

Worship Service
First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia
Sunday, July 16th, 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 Mission Committee would like to promote the church and generate “team spirit” by giving everyone in the church a T-Shirt or Polo shirt (the wearer’s choice). The shirts will be royal blue with the new church logo in yellow. The T-Shirts are Ultra Cotton in sizes YXS-4XL. The polo shirts are Dry-blend, Sizes S-4XL. If you would wear a church shirt & would like one, call the church office (234-2601) or email Katherine Phillips (kcardwell@gmail.com) with your choice of Tee or Polo & your size. The deadline for ordering is July 17th.

Jessica Lee is recovering in ICU at the hospital in El Dorado for another 4 or 5 days at least. She will be released from the ICU to go home when she is ready.

Katherine Connelly is in Room 2330 at MRMC. She will probably be there for several more days, but until you hear differently, just send her a card or some flowers. She is worn out from her illness and her physical therapy, and she needs her rest, so visitors have been limited by her doctors. On a lighter note, She and T.G. have a new grandchild, Amelia Summer Connelly, born last Monday in Alexandria, Virginia. She weighed 8 lbs. 7 oz. and was 21” long. She is the granddaughter of Dan Connelly, and the daughter of John Connelly.

Our VBS Alumna, also known as Starveyors, had a great time at VBS this week. We had the most creative, enthusiastic, and hard working bunch of volunteers ever and the children really got into learning to look for God all around them. At last count we served 41 different kids and averaged about 35 in attendance. They took up offerings each day which will be used for purchasing medical supplies for next year’s Cameroon Mission Trip as well as at least a couple dozen boxes of band aids and assorted first aid supplies.

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

The Galactic Starveyors

A song, the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag, the Christian Flag and the Bible.

As the kids leave the Chancel area, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 65 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 65)

You are to be praised, O God, in Zion.

To you that hear prayer shall all flesh come, because of their transgressions.

Our sins are stronger than we are, but you will blot them out.

O God of our salvation, O Hope of the ends of the earth!

You visit the earth and water it abundantly, making it fruitful.

You prepare the grain, and provide for all the earth.

You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty.

The fields are rich for grazing, & the hills are clothed with joy.

The meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with grain;

Let all the earth shout for joy and sing!

Let us worship God beginning by with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... May the seed of your Word take root in each of us. Let not your truth be choked out by competing agendas or by our recollections of our own imperfections and past failings. We want to hear

your Word and live it in such a way that those who seek and hope in you will not be embarrassed or misled by our life and witness. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing", #356 in our hymnals.

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

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

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. We may delude ourselves, but in so doing we preclude the transformation that God's grace makes possible. In penitence and faith, let us confess our sins, praying together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins. 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. The proof of God's amazing love is this-- while we were still sinners, Jesus Christ died for us... 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

Jesus Christ was crucified for our trespasses and was raised for our justification. Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will and then take a seat.

After a few moments, children will gather at the front and sing.

SPECIAL MUSIC

A VBS Video Summary by Olivia Smith

Song - Sin Messed Everything Up!

Song - God Is Over the Moon

The Galactic Starveyors

As the children leave, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated.... All that we have, all that we are, is there by the grace of God. From that abundance, let us give cheerfully and without reservation that others may be raised to newness of life. 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 "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" - Neil Harmon 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... Accept, O Lord, all of our gifts offered in response to your overwhelming generosity and kindness. Equip us to scatter these seeds and grant that they may they find good soil bringing an abundant harvest for your kingdom, through Christ Our Lord. 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... "While we remain standing, let us sing our next hymn, "Grace Alone", #2162 in the *Sing the Faith* hymnal supplement.

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

"Grace Alone"

Sing the Faith #2162

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first reading this morning is taken from the eighth chapter of Paul's Letter to the church at Rome, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 982 in our pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

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

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

Our Sermon text for this morning is taken from selected verses of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, beginning at the first verse. You can find it on page 846 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God....

"Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"The Parable of the Profligate Planter"

The Bible was not written by some relaxed person, all lathered up with sunscreen under an umbrella by the beach drinking lemonade. Its message didn't come from the lives of those who had time on their hands. The Bible was lived and written by ordinary people like us, who would work all day, and then sit down by candle light with a chicken feather and scraps of paper to share what they had learned of God and of his plans for his people.

One day that a man went out to sow. Some of the seed he sowed went on a path; the seed hardly hit the ground before sparrows came along and ate it. There are some people, let's face it, who are like that hard path. The Word hardly gets there, and it is gone. The sparrows come: inattention, distraction, something else. These are not bad people. They are relatives of mine, relatives of yours. They are friends of mine, friends of yours. They are good people. Only they never seem to have any capacity to respond to the Word of God. There is a dullness there. Sunday morning means absolutely nothing to them except, "I

can sleep later. I can call up a buddy and say, 'Why don't we take our guns out and have some target practice and shoot some cans on fence posts?'"

Some of the seed, if I follow the interpretation, lands on shallow soil. There is not much depth, and underneath the top inch of soil is rock. The seed springs up. Everybody's excited. "So-and-so joined the church!" It is all very exciting. And then what happens? We really do not know what happens, except there was no depth. We are talking shallow. We are not talking insincere-- just shallow.

What do you think when I say "a shallow person"? I have a lot of thoughts. A shallow person is a person who has only two items on the agenda: pleasant and unpleasant, what I like to do and what I don't like to do. I avoid what I don't like to do, and I do what I like to do. That is shallow. Shallow is a person who spends way too much time in front of the mirror. I read last week about a woman who said, "I've been thinking about killing myself, but I want to lose five pounds first." That is shallow. Shallow is reading nothing but *People* or *Us* magazines to find out who is changing life partners or genders this week. Shallow is watching reality television like the *Kardashians* and believing that it has **anything** to do with reality.

Sometimes the Word of God falls among the weeds. These are good people, but they have too many irons in the fire, too many things to do. They have said yes to too many things. Oh, they come to church now and then, but nothing more than just a cameo appearance. These are persons who have forgotten the fundamental rule of game shows and the Kingdom of God: You have to be present to win. They had a sense of priorities once-- this first, this second, this third-- but they lost the list, and now it is a matter of where the most pressure is felt. "I would have been there, but my cousin called and wanted me to come to Texarkana to help her pick out a pair of shoes to wear to the class reunion." "Oh, I would've been there, but my buddy ... " "I would've been there but... ," but this or but that.

Then there is the good soil-- the genuine, truly humble, serving Christians. They are a mystery to me. They live in the same world as others, have the same friends, work at the same places, but there is something different about them. They love, they care, they go, they do, they give. And if you were to recite all the good things they have done, they would be embarrassed. Where do they get that? I think that the difference is in taking just a little bit of time to attend to the spirit-- to nourish that, to feed that, to talk to that, to let it pray, to let it breathe, sometimes alone and sometimes with like-minded people. Attending to the spirit nourishes, increases, and eventually shapes who you are. That is the difference.

They probably didn't start out that way, but something happened-- maybe it was a tragedy that brought a searing pain into their peaceful world; maybe it was a conundrum that left them searching everywhere for answers and finding none until they finally came on their knees, befuddled and bewildered, asking for guidance from the Source of all Wisdom; maybe it was a hunger that nothing on earth could satisfy, or a thirst that nothing in this life could quench. But eventually, the shallow, the hard, the overcrowded hearts were broken and a little seed took root, and EVERYTHING was changed for the better.

So lesson one, from today's parable, is don't worry about where the seed falls. Don't worry about making it grow. Just scatter the seed. just tell God's story as seen through your eyes. Just share your faith.

And don't ever give up on anybody! The plain fact is that I do not know, and you do not know, whether there will be any growth. So let us not be selective, saying "Oh, I think I will put a seed here. This looks like a good one, but I won't put a seed there-- no use fooling with him." No, spread the seed. Let it go-- on the path,, amidst the weeds... even where the soil is thin. Randomly scatter the good Word of God and do not try to predict what the result will be, because you do not know.

Every congregation in the world has about a dozen people who are a surprise to their own relatives-- **I'm one of them**. "I never dreamed **he** would be in church!" "I never dreamed **she** would be active in that." This is God's business. This is Christ sowing the seed for goodness sake. I do not agree with the old time hard shell Calvinists that predestination means that God has predetermined our fate relative to His Kingdom. I believe that people can change, or perhaps, more accurately, that God can and does change people for the better. Think about what the good soil was like before the farmer got hold of it. Covered with grass and weeds of every kind-- knee deep wherever the farmer walked. But he took his plow and he

broke that choked up soil, and turned it upside down. He'd find rocks and he'd pick them up and stack them at the edge of the field to make a wall to keep the wild things away from his precious grain. And **then** he planted his precious seed.

Please don't think that success in the prospering of the Seed, the Word, is up to you. No farmer puts a seed in the soil and then screams at it. "Now, come on, get up!" It will come up in its own good time; with sun and water, it will come up. You do not have to beg it, you do not have to blackmail it, and you do not have to threaten it. I get a little weary of people, good-hearted, good-spirited people, who on behalf of their churches worry you to death! Just plant the seed. It is God's seed, and the seed carries its future in its bosom. It is the seed, and it will grow. Just plant it. Be profligate in planting; cast it anywhere and everywhere. Trust the seed, the gracious good love of God for you and your family and your husband and your wife and your parents and your children.

This last week we had bunch of men and women up here at the church planting seeds for 3 hours plus every night. I think some of them didn't even know they were planting seeds. They were just doing what had to be done, and if no one else would do it, they would. God bless them all. We all like to think that the seed we scattered all fell onto good soil. But the newspapers won't let us forget that some of them, and we don't know which ones, will have dark futures ahead. Death disease, dishonor-- **dark things**, may lie ahead of them. But we will take comfort in having planted the seed in their hearts. Who knows how long the seed may lay dormant, before in God's own good time, it will burst open and bring life and light where before there was only darkness and dread and despair.

That little seed, locked away in a grown up heart, a heart grown as hard as concrete from the scars of a rough life, and then suddenly, that heart is broken, things get turned upside down, the seed is watered by tears and draws air from the sighs of those who have been praying for so long. And then all at once a shoot bursts forth, and then the stalk, and then the grain, and that hard scabble ground of a human heart, erupts with grain. The prayers of the faithful are answered. The hard ground becomes fertile. And God smiles and says, "I told you so."

So for all of you who worked so hard, and went home every night, exhausted, to a cold supper, and bath time and bed time with the kids and grandkids before you could fall into bed yourself, may God bless you for trusting the seed, and trusting Jesus, the real Profligate Planter, who, by his example, tells us to just go and scatter-- on hard ground... rocky ground, ...weedy round, ...dry ground,... as well as good ground-- And your wife or your husband or friend may say, "What did you talk to *him* for? Why did you do that for her? There's nothing there." No, you do not know. You do not have a clue, not a clue, because the seed is the Word of God, and that is the power of God unto salvation.

If we believe that, we will all be all right.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray... Father of all Creation, you have made all things and you have called them good. Help us to remember that as we go forth into the world to scatter the seed of your Word, to share the love of Jesus, to proclaim the good news of freedom, hope, life, and joy eternal that awaits all who turn to you.

Make us good soil. Where we our shallow, cut more deeply into our well ordered lives so the light and air and water can reach those closed off areas of our lives, the places where we keep our secrets, the corners where our private shame hides waiting for a chance to abscess and poison the joy you have placed within us.

Help us to be profligate planters in our own right, scattering seed wherever we are. May we never fail those who love us; disappoint those who trust us; or bring grief to those who pray for us. Make us the kind of people who remember our responsibilities more than our rights; who seek to put as much into life as we take from it; who remember that we will one day be required to account for our use of your priceless gifts; who remember how you have loved us and how we are to love others in Jesus' stead; who are as ready to kneel before your power as we are to reach out for your love.

May we be faithful in our attendance at church, finding joy in seeking and worshipping You. So inspire us that we may begin, continue, and end each day in thinking of you, and doing our part in making

this world all that you meant it to be. 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.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

“Amazing Grace”

The Hymnal #280

*THE BENEDICTION

*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