a nationalistic sign, and the waving of palm branches has something like the increased display of American flags on national holidays and days of remembrance in this country. It was a patriotic display; a symbolic expression of hope that this young Galilean who had stirred up so much attention might strike a blow for the nation, a blow against Rome and for the homeland.

We have, then, a picture of the crowds doing two things: shouting a ceremonial greeting and carrying a nationalistic symbol. The Greeting well that's just what you say."

But the palm branches! Now, that's what they really wanted, a national savior. "Blessed is the one who comes to free us from Roman rule!"

The crowd did not get what it wanted, but it did receive what they needed, indeed what all of us need. To their dismay, Jesus was no local revolutionary, no national freedom fighter. He did not arrive flashing a sword and swaggering in might, but lowly and riding on a donkey. He did not come in the name of the nation, but, and **here is the irony**, ... **he really did come in the name of the Lord**.

Why? Why did the Lord come to such an ornery, hateful, self-obsessed bunch of folks like the Jews, or like us? So that we could see his glory, receive his glory, reflect his glory and have it become a part of us. Once you've really seen glory, you are changed. And that was what we needed, it's what we still need. To be changed.

There was something else said that day, when asked why they were untying and taking his donkey without permission, the disciples told the owner, "The Lord has need of it." And that was good enough. He let it go with two men he had never seen before, just on the chance that God might use so small a thing as a donkey.

"The Lord has need of it" is another of those phrases we hear or use when it suits our purpose, to which we attach little or no meaning. If you walked outside your house and saw two strangers starting your car, and you asked, "What in the Sam Hill do you think you're doing?" and they responded, "The Lord has need of it," you not only would not let your car go, you'd see to it that the two strangers were detained for quite a while. A donkey is such a little thing after all, compared with a car!

Well then how about a hundred other "little things", much smaller than the loan of a donkey, that you get asked for when you are in church surrounded by your family of faith-- When someone asks you to cook a meal or sing in the choir, or play handbells, or teach Sunday School, or help out on

a workday, or any of a thousand other little things-- whichever one of your donkeys is needed by the Lord at a particular moment in time.

It is so easy to say nothing, to do nothing. That's why when someone does something selflessly, just to be of service to God, sometimes those of us around to see it, see glory! It's never expected, but it is always welcome. Glory puts a smile to your face, warms your heart, and may even bring a tear of joy to your eye. Glory lifts up everyone who witnesses its appearing and brings them closer to God, and closer to becoming what God has always intended for us to be-- changed, more like Jesus.

Think about the handbells this morning. Each of them work really hard to play something for us that might inspire us, or lift us up in worship so that we walk a little taller when we leave than when we arrived. Most of them have no natural talent for music nor can they read it. When they play, they hear every clinker, every missed note, every tiny mistake. But the rest of us-- some of us at least-- see and hear glory!

It's the same with our choir. And in Sunday School, our little ones look into the kind faces of the ladies they have learned to look to as examples of Christian love and faith, and, although they could never put it into words, they too see glory!

Ever been in a worship service where those gathered forgot themselves long enough to sing at the top of their lungs to praise and give thanks to Almighty God? It's not that anyone is doing anything special or extraordinary, they are just giving what they have to the glory of God. And when we hear it, we know glory when we see it, and we sing a little louder ourselves, while our spirits soar in anticipation and hope in the power of God?

When I was about ten, my uncle Claude died. He had been a father to my dad, and it really tore him up when my uncle passed away. The funeral was going to be down in Gladewater, and all of us were going to go. My dad wasn't much on details, and my mom had her hands full with getting us three boys haircuts, pressing our pants, shirts, and suits. Starching and ironing my sister's dress. Getting us all shampooed, bathed, and dressed before finally turning attention to ready herself. In all the rush of getting ready that morning, I had scarcely noticed the old black man who sat on the steps in our garage shining shoes-- our shoes. At the funeral, I noticed that my shoes had a shine that looked at least ten feet deep. They hadn't looked that good even when they were new.

I asked my mom later who the man was and why he shined all our shoes. She told me that he had worked for my dad and for Uncle Claude on my uncle's farm outside of Garland City for a long time. He couldn't go to the funeral, and he wanted to do something to show his respect, so he showed up at our house just after breakfast that morning with his shoe shine kit and asked mom if he could help her out by shining our shoes to help get us ready for the funeral. Mom gratefully accepted his offer. He spent the next 3 hours of that humid June morning sweating and polishing, and turning bootblack and spit into glory. I never knew his name, but I have never forgotten that early glimpse of glory. Love, a willingness to be used by God, and a little of whatever it is that the Lord has need of, and you've got glory.

It takes Good Friday faith. It's what you do getting ready on Monday through Saturday, the hard work, the sacrifice, the time spent, trusting that on Palm Sunday or Easter that someone will see the glory shine brightly-- maybe even for the first time. That seeing His glory, they will be drawn a little closer to Him, be changed forever by what they have seen.

When we least expect our prayers to be answered, they are; when we least expect God to be present, He comes. At a time we least expect, there coming down the road of our life is indeed the one for whom we have hungered and thirsted. Then we can put down the palm branches of our expectations, too small and misguided, and shout with all heaven, "Blessed indeed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

It is then that our eyes too will see the glory.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Majestic God, on this Sunday we celebrate the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, remembering his courage as he faced his frightening future with resolve and determination. You sent Jesus that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. You sent Jesus that we might know the truth. You sent Jesus that we might come to know the magnitude of your love for us and for this world. Today is a day for us to remember the road he rode, so that each of us might come to glory, a time for recognizing what you have done for us.

We are inspired by his glorious example and ask that you would help us to be more like him, strong in our commitment and faithful in our service. Give us a faith that sees beneath surface appearances and awaits the inbreaking of your glory in our midst. Help us to trust in you in times of success or failure, strength or weakness, victory or seeming defeat, that in the good times we may reflect your glory, and that in the bad the world may see, not our shortcomings, but your grace 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 us who are able stand as we all join in singing our closing hymn, "The Old Rugged Cross" which is printed in our bulletins.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"The Old Rugged Cross"

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best For a world of lost sinners was slain. *Refrain*

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross, And exchange it some day for a crown.*

O that old rugged cross, so despised by the world, Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above To bear it to dark Calvary. *Refrain*

In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine, A wondrous beauty I see,
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died, To pardon and sanctify me. *Refrain*

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true; Its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then He'll call me some day to my home far away, Where His glory forever I'll share. *Refrain*

*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

"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