

TODAY’S ORDER OF WORSHIP

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

#3 Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah
#837 I Need Thee Every Hour

Scripture Reading by: Rock Cary
Communion Devotional by: Robert Ward

#701 My Jesus I Love Thee
Lord’s Supper and Contribution

#2 We Praise Thee, O God
Sermon “Rejoice in the Lord”
Philippians 1:1-2

#911 Bring Christ Your Broken Life
#523 I Know the Lord Will Find a Way
Closing Prayer by: Gus Tristan

Our Small Groups will meet tonight.
Bobby Rader’s group will meet at the
building at 5:00 p.m.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

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

Jan. 14, 2024

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

Galatians 5:1

Marking Time

I read a post online earlier this week by a preacher acquaintance of mine to the effect that putting Christmas at the beginning of winter was a mistake—the best part of the season is out of the way just a few days in with nothing but dreary days stretching out in front of it for the next few months.

As a confirmed lover of winter, I completely disagree with the premise; I might be the only person in Liberty County eagerly anticipating the temperatures in the teens that are forecast this coming week. But I do find the idea of how we can be shaped by the rhythms of the calendar instructive.

It wasn’t always the case that Christmas Day was the highpoint of this time of year. As I alluded to in a recent sermon, in the Middle Ages it was only the beginning of the festive season which stretched until Epiphany, the commemoration of both the visit of the magi to the infant Jesus and his baptism by John, on January 6. The only real vestige of that in popular culture is the song, “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” But for much of its history, the highpoint of Christmastide was not December 25, but January 5: Epiphany Eve or Twelfth Night, celebrated with feasting, wassailing, and the eating of the Twelfth-night cake with its hidden bean that made the finder king for the night (the forerunner of the King Cakes that we will see in Wal-Mart over the next month).

Traditionally, then, Christmas decorations were left up until Epiphany (or even later, until Candelmas, in some places—that’s another article) rather than being taken down on December 26 as I know so many do. Why does this matter? Well, the reason that still having your tree up in January seems strange to us is the same reason that we start hearing carols the day after Halloween: consumerism. In the Middle Ages, the seasons of the liturgical year established the rhythms of people’s lives: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time (which is basically anything in the next 6 or so months). Now we mark time by whatever holiday we are supposed to buy for next—some of those made the cut, but they are fortified with a host of others. And so we have to move the Christmas merchandise out as soon as possible to make room for the Valentine’s Day candy, and the days after Christmas are celebrated mostly by retail sales to clear out old stock.

Am I suggesting that we should go back to celebrating all of those festivals on the church calendar? No. But what I am saying is that how we mark time reflects more about who we are than we might realize.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Ricky Lucas has been having test run and is waiting on the results.

Gayle Coleman will be having a procedure done this month.

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Wednesday night at 5:30 p.m..

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, Jan. 18th at 8:00 a.m.

Thank You

Dear Church Family,
We would like to thank each and everyone for the many prayers, calls, cards, text, food hugs and kind words expressed to us during the illness and death of our stepdad. It will never be forgotten. We love you all!

In Christian Love,
Lisa, Lori and Walden

Continued Prayers

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stiffler, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Kelly McCain, Wayne Noonkester

Shut Ins

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

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

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	

The First Day

Have you noticed how many calendars now begin the week with Monday? It has not trickled down to our printed calendars, yet, but it is the norm for a lot of electronic applications; you have to change settings to begin the week on Sunday. In Europe, which is a century or two further down the road toward secularization than we are here, it has been the norm for sometime. I remember as a child taking French in school how surprising it was to me that the first day of the week was Monday.

Of course, historically the first day of the week was Sunday. The earliest Christians met on that day because it was the day Jesus rose from the dead. They also wrote about it symbolically being the day of new creation—the 8th day—with his resurrection, after God had rested on the Sabbath. It was a fitting reminder of beginnings at the outset of every week.

In contrast, we tend to think of Sunday as part of the weekend. It's Saturday redux: aside from the hour we (sometimes) spend at church, there is little if any difference. We sleep late, we go to the lake, we take weekend getaways that routinely pull us from the church. We work on projects around the house that we do not have time to address during the rest of the week. We involve our kids in sports that have games or practices on Sunday with little or no thought. Because it's the weekend—that's what they are for, right?

Certainly, we don't want to do anything to interfere with work. That begins on Monday. That is how we mark our time now in so many cases, even when the calendar has yet to catch up. And it shapes our lives.

How many of us see our lives primarily in terms of work? "What do you do?" is the most common question we ask someone new we meet—and we mean, "what is your job?" We think about life primarily in terms of productivity. We cannot set anything aside for our job; it is the priority.

But when we begin the week on Sunday—when we order our lives around worship and fellowship and service and joy—that reorients us. It is not an afterthought, shoehorned in at the end of the week if we can fit it into our otherwise busy schedule.

As Christians, Jesus and his Kingdom should come first in our lives. Sunday is his day—the Lord's Day.

Bryant Perkins

"Stand Firm in...Liberty"

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