

## Sunday, July 26th, 2015

*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 and take his/her seat. The pastor will follow, step into the pulpit, 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.

**PRELUDE** "Blessed Are Ye, Faithful Souls Departed"-Johannes Brahms **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 Isaiah 12 and printed in our bulletins?”

**THE CALL TO WORSHIP** (adapted from Isaiah 12)

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, and you comforted me.

**Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,**

The Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.

**With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name;

**Make known his deeds among the nations;**

Proclaim that his name is exalted.

**Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;**

Let all the earth shout aloud and sing for joy!

**Great in our midst is the Holy One of Israel.**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Let us pray... Holy God, the stories of the saints through all the ages come to us as a gift, for it is through them that we have learned the meaning of faith. We receive this gift with thanks and praise. We are grateful for their example, for showing us the way, for challenging us to continue to live faithful lives. Grant us perseverance when the race gets tough, courage when trials beset us, and rest when we grow weary from the struggles of life. May Christ's joy renew us as we fix our eyes on him. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Glorious Things of the Are Spoken”, number 446 in our Hymnals.

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

\*HYMN OF PRAISE “Glorious Things of the Are Spoken” *The Hymnal #446*

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

\*CALL TO CONFESSION

Every glimpse of the future glory that awaits us, reminds us not only of the hope we have in Christ, but of our own moral failures and transgressions against God and others. With the full assurance of faith, let us go to God in prayer to confess our sin before God and one another as we pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its conclusion for a moment of silent prayer. Let us pray...

\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of the faithful, you call us to courage and risk and to act according to what we say we believe, yet we remain trapped by fear. You call us to walk a difficult path and to follow you through the sea to dry land, yet we remain stuck in the mud by what we think we know. You call us to move, to trust in your providence, as faithful pilgrims once progressed toward a bright tomorrow, but trusting in only what we can see, hear, touch and feel, we remain bound by the routines of today. You call us to open ourselves to the new things you are doing among and around us, yet we turn away to embrace the

familiar. Teach us to live by faith, to act according to our hope, to trust in your promises, & to prepare for a day of redemption more glorious than any of us can imagine. We pray in the name of the author of our faith, Jesus Christ. Amen.

\*SILENT CONFESSION

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

\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Our hope in the Lord! For with the Him there is steadfast love, and with Him is great power to redeem. We have come to Him whose shed blood speaks a word of grace. It is he who will redeem us from all our iniquities. 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 gift of his son, let us also be reconciled with one another and share His 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.**

Tell the children the story of *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupery. Holding up a copy of the book, describe how the little prince travels through the universe and eventually comes to Earth, where he meets a fox who teaches him an important lesson, "One sees clearly only with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eye." Ask the children to name some of the things that we see clearly with our hearts: The love of our parents, the affection of our friends, the joy of playing, the forgiveness of God. Point out that the apostle Paul is kind of like the fox in the story, because he says to the Corinthians, "we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Ask them to guess what Paul is talking about, and then suggest that "what cannot be seen" are important things such as love, affection, joy and forgiveness. Stress that we know they are real because they make our lives good, but at the same time they are invisible. Hold up *The Little Prince*, and say that the fox is right when he says that what is most important is "invisible to the eye" -- after we are finished with life on Earth, we will live forever with the God of love and forgiveness, in "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (5:1).

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

God has blessed us with everything we need and given us a gift of grace that we don't deserve. Remembering His mighty deeds throughout history and His grace lavished upon us, let us share with joy a portion of His blessings 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 "How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place" - Brahms/Wagner 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 all that is seen and unseen, we, your people, present to you in these offerings a piece of who we are. These offerings represent the fruits of our labor and we return them to You as a part of our worship in gratitude for all that You have done in our lives. Accept these gifts and use them for your glory, now and forever. 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**

"Prayer" - Franz Schubert

violin soloist, Dalene Baer

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

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

Our first lesson this morning is taken from Paul's Second Letter to the church at Corinth, the fourth chapter, beginning at the sixteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1006 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him."

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

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

Our second lesson this morning is taken from the Book of Hebrews, the twelfth chapter, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1052 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

"For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a

tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."

"But you have come to Mount Zion & to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, & to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel."

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

THE SERMON

"A Day of Rejoicing"

As I celebrate today, the occasion of my 62nd birthday, I am forced to acknowledge that my body is not what it was. Years of neglect have left it angry and seeking daily revenge on me. Each day, I grow just a bit weaker, the pain and aggravation of earthly existence is intensified ever so slightly.

Since misery loves company, I take some comfort in knowing that most of you are in a similar situation and understand how I feel. But my greatest comfort comes from the words of Paul in the reading from Corinthians read by Mike McNeill a moment ago: "Though my outer nature is wasting away, my inner nature is being renewed every day. This affliction is preparing for me an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."

By virtue of age and grace, I have come to that point where, like Paul, I am not afraid of dying, and to some extent can even look forward to it. While I am here, I have work to do, given to me by God, that I love to do. I get to spend time, with all of you, good friends and family, who have been unfailingly kind and limitlessly forgiving of my shortcomings.

But I also understand that to be away from the body is to be at home with the Lord. Home. With the Lord. Not here. This is not home. And the biggest mistake we make is thinking that it is. We build and acquire and redecorate and expand and try to tie ourselves to earth with our earthly empires. We don't write wills. We don't prepare living wills. We move on down the road of life, moving closer to our departure from it with each step, and never stop to think about the end of this journey and the preparations for our homecoming in the kingdom of God.

But you are likely to answer, "I am not ready to die yet."

There are multiple errors in such stinking thinking. First, you don't get to pick the time of your departure, or the means of conveyance-- how you will depart this earth for your ultimate destination. Second, if you are a Christian, you are not really preparing for death, but for your moving day, when you will be relocated to your final home.

And if you're not looking forward to that day, then you haven't spent enough time thinking about the promises that God has made us for that day. So let us remove that sense of dread about our moving day and look at what Scripture has to say about it.

First, three crowns await you. The first is the crown of life mentioned in James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10. Heaven will be wonderful for us, not just because of what is present, but because of what is absent-- death, disease, tears, despair, loneliness, pain. Think about what we do here to avoid death for as long as possible-- we sweat and exercise, we eat things we don't like, we pop a jillion little pills every day, haul oxygen tanks with us everywhere we go, poke ourselves with needles, and on and on. As long as these things help us to do the meaningful work Christ has for us, keep on doing them. But do not forget that this world is only temporary. It is not an end, it is a means to an end, life with God in our forever home. This life is not crowned with life, it is crowned with death. It is only our time with God that is crowned with life.

As Paul neared the end of his life and ministry and lived in chains awaiting his execution, he wrote his young friend and helper, Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the

Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

The crown of righteousness is sort of self-explanatory-- it means that you are in a right relationship with God-- forever. You might ask, "But aren't we already covered with Christ's righteousness from the moment we believe and receive him as our Lord and Savior?"

Well, yes, we are covered with Christ's righteousness, but we still sin, perhaps not as boldly or monumentally as before we believed, but we sin. It is Christ's righteousness, not our own that covers us. When my uncle died, he had set up a trust fund to pay for most of my college. When I arrived at Baylor as a freshman almost 44 years ago, I had my checkbook with me-- and I used it. I never got a copy of the statement. I just wrote checks. I never worried how much money was in the account. All I knew was that if I wrote the check, it would be covered.

However, that is no longer the case. Today, if I write a check, it is my money, good faith and credit that the bank recognizes and that is why they will cash a check with my name on it-- even though they would probably prefer Debbie's.

That's how it is with the righteousness of Christ, we sin or write checks, and Christ covers it with his righteousness. He deposits his grace, and we are good to go. But at some point in time, I've got to stop sinning. There is no sin in heaven. The righteousness of Christ first imputed or credited to me, must become my own. That is what sanctification is all about. When we first believe, we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, but just as importantly, the Holy Spirit comes to live with us and begins to change us, and over time, the righteousness imputed to us, is imparted to us. That which belonged to Jesus and was credited to us, becomes our own. We will stop sinning-- probably not until the perishable is clothed with the imperishable, but it happens, and that is when we receive a crown of righteousness.

In this world, sin has broken a million hearts, crushed just as many hopes and dreams. It has broken countless promises, and shattered lives from the beginning of time all the way to its end. But in heaven all of this will end. Sin will have no power, no presence, no place.

Try to imagine a world without sin, a perfect world.

Does that mean peace? Then envision absolute tranquility.

Does a perfect world imply joy? Then create your highest happiness.

Will a perfect world have love? If so, ponder a place where love has no bounds.

Whatever heaven means to you, imagine it. Get it firmly fixed in your mind. Delight in it.

Dream about it. Long for it.

And then smile as your Father reminds you from the pen of Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "No one has ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him".

What a breathtaking verse! *Heaven is beyond our imagination.* We **cannot** envision it. At our most creative moment, at our deepest thought, at our highest level, we still cannot fathom eternity.

Anything you imagine is inadequate. Anything anyone imagines is inadequate. Think of all the songs about heaven. All the artists' portrayals.

All the lessons preached, poems written, and chapters drafted.

When it comes to describing heaven, we are all happy failures. It's beyond us. That is the meaning of the crown of righteousness.

That's two crowns, and there is yet a third-- the crown of glory.

Peter writes this in his First letter, the 4th verse of the fifth chapter, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that never fades away."

To be crowned in life means no more death. To be crowned in righteousness means no more sin. To be crowned in glory means no more defeat.

Have you ever been a loser? At sports? Golf.... tennis... football... baseball.... Have you ever dreamed of being a Jordan Spieth, or Tiger Woods? A LeBron James, Michael Jordan, or Larry Byrd? A Muhammad Ali. Have you ever dreamed of being Miss America? Maybe you wanted to be a

recording or movie star idolized and adored by millions? Perhaps you wanted to be the next Sam Walton, Bill Gates, or, God help us, Donald Trump? What would it be like to have more money and more power than half the countries of the world?

We all want to have the perfect marriage, the perfect home, the perfect job, the perfect life. But how many of us do?

We are all failures in some way, things haven't worked out the way we thought or hoped that they would. When we die, our children, or maybe our grandchildren might visit our graves or remember us well and fondly. But after them we know we will be forgotten. No cheers, no parades, no flags at half mast. We feel like losers, unable to erase or correct the thousands of mistakes made in the course of an ordinary lifetime.

But the crown of glory means that all of that doesn't matter. **Your** day is yet to come. What the world has overlooked, you Father has remembered, and sooner than you can imagine, you will be blessed by him. Listen to this from Paul in First Corinthians 4:5, "God will praise each one of them."

Not the best of them, nor a few of them, the the overachievers, or high performers-- but each of them, every one of them.

You won't be left out. In fact God himself will praise you. He won't leave it to the elders, or the angels or archangels, or even St. Peter. He will do it himself, speak your name and sing your praises from his own lips. He will place his hands on your shoulders, take one finger and lift your chin until your eyes meet his, and he will say, "Well done! God and faithful servant! enter into the joy I have prepared for you! Come and share my happiness!"

And it won't be just any name he speaks. We pick up a lot of nicknames in a lifetime-- "Cheat", "Lazy Bum", "Drunk", "Loser", "Slut", "Fatso". No "B" words or "N" words. The name God calls you won't be any of those. It won't even be the name your parents gave you. It will be a name picked out and given to you by God himself.

John tells us this in Revelation 2:17, "I will also give to each one who wins the victory a white stone with a new name written on it."

You may not have known it, but God has a new name for you. When you get home, he won't call you Paula, or Katherine, or Debbie, or Pat. It won't be Jim, or Benny, or Mark, or Mike.

When God says he will make all things new, he means it. You will have a new home, a new body, a new life, and-- a new name.

The road ahead is so bright a fresh name is needed. Your eternity is so special no common name will do. So God has one reserved just for you. There is more to your life that you ever thought. The life ahead of us does not end with death, but only becomes more glorious than any of us can imagine. So don't lose heart, hold your head high, and finish your race strong. Be there when God whispers your name.

#### THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me... Lord of the ages, we struggle toward your presence, and in the hidden depths of heart and soul we seek to trust your promises of a glorious future in the sweet forever that awaits us when this earthly life is done. We believe that You comprehend our sorrows and look with tenderness upon the lingerings of doubt and fear within us. Grant then that our doors may open at your bidding. Use these fleeting moments here to reach our hearts and claim them for your own. Heal our souls, that out of sadness and defeat, may come the joy that conquers tears, and that out of darkness, light that turns the blackest night into the brightest day. Persuade us that behind death is still the steady presence of your wisdom; so we may surely trust your goodness and your power to deliver us to the home you have so lovingly and lavishly prepared for us through Jesus Christ our risen 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, “When We All Get to Heaven”, printed in our bulletins.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION

“When We All Get to Heaven”

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, sing His mercy and His grace;  
In the mansions bright and blessed, He'll prepare for us a place. *(Refrain)*

*When we all get to heaven, a day of rejoicing that will be!*

*When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory.*

While we walk the pilgrim pathway, clouds will overspread the sky;  
But when traveling days are over, not a shadow, not a sigh. *[Refrain]*

Let us then be true and faithful, trusting, serving every day;  
Just one glimpse of Him in glory will the toils of life repay. *[Refrain]*

Onward to the prize before us! Soon His beauty we'll behold;  
Soon the pearly gates will open; we shall tread the streets of gold. *[Refrain]*

\*THE BENEDICTION

Hebrews 13:20-21

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

“He Is Lord!”

He is Lord! He is Lord! He is risen from the dead and He is Lord!  
Ev'ry knee shall bow, ev'ry tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis