

TODAY’S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor /Opening Prayer by: Bobby Rader

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#2 We Praise Thee, O God

#144 O Worship the King

Scripture Reading by: Joseph Girard

#381 Years I Spent in Vanity

Lord’s Supper and Contribution

#453 Love Lifted Me

Sermon: “Speak With Boldness”

Acts 4:23-31

#915 Trust and Obey

#704 Bind Us Together

Closing Prayer by: Wayne Noonkester

Tonight is our 4th
Sunday Evening
Fellowship meal

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship

Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

February 27, 2022

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

Galatians 5:1

Repenting in Dust and Ashes

My parents came down this past week to celebrate my birthday with me. For years, our tradition has been for them to take me to a restaurant of my choice for dinner. We did that and had a wonderful time. But in selecting a place, because my mom has been talking for awhile about wanting to go visit Galveston, I considered going down there and having seafood. I even made a reservation at one place, but I was surprised that there were no open tables between 5:30 and 8:30—why would they be so busy this time of year 2 weeks in advance? And then it hit me: Mardi Gras. Needless to say, we did not go to Galveston.

But it prompted me to write this week about Mardi Gras and Lent in general, because most years at least one person comes to me with some questions about this season. Mardi Gras is the most prominent name in this part of the world for the entire Pre-Lenten season, which is known variously as Shrovetide or Carnival in other countries. This is the time of the liturgical calendar that more or less falls between Epiphany (the commemoration of the Magi visiting the baby Jesus, celebrated on January 6) and the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Mardi Gras, which, as you probably know, is French for “Fat Tuesday,” properly refers to the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The custom was to eat up all of the rich, fatty foods in the house—like pancakes, traditionally eaten in the UK, to consume the eggs, milk, and sugar—before Lent began. Eventually, this extended to indulging in all sorts of excesses, and, in some countries, grotesque costumes, degrading acts, and a general upheaval of typical societal norms.

The reason for disposing of those was that Lent was a 40 day fast. In the earliest days of the church, every Sunday was a commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus. But due to its importance and the fact that, unlike many events in Jesus’ life, the time could actually be located accurately on the calendar, the annual observance of it was something that occurred very early. Easter was accordingly the first Christian holiday to be observed beginning in 2nd/3rd century

In these first 3 centuries, a period of fasting was observed in preparation, typically of 2-3 days. Over time, this grew to a 40 day period, first mentioned in the Canons of Nicaea (325). This was suggested by the 40 days fasts of Moses, Elijah, and especially of Jesus himself. Since Sundays were exempt from the count, they had to add on the 4 days from Ash Wednesday to the first Sunday in Lent to get to 40. This not only made the proper number, it gave the start of the fast greater significance. Privately, people sprinkled ashes on themselves as a sign of repentance; eventually, it became a public practice. The general penance of the whole congregation came to be symbolized by ashes rubbed onto the forehead in the shape of a cross.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Susan McCain is having health problems.

Joe Edd Stifflemire is taking chemo treatments.

Jo Ella McKewen is having health problems.

Lon Hobbs had emergency surgery last week and is at home now.

Continued Prayers

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Gwen Pettit, Harold & Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Frank & Tina Garcia, Caitlin Smith, Ka'Leisha Jones, Oscar Cantu, Gary Nielsen, Virginia Cole

Shut Ins

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique, Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting this Monday, Feb. 28th at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a fellowship meal tonight at 5:00 p.m. in the family life center.

We have a blood drive scheduled for Monday, Feb. 28th from 4-8 pm. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board.

We have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, March 1st at 8:00 a.m.

New Movers Program

We are starting a new movers program. We will have a list of people that have moved into the area. If you are interested in helping with this, see Bryant Perkins.

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>	<u>Minister</u>
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor		
Robert Ward		

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Obviously, none of this is rooted in Scripture or the practice of the earliest Christians; in fact, a good bit of it is quite clearly contrary to what Jesus expects of his followers. But I do want us to at least consider the concept, since this coming week is Ash Wednesday. While I absolutely do not advocate practicing these things, the underlying principal of Lent itself, of focusing on your own temptation, sin, and repentance, is a good one. It is so important, in fact, that it should not be confined to a mere 40 days every year. We ought always to evaluate ourselves in light of God's Word. To abandon the sin we have perhaps let casually take hold in our life. To take time to renew our desire to serve God and be the people God intends us to be. With that thought in mind, consider a passage commonly read in conjunction with Ash Wednesday, **Isaiah 59:12-20**.

For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us, for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities (v. 12). If you were to count all the sins we commit in just one week—both our deeds and things we ought to do but do not—they would be numerous. We must honestly evaluate ourselves and acknowledge changes need to be made.

[T]ransgressing, and denying the Lord, and turning back from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words. Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.(v. 13-15a). Isaiah describes some of the things he has seen that are wrong. Are we guilty of any of these? Let us all examine ourselves. Do I really love God above all else? Where do I need to improve in my life? That is the first part of a life lived penitently before God: to look at ourselves and recognize our sins.

The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment. So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the Lord drives. "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the Lord. (v. 15b-20).

Here is the second part: to look away from ourselves and look to God. God saw our sin, and he was appalled at what he saw. But most appalling of all was that there was no one to intervene, no one to rescue humanity from its sins. So God in Christ did that himself. That is what the good news is all about.

We need to be cognizant of these things, and not just at a special time of year. May we all look deep within ourselves and acknowledge our sins. May we then look to Christ, who won the battle for us, and receive forgiveness. It will help us to grow in our appreciation for what God has done for us, not only through becoming more aware of our shortcomings and refining our character, but in becoming more aware of just how much our Lord loves us.

Bryant Perkins

"Stand Firm in...Liberty"

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