TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch/Opening Prayer by: Ken Coleman
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#997 O Come All Ye Faithful
#1001 Hard the Herald Angels Sing
Scripture Reading by: Matthew Girard
#350 When My Love to Christ Grows Weak
Communion Devotional by: Don Lynn
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#1018 Joy to the World
Sermon: "The Greatest Gifts"
1 Corinthians 13:13

#911 Bring Christ Your Broken Life
#738 Take the Name of Jesus with You
Closing Prayer by: James Scott

We will not have
Evening Service tonight

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

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

Dec. 25, 2022

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Merry Christmas

I have printed this article, written by Reuel Lemmons and published in the Firm Foundation several decades ago, every year since I have been here. I suppose it is something of a Christmas tradition in itself at this point. While it seems silly in some ways to repeat it, I get comments every year from those who missed it before somehow about how much they appreciate it; so I make no apologies for running it again—especially on Christmas Day!—and I suppose I will continue to do so until those comments stop coming. This editorial powerfully addresses the mixed feelings some of us have about the Christmas season, and it does so in such an eloquent way that it still feels powerful to me every time I read it. BP

We are again at that time on the calendar when the Western world pauses to acknowledge that Jesus Christ was born in the world. The date makes little difference. And we heartily agree that some other time of year suits the occasion best, but that makes little actual difference. We also agree that the celebration of a special religious holiday has no foundation in scripture, and that it had its sources in pagan rites and apostate festivals. This will acknowledge in advance all those letters differing with us in what we are about to say here.

Personally, we are glad that the world, bent on carnage and drunk on hedonism takes time out to acknowledge that God has sent his Son into the world. Even atheists, like the stones of the ground, cry out. We deplore the fact that men make merchandise of the occasion – as the moneychangers took advantage of the opportunity in the temple – but even they help the world to stop and take note of God's gift to man. In a world of war they talk about peace; in a world of hate they talk about love; in a world of sorrow they talk about joy. All the advertising, all the decorations, all the plans for family gatherings call attention to the fact that there is something better in the world than the rat race.

A lot of attention is given in the Bible to the birth of Jesus. The gospels abound in details. The numbering, the birth, the stable, the flight into Egypt – there was a lot of excitement in both heaven and earth when God sent his Son into the world. Without controversy the greatest event in all human history was heralded by that star that shone over Bethlehem. One might argue the merits of the cross as the greatest, but had there been no manger there would have been no cross. With the coming of the Son of God in human flesh a love was born that the world had never before known. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." With all we think we know about love, we can grasp but a very small concept of that love. No wonder the angels sang!

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

J. C. Whitfield, Gayle Coleman's sister, will be having gall bladder surgery soon.

Gayle Coleman had eye surgery Friday.

Steve Lunceford had lung surgery last week.

Robert Williams, the Mast's son in law has been diagnosed with cancer in his jaw and will have surgery on January.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Geri Cryer, Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ka'Leisha Jones, Linda Frank, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Susan McCain

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

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

Our Missionaries

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

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Wednesday, Dec. 28th at 5:00 p.m..

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Jan. 3rd at 8:00 a.m.

Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to Debby McKinzie on the passing of her son, Gary Nielsen. He passed away Tuesday morning. The funeral is Tuesday, Dec. 27th at 3:00 p.m. at Ardoin Funeral Home in Kinder, LA.

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

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"
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The eloquence of tongue and pen have been exhausted in paying homage to the babe of Bethlehem, the man of Galilee and the lamb on the cross. Limited as we are by our humanism it is impossible for us to grasp the full significance of what God did in Christ at that time. About the best we can do is acknowledge that if he had not come into the world we would die without hope of heaven. He was the light shining in the dark place. "They that sat in darkness saw a great light."

We can understand the love of a mother for her child. We can even understand the love of a man who might give his life for his country. But it is beyond us to understand the love of a God who would rob Heaven to bless earth; empty Glory to fill us with glory. It was no natural affection that made God send Jesus into the world. What he did at Bethlehem matured until it became what he did at the cross. It is fitting that we should pause and note that we didn't earn it; it was an act of grace.

History is sometimes turned around by the smallest of events, and destiny is balanced on the point of a pin. The almost totally unnoticed event of Bethlehem has affected the world more than all the battles that were ever fought or all the governments that have ever convened. For four thousand years sin-cursed man had hoped for the seed of woman that would bruise the serpent's head, and for two thousand years the Jews had looked for a Messiah. But when he came they didn't recognize him. He came in the seclusion of a stable, in the darkness of night, and in the guise of a man. The greatest forces of all time do not come with powerful explosions or the noise of racing chariots; they come on silent wings. The power of love is such a force. And grace and goodness make little racket.

In a night without light came the Light. In a world without hope, hope was born. In the midst of despair there was the singing of angels. They had but a star, but we have Son-light. The hopes and fears of all the years were pinned, whether the shepherds realized it or not, upon a little baby in a young mother's arms. Really, that is where hope still lies.

Wise men brought him gifts. But their gold, frankincense and myrrh have long since turned to dust. It was the best they had, and they set precedent for our giving gifts, but they gave only gifts that perish. We have an opportunity to give a living sacrifice. If giving is the test of loving, then let us give the consecration of our lives. He himself has said, "Greater love hath no man than this: that a man would lay down his life for his friend."

After all, it isn't the gaudy tinsel in which the gift is wrapped, nor is it the extravagant price paid for it, it is the heart that is given with the gift that really makes the gift worth receiving.