

## Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia

Sunday, October 25, 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 followed by the pastor. The pastor will 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.”

*The preacher will take a seat.*

PRELUDE "O Jesus, King Most Wonderful" - Dale Wood

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

The Choir

“Let Us Go Unto the House of the Lord” - Dan Dykema

*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 Isaiah 55 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Isaiah 55)

Seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while he is near;

**Let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts;**

Let us return to the Lord, that He may have mercy and abundantly pardon.

**For His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways His ways.**

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so God’s ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts.

**For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth,**

So shall His word go forth and not return to Him empty;

**It shall accomplish that which He purposes, and succeed in the thing for which He sends it.**

For we shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace;

**The mountains and the hills before us shall burst into song;**

All the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

**Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;**

Instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;

**And it shall be a memorial to the Lord, and an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.**

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... We have gathered here, O Lord, because you have called us and because we know our need of the wisdom and power that you alone can provide. Your ways are wonderful beyond our understanding. When our strength is spent, our vision clouded, and our hope is gone, you reach out to us in ways we often fail to notice. But here in your house of prayer, we sense your calming Spirit and feel the comfort of your everlasting arms as they lift us above present hardships. Restore to us that sight which is beyond seeing, so that we may be instruments of your grace wherever there is need. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “How Great Thou Art”, number 467 in our *Hymnals*.

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

\*HYMN OF PRAISE

“How Great Thou Art”

*The Hymnal #467*

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

\*CALL TO CONFESSION

Hear this invitation from King David, “Let all who are faithful offer prayer and confess their transgressions to the Lord; acknowledge your sin and do not hide your iniquity. And then, at a time of

distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach you, and God will forgive the guilt of your sin.” In penitence and faith, let us confess our sins 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 Grace, we have cried out in our time of need for the healing touch of Jesus and you have responded with grace sufficient for our need. Such an experience should have stirred us to become followers of Christ, but we confess that like the disciples we are slow learners. We complain that it is not right that we should have to suffer. When we are well, we do not do what we can to ease the misfortunes of others. We are too often tempted to take our blessing and depart, because we are reluctant to surrender any of the comforts to which we are attached. Open our eyes to your wonderful power and love poured out in such abundance for us. Make us willing to suffer whatever we must to send forth your word and bring your straying children back to you. Forgive us, we pray, that we may be freed from guilt, strengthened in our faith, and focused once more upon the task to which we have been called in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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

**\*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Hear the Word of the Lord, “I will write my law upon their hearts; and I will be their God, & they shall be my people. I will forgive their iniquity, & remember their sin no more.”...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,*

“Let those of us who are able, stand and join in singing our next hymn, “O God, Who in a Mysterious Way” #270 in our *Hymnals*.

**\*HYMN OF PREPARATION**

“O God, Who in a Mysterious Way”

*The Hymnal #270*

*After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say:*

“Be seated....In the Fall of each year, our congregation prepares for the harvest of gifts that will supply the needs of our ministries here at First Presbyterian Church. Our final lesson in Stewardship comes to us this morning in a video entitled “Payin’ Your Tithes”....

*The preacher will take a seat...*

**A MINUTE FOR STEWARDSHIP**

“Payin’ Your Tithes” - a Video

*After the Minute for Stewardship, the liturgist will return to the lectern & say...*

**THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

With our offerings, we give thanks for mercies too numerous to count. Let us share cheerfully

& generously from all that has been entrusted to our keeping that God may be praised, & that peace may come to all God's people. Let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes & offerings...

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

THE OFFERTORY "Bright Wings (Psalms 55:6)" - Hugh S. Livingston, Jr. 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**

For your goodness and mercy that overflow through our lives and equip us to share, we give thanks. No sacrifice on our part can ever match the gift you have given us in Jesus. No offering is adequate to express the full measure of our gratitude. Keep us strong that this church may witness to your radiant truth, unite to oppose the evil around us, and offer mercy and redemption to those who feel overwhelmed. We bring ourselves with our gifts, that all may be consecrated to your service and glory. 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**

"New Born Again" - Larry Shackley

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 Gospel of John, beginning with the first verse of the ninth chapter. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #932 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Silo'am" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing."

*The liturgist will take a seat with the congregation among friends.*

*Thanks for your service.*

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

Our Second Reading this morning is taken from the Story of Job, the forty-second chapter, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #464 in your pew bibles.

"Then Job answered the LORD: "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted. `Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered

what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.’

I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

THE SERMON

“What Did Job See?”

For 37 chapters, Job has suffered at the hands of Satan. The loss of all his children, his crops, his wealth, and his health-- everything with which God has so richly blessed him. He is left with a wife who taunts him to curse God and die, and three friends who assure him that his suffering is his own fault and to quit complaining, confess, and throw himself on the feet of God in the hope of finding mercy.

Not all that Job’s three friends have to say is wrong. In fact, much of what they say about what happens to evil people is true. The problem is, they look at Job and judge him not according to what they know he has done, or have seen him do, but according to what they assume he has done based upon his circumstances. They, like Job, see the hand of God in this, but they don’t see the hand of Satan at work. They simply assume that since Job has had all these terrible things to happen to him, he must have done something evil to deserve it!

Does anyone remember the old movie, “The Sound of Music?” Remember when Maria meets Mr. Von Trapp and they finally fall in love? She sings, “Nothing comes from nothing. Nothing ever could. So somewhere in my youth or childhood, I must have done something good.” That’s the theology of Job’s three friends. Good things happen to good people, bad things happen to bad people. That’s the rules. That’s it. Period. End of story. So Job, we know that you **MUST** have done something bad.

It’s true, isn’t it, that God’s word teaches that if you are faithful God will bless you? Have you ever read the end of Deuteronomy? And is it not also true that God’s word teaches that if you forsake God, you will be cursed. This is in there too. But is it true? Of course it is! It’s in the Bible! And when we reach the end of Job, guess what? That’s exactly how it works out. But... there are a lot of lessons in Job, some that bring us closer to seeing Jesus than the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy.

Do you know anyone like Job’s friends? Anyone, who looks upon the misery of others and blames them for it? The disciples do the same thing in John 9 when they see a man blind from birth and assume that somebody must have sinned. “Why is this man blind Lord? Is it because of his parents’ sin, or is it his own fault?” The disciples want to fix the blame. Someone has to be responsible for this! He wouldn’t be in this condition if somebody hadn’t screwed up big time!

Jesus tells them, “It was neither this man nor his parents who sinned that he is blind, but this is so the works of God might be displayed in his life!”

Here’s a man who waited for a long time to see God’s works displayed in his life. How many people have looked at his condition and blamed him or his parents for it? But Jesus opened his eyes and he saw God’s works displayed in himself!

It is easy to find fault, point, and blame isn’t it? More time and energy is wasted over this than you would believe! You remember the time the Three Stooges were being chased by a hungry lion? They ran back to take shelter in their car and to their horror the doors are locked and the keys are still in the ignition! So what do they do? They break into a big argument punctuated by eye pokes, face slaps, and body blows about whose fault it is! Now instead of the Three Stooges, picture Job’s three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar!

I once knew a very good man, who was unjustly convicted of manslaughter and sent to Tucker prison farm. His first night there, he was stripped of his shirt, handcuffed to the bars of his cell, and beaten with a cat of nine tails looking thing to the point that, 40 years later, his scars would turn your stomach just to see them. And when the guard administering the beating was finished, he drew close and whispered in his prisoner’s ear, “Now boy, you just understand, this ain’t for nothin’ you done... it’s for all them things you ain’t gonna do while you’re here.”

In response to the incorrect and unwanted advice from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, Job rejects their counsel and looks instead to God. He knows that this could not have happened without God having allowed it, so he demands that God himself appear and justify him, give account for his unjust actions, and tell his friends that he has not sinned and that he is innocent of their accusations. He is serving God a subpoena!

So in Chapter 38, God shows up, but instead of offering answers, He challenges Job with more questions. "Where were you when I created the earth and laid its foundations? Tell me, Smarty Pants, how would you go about hanging the planets in space and arranging the stars in the heavens? Can you lead a crocodile or an elephant with a leash made of vines while the two of you walk together? No, well then tell me, you mouthy brat, just who do you think you are? Look Son, when you know enough to run the universe, I'll answer your questions."

But then comes the final chapter-- Chapter 42-- and Job gives his answer. For this brief climactic moment, Job's suffering is forgotten, lost in his remorse and his shame at having ever questioned the God who had loved him and blessed him for so many years. And then Job answers God, "I had heard of you by ear, but now.... now I have seen you with my eye, and I repent in dust and ashes."

So here's the question, "Just what did Job see that so thoroughly chastened and changed him?" What vision could possibly have changed him from a complaining, whining, petulant, braying two legged jackass into a remorseful and grateful servant of the Lord Most High? What was it that opened his eyes and shut his mouth?

Seeing God, being in His presence had the same effect on Job that it had had on Peter, "Get away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man.".... And Isaiah, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

After 41 chapters, God's answer to Job is, essentially, "I'm God and you're not."

That means, God understands, God is in control.

Somewhere all of this makes sense

Somewhere all will be made right.

God does not answer "Why," because we don't need to know why.

What we need to know is how to go on living in the face of tragedy.

More than a philosophical answer to our questions, we want a real experience of God's presence

That's what "shut Job's mouth," you know.

Not the answer to why, but the living presence of Almighty God.

Job recognized that God is good and He is real and He is present.

And when we experience that, it is enough, for now.

That doesn't mean, "Never question why."

It was Job's questioning and struggling to understand that brought him into God's presence.

But you may find that His answer is simply, "I'm God. I'm still in control. And I'm here with you always."

That is not to say that there aren't reasons for why God allows such things.

And when we get some distance, we may even be able to see and understand some of them.

Although I doubt we will understand all of them in this life

But what we need is the presence of God.

Think back to September 11th, 2001. How often did we hear news anchors who usually poo poo Christianity and its adherents as fanatics and nuts, refer to their own prayers offered up in the wake of unspeakable tragedy? They even called all other Americans to prayer.

When was the last time you heard a news anchor tell you to pray?

And churches across the country were full as people sought answers and strength and comfort and some assurance that someone, somewhere was still in charge.

Those who usually think nothing of God turned their thoughts towards Him, seeking Him, desiring His presence.

IS God bigger than the boogie man? IS He watching out for you & me?

The answer is yes, and no.

Does God keep His people from experiencing pain? Will God make sure that tragedy doesn't touch your life? Does God make any guarantees that He will protect you and me from pain in any form?

No. I wish I could say He does, but He doesn't

God did not spare His own Son

In fact, He intentionally allowed Him to undergo tremendous suffering.

But He did it for a larger purpose.

He allowed Jesus' human life to be brutally cut short, so that millions could have life that lasts forever.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that God will treat us better than Jesus.

In fact, as His followers, we are told that we, too, will have to bear the cross.

But just as Jesus' suffering was for a greater purpose, so will ours be for a greater purpose

Though we probably won't see it now.

But just as Jesus' suffering was not forever, neither will ours be.

God is bigger than any boogie man

And while we may well experience suffering and tragedy in this life, it will not be forever

We may not be saved from suffering from this life, but ultimately, those who trust in Christ will be saved for eternity

And I believe that when we see the wonders that God has wrought through the our sufferings, we will actually believe it was worth it all.

The only survivor of a shipwreck was washed up on a small, uninhabited island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him, and every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming. He eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect him from the elements, and to store his few possessions.

One day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up to the sky.

It was just more than he could take. He was stunned with grief and anger. "God, how could you do this to me!"

But the next day, he woke to the sound of a ship approaching the island to rescue him.

"How did you know I was here?" he asked in wonder.

"We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

We will not always understand, but we can always trust, that God is Bigger:

Bigger than the boogie man

Bigger than terrorists

Bigger than our doubts and fears and questions

Bigger than cancer-- and even death itself!

Bigger than all the sin in all the world

Bigger than all the evil this world can throw at us.

I believe that is what Job saw. It is what I have seen. It is what gets me out of bed in the morning and what allows me to sleep at night.

I pray, I really do, that you will see it too.

To God alone be the glory!

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

Lord, you have reached out to us in love, so help us in love, to reach back toward you. We clamor after you, seeking relief from our ills and mis-fortunes, hoping for your healing, begging for the comfort and peace that only you can give. Give us this, grant us that, we say in our prayers to you.

Your own generosity encourages us do it. You have never sent us away empty, but in countless acts of mercy have reached out to us and given us what we needed.

Now we are bold to ask for one more divine gift-- the gift of grace to follow you, to have our gaze wrenched off ourselves and our needs, moved toward the needs of others; to learn the joy that comes to us through service to you and your kingdom; to have the courage to be true to your way, even when it is not the world's way.

Grant us a vision, an experience of your love and power, that will sustain us in hard times and prepare us to remain faithful when our living is easy. May your greatness comfort us in the midst of chaos and your goodness inspire us to give ourselves wholly into your care, trusting you to lead us where we have not been; 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, "Amazing Grace", #280 in our *Hymnals*.

\*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Amazing Grace"

*The Hymnal #280*

THE BLESSING

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, remain with you always. Amen

\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

Psalm 139

Tune: Londonderry Air (O Danny Boy)

O Lord you know my laughing and my weeping.  
You see my thoughts and deeds from every side.  
Before my birth, my life was in your keeping.  
I can't escape, no matter where I hide.  
For if I flee from you, through joy or sorrow,  
To heaven or hell, I find you waiting there;  
Or ride the wings of morning till tomorrow,  
Yes, even there, yes even there, I'm in your care.

\*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis