

TODAY’S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Bobby Rader / Opening Prayer by: Daniel Balch
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#611 Heavenly Sunlight
#555 Seek Ye First

Scripture Reading by: Rock Cary
#509 I Will Sing the Wondrous Story

Communion Devotional by: Robert Ward
Lord’s Supper and Contribution

#469 Faith Is the Victory
Sermon: “How to Celebrate Independence Day”
1 Peter 2:9-10

#904 Have You Been to Jesus?
#753 Farther Along
Closing Prayer by: Gus Tristan

We will be watching the second season of
“The Chosen” at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday nights in
the fellowship room.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

July 2, 2023

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

Galatians 5:1

The Big Picture

One of my favorite old hymns that we sing is “Blessed Assurance,” by Fanny J. Crosby. Crosby speaks of the confidence we have in Jesus. When we are born of water and the spirit, washed in the blood of Christ, we become heirs of God. We have a foretaste of eternity. This is our story. And it is certain! It is assured!

Yet, so many of us lack certainty in our salvation. We have talked about this before, but particularly based on some recent conversations in our Book Club, I am convinced we cannot talk about it enough. Why is it that so many of us do not have that assurance?

I think there are several things in play. We have a misunderstanding of God’s nature. We fail to appreciate his actions on our behalf. And there is an imperfect realization of what it truly means to be in Christ. I want to think through those things, beginning with the first, over the next couple of weeks, with a view to instilling more confidence in Christ in us.

One of the things I believe we need to be more aware of is the metanarrative of Scripture: all these small stories make up one big story about who God is and what he has done and is doing in the world. Let’s think about that in broad outline form. To begin with, God’s love motivated him to create the world; we must never forget that is at the core of who he is. With love comes a relationship, and so God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve. But the relationship changed when sin entered the picture, resulting in expulsion from paradise. And the story of the fall does not really end there, as humanity continued to degenerate until God cleansed Creation and established a relationship with a new representative in Noah.

That is what we see repeated over and over again in Scripture: it is the story of God’s efforts to restore the broken relationship and to seek people who will represent him in the world. Ultimately, God established a lasting relationship with one of Noah’s descendants, Abraham, promising him a land, a great nation through his descendants, and most importantly, that all nations would be blessed through him. Abraham became God’s special representative, and God maintained a relationship with his family: Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Robert Modisette is on hospice care.

Gerald Bagwell, Joe Edd Stifflemire's brother in law, is on hospice.

Nan Bagwell, Joe Edd Stifflemire's sister, is at home after being in the hospital.

Winston Leifester had a stroke, and his cancer has returned.

Continued Prayers

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ka'Leisha Jones, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Bryan Senegal, Cynthis Deblanc, Patricia Prater, Richard Prater, Edna Semien, Wilson Semien, Gloria Moore, Betty Spencer, Willie Spencer, James Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Brooke Ann Smith

Shut Ins

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Myrtle Sheffield, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Deacons, Minister meet Monday, June 3rd at 6:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Wednesday, July 5th at 8:00 a.m.

Summer Book Club

The book we are reading and studying is "Gentle and Lowly". A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board. We will meet each Thursday at 6:00 p.m. If you are interested in this see Bryant.

Our Missionaries

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

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>	<u>Minister</u>
Ken Coleman	Zach Arthur	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

Even when the Israelites found themselves slaves in Egypt, God stepped forward as redeemer. He delivered them from their enemies. He then established a covenant relationship with them at Mount Sinai. Much like in the Garden, God walked with the Israelites because they were in a covenant relationship with him. Despite this blessing, Israel rebelled against God—even while Moses was on the mountain, receiving the terms of the covenant!

To make a long story short, the history of Israel shows a pattern of rejection in their relationship with God, from doubting God on the doorstep to the Promised Land to rejecting him in favor of idols in the days of the kings. He sent the prophets to call them back to communion with him, but they didn't listen. So finally, God turned them over to their enemies. They were taken into exile by Assyria and Babylonia.

But the prophets looked to a day when God would establish a new covenant with a righteous remnant of Israel:

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

There is a bond here between relationship and forgiveness: everyone will know God, for he will forgive iniquity.

What we see in the OT is a God reaching out to his Creation. He acts on humanity's behalf so they might enjoy his blessings, but the people's sin keeps getting in the way. The story of Scripture is of God acting on behalf of humanity to restore that broken relationship. That means that **John 3:16** is really the thread that runs all throughout Scripture: the big story is about God working to restore the right order. We must not ever lose sight of that and what it reveals to us about God's nature and his heart for us.

Bryant Perkins

"Stand Firm in...Liberty"

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