

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Notes from Rodney L. Barbour

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Theme: Pastor Alan writes: *“I know the plan I have for you,” says the Lord. Consider that God made you for a reason, and has invested some very special love crafting, molding and shaping you to be just so---a unique, marvelously-made masterpiece of God. Are you ready to set out on your next excellent adventure? Today we worship God as “Mediator”, as he brings us where we otherwise could not go.*

Preparation for Worship: As we gather for worship today, we sing two spiritual songs. If these songs are new to you, read the words as you listen to the melody and soon you should be able to “catch” the tune and join those already singing. Remember, the Psalms instruct us to “Sing to Him a new song” (Ps 33:3 and various other ones as well)! We follow this instruction this morning. We begin with **“OUR GOD”**. Look for references to Jesus’ miracles, to Creation, and to Paul’s words to the Romans (8:31-*If God is for us, who can be against us?*). The chorus to this song praises God by saying: ***Our God is greater, our God is stronger, God you are higher than any other, our God is healer, awesome in power, our God, our God!*** The second song **“LORD OF LORDS”** is a song of adoration. There are many images in this text, including: *“to worship you Jesus is my sole desire”* (following the Great Commandment); and, *“Jesus has shaped my heart for his pleasure”*. We remember the angel choir in Revelation as we join them in ceaselessly singing: *“now to the lamb who sits on the throne, be glory and honor and praise”*. We repeat the act of singing some of these words as the vision for eternal worship in Revelation seems to include the act of “ceaseless singing”. Here is a portion of the text: *Beholding your beauty is all that I long for, To worship You Jesus is my sole desire, for this very heart you have shaped for your pleasure, purposed to lift your name higher; here in surrender in pure adoration, I enter your courts with an offering of praise, I am Your servant come to bring you glory, As is fit for the work of your hands; Now unto the lamb who sits on the throne; be glory and honor and praise; all of creation resounds with the song, worship and praise him the Lord of Lords*

Call to Worship: These words reflect that several of our young members are presenting themselves to be confirmed as members of Christ’s Church! They have studied for the past two years, and have come to this point, remembering their Baptism, and seeking to be followers of Jesus Christ through his flock at Crestview Presbyterian Church. These words remind us: these young persons join with their parents, and grandparents, and maybe great grandparents who love and worship Jesus Christ and seek to follow him. We are all disciples of Jesus Christ and we seek to love him, and to love our neighbors as ourselves, and as he first loved us!

Leader: Friends, know that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

People: **We come to worship you, O God, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

Leader: We are disciples of Jesus Christ. As we worship, let us live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us. Let us rejoice always; let us pray without ceasing; let us give thanks in all circumstances;

People: For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us. As we worship, let the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen!

Hymn of Praise: This hymn of praise reminds us of the rich symbolism we find in “the church”, a gathering where two or three are gathered, where God is! We recognize, we bring and offer our varied skills and gifts, and wait for the empowerment of the Spirit to use our gifts in ministry to God, to each other, and to those around us. This hymn directs us to symbols in our worship, such as table, baptismal font, pulpit, cross which remind us of the presence of God in our lives. The hymn ends in a simple statement of adoration, and a statement of dedication on our part to be faithful servants as “God’s Kingdom comes...and His will is done”.

Confession and Pardon: As today’s confirmands answer questions about their faith and make a commitment, it will do us well to remember the time we answered these questions. And, they prompt us to take a quick assessment of how we have done in following Jesus’ call. As most are unable to follow the “LAW”, we remember that Jesus offers grace and forgiveness! As we confess our sins to Him, He is ready and able to forgive us and restore us to God’s purpose!

(unison) Lord, you are a God who keeps promises. In our prayers and songs we say that we want to be Christians, but we forget our promises. Our actions do not match up with our words. We say mean things to other people, we hurt their feelings, we think of ourselves first, and we ignore you. Lord, forgive us and hear our prayer for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. To all who confess their sins and resolve to lead a new life, he says, “Your sins are forgiven.” He also says, “Follow me.”

People: Lord you have shown us your mercy, you’ve shown us forgiveness each day. Now help us to love one another and show the world your spirit of grace.

Scripture/Sermon: Take time before Sunday to read 2 Timothy 1:3-7. In today’s worship, when both the members (older) of the congregation answer the congregational questions and the confirmands (younger) answer their questions, both “groups” need to realize the relationship we are now in together—a relationship described in today’s scripture passage. Paul (older) prayed for Timothy (younger) and were a source of mutual encouragement to each other. On this Mother’s Day, we see in this scripture that Timothy’s mother and grandmother, Lois and Eunice, communicated their strong Christian faith to Timothy. Parents and children need to share with each other their faith in Jesus, and be sure they see Christ’s love, helpfulness and joy in each other. Paul was encouraging Timothy to use the gifts he had received and step out boldly in faith and proclaim the gospel. The power of the Holy Spirit helps us do this.

Closing Song: We leave today's gathering and go into the world accompanied by the words of the spiritual song "From the Inside Out". The idea is our lives and ministry are formed by God's love in our heart, mind and soul, i.e. from the "Inside Out". As God lives in our heart, so can we begin to love our neighbor and serve others as God would have us do. Here's the text: *A thousand times I've failed Still Your mercy remains, and should I stumble again I'm caught in Your grace. Everlasting, Your light will shine when all else fades; never ending Your glory goes beyond all fame. Your will above all else my purpose remains, the art of losing myself in bringing You praise. In my heart and my soul Lord I give You control, consume me from the inside out Lord. Let justice and praise become my embrace to love you from the inside out.*

See you in Worship this Sunday!