

Service of the Lord's Day
First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia, Arkansas
Sunday, September 25th, 2016

PRELUDE "Medley: 'Come Thou Almighty King' & 'When I Survey'" **Olivia Smith, Pianist**
CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "This Is the Day!" - Dan Dykema **The Choir**

After the choir is finished, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 146 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 146)

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have being.

We will not put our trust in princes in whom there is no help.

When his breath departs he returns to his earth; and on that very day his plans perish.

Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God,

Who made heaven & earth, the sea, & all that is in them.

He keeps faith for ever and executes justice for the oppressed.

He gives food to the hungry and sets the prisoners free.

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind and lifts up those who are bowed down.

The Lord loves the righteous and watches over the sojourners.

He upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked He brings to ruin.

The Lord will reign for ever, O Zion, and He will be thy God unto all generations!

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Glorious and Sovereign Lord, you are our light and salvation. As we gather to worship you this day, help us to hear and heed your Word so that we might be kept from those things that would harm us or others. Open our ears that we may hear and heed your life-changing warnings and promises. Help us to identify with rich and poor alike as your children, and make us willing to offer the care and compassion required of those who aspire to your kingdom. Guide us in the the way of righteousness and compassion so that our actions may exalt you, and our every deed provide hope to those we meet in your name. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn,
“Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine”, number 341 in our *Hymnals*.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE “Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine” *The Hymnal #341*

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

How often in the course of each day, do we get so caught up in our pursuit of good things, do we neglect the best, The Love story of God and His people with all of its promises and its warnings, intended to guide us to the peace and joy of God's eternal kingdom? Let us pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing for a moment at its conclusion for a period of silent prayer. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Our Father, you have blessed us beyond all deserving, so we must ask your forgiveness for those times when we act like spoiled children, becoming so comfortable with our advantages that we forget who makes them possible. We so value the earthly blessings you provide, that we treat spiritual blessings, such as your Holy Word, with disdain. We so neglect its guidance that we have no right to expect anything other than condemnation. Worst of all, we encourage others to ignore your warnings and to do what feels right, rather than to do what you have said is right. O God, show us a better way and give us a new perspective on what is true and worthy of our attention in life. Have mercy on us, we pray. Amen.

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

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The God who gave us life is eager to redeem that life when our inattention to His voice leads us to stray and to forgive us when we hear and answer his call to return. Let us set our hopes on God, who mercifully forgives all our sins and richly provides all things that we need to live an abundant life. 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

Ransomed, healed, restored, and forgiven, we have been freed to live at peace with God and 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 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 Pastor Mike.”

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.***

Hold up a series of traffic signs — STOP, YIELD, NO TURNS — and ask the children to explain what each of them means. Have them tell you what kinds of things can happen if a person doesn’t pay attention to signs. Stress that it is very important to pay attention to signs, because they are there to keep everybody safe. If we don’t obey the sign, it will cost us some money, or some pain, or even our lives.

Tell the children the story of the rich man and Lazarus, and how the rich man ignored the messages of the Bible about taking care of poor and hungry people. Point out that the rich man died and then suffered terribly, because he hadn’t been good to poor people like Lazarus. Let the children know that the rich man wanted his brothers to be warned about this, but he was told, “They have the Scriptures” (Luke 16:29) — meaning that they have plenty of signs in the Bible that tell them how they are supposed to live and what to do and what not to do.

Ask the children to tell you what some of the most important signs in the Bible tell us to do — to love others, to obey mom and dad, to be nice, to share with others — Invite them to pray with you asking God to help them pay attention and to obey the warning signs he has given us.

Let us pray.... Dear God, we don’t always do what we are supposed to. Sometimes it’s because we don’t know how, but most of the time it’s because we want things that aren’t good for us, in spite of the warnings we get from the Bible and from our moms and dads. Help us to pay attention and to obey the warnings we get so that we can be happy forever. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

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, “Open My Eyes That I May See”, #324 in our hymnals.”

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

“Open My Eyes That I May See”

The Hymnal #324

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

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated. . . Because the love of money is the root of all evil, we should seek to make wealth a tool for accomplishing good rather than as a means for accumulating things. Because we have been blessed in order that we might share, we bring our offerings with gratitude and rejoicing. Let us give

thanks with glad and generous hearts 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 "Light Divine" - Orlando Gibbons/Healey Willan 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... Gracious God, you have blessed us with all that we need and often more than we need. Help us receive what you give with grace. In turn, help us be generous — with our monetary gifts, our possessions, our talents and our time. We ask that you would accept and consecrate all these gifts to further your work in the world. 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.

THE ANTHEM

"Create in Me a Clean Heart" Arnold B. Sherman

The Choir

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the sixth chapter of Paul's First Letter to Timothy, beginning at the sixth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1036 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith & pierced their hearts with many pangs.

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

In the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed."

*The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation.
When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...*

Our sermon text today is taken from the sixteenth Chapter of the Gospel of Luke, beginning at the nineteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #910 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

"There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Laz'arus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Laz'arus in his bosom. And he called out, `Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Laz'arus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.'

But Abraham said, `Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Laz'arus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

And he said, `Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

But Abraham said, `They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

And he said, `No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

He said to him, `If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.'

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Warning Signs”

Have you ever thought about how many warnings you get in the course of the day? The first one I pay attention to is usually the bell that sounds when I get into my car. What would otherwise be a pleasant little ding, soon becomes an annoyance because of its insistence that I **must** buckle my seat belt.

That may be the first one I hear, but I see many more before that. There's the warning tag on my bed, my pillow, my hair dryer. My laptop pops up dozens of dialog boxes asking me if I really want to do what I have told it to do.

My favorites are the ones like these:

On a frozen dinner: "Defrost before eating."

On a chain saw: "Do not stop chain with hand."

A fishing lure, with this warning: "Harmful if swallowed."

A baby stroller warned: "Remove child before folding."

And a cardboard sunshield that keeps the sun off the dashboard warned, "Do not drive with sunshield in place."

What's really sad is that each of these warnings were added because someone, somewhere actually needed to be told what should have been obvious to any one with a room temperature IQ.

A preacher friend from San Antonio told me about his favorite encounter with warnings. He told me, "I'd seen that silly light burning on the car panel for days. And for days I'd ignored it. Too busy. I kept telling myself, "I'll take the car to the mechanic tomorrow."

But tomorrow never came. The little red light continued to burn. Something was wrong, but my friend had too many things to do.

Finally, his car did what it had to do to get the attention it craved. It quit running on I-35 S about 15 miles south of New Braunfels. "Next time I'll pay attention," he mumbled to himself.

Warnings. Little red lights that warn us of potential problems and danger. They're not just found in cars or attached to power cords either. They exist in all parts of life and manifest themselves in a variety of ways: guilt, depression, rationalizations. A friend might confront. A Scripture might sting. A burden

might prove too heavy. Regardless of how they may arrive, warnings come with the same purpose: To alert. To wake up.

Unfortunately, they are not always heeded. All of us have learned to cover our ears and shield our eyes at the right moment. It's amazing how adept we can be at keeping them out. Warnings can be as blunt as a sledgehammer and we still turn our heads and whistle them away. We have just enough arrogance in us to believe we are the exception to the rule.

We're often surprised at life's mishaps, but when pressed we have to admit that if we had just done something about those wake-up calls, we could have avoided many problems. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus gives us a strong warning about ignoring his warnings in Scripture.

For many years the rich man had ignored the needs of poor Lazarus who nightly slept on the sidewalk in front of the gate to his home, and daily begged for spare change from passers by. The Rich Man didn't cause Lazarus' suffering, but day after day, he stepped over Lazarus' prone body, grew increasingly deaf to his pleas for help, and ignored the command of God to "not to harden your heart against the poor man among you, nor shut your hand from him.." (Deuteronomy 15:7) Each day Lazarus' suffering bothered him less. It got so that he didn't even have to look the other way to avoid being upset by the dogs licking at the maggots on Lazarus' legs.

No one was more surprised than the rich man when, having gone to bed on his king size vibrating bed with satin sheets, he woke up in hell, with a mouth dry as dust and in absolute torment.

When he finally grasped that his situation was not going to change, he begged Father Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his 5 brothers.

But Father Abraham answered, "Nope.... They have the Scriptures."

So he protested, "That's not enough. You've got to do something to get their attention, like sending some one back from the dead."

But Father Abraham was adamant, "Sorry, if they don't believe the scriptures, then they won't believe **even if** Lazarus comes back from the dead."

Really? I think a dead man walking and talking might get my attention... or I might just think they were role playing a zombie for some stupid reason. Or I might blame it on a bad dream, or an adverse reaction to a new blood pressure medication, or just a piece of bad potato in my soup.

How about you? Have you missed any warnings lately? Or have you just disregarded one that has been nagging and nagging at you.

Then maybe you need to repair your warning detector. Why not tune it up with a few cautions from Scripture. How about this warning to avoid sticking your nose in other people's business:

"Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own."
Proverbs 26:17

One-night stands:

"For a prostitute will bring a man to poverty, and an adulteress may cost him his very life. Can a man hold fire against his chest and not be burned? Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet? So it is with the man who commits adultery with another's wife. He shall not go unpunished for this sin."
Proverbs 6:26-28

Dust-covered Bibles:

"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." Hebrews 2:1

Been looking for a little extramarital or extrajudicial excitement, then think about this warning from Paul to the Corinthians:

"Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

Secret scampering that you think will go unnoticed:

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Galatians 6:26:22

And a couple of warnings about ignoring warnings:

“Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.”

Proverbs 19:27

“Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.” Proverbs 13:10

And here is the really hard part of the sermon. Are we willing to warn those on the wrong road before it's too late? Jesus' words are the warning. We're just the little red light or the tag that carries the warning.

Several years ago, I met weekly with a group of preachers to work on the material for each week's sermon. As we were working on this particular reading from Luke, one of my fellow sermonizers suggested the title: “How much do you have to hate someone to NOT tell them about Jesus?”

Because if you don't tell them about Jesus, they might not hear the warning in time.

Now, by contrast, Jesus knows why it is so important. He knows firsthand about Heaven-- **and Hell!** Before He came down and walked upon this earth - and died and was buried and rose again - Jesus had been in heaven since before the creation of the world

He knew what heaven was like – because He'd lived there.

And Jesus knew what Hell was like because He'd seen it firsthand. He had helped His Father make it.

So Jesus is in a position to tell us more about Hell than anyone else. And he was determined that we know the truth about the consequences of the choices we make. He himself gave us these warnings:

- (He said) “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.” Mark 9:43

- “(Those who were condemned would be thrown) into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:42

- “(They would be told to) ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” Matthew 25:41

How much do you have to hate someone not to tell them about Jesus?

How much do you have to hate someone not to warn them of the coming judgment?

Jesus loved you and me so much that He told us about Hell... because He doesn't want us to go there.

The real tragedy of hell isn't that it's real, or that it's a bad place.

The real tragedy is that Hell wasn't created for us... Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels.

But John 3 ends with these fateful words: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." John 3:36

Don't get the wrong idea, God doesn't hate us.

He loves us so much that He sent his son Jesus.

And Jesus loves us so much that He warns us about Hell, even as he shares with us the glory and promise of Heaven.

So why would anyone go to hell? Well, they'll go there in part because nobody warned them. Nobody explained to them how critical/important this was.

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood.” Ezekiel 33:7-8

I drifted away from God and the Church for a long time. I thought I had all the answers. My family refers to this as my “heathen” period. I was so wrong for so long, it's nothing short of a miracle that I am here today. What accounts for such a change?

My mother loved me enough to stay after me, to speak the truth when I didn't want to hear it, to put up with the dirty looks, the long and awkward silences, and the unkind judgmental words I hurled in her direction when she sounded the warning I needed to hear. God bless her forever for doing that for me.

And that is why I am sounding this warning for you. I love you and Jesus too much to remain silent. I love Him and you too much to risk your missing one another for all time because I was afraid you might get mad at me for warning you of what you might be missing.

Which brings us to one more warning-- if you don't love the object of your warning, keep your mouth shut. No one is going to care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

Divine warnings. All inspired by God and tested by time. They're yours to do with as you wish. They are red lights on your dash board. Heed them and safety and happiness are yours to enjoy. Share them with those you love and you can look forward to sharing eternity with them. Ignore them and I'll be looking for you on the side of the road, or God forbid, somewhere way south of there.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Would you pray with me...

Lord, your word reminds us that we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it. Your word tells us that there are blessings that await those who believe and respond in joyful obedience. But do not let us delude ourselves by doubting the opposite, that righteous judgment and eternal punishment await those who live only for their own pleasure. Grant that we might be people who share the wealth that you have provided - that we might be ones who share both the bread and wine of earth and the bread and wine of heaven even with the selfish and the bitter around us.

We pray for those who like Lazarus are ignored or neglected and left to suffer in our world. Grant that every time we succeed in our attempts to forget about the Lazaruses of the world, you would cure our amnesia and bring forth an appropriate response with a reminder or warning from your Word. Fill us with the determination to exercise mercy and to work to turn the tables on injustice. Bind us together and make us bright and shining witnesses to your righteousness as well as your grace. Teach us how to enrich the lives of others, rich or poor, good or evil, with a love expressed in practical and caring ways-- whether it is the bread that will fill their empty stomachs or the bread of heaven that alone can satisfy their souls. Never permit us to disgrace you or ourselves by giving way to indifference to or impatience with the needs of others, 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, "Be Thou My Vision", #339 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "Be Thou My Vision" The Hymnal #339

*THE BLESSING

*THE CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE *Sing the Faith #2065*

"Lord, You Are More Precious Than Silver"

Lord, You are more precious than silver. Lord, You are more costly than gold.

Lord, You are more beautiful than diamonds. Nothing I desire compares with You.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis