

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

August 30, 2020
8:15 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas
Link to worship videos available at: www.fpcbryan.org

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Hallelujah! What a Savior

arr. Cindy Berry

WELCOME

We welcome you to worship today.

In Psalm 47, verses 5 thru 7, we find these words:

God has gone up with a shout,

the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

Sing praises to God, sing praises;

sing praises to our King, sing praises.

For God is the king of all the earth;

sing praises with a psalm.

Let us praise God together.

HYMN NO. 268

Crown Him with Many Crowns

DIADEMATA

**Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne;
Hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.**

**Crown him the Lord of love; behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified:
no angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright.**

**Crown him the Lord of peace, whose power a scepter sways
from pole to pole, that wars may cease, absorbed in prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end; and round his pierced feet
fair flowers of paradise extend their fragrance ever sweet.**



PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

O Holy One, in these months we have been filled with praise, doubt, conviction, and questioning. We know you are always with us, but we often do not feel your presence and close ourselves off from your guiding hand. We know that you are sovereign, just, and gracious, and we have hope for the future you will bring, but we also feel stuck here and now in a place of wandering, many times forgetting that it is the wandering that will lead us back to you. Open our hearts, God, to understand your promises and live with certainty and hope that a tomorrow of your making will come, and we will freely know love, compassion, and joy. Help us to live each day counting on your unfailing love and grace.

Friends, the good news of the gospel is this, that Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, and Christ prays for us. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven and made new, Hallelujah! Amen.

HYMN OF RESPONSE NO. 606

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

OLD HUNDREDTH

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 24:44-53

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

God's Truth: A Sword or a Flashlight?

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION,
AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

adapted from prayers of John Wycliff
on James 3:17 and Jeremiah 17:14

Lord, open our hearts to receive you and be changed by you. Give us grace to hold righteousness in all things, that we may lead a pure and blessed life, and wisely avoid the darkness. Help us to understand and know the treacherous deceit of evil so that we may not be fooled by its lies and tempting messages. Mold us to be mild, peaceable, considerate, and self-controlled, so that we may act sincerely for the good of others. And make us steadfast and unshakeable in faith, hope, and love. And Lord, let us be quiet in words, so that we may not speak like fools, but as is insightful and appropriate.

Turn us toward you, that we may be completely yours. Heal us, that we may be completely whole in your grace and only with your help.

Watch over the sick and in peril, the ill of both mental and physical needs, those who are struggling, the jobless, the hopeless, the downtrodden, and the anxious. God, in these times, please know our pain and give us strength and peace of heart to overcome, to bear with others, and to be persistent in faith. We know you are always with us, open us to know your presence and your grace.

We pray these things in the name of your son, Jesus the Christ who taught us to pray to you together 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. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

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**Christ is alive! Let Christians sing. The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises reign. Love, drowned in death, shall never die.**

**Women and men, in age and youth, can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth, revealed in Jesus, freed for all.**

**Christ is alive, and comes to bring good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring with joy, with justice, love, and praise.**

DISMISSAL AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE

The Solid Rock

arr. Melody Bober

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MISSION OPPORTUNITIES. IT'S SCHOOL TIME! We're reaching out to our adopted school **ANSON JONES ELEMENTARY**. On their list of student needs are: **composition books (wide-ruled), No. 2 pencils, crayons (24-ct), markers (Crayola, 8-ct), Pink Pearl erasers, and jumbo glue sticks.** Due to COVID-19, Anson Jones is also requesting: **2-gallon zipper bags, case 12-oz. bottled water** (as drinking fountains are not being used), and **disinfecting wipes**. Place your donations on the marked table in the Patio thru Wednesday, September 30. Monetary donations also accepted. Make checks payable to FPC-Bryan or go to www.fpcbryan.org, click **Give** to donate through our online payment portal ("**Special Gifts**" MEMO: **Anson Jones**).

Our brothers and sisters in Peru remain in shutdown since March. All the various organizations and churches supported by U.S. based Presbyterian mission teams are exhibiting signs of stress. A **COVID-19 Peru Relief Fund** has been established to provide food and assistance to the poorest in Lima (Peru) served by Pastor Pedro Garcia with Joining Hands Network. Here's how you can help! Make checks payable to FPC-Bryan or go to www.fpcbryan.org, click **Give** to donate through our online payment portal ("**Special Gifts**" MEMO: **COVID-19 Peru Relief**).

Hurricane Laura (Category 4) made landfall in the early hours of August 27 on the coast of Louisiana, about 30 miles from the Texas border, bringing lashing rain and sustained winds of 130 miles per hour. While the storm was downgraded to a category 2 as it moved further inland, hurricane-force winds and widespread damage continued. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is working with our international partners where Hurricane Laura impacted Haiti and the Dominican Republic, in addition to the affected U.S. presbyteries. Disaster Relief-Hurricane and Typhoon Relief. Here's how you can help! Make checks payable to FPC-Bryan or go to www.fpcbryan.org, click **Give** to donate through our online payment portal ("**Special Gifts**" MEMO: **Hurricane Laura, DR000194**).

Especially in this time, visit the church website, www.fpcbryan.org, for the newsletter, announcements, worship bulletins, devotionals for children and adults, updates, etc.

Like us on **Facebook** at: www.facebook.com/FPCBryan

NEW!!! on **Instagram**: www.instagram.com. Search for and follow **fpcbryantx1867** and/or **fpcbryan_youth**

Help FPC-Bryan's YouTube channel achieve 345 more subscribers to be eligible for a custom url!
On www.youtube.com, search for First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas, then click **SUBSCRIBE**

Our newsletter, **The Chimes**, continues to be available online, emailed to FPC-Bryan friends, and mailed to local FPC-Bryan members with the printed bulletin and sermon to those without technology.

Until further notice, it will not be mailed to its full distribution list.

The deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is Noon, September 6, and will be distributed on Wednesday, September 9. This newsletter will cover news from September 17-30.

STAY CONNECTED! with others in this community of faith at Church Updates—FPC-Bryan's online tool for church-related announcements, ways to serve, and current prayer needs. This online tool is "**REAL TIME**," and users receive a weekly reminder email on Thursdays to view new posts.

Login and create your password-protected account at <https://fpcbtx.churchupdates.org/login>.
For more information, contact Karen in the church office, 979.823.8073 or office@fpcbryan.org.



A WARM WELCOME!

We are delighted to have you worship with us today.

WORSHIP NOTES

PREACHER

Rev. Emily K. Béghin

LITURGIST

Rev. Ted Foote

USHERS/GREETERS

Adam Espinoza; Shelley Espinoza;
Randy Gholson; BJ Hendler;
Karon Mathews; Nicole McKinley;
Scott Shafer

MUSICIANS

Michelle Lassiter, *Pianist*
David Kipp,
Director of Music Ministries

COVER ART

“The New Covenant
in Its Moment of Victory”
One of 11 faceted windows
in sanctuary of
First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

SOUND

Jerry Norris

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THIS WEEK AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST,
AUGUST 30, 2020

8:15am ON-SITE OUTDOOR WORSHIP-

on the northeast part of the Gordon St. Parking Lot

ONLINE WORSHIP-To view, visit www.fpcbryan.org

9:30am Loose Leaf Church School Class-via Zoom

7:00pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-on the FPC Basketball Court

(Watch your inbox for details via email!)

MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2020

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2020

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SEPTEMBER 6, 2020

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(Watch your inbox for details via email!)



**For regularly scheduled meetings/gatherings,
please be in touch with your group's
moderator, leader, coordinator, or facilitator
to determine alternate meeting options/platforms.**

The Covenant Windows

Designed from Biblical stories by the Smith Glass Co. of Ft. Worth in 1966, eleven windows gird the nave, proclaiming the theme of God's covenant with God's people. The five windows at the congregation's left, moving toward the entrance, portray the covenants of the Old Testament. In counterbalance, the five to the right of the chancel depict the covenants of the New Testament. The window above the main entrance behind the balcony is an expansive Nativity scene.

A covenant is a solemn and binding agreement made by two or more individuals or groups, to do or to keep from doing, a specified action with understood accountability. God's compact with human beings is a commitment, a promise—absolute and certain.

The history of the people of Israel commences with the covenant of God with Israel. Abraham, at the direction of God, left Ur of the Chaldees and journeyed to a land where God promised to make his descendants a great people. The origin of Israel's religion is the covenant given to Moses at Mount Sinai and is referred to as the "old covenant."

The "new covenant" is God's gift of His Son in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So it was that, in the beginning of the Third century, Tertullian began to refer to the two collections of scripture as the Old and New Testaments—by literal definition, the old and new covenants.

The New Covenant in Its Moment of Victory

This window projects a fleeting impression that Christ's figure has been halted as He steps in majesty from the darkness of the open tomb. In His hand is the staff from which flares the banner of His victory over death, with the victory of God's love in Jesus also symbolized over the Empire by the unconscious Roman soldier at the lower level of the window. Attention is also drawn from the central figure to a glimmer of colors strewn against the brilliance of sunrise. Here the artist has turned to the ancient symbolism of the butterfly—seventeen (17) in different colors—to project the significance of this montage. As in the metamorphosis of caterpillar to cocoon to exquisite butterfly, so was Christ's triumphant resurrection depicted by the Christian of old.

CHURCH OFFICER NOMINATING FORM



We invite your prayers for the Nominating Committee which will meet to nominate candidates to serve as Elders (12—Class of 2022); 2021-2022 Nominating Committee members-at-large (5); Foundation Trustees (3—Class of 2026).



2020-2021 CONGREGATION'S NOMINATING COMMITTEE

(a committee of the congregation)

Moderator (Ruling Elder)A.J. Renold; Vice Moderator (Ruling Elder).....Sally Kate Morse
 Members-at-largeto be determined

RULING ELDERS

CLASS OF 2020

Lois Basenfelder Jasen Petersen
 Dave Haverland AJ Renold
 Phyllis Lee Don Spencer
 Jo Monroe Rod Thornton
 Jerry Norris Julie Young
 Beth Pennebaker Steve Zimmerman

CLASS OF 2021

Fan Cloud Marcia Miculek
 Ruth Ann Gholson Sally Kate Morse
 Adam Hartman Bookman Peters
 Anton Leontyev Roger Reese
 Karon Mathews Janice Sahn
 Nicole McKinley Yunior Torres Camargo

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. — I Corinthians 12:4

Gifts and requirements for serving as a church officer are: Elders are called to exercise special functions in the Church. God gives these persons suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. (*Book of Order G-2.01*)

ELDERS are those, in a Presbyterian Church, who compose the Session which is the governing body of the church. They are responsible for decisions of the daily life of the church through committees such as Administration, Caring Support, Christian Education, Membership Building & Evangelism, Missions—Local and Beyond, Property, Stewardship & Finance, and Worship.

TRUSTEES are those who compose the Board of Trustees of First Presbyterian Church of Bryan Foundation.

Please list your suggestions for nominees whom you feel will be the best suited to serve in a new class of leaders at First Presbyterian Church:

Nominee(s) for Elder (Class of 2022) _____

Nominee(s) for Nominating Committee Member-at-Large (2021-2022) _____

Nominee(s) for Foundation Trustees (Class of 2026) _____

**Place the form in the offering box or
 email suggestions to office@fpcbryan.org by Sunday, September 20.**

God's Truth: A Sword or a Flashlight?

Rev. Emily K. Béghin
Luke 24:44-53 (NRSV)

August 30, 2020
First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah^[a] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses^[b] of these things. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." ⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.^[c] ⁵² And they worshiped him, and^[d] returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³ and they were continually in the temple blessing God.^[e]

Today's window features the victory of the resurrection and the way to ascension for Christ. He stands poised like a warrior who has completed his mission, but truly, it has only begun.

At his feet we see an unconscious roman soldier, darkened by the stains of the past, a symbol of oppression and earthly power. Christ now stands in victory; victory over death, sin, and darkness. God's Son, the messiah is the champion over all that would serve to oppress.

His victory brings grace, love, and forgiveness. He is bigger than any governing power, than any man, and over any spiritual creature. He has fulfilled his mission to liberate and to redeem.

In his left hand he holds the flag of the medieval kingdom of Asturias; the white flag lined with a scarlet cross that lines the northern border of Spain where the Camino de Santiago is tread. You may recall two weeks ago we discussed the scallop shell in John's left hand in the baptismal window, the symbol of the beginning of this great pilgrimage.

A pilgrimage is the symbol of life on earth, our spiritual journey to connection, oneness, with God. Many scholars call this moment, the resurrection and ascension, the atonement, or at-one-ment when we have been reconciled or rather connect once again with our creator.

Jesus holds this flag because his earthly journey has been completed just as one may complete the Camino, but the flag also serves to remind us that we are still on this journey. Jesus, with his charge to the disciples is about to hand that flag to us that we might take it up and allow ourselves to be transformed on the journey ahead.

In our passage, Jesus points back to the law of Moses and shows us that the scriptures have been fulfilled, but the disciples need to understand the scriptures, even these who have been with Jesus and learned from him each day, even they need more to comprehend the truth.

This need to understand brings us into the present. He tells them they must wait, pray, and hope because the spirit will fall upon them to make them to see the gospel's truth. Only then may they go out to all people of all nations of every kind and witness to the truth in the future.

This is Jesus' charge to all believers and it is not kind, beautiful, or gentle. This text should come with a warning because if we do as Jesus has asked of his disciples and called upon us as well, we will face our worst enemies... ourselves.

To pray to understand requires an openness that most of us have never known. We must see our true faces in the mirror of our souls and that frightens us because what is within us can be frightening.

The door to our hearts cannot be opened if we do not encounter the biases, guilt, greed, and sin within ourselves. We have barricaded our hearts with the things that would serve us... We've made other gods of our preferences in self-preservation...

It should frighten us... How easily we falter in our attentions. How easily we would listen to another voice before that of the spirit. And how easily we would call our own voices that *of* the spirit... Idolatry... blasphemy...

The sad thing is, that if that does not upset us, it means we are only conditioned to be used to such behavior. We see it every day now on the

news, in social media, and we hear it from our friends. We dare to label our own wills as God's.

God's will is clearly stated here in this scripture. Redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation all given in love. "Thus it is written, that the Messiah^[a] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

The term "forgiveness," *aphesin* in the ancient Greek. is literally a term for liberation from debt, captivity, and systemic oppression. In Jesus' time, debt directly led one to enslavement, which for much of the population was a very real and constant anxiety. Today, most of the population lives within that anxiety with new labels slapped onto the word enslavement.

Verse 47 calls attention to the issues both spiritual and of this world and it changes the way in which we receive this scripture. Systemic oppression was very real under the roman empire for God's people. It takes vulnerability of ourselves to see just how ugly and veiled systemic oppression is within our own time as well.

After all, Christianity was not meant to be kept in a box for the day we venture to Heaven's doorstep. Christ is alive and we are called to live into this charge of witnessing to God's truth here and now.

Like I said, this charge Jesus gives needs a warning label because we must be open to being made entirely new in Christ if we are to know the truth of God's will.

In verse 48, we are directly called to be witnesses that Jesus' sacrifice calls for good news to those in need of forgiveness or *aphesin* liberation. Jesus charges us to be changed that we may go into the world and upset the things that would serve to oppress, enslave, or hold down our brothers and sisters of all nations.

Luke's message to us today highlights a Christ who is pointing his faithful to the beginnings of the work to be done on this earth, but there is a process and an order to sharing the good news.

First, they must wait, pray, and listen so that they may receive the Holy Spirit who will open their minds to properly understand the scriptures. Jesus has fulfilled the prophecies of making the way for forgiveness and redemption, but these

things must be known through holy wisdom in order to be shared with all peoples of all nations.

To witness to the gospel in absence of the Spirit is to bear the mouth of a fool. It is as you have heard it... best to keep one's mouth closed than to open it and remove all doubt. So do as Jesus has said. Pray, listen, discern. Only then can your mouth bear the power of God's truth.

The power structures have been upset; the last shall be first and the first shall be last... Jesus came that all peoples may be made new again through forgiveness and grace... and the disciples were being called upon to understand that the gospel speaks not only for the thereafter, but for the very real here and now.

The charge Jesus gives, therefore, holds weight that requires all of us to work together in love and with grace to be transformed by the Holy Spirit that we can recognize and work to overcome that which would serve to harm. After all, do we really wish to be a source of harm to another?

Do the things we have adopted in our lives cause us to harm others whether spiritually or in society?

Our hearts must be open only for God above all else so that we might correctly comprehend the Word of God and God's will. So let me dare to ask, Is the Bible a sword or flashlight in the dark? How do you use the Word of God? Or do you let the Word of God use you?

Jesus has had victory. He stands not as a member of the roman empire or as a member of a political party, but on his own; victorious and calling us to be moved, molded, and born anew in this gospel news.

In our window, Jesus stands above the symbol of systemic oppression and government influence seen in the soldier. Jesus stands also with his foot on the symbol of death.

Look at him. Christ is our king above all, God is love, and the Holy Spirit will guide us in the righteous path, but only if we dare to shed the skins of our own egos.

To come before God and fall upon your knees, to open yourself to seeing the ugly places within you and the beautiful places that will grow.... That is what Jesus asks of us right now. That is

liberation. And once we understand, we will be compelled to go out to all peoples of all nations.

All colors, shapes, and sizes... they are all God's children. Just as in the window... all these butterflies are different colors and sizes, but they are all beautifully made for their journey.

We are called to rise with Christ above the limitations and ways of this world and to be transformed as butterflies to spread the truth, God's truth of radical, transcending love, above all else.

So, when we read the Bible, how do we know it is the Holy Spirit who is with us? How do we recognize God's will versus our own will? We must examine whether we are letting God's story and words for us transform *us* or if we are interposing our own story onto God's words to transform their meaning.

Is the Bible a sword or flashlight in the dark? How do you use the Word of God? Or do you let the Word of God use you? How do we witness to God's love and care for all peoples in the world? How do we uphold grace and forgiveness given to us by Christ? How do we allow metamorphosis that we can become something new in Christ? What does it mean to be of Christ in 2020?

It is these questions in which we find ourselves today. It is these questions that Luke's Jesus challenges us with, but we know how to begin... wait, pray, listen and discern.

Let us be a people of prayer and discernment, a people of our King in Christ, a people ready to transform in the Spirit to know the true love and liberation of God. And friends, may we witness and move in this world as liberators through the truth of Christ's transcending love.

We are the church and with open hearts, we are the true church, all of us vulnerable believers in the victorious Christ, King above all kings, Lord above and beyond all. Let us praise him that we are saved and loved, compelled to witness in truth to his unfaltering grace. Amen.