

Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia

Sunday, September 27th, 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. After a short prayer with the choir, the Pastor will enter followed by the liturgist and choir. The pastor will offer a welcome 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.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE “Be Strong in the Lord” by Robert J. Powell **Dr. Elizabeth Davis**

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP “This Is the Day!” Dan Dykema **The Choir**

After the Choral Call, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 118 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Psalm 118)

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!

With the Lord on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me?

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

I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.

Open to me the gates of righteousness,

That I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; His steadfast love endures forever.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... May all your people find favor with you this day, God of majesty and power. Help us so to hear and digest your life giving Word, that it may turn our sorrow into gladness and our mourning into joy. Lift us above our daily preoccupations so that we may pray with earnest intent, both to thank you and to be changed by you. Let our prayers be powerful and effective, so that the service we extend may find favor in your eyes, blessed Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name”, number 142 in our *Hymnals*.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” *The Hymnal #142*

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

James tells us, “Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so you may be healed. The prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective. Let us seek that right relationship with God that empowers our prayers and our service by praying together the prayer of confession as it’s printed in our bulletins, pausing for a moment at the conclusion for a brief period of silent prayer and reflection. Let us pray....

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of all creation, forgive us for the times when we have hidden behind the name Christian, only to fail to take our place in the front line of spiritual battles. Pardon us for being suspicious of the motives of those who fight beside us in the war with evil, for no reason other than that the flag they follow is of another color, even though it bears a cross as its emblems. Remind us that those who follow you may do so in any cloth, for you were never tailor made. Forgive us for turning aside your angels in our ignorance, and for our arrogance in presuming to know who is on your side. Forgive us and help us to amend our thinking and our acting on behalf of Christ. Amen.

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

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Whoever has the Spirit of Christ is alive in Jesus. All who open them-selves to the rule of the Spirit in their lives, confessing their sinfulness and need for forgiveness, may be assured that they will be put right with God, & their hearts and minds renewed....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 God 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 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 preacher 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 step to the pulpit and say,

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Like salt enhances the flavor of food, Christians are called to share the joy and gladness we have discovered in Christ, so that the lives of our brothers and sisters may be improved. Let us be the salt of the earth and continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY "Jesus, My Lord, My God, My All" - Robert J. Powell

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

Generous-hearted God, as followers of Jesus we want to be openly loving and giving people. In support of that desire, we bring this offering to serve human need wherever and for whomever your purpose. We ask that you will receive it and bless it to your divine purpose and the glory of Jesus, in whose name we pray, Amen.

The liturgist will take a seat until after the Anthem.

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

"Fairest Lord Jesus" - Derek Hakes/Craig Courtney

The Choir

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from the book of Numbers, the eleventh chapter beginning with the twenty-fourth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #125 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and placed them round about the tent.

Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy elders; & when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did so no more.

Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested upon them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

And Joshua the son of Nun, the minister of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, forbid them."

But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp."

The liturgist will take his/her seat.

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

Our Gospel Reading this morning is taken from the Gospel of Mark, the ninth chapter, beginning with the thirty-eighth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #877 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"John said to him, "Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us."

But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us. For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Chain of Command”

The Israelites have been following Moses in the wilderness for years, whining and complaining almost every step of the way. And there's a reason that Gospel song writers and preachers refer to them as the Hebrew children-- they act like children. Do you remember what it is like to take a long car trip with your kids. An hour away from home, the bickering starts-- Dad, he's on my side.... Mom, she's touching me... Mom, he's breathing my air... Dad, make her stop looking at me. It wasn't appreciably different for poor old Moses. Moses is approaching his 100th birthday, and it's all gotten to be just too much! So God told Moses to pick 70 people and that he would pour out a portion of the Spirit resting upon Moses onto the 70 so they can help share Moses' load.

Everything would have been just fine, except for the fact that two of the chosen 70, Eldad and Medad, got held up in camp. Maybe they were ill, or perhaps they had just gotten off duty from patrolling the camp, and were having a late breakfast. Imagine what it must have been like for their poor neighbor, outside his tent washing the manna porridge off of their cereal bowls who first heard old Eldad and Medad preaching at the top of their lungs-- maybe even speaking in tongues-- No doubt, God had something to say.

Their neighbor then ran to tell Moses what was happening. And Moses' #2 man, Joshua, still in his Barney Fife period of leadership development, gets nervous and tells Moses that he needs to nip it in the bud. Can't you just hear him? “Um, Moses. Isn't that your job? If these two clowns keep preaching, people won't realize how special you are. Aren't you going to stop them? You know – protect your reputation and all? You don't really want to share that preaching thing with them, do you?”

Moses looks at Joshua and says: “Are you jealous for ME?” Don't you get it Joshua – I wish that EVERYBODY was preaching. God is big enough for all of us to preach. The real question isn't, why are they preaching, it's why isn't everybody? There's more than enough God to go around.”

Even in church, it's so easy to be jealous of other churches. Oh – they have that great new pastor who... Or, how come they're so big, and we're well, not. And they are grief workshops, and have mother's day out and have a whole smorgasbord of classes to offer. It's so human to compare ourselves with others. But we don't need to. You see, God has already given us everything that we need.

Those large mega-churches? They often crave the intimacy and community that's natural in small churches like this one. And the ones that have pastors that know how to smooth over every feather? Well, some people need perfection. Others can handle human. If we believe that God is big enough to provide all we need, then we can rest assured that God is kind enough to know the best way to provide that.

Fundamentally, Moses didn't get jealous because he understood – there's enough. You only get jealous when think there's not enough to go around.

We don't need to worry about protecting our turf, or our place in the pecking order, or our place in the family, and CERTAINLY not our place in God's heart.

The only thing to worry about is are we doing what God has called us to do. Are we following his orders, or trying to make sure that everybody else is following ours? It's all about remembering that we are in the chain of command, and all that's important is that everybody remember who is at the top. He plans the strategy, recruits our fellow warriors, and gives the orders-- along with the authority, weapons, and intel we need to win any battle.

We don't have to be jealous of those higher in the chain of command. And if you're a Christian – a child of the King – it's even more serious than that. If you're jealous of anybody else – you are doubting God's provision.

Thirteen hundred years later Jesus had a similar problem. John saw a guy casting out demons and healing people in the name of Jesus and knew that he hadn't been given that authority by Jesus, so he told him to cease and desist. It never occurred to John to ask who had appointed him to determine who was to be allowed to cast out demons & heal the sick and just what their qualifications should be.

This lesson is not to say that no one should concern themselves with making sure that certain jobs ARE being done by the people best trained and equipped to do them. I for one sleep better knowing that if I should have an attack of acute appendicitis, the removal of that faulty organ will be done by a physician licensed by the state and an accredited member of the American College of Surgeons, rather than some guy whose sole qualification is that he spent the night at a Holiday Inn.

What it does mean, is that if I have been hit by a car and I am bleeding to death in the street, it would be nice to know that someone will try to stop the bleeding even if they never went to medical school or watched a single episode of ER. In the same way, the world around us is starving for the Bread of Life and thirsting for Living Water, and it doesn't matter one bit if the one who offers them refreshment for their soul is male or female, Pentecostal or Presbyterian, Pope or pew filler. The message is the same, the battle is the same, the man at the top is the same and his name is Jesus. And He delights whenever we use his name-- as long as our intent is to serve him and bring him glory.

This is especially important in this day and time, when our government has public officials who use their non-partisan positions to harass and persecute those with whom they disagree politically. When elected officials at every level substitute their judgment for the law in determining which statutes they will enforce and which they won't.

But the greatest amount of damage is inflicted by little people who want to be big people with power and respect, when they too zealously guard their own power and authority from the infringement of others. They forget that it is not their power, it is the power of the people lodged with them for a short period of time to serve the people.

And the power that our governments and churches work so hard to protect is not theirs either. It is the power of God, to be used to serve him as he directs us all. It is not to be used to protect our power, our place, or our property, but to advance his kingdom. And when we lose sight of that fact, we become modern day Pharisees, or members of the Inquisition, or just run of the mill, everyday, garden variety, ecclesiastical jackasses, and we will be revealed, all too soon enough, as the fools we are.

A few weeks ago, Chuck Joyce sent me a parable illustrating this principle that I want to share with YOU.

A plain, black, late model sedan with government plates drove up uninvited to a small farmhouse in the southern Arkansas backwoods. A man, nattily attired in his black suit, starched shirt, power tie, and Rayban sunglasses approached the farmer, badge in hand. The farmer hitched up his overalls and asked politely, "Can I hep ya'?"

"No sir, I don't need your help. I am from the DEA and I am here looking for illicit crops of marijuana being grown in the wooded areas of farms just like this one. I am going to search every inch of your property, and if I find any such illegal agricultural products, you, Old Man, are gonna spend the rest of your life in a federal penitentiary."

"Well," the old farmer answered, "look wherever you want, but be sure you stay out of that field over there," and he motioned to the field south of the barn.

"Mister, don't you try to tell me where I can search and where I can't." He then held up his bright and shiny brass shield in its government issue, genuine leather case right in front of the old man's shocked face. "You see this badge, old man? This badge gives me the right to search anywhere I see fit. On any land.... at any time... NO questions asked... Do you understand that old man. 'Cause if you try to interfere with me in the performance of that duty, I have the authority to arrest and detain you indefinitely."

"OK, buddy. Do what you have to do. I'll be in the barn working on my tractor if you need anything."

The farmer headed to the barn and, sure enough, the DEA agent headed straight for the south field. About 10 minutes later, the farmer was underneath his tractor when he heard a blood curdling scream for help. He rolled out from under the tractor and ran out of the barn toward the south field where he saw the DEA agent being chased by his angry and very territorial Brahma bull. With every

step the bull was gaining ground on the officer, and it seemed likely that he'd sure enough get gored before he reached safety.

The farmer started to climb through the fence when suddenly he stopped and yelled to the officer at the top of his lungs, "YOUR BADGE!
... SHOW HIM YOUR BADGE!"

We are to remember that God has given us everything we need to serve him. We do not have to worry about losing our jobs as long as we do that. We don't have to worry if someone uses Jesus' name, as long as neither of us uses it in vain. When unfamiliar forces seem to threaten, all we have to do is to call on His name, and all will be well. If those forces are His, they will join us. If they aren't it doesn't matter anyway, because the gates of hell will not prevail against you.

Just call on Jesus, and show the world that you know how to take orders. Show them that you know how to love as He has loved you.... unless..... you'd rather show your badge.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

O God, it is true that when we do not stand for something, we may well fall for anything, and that when we do not stand for you, we may well fall from you. We know we are supposed to be a community of your faithful people, a clutch of Christians called to minister in your way, in our day. We are aware that some are not welcome, because of their belief in a false gospel or because their behavior threatens the sheep of your flock. We do know, Lord, that to be against another who is doing your work and giving you glory, is to oppose you and your will.

Lord, you have called us to undivided service, and you expect us to deal kindly with whomever we encounter. Use us as you will to seek and save all those who dwell in darkness and despair. Reach down into the lives of those who are broken and restore them to wholeness and strength. May we recognize them not as trash to be discarded, but as treasures to be redeemed and valued by us. Restore in us a sense of the value and potential of our lives when we live them in gratitude for your gifts and in service to your kingdom. Help us to live up to our calling and to do those deeds that testify to our determination to be your faithful servants, 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, "O Jesus, I Have Promised", #388 in our hymnals.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "O Jesus, I Have Promised" *The Hymnal #388*

THE BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and give you His peace-- in your going out and in your coming in; in your lying down and in your rising up; in your labor and in your leisure; in your laughter and in your tears-- until you come to stand before Jesus in that day in which there is no sunset & no dawning. Amen.

*THE 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