

## TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch /Opening Prayer by: Ken Coleman

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Shannon Smith

#611 Heavenly Sunlight  
#881 Mansion Over the Hilltop

Scripture Reading by: Jackson Burgess

#480 Blessed Assurance

**Lord's Supper and Contribution**

#535 The Glory-Land Way

**Sermon: "If Christ Had Not Come"**  
**Luke 2:8-14**

#912 Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary  
#452 Standing on the Promises

Closing Prayer by: Tommy Cary

Welcome by: Daniel Balch

Evening Assembly Song Leader: Shannon Smith

#528 I Know That My Redeemer Lives  
#454 Precious Memories

Scripture Reading: Tristan Strickhausen

Prayer by: David Smith

#453 Love Lifted Me

**Sermon: "The Parables of Jesus: Smart Money"**  
**Luke 12:16-21**

#909 There's a Fountain Free  
#406 Just a Closer Walk with Thee

Closing Prayer by: Phillip Strickhausen

### **Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth**

**Sunday:** 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 6:00pm — Worship

**Wednesday:** 10:00am — Ladies Bible Class, 7:00pm — Bible Study Classes

December 23, 2018

## ***"Stand Firm in...Liberty"***

Galatians 5:1

### **Merry Christmas**

*This article was originally written by Reuel Lemmons and published in Firm Foundation. I encountered it for the first time online with no issue reference, and though I have several decades worth of the paper in my possession, I cannot seem to track it down. In any case, considering the mixed feelings some of us have about the Christmas season, I wanted to commend this editorial to your attention. BP*

We are again at that time on the calendar when the Western world pauses to acknowledge that Jesus Christ was born in the world. The date makes little difference. And we heartily agree that some other time of year suits the occasion best, but that makes little actual difference. We also agree that the celebration of a special religious holiday has no foundation in scripture, and that it had its sources in pagan rites and apostate festivals. This will acknowledge in advance all those letters differing with us in what we are about to say here.

Personally, we are glad that the world, bent on carnage and drunk on hedonism takes time out to acknowledge that God has sent his Son into the world. Even atheists, like the stones of the ground, cry out. We deplore the fact that men make merchandise of the occasion – as the moneychangers took advantage of the opportunity in the temple – but even they help the world to stop and take note of God's gift to man. In a world of war they talk about peace; in a world of hate they talk about love; in a world of sorrow they talk about joy. All the advertising, all the decorations, all the plans for family gatherings call attention to the fact that there is something better in the world than the rat race.

A lot of attention is given in the Bible to the birth of Jesus. The gospels abound in details. The numbering, the birth, the stable, the flight into Egypt – there was a lot of excitement in both heaven and earth when God sent his Son into the world. Without controversy the greatest event in all human history was heralded by that star that shone over Bethlehem. One might argue the merits of the cross as the greatest, but had there been no manger there would have been no cross. With the coming of the Son of God in human flesh a love was born that the world had never before known. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." With all we think we know about love, we can grasp but a very small concept of that love. No wonder the angels sang!

The eloquence of tongue and pen have been exhausted in paying homage to the babe of Bethlehem, the man of Galilee and the lamb on the cross. Limited as we are by our humanism it is impossible for us to grasp the full significance of what God did in Christ at that time. About the best we can do is acknowledge that if he had not come into the world we would die without hope of heaven. He was the light shining in the dark place. "They that sat in darkness saw a great light."

**Our Sick**

**Tim Watts**, Lois Watts' grandson, has been diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

**Phillip Cottle** is home from the hospital.

**Continued Prayers**

**(Need cards, phone calls & visits)**

Gwen Pettit, Gary Nielsen, Harold Cryer, Steve Ward, Jackie David, Frank & Tina Garcia, Bill Lunceford, Eric Davis, J. P. Williams, Mark Wilcox, Dayla Hale, Ann Rogers, Phillip Cottle

**Shut Ins**

**(Need cards, phone calls & visits)**

Jim Smith, Pauline Taylor, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Ronnie Rubit, Joe Leonard, Dr. Ronald Davis

**Our Missionaries**

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Mwanza, Africa, Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

**Plastic Bags**

The Food Bank is in need of plastic grocery bags. A barrel is in the foyer.

**Upcoming Activities**

**No Elders, Minister** meeting this week.

The office will be closed Dec. 24th & 25th.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Jan. 8th at 8:00 am.

In 2019, we will be working through the book "One Word" together. This is a daily devotional book, and our Sunday evening lessons will relate to it. If you are interested in participating in this program, please pick up a book from the office. One free book per household; additional books may be purchased for \$5/each.

Several pair of eye glasses have been found in the auditorium. If you have misplaced yours, check in the office.

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>	<u>Minister</u>
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bob Parker	Danny Balch	
Bobby Rader	Shannon Smith	
Don Taylor	Phillip Strickhausen	
Robert Ward		

Communion Preparation: Jeraldine Frazier  
 Nursery Attendants: Tania Balch

Communion Preparation for Sunday, Dec. 30<sup>th</sup>: Nancy Hempel  
 Nursery Attendants for Sunday, Dec. 30<sup>th</sup>: Jane Tinkle, Rita Upton

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We can understand the love of a mother for her child. We can even understand the love of a man who might give his life for his country. But it is beyond us to understand the love of a God who would rob Heaven to bless earth; empty Glory to fill us with glory. It was no natural affection that made God send Jesus into the world. What he did at Bethlehem matured until it became what he did at the cross. It is fitting that we should pause and note that we didn't earn it; it was an act of grace.

History is sometimes turned around by the smallest of events, and destiny is balanced on the point of a pin. The almost totally unnoticed event of Bethlehem has affected the world more than all the battles that were ever fought or all the governments that have ever convened. For four thousand years sin-cursed man had hoped for the seed of woman that would bruise the serpent's head, and for two thousand years the Jews had looked for a Messiah. But when he came they didn't recognize him. He came in the seclusion of a stable, in the darkness of night, and in the guise of a man. The greatest forces of all time do not come with powerful explosions or the noise of racing chariots; they come on silent wings. The power of love is such a force. And grace and goodness make little racket.

In a night without light came the Light. In a world without hope, hope was born. In the midst of despair there was the singing of angels. They had but a star, but we have Son-light. The hopes and fears of all the years were pinned, whether the shepherds realized it or not, upon a little baby in a young mother's arms. Really, that is where hope still lies.

Wise men brought him gifts. But their gold, frankincense and myrrh have long since turned to dust. It was the best they had, and they set precedent for our giving gifts, but they gave only gifts that perish. We have an opportunity to give a living sacrifice. If giving is the test of loving, then let us give the consecration of our lives. He himself has said, "Greater love hath no man than this: that a man would lay down his life for his friend."

After all, it isn't the gaudy tinsel in which the gift is wrapped, nor is it the extravagant price paid for it, it is the heart that is given with the gift that really makes the gift worth receiving.

***"Stand Firm in...Liberty"***

is the weekly bulletin of the Liberty Church of Christ 3201 North Main, Liberty Texas 77575  
 Office Phone Number (936) 336-2213; Fax (936) 334-8280;  
 Minister's (Bryant Perkins) Cell Phone Number (903)407-5737  
 Website: libertycofc.org Facebook page: Liberty Church of Christ