



September 6, 2020

Ordinary Time, Proper 18

First Christian Church 1609 East Ash St. Goldsboro, NC 27530

Minister Rev. Dr. Tom Millay

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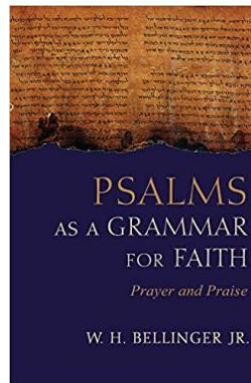
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Weekly Conference Calls every Wednesday at 6:45 PM. Here is all you do:

Dial 712-770-5505 and then wait for instructions to enter access code, which is 300904#.

### Outdoor Church

If we were ever tempted to take gathering at church for granted, I am sure we do not do so anymore! Praise God: We will continue to have outdoor services this Sunday. Church will begin at **9:30am** and last about 30 minutes. Masks will be encouraged, and we ask that you bring your own lawn chair. For those not able to attend, our worship services will still be available online. We will still have our **Sunday conference call at 10:45am**.



### Pastor's Library No. 8

Tune into the Pastor's Library this week for an eye-opening reflection from Bill Bellinger of Baylor University, who breaks down the different books of the Psalms. There are five different books that make up the Psalms, and each one has its own setting. For example, Book 4 is set in Babylon, when Israel is exiled, while Book 5 is set in Israel after the return from exile. Bellinger does a wonderful job of explaining how this affects our interpretation of each psalm.



### Music

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing" (Ps. 100:1-2). We will be worshiping the Lord on Sunday. We will be entering the Lord's gates with gladness and the Lord's courts with praise. **Tom Casey** will continue playing LIVE music during the Sunday service and don't forget that more piano music from Tom Casey can be found online on the church's Facebook. Be sure to check out the online music, and feel free to share it with your friends!

IN  
THE  
BEGINNING  
WAS  
THE  
WORD

### Verse-by-Verse: Walking through the Gospel of John

Join us on Facebook for a new video series titled "Verse-by-Verse," where Pastor Tom walks through the Gospel of John and unpacks the rich meaning of the text. The series starts by answering the question: What does it mean to say "In the beginning was the Word"? This week, we will look at the next phrase, "and the Word was with God." These are phrases that seem fairly simple, but there is more than meets the eye.

### Missions

David Mallory, Kit Coordinator for CWS, wrote to us this Monday saying: "Dear friends, Thank you for your congregation's generous contribution of hygiene kits to Church World Service. Your gifts will provide much needed aid to God's children across the world. Thank you for your witness and your partnership as we seek to serve those in crisis."

### September Special Offering

Our **missions special offering for September** supports the **Reconciliation Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**. Offerings fund the Church's mission to become a pro-reconciling and anti-racist church utilizing experiential education, inclusive worship, and

intentional dialogue. Through this mission, the Church seeks to promote healing, relationship, and restoration in the whole family of God. The mission provides programs for leadership development, curriculum for dialogue and learning, and partnerships within the Church and our communities. Our gifts help to **ensure the human dignity of every child, to ensure all have access to Christ's abundance, to fully flourish in education, financial stability, and friendships across God's human diversity.** Thank you for your generosity.



### **Step into the Water: A Socially Distant Scavenger Hunt**

Just because we're socially distancing doesn't mean all fun is off the table. We are planning to gather together one evening in late September as a number small, family-based teams, to gather together a number of items needed by the church. After bringing our contributions together, a catered meal will follow. Please **sign up** this Sunday and also **take a list** of the needed items, which will be available on Sunday. Alternatively, you can call into the office to sign up and get emailed the list. More details with respect to timing soon. Be on the lookout!

### **Worship**

Welcome to worship, whether in person or online! Visit us in person at 1609 E. Ash St. in Goldsboro, or online at [www.firstchristiangoldsboro.org](http://www.firstchristiangoldsboro.org) for several videos posted by 9:00 AM each Sunday: our Sermon, our Old Testament and Epistle Readings by Elders. Our lectionary readings this Sunday are: Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 149; Romans 13:8-14; and Matthew 18:21-15-20.

### **Sermon**

#### **"Remember"**

Imagine you're an outsider looking in at the Disciples. What makes us different from other Christian movements—from Baptists, for example? I think it might be difficult to tell, at first. But if someone kept coming back week after week, they would notice something that pretty obviously does set us apart from Baptists. We celebrate communion, the Lord's Supper, every week.

Even if this person on the outside looking in noticed this commitment to sharing the Lord's Supper with one another every week, they still might wonder: why?

Why do it every week? And, to be honest, maybe even some of us Disciples are wondering that today. Why exactly do we do this? And why do we do it every week?

Memory: Memory is a powerful and mysterious thing. Memory is mysterious. We think about memory as part of the mind, one of the faculties or activities our minds can engage. And yet, so often memory is triggered by something in the body. I remember recently I was overwhelmed with the smell of bleach, but this smell sent me back to high school, when I worked at nights at an ice cream shop which used bleach to wash many of the scooping and cleaning tools we used. I then sat for a good half-an-hour remembering many different parts of my high school life, such as going to the Taco Bell drive-thru at 2 AM with my best friend Jon after I had finished work, and all those memories were surfaced because I just so happened to smell a cleaning supply. How on earth does that work? I have no idea.

What I do know about memory is that it is also quite powerful. Memory can be used to hold a grudge and to refuse forgiveness; it can separate people and it can keep them separate. Or memory can draw together—say you remember a time when you were forgiven, perhaps that causes you to extend forgiveness to another. Memory, especially memories of one's own guilt, can cause the deepest despair. Or memory of how God has acted, how God has forgiven, how God has led broken and flawed people toward wholeness and a toward living lives of self-giving love—memory can open a door to hope, even in the darkest times. Memory is a powerful tool; we have to be careful how we use it.

The Bible gives us instruction on how to use our memories, how to make our memories an instrument for growing closer to God. Our Old Testament lesson for the day is one of those passages that gives enormous insight into both the power and the right use of memory.

In Exodus 12, the LORD tells Moses what is about to happen: the angel of death will be visited upon the firstborn of Egypt, for everyone except the Israelites who will have painted lambs blood over their doorposts, a sign that causes God's avenger to pass over such houses. At the same time as the LORD is telling Moses what will happen, the LORD also tells Moses that this event must be remembered: that every year a festival shall happen that remembers this day, the festival of

*pasach*, where unleavened bread, the bread of hurried flight, is eaten, and God's power and mercy is celebrated.

Then, in Exodus 13, after the Israelites had been liberated from slavery but before they crossed the Red Sea, Moses follows through on God's orders and gives the Israelites instruction on how they are to keep the Passover festival. He says:

"Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, because the LORD brought you out from there by strength of hand; no leavened bread shall be eaten. Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your ancestors to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this observance in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen in your possession, and no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory. You shall tell your child on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' It shall serve for you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead, so that the teaching of the LORD may be on your lips; for with a strong hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. You shall keep this ordinance at its proper time from year to year'" (Exodus 13:3-10).

This day the Israelites shall *remember*; this is the day when God "heard their cry on account of their taskmasters" and came "down to deliver them" (Exodus 3:7-8). This is the day when God was revealed to them not just as the Creator of the world, but as the Liberator of the oppressed, as He Who Breaks Chains. Here we have the origins of *pasach*, of the Passover festival, which is kept to this day as Jewish families sit around a table and tell the story that begins with "Once you were slaves in Egypt."

Beyond this command to remember, the Bible gives us further clues as to how important remembering the Exodus is. To understand this, we have to know that the Book of Psalms is not just one book. If you read through it, you will discover that there are five books that together comprise the Book of Psalms. And each

book has a setting. Books I and II are set within the threatened Davidic kingship, and often ask for help from the LORD. Book III of the Book of Psalms is set in Israel during the time when the exile is happening, as the temple is being destroyed. The final psalm of the book says "You have renounced the covenant with your servant; you have defiled his crown in the dust. You have broken through all his walls; you have laid his stronghold in ruins" (Psalm 89:39-40). Book IV of the Psalms is then set in the exile itself, as the Israelites are in Babylon. These songs of Book IV are songs they are singing in a foreign land. And of what do they sing? The exodus! During this time when Israel is again under the rule of another, this time Babylon, they remember their own history; they sing of how God freed them, in the hope that God will free them again. They have hope because they *remember*, they remember what God has done in the past, they remember who God is: the one who observes, who hears, and who acts to save.

Memory keeps alive the people of God, and it does so even in the darkest of circumstances, those times most devoid of hope, those moments full of nothing but the sting of pain at what has happened.

What Passover was, and is, and will continue to be for the Jewish people is what the Lord's Supper is for us. This is the moment we remember who God is. God is the one who observed and heard that we were enslaved to the powers of sin and death and sent Jesus to free us. God is the one who gathered human beings divided by anger and jealousy and fear, and taught them the simple act of sitting together and sharing a meal.

This moment of the Lord's Supper is when we enact our memory, when we act out and make present that moment in history that continues to make us who we are today. Our identity today is still folded within that moment in 1<sup>st</sup> century Jerusalem when Jesus gathered together with his friends and shared a meal with them. We are who he made us then, in that moment: the people of God, gathered around a table, welcoming all who come and sharing with them, washing feet and inviting any and all to join, without fear, in the full confidence of God's power to reform all hearts.

We celebrate this every week because it is what we *need* to remember. If we don't remember this, our memories will easily be filled with other things:

resentments and fears and grudges—those things which divide us. And then we won't be who we are anymore. We will be scattered to the winds, no longer gathered by God, no longer God's people. If we aren't around the table, if we don't remember this event when we were all made one, then we cease to exist. That's how important memory is.

So I ask you today: What do you spend your time remembering? Do you think of the Lord's Table every day of the week, or only every Sunday? Or maybe not even then? Do you remember the Lord's Table when you are tempted toward anger and rage at someone during the week? It is a powerful thing to remember. For like it or not, to be a Christian means: I want to be around a table with this person. May God the Holy Spirit accompany us until that is true, opening our hearts to one another in true welcome, and reminding us all that our Savior Jesus has taught us about God's desire to save each human being. Amen.

#### **Prayers of the Parish:**

This week, we continue to offer prayers for rebuilding and for healing in the wake of Hurricane Laura, and we also offer prayer for safety for our brothers and sisters in Smithfield and sisters in Clayton who are experiencing flooding from the Neuse River, especially for New Generation Christian Church.

We also pray for the end of violence of all kinds. May the God of peace break into our world and banish all forces of the Enemy who incite us to harm each other, and may those through whom harm has happened be free of the spiritual forces which keep them in bondage. May they know the power of the Gospel which frees us. May we all be reminded of our true enemy: Satan and all his forces who work together to wreck the lives of human beings made in the image of God. With that in mind, let our hearts be filled with love for each and every person on the face of this earth: "O Lord, make haste to help us!"

Let us lift up our weekly requests. We ask especially and continue to ask that you protect also all those who in danger today because of the pandemic, for those who provide essential services of all kinds. Visit especially: doctors, nurses, and all those working in health care; those who are in nursing homes, hospices, and long-term care facilities who are feeling isolated in these long weeks of distancing; schoolchildren, teachers, and administrators in a time of great uncertainty, and especially those students, teachers, and administrators who are now or are soon going back to school; we pray for childcare workers; for those who process food and those who stock and sell in grocery stores; visit delivery drivers and visit all Your churches, their pastors, their deacons, their elders, and their congregations. Visit all those who cannot find safe work in

these moments and who are feeling more threatened than ever this week. Visit the sick, the hungry, and the imprisoned. Mourn with those who mourn. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Grant us Your peace.

Please hear our prayers for:

*Grace Price, Eloise Kleinert, Mary Ethel Lewis, Kathy and G. A. Spain, June Anderson, Willie and Faye Rogers, Rick Rogers (Faye & Willie Rogers' son), John and Becky Selzer, Rebecca Daniels, Lorraine Loch, Val Watkins (Brantley's sister-in-law), the Spain's great granddaughter Katie, Molly McEldowney (Sharon Jones' daughter) and her brother, David Reynolds, Robert Strader (June Anderson's son-in-law), Jodie Hudson, Eddie Stewart, Linda Hilburn, Lee Summerlin, Gary Bartlett, Bill Smith, Gordon Aycock (friend of June Anderson), Chuck Allen, the Kleinert Family, Family of Dennis Horne in the death of his Aunt Linda Sides and Family of Ruby Santee in the death of her sister, Margaret Medlin, Melissa Acres, Mary Anne Cowley, Ruby Santee, Linda McCoy, Ken McCoy and family, Jay and Kelley Pittmann, a praise for Dennis Isenhower's son Dennis, a praise for Ray Price, Tanner Bjork and family, and Jana Blackman.*

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

**Communion** You may pick up individual communion packs at the entry table at the parking lot entrance Mondays from 10 to 12 or Tuesdays from 10 to 12 or use your own bread and juice at home. You may also drop off your offerings at that time.

### **A Moment for Meditation**

This week Paul tells us "you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep... the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Rom 13:11-12). What a powerful metaphor, this wakefulness. We don't want to be caught sleeping when the Lord returns. We want to be awake, with clear eyes, praying, "come then Lord, and be our judge," welcoming and not weeping at the return of the Lord. Are we concerned with what he would be concerned with? Are we healing, are we feeding, are we caring for the downcast and the outcast? Are we doing those things that Jesus did? It's so easy to say, 'let's not worry about that,' and drift off into sleep. But the Lord is coming. He will set the table, and he will invite those who know him. Let's be ready. Let's be awake.

**Preparing the Lord's Table with Our Offerings** - Let us prepare the Lord's Table with our Offerings. Thank you for your faithfulness in sharing your offerings during this time. You may drop them *by the church office from 10 to 12 on Monday or Tuesday of each week, by calling Wanda for another time, or by mailing in.*

**Offering Prayer** - We at First Christian are not ashamed of the power of the Gospel, and there's a very good reason for that: the Gospel is the healing power of God, coming to mend our broken



world. May we continue to be part of God's action through the gift of our own selves: our time, our resources, and our spirits in prayer. Sanctify the gifts of the church this week, O Lord. First and last, we offer our praise to God, from whom all blessings flow, and from whom every good and perfect gift comes down. Amen.

**Confession** - As Christians, we recognize we are not perfect. Join me in a moment of silent confession, for things done and for things left undone.

Let us rejoice: our sins are forgiven through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the power of the Holy Spirit draw us all more closely to God in the week to come. Amen.

**Communion Prayer** - "Be present, be present, O Jesus, our great High Priest, as you were present with your disciples, and be known to us in the breaking of bread; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen" (Book of Common Prayer, 834).

**Words of Institution** - On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my Body broken for you. Eat this in remembrance of me." In the same manner after supper, Jesus took the Cup and when he had blessed it, he gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my blood of a new covenant, poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink it in remembrance of him."

The Gifts of God for the People of God.    *Thanks be to God!*

**The Lord's Prayer** Let us now pray together the prayer our Lord taught us, 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Benediction Prayer** Remember the table. Remember that God has gathered you, welcomed you, embraced you, and called you to do the same for others. Lord Jesus, send us out, full of the power of the Holy Spirit, to do the work of the Gospel. Amen.

#### **Announcements and Calendar**

Outdoor Church Service, Sunday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 AM (see information above)

Administration Meeting, Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, at 6:45 PM (over conference call)