

**Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia
Sunday, June 18th, 2017**

The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room at about 10:40am. The liturgist will enter followed by the pastor. The pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, & 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

"Prelude in C minor" - A. Raison

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 103 and printed in our bulletins?"

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 103)

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

As far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.

For he knows how we were made & remembers that we are dust.

The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him,

And his righteousness extends to their children's children.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Let us worship God beginning by with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Almighty God, through the power of Your Holy Spirit You enable us to do and be more than we can think or imagine. Come now, dwell within our worship, and make us strong to do your work and will and so bring you praise and glory through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!", #138 in our hymnals.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

"Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!"

The Hymnal #138

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. With the full assurance of faith, let us approach the Father of mercy and confess our sins before Him and one another as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its end for a time of silent prayer. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Almighty God, like foolish children, we have distanced ourselves from you and your will for us more often than we care to remember. We have looked out for ourselves first, over our neighbors. We have neglected our families in pursuit of wealth, power, or pleasure. We have turned a deaf ear to your call and abandoned your way. In spite of our many failings, we come and ask that your peace and grace may cover us like a soft blanket. Remind us that we are not saved by our own efforts, no matter how diligent we may be, and that you have put control of all things under the feet of Jesus Christ, whose life and work have saved us all. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

As far as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is God's steadfast love toward those who

fear him; As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear 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 to 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.***

The preacher will step to the pulpit and say, "This being Father's Day, we have a short video produced by the Skit Guys to express our thanks to our fathers for their love & thanks to God for our fathers.

FATHER'S DAY VIDEO

"A Father's Glory"

The Skit Guys

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Our Father has blessed us beyond all deserving and beyond our imagining. With grateful hearts and open hands 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

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" - Richard A. Williamson

*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... O God, as Christ calls us, Your Spirit empowers us. We accept Your charge to be His servants in the world. Reconciled by Christ through love and acceptance, we seek to bring justice, Lord, and peace and goodwill to all whom we meet and pray for. Accept our lives and these our gifts and use them for your glory. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen

The liturgist will invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and then sit down until after the Special Music.

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

“Blessed Assurance”

Joanna Smith, Soprano

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first reading this morning is taken from the sixth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1020 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth. ‘Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.’”

The liturgist will take a seat with the congregation, with our gratitude for your service.

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

Our Sermon text for this morning is taken from selected verses of the eleventh chapter of the Prophet Hosea, beginning at the first verse. You can find it on page 782 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God....

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Ba’als, and burning incense to idols.

Yet it was I who taught E’phraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one, who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

How can I give you up, O E’phraim!

How can I hand you over, O Israel!

How can I make you like Admah!

How can I treat you like Zeboi’im!

My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy E’phraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, & I will not come to destroy.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“A Father’s Love”

When my daughter was little she had a doll, it was a rag doll that she cuddled with every night in bed, beginning while she was still in her crib. When she went off to college, She left her doll behind. She had grown quite old from the love my daughter had given her. Her skin was no longer a pretty pink, but a dirty grey with black smudges, Her hair was knotted and frayed and much of it missing as if she had been through chemotherapy. Their were small rips and tears all over her arms and legs. And worst of all, she was now blind where two googly eyes once brightened the face of anyone who looked at her.

As soon as Maggie headed off to Waco, that great center known for its scholasticism and holiness, also known as Jerusalem on the Brazos, Debbie took Annie and began by giving her a long bath-- the first in many, many years. She bought some red yarn and with a needle and replaced her missing locks. She then addressed the open wound on her arms and legs, and very patiently and carefully sutured them closed. Finally, she restored her sight by replacing her googly eyes. She looked just about as good as she had a decade and a half earlier. When Maggie came home at mid-semester, she was shocked to see all of the reconstructive and plastic surgery her old friend had had. And when she went back to school, she took Annie with her. And I suspect, if Maggie ever has a daughter of her own, Annie will get a new cribmate or bed partner, and will find renewal in being loved by someone new.

There are two truths about people. First--- we are all rag dolls! Flawed and wounded, broken, and bent, missing things that life has cruelly taken from us, covered with stains and filth and unable to

clean ourselves. Ever since the Fall, every one of us humans has been made all too aware of our impermanence and of our many weaknesses.

But the second truth is what is most important. It is the message of Hosea. We are not **just** rag dolls! We are **GOD'S** rag dolls. He knows about all of our flaws and imperfections, all of our missing bits and pieces. He knows, and he loves us **ANYWAY!** Our raggedness is not our identity. Raggedness is not our destiny. Our raggedness is no longer the most important thing about us. **We may be unlovely, but we are not unloved.**

And we cannot be loved without being changed by that love. We may look like Aldonzas, the cheap prostitute loved by Don Quixote. But God sees us only as his Dulcinea-- beautiful, refined, and every bit worthy of his love.

The fairy tales we read to our children reinforce the world's view that only that which is beautiful can be loved. Snow White was comatose when she charmed Prince Charming. Sleeping Beauty was sound asleep, but remained drop dead gorgeous until her Prince found her and fell in love with her. Rapunzel was trapped in a tower, but never had a bad hair day, until finally her knight in shining armor arrived to set her free so that they could live happily ever after.

The Christian life, puts the lie to all of that nonsense. It is being loved that makes us beautiful. My father's mother was an old farm wife. When we came along my Nanny Isa was in her eighties, never wore more than a bit of rouge on her cheeks and lips. Her body had the shape of the bottom half of a bowling pin, and even her wrinkles had wrinkles from two many years of working a garden that fed her and most of the folks that worked for her. One of our favorite childhood chores was to take her tweezers and pull the hair that grew long and white from each of the many moles on her face. But, O my God, how we loved her, and how beautiful we truly believed her to be.

There is a love that creates value in the beloved. It turns rag dolls into priceless treasures. It takes the moments with them, common as straw, and spins it into the finest gold.

If we are lucky, we experience these moments and this love with our parents or our grandparents. And if we are not so fortunate, we find that we have a Father in heaven who has attached his love to us and given all of us ragged little creatures a value beyond calculation. Perhaps the finest example of this is found in the scripture we use more often than any other for our assurance of pardon: "The proof of God's amazing love is this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

But what happens when the one we love doesn't love us back? What happens when they run from us, reject our values, our ways, our heritage, our love? Real Love, God's love doesn't stop. It keeps on singing. Only now it sings the blues. That's what we are really hearing in Hosea 11-- God singing the blues:

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Ba'als, & burning incense to idols.

Yet it was I who taught E'phraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one, who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

How can I give you up, O E'phraim!

How can I hand you over, O Israel!

How can I make you like Admah!

How can I treat you like Zeboi'im!

My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy E'phraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, & I will not come to destroy."

So God and Hosea keep on loving, and in time, that love which will not let us go, changes everything.

When I was in Hillsboro, we had a family there who were good and faithful Christians and wonderful parents. Janet, the mother in this little family had been taken to church faithfully by her mother, because her father, Jack, never went to church, preferring to spend his Sundays at the golf course, the fishing hole, or his favorite hunting woods. Janet was reading with her 5 year old daughter Alicia on her lap one Sunday evening after she had spent Saturday with her grandfather Jack at deer camp. They were going over one of Alicia's books about animals. Janet pointed at a picture of a cow and asked, "What sound does the cow make?" "Moo."

"Here's a doggie. what sound does a doggie make?" Woof."

"And here's a deer. What sound does a deer make?" "BANG!"

While Jack didn't drink at work, or around his grandkids, he was an alcoholic. Janet said the day they had feared for so many years finally came when Jack's skin and eyes suddenly turned yellow. The doctor's verdict-- pancreatic cancer, far advanced.

As he grew weaker, Janet felt ever more pressure to talk to her dad about Jesus. Finally, when she could stand it no longer, she exploded with the question that opened the door. "Dad, You're not going to live forever, so if you go before Alicia, and she later asks how were things between you and Jesus, what am I supposed to tell her?"

"Why, everything is great between my and Jesus. Why shouldn't it be?"

She pressed further and then began to explain God the Father's love for us-- "While we were still sinners, Jesus died for us."

And suddenly, the light dawned, the ice melted, and Jack finally prayed and gave his life to God.

In short order, God began to do some reconstructive surgery on Jack. He began to read the Bible, beginning with the Gospel of John.

Next he began to pray, even to initiate prayer with his family, and frequently asked that they do the "hand thing" with him, holding hands while they prayed together. Janet said it suddenly struck her that Jack's hands, which had never seemed to hold anything but golf clubs, fishing rods, rifles, shotguns, and beer cans, now seemed more beautiful in weakness than they had ever been in strength.

The Friday night before he died, he entered the hospital again, and called Janet. Her husband heard her say, "And I love you too, Dad. See you in the morning."

Her husband, Don, asked, "Did that mean what I think it did?"

"Yes," replied Janet, "He said he loved me."

It was an eternal morning to which Jack awoke the next day. The last time Janet heard her Father speak was the first time she had ever heard him say, "I love you."

There is a love that adds value to whatever it loves. It takes rag dolls like Annie, or Jack, or you, or me, and loves beyond all reason. And if we let him, our Father's love will continue to do reconstructive surgery on us, until one day, we will exclaim--

"Behold what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are... Beloved, we are God's children now; and we will be like him!"

Our Father's love. Totally unreasonable. But thank God it is so.

And we are going to be like Him. Loving the unlovely, beyond all reason. Singing the blues, more often than lilting love songs. Absolutely unreasonable.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray... God our Father, in your wisdom and love you made all things. This day we thank you for one of your best gifts, our Fathers. Bless these men.

Guard their hearts. Strengthen their resolve. Help them embrace the joy that comes with the rearing of their children. Let the example of their faith and love shine forth. Grant that we, their sons and daughters, may honor them always with a spirit of profound respect and love.

Father, we also pray today for those who haven't had the presence of a loving, earthly Father which all your children have as their birthright. May they know that You are the Father of the fatherless. We pray You would use Your Word and Your people to help relieve some of the pain the fatherless children of

earth bear. May this be a day in which we give honor to You, God, for giving us our fathers and for being there when they, in their fallen state, fail us. Through 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.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

“To Fathers Near and Far”

(to the tune of ‘*Melita*’ from ‘*Eternal Father, Strong to Save*’)

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, “To Fathers Near and Far”, sung to the tune of “Eternal Father, Strong to Save”. The lyrics are printed in our bulletins.

To Fathers near and far we sing. Our gratitude and thanks we bring.
Your strength throughout our early years helped us to conquer all our fears.
And when we needed extra care, our comfort came when you were there.

With dads & husbands everywhere, our hopes, our dreams, our lives we share.
The family ties which we hold dear bind us together far and near.
And Father of us all we pray, Thy steadfast love be ours always.

And to our fathers, thanks we lift for their great love, a precious gift.
Lord Jesus, be with them we pray. Send down your Spirit every day.
Let all our fathers now be blessed, both here on earth and saints at rest.

*THE BENEDICTION

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

“Blest Be the Tie That Binds”

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis