

**Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia
Sunday, December 6, 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

Olivia Smith

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

The Choir

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" - French Carol

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 the Song of Zechariah in Luke 1 that is printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Luke 1)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; he has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty savior, born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old, that he would save us from our enemies,

He promised to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

Free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

To give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

us worship God beginning today with a short video explaining the meaning of our second Advent Candle...

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

“Preparation”

A Video

After the video, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Lord Jesus, you came, dwelt among us, showed us a better way to live, and filled us with the peace that comes from believing. Some of us have forgotten those lessons, others of us have grown weary to the point of despair. So come again, Lord, through your Word and your Spirit, live in our hearts and minds that we may once more accept your mission as our own and prepare ourselves and our world for your return. Reign in every heart so that we may look forward to that day in which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”, number 8 in our *Hymnals*.

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

*HYMN OF PRAISE

The Hymnal #8

“Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”

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

*CALL TO CONFESSION

If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us confess our sins before God and one another by praying together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing for a moment of silent prayer at its end. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of all Truth, we confess that we get so caught up in preparing our homes, classrooms and places of business for Christmas, that we neglect to prepare ourselves. We let Christmas come and go in a spirit of superficial sentiment, without allowing it to touch us spiritually. Forgive us for our failure to face the truth about ourselves and for turning away from that which we know to be for our own good! By your grace we now acknowledge our sins and come to our knees in repentance. Through your love and power revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we place our trust in you as we say: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; restore to me the joy of your salvation; and sustain in me a willing spirit". Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Isaiah tells us, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away". All this has been made true through the gift of Jesus, and we who repent have been cleansed from all wrong. Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

The preacher will motion for the congregation to stand.

*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 lectern and say,

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We have been enriched and strengthened in so many ways by the gifts of God. Now we have the privilege of sharing the grace we have received with others, many of whom are in greater need than ourselves. Let us give as we have been blessed and continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes & offerings.

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

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"Prepare Thyself, Zion" - J.S. Bach/H. Robert James

*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 promise, You who cause the branch of hope to bud and flower; we offer you the fruit of our labour and the sacrifice of our hearts. Bless this offering that we bring; and use it to break open possibilities for those who wait in quiet desperation. Bring light to their darkness and show us all the way to faithfulness, in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith as it is expressed in the traditional version of the Apostles' Creed as found on page 14 in the front of the Hymnal. 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.

The liturgist will invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and sit down.

THE ANTHEM

The Choir & Josh King, tambourine

"I Hear the Prophet Callin'" - Pepper Choplin

SCRIPTURE READINGS

After the Anthem the liturgist will step to the lectern and say...

Our Gospel lesson for this morning is taken from the Book of the prophet Malachi, the third chapter, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #830 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight,

behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? "For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the LORD. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. "

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 Luke, the third chapter, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #890 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiber'i-us Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturae'a and Trachoni'tis, and Lysa'ni-as tetrarch of Abile'ne, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Ca'iaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechari'ah in the wilderness; and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

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

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"The Beauty of Holiness"

John the Baptist would never get hired today. No church would touch him. He was a public relations disaster. He "wore clothes made from camel's hair, had a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey". Who would want to look at a guy like that every Sunday?

His message was as rough as his dress: a no-nonsense, bare-fisted challenge to repent because God was on his way.

Didn't matter to John if you were a Jew, a priest, a Baptist, or all three. What mattered was that you get off your duff and get right with God because he's coming and he don't mean maybe.

No, John would never get hired today. His tactics lacked tact. His style wasn't smooth. He made few friends and lots of enemies.

But guess what!?! He made hundreds of converts. "All the people from Judea and Jerusalem were going out to him. They confessed their sins and were baptized by him in the Jordan River" (Mark 1:5).

Look at that. "All the people of Judea and Jerusalem "How do we explain such a response? It certainly wasn't his charisma or clothing. Nor was it his money or position, for he had neither. Then what did he have?

One word. Holiness.

John the Baptist set himself apart for one task, to be a voice of Christ. Everything about John centered on his purpose. His dress. His diet. His actions. His demands.

He reminded his hearers of Elijah. And he reminds us of this truth: "There is beauty in holiness." You don't have to be like the world to have an impact on the world. You don't have to be like the crowd to change the crowd. You don't have to lower yourself down to their level to lift them up to your level.

Nor do you have to be weird. You don't need to wear camel's hair clothing or eat insects. Holiness doesn't seek to be odd. Holiness seeks to be like God.

You want to make a difference in your world? Live a holy life:

Be faithful to your spouse.

Be the one at the office who refuses to cheat.

Be the neighbor who acts neighborly.

Be the employee who does the work and doesn't complain.

Pay your bills.

Do your part and enjoy life.

Don't speak one message and live another.

Note the last line of Paul's words in I Thessalonians 4.

"Do all you can to lead a peaceful life. Take care of your own business, and do your own work as we have already told you. If you do, then people who are not believers will respect you."

A peaceful life leads nonbelievers to respect believers. What if John's life had not matched his words? "What if he'd preached repentance and lived in immorality? "What if he'd called for holiness and yet had a reputation for dishonesty? If John's life had not matched his words, his message would have fallen on deaf ears.

So will ours.

People are watching the way we act more than they are listening to what we say.

John was a voice for Christ with more than his voice. His life matched his words. When a person's ways and words are the same, the fusion is explosive. But when a person says one thing and lives another, the result is destructive. People will know we are Christians, not because we bear the name, but because we live the life.

It's the life that earns the name, not the name that creates the life. Here's a story that illustrates this point.

A Jewish couple were arguing over the name to give their firstborn. They finally asked the rabbi to come and intercede.

"What is the problem?" the rabbi asked.

The wife spoke first. "He wants to name the boy after his father, and I want to name the boy after my father."

"What is your father's name?" he asked the man. "Joseph."

"And what is your father's name?" he asked the woman.

"Joseph. "

The rabbi was stunned. "So, what is the problem?"

It was the wife who spoke again. "His father was a horse thief, and mine was a righteous man. How can I know my son is named after my father and not his?"

The rabbi thought and then replied, "Call the boy Joseph. Then see if he is a horse thief

or a righteous man. You will know which father's name he wears."

To call yourself a child of God is one thing. To be called a child of God by those who watch your life is another thing altogether.

May that be our greatest desire and at the top of every Christmas list.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

God of light and life, bring us into the light of your holiness and reveal the ugly things in our lives that we try to hide from ourselves and from one another. Deliver us from our foolish pride that demands that we constantly "keep up appearances," and present a face to the world that is much different from who we are and who you want us to be. Bring down the high places that obstruct your path to us and fill in the valleys that hinder our coming to you. Remove from our lives those powers and forces that have caused us to do evil rather than good, to hate rather than love, to hold resentment close to us rather than the power of your forgiveness, to seek amusement rather than fulfillment.

Lord, for those who bear the almost unbearable burden of silent waiting as those they love linger between life and death, hear their prayers and grant them the benefit of your strong hand beneath them, that they may be secure enough to surrender completely to your will, and choose to trust your promises, that you will work in all things for the good of those who love you. When the need of our friends and neighbors rise to our awareness, help us to be truly there for them, just as you are here for us.

Let your blessing rest upon this bread and cup, our Father. Prepare us to receive them as indeed from the hands of Christ, and grant that remembering his death to save us, we may bring the values and ethics of your kingdom into this world. Rather than seeking justice, let us be just; rather than waiting for his coming, put us to work as soldiers in your army, as servants of our king; rather than seeking faith, let us be faithful. May we stand forever firm in faith and witness, through the Him who was and is and is to come, and 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.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Words of Institution

The Distribution of the Elements

Prayer after Receiving

O loving God, may this sacrament keep us honest with you, ourselves and others and remind us always that to turn away from you is to fall, to turn toward you is to rise, and to stand before you is to abide forever. Grant us, dear God, in all our duties your help; in all our uncertainties your guidance; in all our dangers your protection; and in all our sorrows your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "On Jordan's Bank the Baptists Cry", #10 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION "On Jordan's Bank the Baptists Cry" *The Hymnal #10*

*THE BENEDICTION

“Go into the world in peace, rejoicing in the power and presence of God. And may God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be upon you all, both now and forever more. Amen.”

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE “Let There Be Peace On Earth”

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God as our Father, brothers all are we.

Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me; Let this be the moment now.

With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment & live each moment in peace eternally.

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis