

Worship Service
First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia
Sunday, July 9th, 2017

The liturgist will enter about 10:40am and take his seat near the organ. 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 **"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" - Beethoven/Hobby** **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 116)

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.

Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

He has delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation & call on the name of the Lord,

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

Let us worship God beginning by with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... O Lord, we come before you realizing that without you we are nothing. Until we lay our hearts captive to your word and touch, we remain bound to the temporal things of the flesh that can never satisfy the deep, deep hungers of our souls. By the power of your Holy Spirit and a fresh hearing of your Word, set us free from all that binds us to lesser things. Renew in us a sense of your living, breathing Spirit, so that our souls may find rest. Transform our hesitancy into daring, our complacency into urgency, and our indecision into committed response as we surrender our hearts and minds and lives to you this day. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Come Sing, O Church, in Joy!”, #430 in our hymnals.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

“Come Sing, O Church, in Joy!”

The Hymnal #430

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

We live in a generation of complainers, rich in things, but poor in spirit. Increasingly isolated in our abundance, we have become blissfully unaware of the chains that bind us, even as we have become deaf to the Word that could free us. Let us confess our sins before God and one another using the prayer of confession as its found within our bulletins, pausing at its end for a time of silent prayer. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Lord Jesus, you have invited us to come to you for rest and comfort, yet we hesitate because it requires our surrender of control to you. You ask us to learn from you, but we do not want to spend the time and effort it requires. At last, we have grown tired from the pursuit of things which do not satisfy, so we ask you to reorder our lives in accordance with your will so that we may experience the rest and peace that you can give. Amen.

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

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

We are no longer people under law but under grace. We have been set free by love, love revealed through Jesus Christ, who for our sake endured the cross that we might know true freedom from sin

and death...Friends believe the Good News!

I 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

We have been yoked with Christ so that he might lead us from death to life. He has delivered us from the burdens we were never meant to carry so that we might know peace and share it with one another. 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...

“Please be seated. 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, number 403 in our hymnals.”

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

The Hymnal #403

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated.... God has greatly blessed us with many kinds of wealth, but we must not forget those whose lives remain shackled to poverty, ignorance, illness, or despair. Let our joy and gladness overflow as we express our gratitude to God by extending his grace through practical acts of mercy to those still burdened. 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

"Aria Cantabile" - Beethoven/Parks

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... O God, in love we make this offering as a sign of our participation in Christ's ongoing work of lifting burdens and lightening hearts. Bless our gifts and strengthen us to offer worthy service to the glory of Christ in whose name we pray. 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

Brittany McDaniel-Johnson, Soprano

"How Great Thou Art" - Arr. Linda and Steve Pratt

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first reading this morning is taken from the fortieth chapter of Prophet Isaiah, beginning at the twenty-seventh verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 620 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"?"

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

The liturgist will take a seat on the Chancel or with the congregation.

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

Our Sermon text for this morning is taken from the eleventh chapter of Matthew's Gospel, beginning at the twenty-eighth verse. You can find it on page 845 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God....

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"For the Rest of your Life"

It was the middle of the night. George was pacing back and forth in the bedroom, unable to sleep. This woke his wife, who asked him why he couldn't sleep.

He replied, "You know that thousand dollars I borrowed from Bob next door? Well it's due tomorrow, and I don't have it. I don't know what to tell him and I just can't stop thinking about it so I can get some sleep."

His wife said, "Honey, I have the solution." She opened up the window and yelled to the house next store. "Bob, wake up." A light went on in the house next store and Bob stuck his head out of his window.

She continued, "You know that thousand dollars my husband owes you? Well he doesn't have it!"

Then she closed her window and turned to her husband. "There, now let *him* pace the floor and *you* come to bed and get to sleep."

Laugh if you want, but chronic lack of sleep affects somewhere between 50 and 70 million adult Americans every year-- and the problem is getting worse. So when we hear what has become known over the years as The Great Invitation from Jesus, it is like sweet music, a lullaby, to our restless souls.

But then we start to think about the truthfulness of that invitation and doubt moves back in and our easy, peaceful feeling moves out. For instance, we have Vacation Bible School this week. You really can't have much to do with VBS without soon coming to the realization that it is a lot of work, and it takes a lot of time. Real commitment, **for 5 whole days.** Truth is, when the week is over, we'll have about a dozen adults, who will swear that they're never doing another one of these. They're going to sit back next year and let someone else do it, let some one else, plan, adapt, and reorient their lives for a week or two or three. But next year rolls around and, lo and behold, you look at the VBS Team, and it's pretty much the same crew, making the same commitment this year that they did last year, and making the same promises to themselves that this is the last year they're gong to do this... It's pretty much the same every year. What happened to that rest that Jesus promised?

Or take handbells. It takes commitment just to get to practice every week, to get there on time, and to be there when a performance is scheduled. When you have as few ringers as our bell choir has, it is so hard on those who do come and play when just one or two others don't show. Yet the weekly ringers go on week after week doing what they can. Like George in our opening story, the missing ones, the volunteers who don't volunteer or who don't follow through, worry about what they are going to say to the others. It gets hard to face someone you really love and care about when you let them down, again, and even again. But there are so few, quitting is not an option. That is sum, is what life in a small church is like. And you think, "OK, Jesus. Where is that rest you promised and what does your yoke seem so heavy? There's nothing light about it."

"Come to me, all of you who toil without thanks, without help. Come all of you who are carrying loads that are more than you can carry." That part we understand, it's this yoke stuff, and talk of such work being "easy", and the unfulfilled promise of rest *that escapes our comprehension*.

Let's start with the yoke. A yoke is a tool that spreads a work load more efficiently between different parts of the body or even different bodies. A yoke might be used to take the load from the hands and arms to the shoulders-- as is done in many cultures where water must be carried some distance from one place to another. Carry a five gallon bucket filled with water in one hand and see how quickly your muscles scream for relief. But take that bucket, hang it on one end of a smooth yoke laid across ones' shoulders, and add another bucket to the other end, and you will find that you can carry twice the load, with a tiny fraction of the effort and discomfort, for a much greater distance.

Or take two oxen, yoke them together to pull a plow, & see how much faster your plowing gets done.

In Jesus' day, one of a carpenter's most common jobs was making yokes for people and animals. There is an old legend that Jesus was in fact a Master Carpenter and the finest yoke maker in all of Judea. He didn't just make a generic, one size fits all yoke that he could make a little easier and sell a little cheaper. No sireee. His yokes were works of art. Each one custom fit and shaped to the animal or animals that would be wearing it. Jesus and his customers knew that the better the yoke fit, the more productive the animal would be in his tasks. When Jesus says his yoke is "easy", he doesn't mean that it is simple, or that no effort is required. The word he uses that we translate "easy" means that "it gives ease", it fits. It doesn't rub or chafe. It is made to fit the wearer. No one else's yoke is exactly like it. The yoke Jesus has made for you is one of a kind-- just like you.

It is the yoke that gives ease, that lightens the burdens, that allows us to do all we can for him, and when our work is done, he will remove the yoke from us and we will find rest for our souls. John the Revelator says it this way, "Blessed are those who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors and their deeds will follow after them."

One more thing about the yoke. Notice that Jesus invites the believer to "Take my yoke upon you..." He doesn't ask that we let him put it on us. He doesn't treat us like spoiled children and say, "Now just shut up and be still. I'm going to put this on you, and you are going to like it. One day you will even thank me for it."

It is strictly an invitation, not a demand. Some years back, an elderly couple immigrated to America from a war torn part of Eastern Europe, and they were not well versed in American culture. One day they received an invitation to the wedding of a family member, and at the bottom of the invitation were those cryptic letters: RSVP. In his thick, Eastern European accent, the husband said, "Vife, vat does it mean: RSVP? "

So they thought for a while, until inspiration dawned, and the husband said, "Vife, I know vat it means: *Remember-- Send Vedding Presents.*"

They made a mistake by imagining that the message was a demand when, in reality, it was an invitation. Unfortunately, many of us make the same mistake about Jesus Christ and the gospel. We think it is a demand when in reality it is an offer—a free invitation.

A memory familiar to most Judeans was the treatment of their own soldiers following defeat at the hands of Caesar's armies. Once an army had surrendered, it's soldiers filed past two posts set in the

ground, with a yoke lashed between them about 4 feet off the ground. The conquered soldiers were marched single file by it. If they wanted to live they had only to walk under the yoke, acknowledging their acceptance of Roman rule and service to Caesar under the Roman yoke. If they could not, they marched away from it and were put to death with a Roman sword.

And the height of the yoke? Why did they set it so low? Because if anyone wanted to pass under it, they were forced to bow. And bowing symbolized an acceptance of the conqueror's power. To pass under the yoke, was to acknowledge Caesar as Lord.

There is one more thing to remember about Jesus' invitation. Yokes were not just used to efficiently connect an animal to the burden he must shoulder, it was also used to connect two animals so that together they could share the load. When we take Jesus' yoke upon us, we are yoking ourselves to **him**. He will pull most of the load, and he will teach us to carry what we must with grace. He will walk beside us and teach us the ropes.

Woody Allen once said of that promised rest believers will experience in God's kingdom, "The lion and the lamb shall lie down together,... but the lamb won't get much sleep." But Woody's observation is funnier than it is true, The lamb **can** sleep very well, because he is yoked with his Shepherd. The lamb can sleep, because his Shepherd never will.

Take his yoke upon you, and you will experience the rest of your life. . . **FOR** the rest of your life.
THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray... Lord Jesus, we have brought many burdens with us here this morning. We are burdened with concern about our families. We worry about our health, our finances, even worries about returning to our work with its demands and responsibilities. We have come here hoping for a time of rest, an opportunity to unburden ourselves from the cares that consume us.

Because you have promised us rest, we ask you to relieve us of those burdens which are too heavy for us to bear by ourselves. If there be burdens from which we cannot be delivered, we ask that you bear them with us, thus enabling us to carry on productive and meaningful lives despite the burdens.

Lord, you have called us to be disciples, so help us to learn from you and to rejoice in your service, for having found the rest that you have promised. We know that there are burdens which we would avoid, but which you nonetheless would have us to bear for others too weak to bear them alone. Quiet our groans and ease our own discomforts so that we may be more aware of the hurts of the rest of the world. Strengthen us so we may be courageous enough to bear whatever yoke you offer us, to bear whatever burden you lay upon us. Relieve us of those burdens which are trivial, or selfish, or inconsequential. Give us a yoke worth wearing, a burden worth bearing all to the glory of Christ, 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

"Near to the Heart of God"

The Hymnal #527

*THE BENEDICTION

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Go Now in Peace"

Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of everyday.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know He will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.
Amen, Amen, Amen

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis