

First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia, Arkansas
Sunday Morning Worship Service
March 26th, 2017

PRELUDE

"Lift High the Cross" - Charles Callahan

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

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 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.

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;

I will 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 think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night.

Because you have been my help, in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.

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

I shall rejoice in God and all who swear by him shall exult!

Let us worship God beginning with the second Lenten reading by Karen Koenig. She will be speaking the words of the Samaritan Woman from the well as she watched the Messiah's agony on the cross.

The Bible says this:

“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I thirst.’ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.”

The Liturgist will sit down until after the Invocation.

Karen Koenig steps to the microphone near the Lenten Wreath and begins reading:

WOMAN AT THE WELL: This man is so thirsty. He's lost a great deal of blood. He's been driven through the streets like an animal. He's hung on that cross for hours. At least these Romans have the decency to give him a moment of relief from his thirst.

That is what he did for me. I met Jesus when I was very thirsty, I had come to the well to draw water in the middle of the day. I know that noon is not the easiest time to go to the well. The sun is hot and the work is hard. But I would rather face the scorching sun than the burning eyes and blistering words of the people of my town.

I was shocked to see a Jewish man in our village. You see, Samaritans and Jews have been bitter enemies for longer than anyone can remember. Yet, he asked me for a drink of water. I was shocked. I answered, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"

He answered my question not by telling me why he wanted to reject me, but by telling me what he wanted to give me. He said, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

I didn't understand. He didn't have a water jar. He didn't have a well of his own. "What could he offer me?" I wondered.

He told me that whoever drinks the water he gives will never thirst. The water he gives, he said, is a spring of water, an endless supply, which brings eternal life, I did not fully understand what he was saying, but I knew that I was thirsty for more than water that day. I asked him to give me his living water that I might not thirst again.

He then told me about my life. He saw my struggle. He knew my sin. He read what was written upon my heart. But he did not condemn me. He saw that I thirsted for much more than water. I was

thirsty for acceptance. I was thirsty for forgiveness. I was thirsty for peace with God.

I scarcely dared ask him what I was thinking, "I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

He answered, "I who speak to you am he."

In that moment, my thirst was quenched. He gave me the living water. And, as he said, I have never thirsted again.

Oh, Jesus, I know how it feels to be thirsty. And I pray that soon your suffering will end, your thirst will be quenched, and you will again know the peace which you have given to me.

(Extinguish one candle and return to your seat with our thanks.)

The liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... We come to you, God, because we are thirsty. Our spirits need the refreshing water of your word, just as our bodies need the refreshment of a cool drink. We worship you with joy, for we can already feel the gift of your presence all around us. Now open our ears that we may hear all that you expect of us. Open our lives to your truth and prepare us to follow Jesus in accepting the unacceptable, challenging the conventional, and joining together in a harvest for your realm. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "Come, Now Is the Time to Worship", the words of which are printed in our bulletins.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

"Come, Now Is the Time to Worship!"

Come, now is the time to worship! Come, now is the time to give your heart!

Come, just as you are to worship! Come, just as you are before your God!... Come!

Come, now is the time to worship! Come, now is the time to give your heart!

Come, just as you are to worship! Come, just as you are before your God!... Come!

One day ev'ry tongue will confess You are God! One day ev'ry knee will bow!

Still the greatest treasure remains for those, who gladly choose you now!

Come, now is the time to worship! Come, now is the time to give your heart!

Come, just as you are to worship! Come, just as you are before your God!... Come!

One day ev'ry tongue will confess You are God. One day ev'ry knee will bow.

Still the greatest treasure remains for those, who gladly choose you now!

Willingly we choose to surrender our lives. Willingly our knees will bow.

With all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship! Come, now is the time to give your heart!

Come, just as you are to worship! Come, just as you are before your God!

Come!.. Come!... Come!... Come!...

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will show us His grace, forgive us our sins, and remember our transgressions no more. In penitence and faith, let us confess our sins before God and one another, praying together the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins and pausing at its conclusion for a moment of silent prayer. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

(In Unison)

Lord forgive us for being such an acquisitive people. We collect things to help us remember our past, to protect us in the present, and to provide for our future. We accumulate grudges, hurts, habits, and pet sins that we would rather drag through life than discard to lighten our load. Father, grant us such faith that we might be not just willing, but eager to lay our burdens down, and run with joy the race that is set before us. Help us to cling to Christ rather than the things that keep us from the joys that yet await us in

this life and the next. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God looks into the secret places of the heart, and discerns our thoughts. He knows our sorrow for our sin, and delivers us through Jesus the Messiah. By his sacrifice we may be assured that our sins are forgiven. 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

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us now be reconciled one with another and share the peace of Christ. 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 pulpit 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 return to the lectern and say...

“Would all who are able, please stand and join in one voice to sing our next hymn, “Fairest Lord Jesus” hymn #306 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“I Love to Tell the Story”

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true;
It satisfies my longings as nothing else could do. *Refrain*

*I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.*

I love to tell the story; 'tis pleasant to repeat
What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet.
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
The message of salvation from God’s own holy Word. *Refrain*

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it, like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
'Twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long. *Refrain*

After the hymn, the liturgist will return to the pulpit and say,

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

When we stop to consider the amazing riches God has provided, how thankful we should be. Good soil and water give us food in abundance. Gifts of the Spirit grant life with eternity in it. Let us give thanks to God as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

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

THE OFFERTORY "My Song Is Love Unknown" - Charles Callahan 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 Grace, we make this offering in wonder and gratitude that Jesus is with us in this world. Use these gifts to meet the need of others, to free them from whatever prisons bind them, to satisfy their deep hungers and quench their even deeper thirsts, so that they may rejoice and tell the Good News of your deliverance with us. Amen.

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.

SPECIAL MUSIC "I Am Not Worthy" by Beatrice Bush Bixler Dr. David DeSeguirrant, tenor

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the fourth chapter of Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1039 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation. Thank you for your service.

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

Our sermon text today is taken from the fourth chapter of John's Gospel, beginning at the fifth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #925 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the word of God....

"So he came to a city of Samar'ia, called Sy'char, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you

get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

The woman answered him, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly."

The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things."

Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"

So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

They went out of the city and were coming to him."

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Tell Your Story”

Lent is about dying to ourselves so that we can live for Christ. But never having died before, we could use a little instruction and preparation. One of the things we do is to make a list of last words and final tasks or experiences that we want to get done before the end comes. But inexperienced as we are, we may miss some items of real importance. So we are asking, “What would God want on my bucket list?” Or bucket list from God began with, “Become a student of the Bible.”... “Heal an old wound.” ... and “Take out the trash.” This week we add, “Tell Your Story.”

Each of us has one you know.... not about how we met our spouse, or what it was like to hold our first born child in our arms for the first time. The story we need to tell is more important to you and the world than that, It's more like, “How you met Jesus for the first time.” And “What was it like when you felt him hold you in his arms for the first time?”

That is why this morning we turn to the Samaritan Woman at the Well, Jacob's Well to be precise, in the backwater Samaritan town of Sychar. Jesus has found it necessary to travel through Samaria and about noon, in the heat of the day, he arrives at the well and he rests while his disciples make a lunch run into town. It's been a long walk, under a hot sun so it's understandable that Jesus is tired and thirsty. But as Providence would have it, a woman from the town approaches. To fill her jug to take back home for her washing and cooking and for her common law husband to drink. She is alone, because all of the other women in town use the town well which is closer and because they come early in the morning when the heat makes this daily chore a little less burdensome. She can avoid the glare of the sun and the glare of their hate-filled eyes. The words of the other women are sharper than the stones of the road, she she has opted carry her burden a little farther and sweat a little more just to avoid the load of hate the others heap upon her.

She sees the man sitting at the side of the well, and that is not unusual. What is unusual is that he speaks to her, “Might I have a drink from your jug?”

It was unusual in that this man spoke to her, a woman. Men did not even speak to their wives when they were in public. And he was a JEW! To Jews, Samaritans were beneath contempt. They would be more likely to kiss a pig than to speak to a Samaritan

So the woman asks, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?”

And Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?”

She is really taking advantage of the situation to have a some fun at his expense. “Where’s your bucket, mister? Are you greater than our Father Jacob?”

This is sort of like what happened to Billy Graham early in his ministry. He was in a small town and taking his morning walk, that day to the local post office to mail a letter to his wife. He stops to ask directions from a young boy of about 10, The boy gives him the directions he needs, and Billy thanks him and invites him to the crusade that night at the football stadium telling him, “If you come to the football field tonight, I’ll tell you how to get to heaven.” And the kid replied, “Mister, you can’t even find the Post Office, so I think I’ll pass.”

Anybody else would’ve replied indignantly to the woman: “What do you mean OUR father Jacob? WE don’t have a father Jacob. I have a father Jacob. You have a gentile father... so get my water & be quiet.”

Instead, what he said was “How about this: I can give you a spring of living water, and after you drink it you’ll never be thirsty again.”

To our surprise the woman makes a kind of unguarded response. She says, “I tell ya what, sir: I could go for that... then I wouldn’t have to keep coming here to draw water in the middle of the day.”

It’s actually a kind of a vulnerable thing to say & Jesus takes notice. His next move is the crux move of the text:

“Go, call your husband, & come back.”

“The woman answered him, “I have no husband.”

Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband...”

Jesus puts his finger right on the pain of her life. He sees to the heart of her life, to the thing that is really killing her. And He pours out his love and forgiveness on her, filling her with that living water of which he had spoken, and which is now welling up within her and about to burst forth.

She ran back to her town to tell anyone who would listen. And did you hear what she said as she ran into what must have been the town square? “She said to the people, ‘Come and see a man who has told me everything I’ve done!’” But it’s what she didn’t say that’s even more wonderful. I imagine that as she said, “Come and see the man who has told me everything I’ve done.” That she must’ve been thinking, “And loved me anyway!” And with her enthusiasm, with her honesty, with her testimony, people came to believe in Christ. John says it right there. “Because of her testimony, many people in the village believed in Jesus.”

At any given time there’s probably not a single person in our community firing on all 4 cylinders. That’s the beauty of the community. When I’m down, you might be up & vice versa. The strong help the weak – knowing they’ll be weak at some point. The weak rely on the strong – knowing it’ll soon change around. None of us have it all together – we are all sinners, after all. We share our stories to lift up those who are down, and to draw in those who are in danger of wandering off.

And we tell our stories to remind ourselves when everyone else may have turned our backs on us, when our faith seems to be taking a battering and the facts seem to line up against what we believe. We

will remember that we know the Truth. We experienced it. It is not just to convert the stranger, it is also to re-convert ourselves.

And when you tell your story, don't prejudge the audience. Don't allow yourself to think, I'm wasting my time, or it won't do any good, or they'll just laugh at me.

My mother made that mistake. In 1960 I was almost 7 at the time, and insurance physical revealed a tumor on a lung. He and my mother parked us kids with grandmothers for a couple of weeks, while they drove to the Ochsner clinic in New Orleans for surgery. From the moment my mother heard his diagnosis, she prayed that it might not be the cancer his doctors had predicted, even as she worried about how she would take care of four kids and work full time to keep us in clothes and food and whatever. The time finally came for my dad to be wheeled into surgery and my mom remained there in the hospital room praying intently for a good outcome. After about two hours, the room filled with light and she swore that an angel appeared before her to tell her that her prayers were being answered, and that the tumor would be benign. Immediately she said that a weight had been lifted from her and she slept peacefully for the first time in days. A couple more hours later, the doctor came bringing the same good news that the angel had delivered two hours earlier.

The remarkable thing is that I never heard this story from my mother. She never told us. Even when I was in my heathen period, and needed to hear a word of faith, a reason to believe, she never mentioned it.

Fortunately, she did tell her her best friend, Jean Garrison, and Jean was later kind enough to share it with me just before I left to go to seminary, along with the news that my mom had prayed long and hard that God would use me and call me to the ministry. When my mother passed away, I was not aware of her prayers, but the seeds had been planted.

And I have a duty to remind my son of his miraculous cure from a truly dreadful disease. Or of the many times God stepped in and interposed himself in my life for my good.

Telling your story is a large part of what it means to worship in spirit and in truth. We are to witness to the Truth, just tell others what we have seen and heard. How we met Jesus. And WHAT a difference that meeting has made in our lives.

Tell your story.

Tell how a good God remembered a forgotten soul on earth. A prayer that God's grace would seep into the cracks and cover another that the church let slip through. A prayer to take a life that no one else could use and use it as no one else could.

Tell your story-- not from a pulpit, but from behind the counter at work, at the bedside of your children, from a bed in a nursing home. Don't try to tell it like some silver tongued, black-robed preacher, but one whispered fearfully by a recovering alcoholic, or a repentant adulterer.

Tell your story so that the world can see and hear what God does best: take the common and make it spectacular. To once again take the rod and divide the sea. To take a pebble and kill a Goliath. To take water and make sparkling wine. To take a peasant boy's lunch and feed a multitude. To take mud and restore sight. To take three spikes and a wooden beam and make them the hope of humanity. To take a rejected woman and make her a missionary.

Tell your story because there is someone who needs to hear it-- and that someone might be you.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me...

We thank you, Father, that Jesus meets us in the ordinary round of our days filled with ordinary tasks, and that he intrudes into our agendas with your divine appointment when we least expect him, and always when we need you most. We give thanks that you seldom deal with us as we anticipate, or deserve, but according to our deepest need.

Keep us open to encounter your Christ in surprising and unexpected moments. Help us to grow in the depth of our relationship with Jesus, our Savior, Your Messiah. Grant us courage to face Him and talk to Him, to face the piercing look, the probing question.

And then O Lord, grant us courage to tell our story of our relationship with Jesus, how we met, and what a difference it has made in our lives. Let us cherish the sharing our moments with Christ as much as we value the memories.

For those who doubt that Jesus is who he said he is, grant that they may risk believing. For those who feel they are unworthy to ever be sought out by Jesus, help them discover their own belovedness to him and to you. And for those who look for Jesus in such limited and restricted ways that they miss your power and presence at work around them, open their eyes and their hearts that they may know and love even as you have always been known and loved by you, 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, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing", #356 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" *The Hymnal #356*

*THE BLESSING

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Pass It On"

I wish for you, my friend, this happiness that I've found--
You can depend on Him, it matters not where you're bound;
I'll shout it from the mountaintop, I want the world to know:
The Lord of love has come to me, I want to pass it on.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis