TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

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

#867 To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way
#878 Sweet By & By

Scripture Reading by: Joseph Girard
Communion Devotional by: Craig Girard

#342 We Saw Thee Not
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#881 Mansion Over the Hilltop
Sermon "Encouraging One Another"
Hebrews 10:23-25

#851 I'll Fly Away
#864 Where the Gates Swing Outward Never
Closing Prayer by:

Our Small Groups will meet tonight.
Ken Coleman'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. 7, 2024

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, Nobody

There is an old story, a sort of parable—I am not sure of its original source. But many of you have likely read it before. If so, you are going to read it again.

It is about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to do and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody would do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

The story itself is a bit confusing, but we all get the point. This is an illustration of the Pareto principle, what we might know better as the 80/20 rule. When we apply that to churches, it means that 80% of the work gets done by 20% of the people. And a lot of things that need to be done go undone as a result.

In this new year, I want to continue to challenge us to break away from that paradigm. Just imagine what we could do if those numbers were reversed; imagine if the vast majority of this congregation was excited about who we are and what we are called to be and to do!

There's a parable Jesus told that helps reinforce this idea. On the first day of the last week of his life, he made his "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem. He was greeted by crowds of people shouting *Hosanna to the son of David*—"God, save!"—and waving palm branches, welcoming him like a king. That did not sit well with the Jewish elites, who questioned his authority in series of confrontations.

At one point in this clash, Jesus told them a story: *A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." And he answered, "I will not" but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, "I go sir," but did not go."* **(Matthew 23:28-30)** He applied that to his audience, without mincing words: the respectable religious leaders were the disobedient sons; the tax collectors and prostitutes were the obedient ones, and even those despised outcasts would enter the kingdom of God before them!

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.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Patricia Prater, Edna Semien, Betty Spencer, Willie Spencer, James 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

Upcoming Activities

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

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

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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There are lessons for us here, too. Consider the question Jesus asks to drive his point home: *Which of the two did the will of his Father?* **(v. 31)** This is the only question that really matters; all Scripture is saturated with that conviction. What is at stake here is doing or failing to do the will of God—and, when we consider the perfectly obedient example of Jesus, it is following or failing to follow him. The Father is God, and the vineyard is his Kingdom. The two sons are classes of people commanded to labor in it: those open sinners who refuse but then repent and earnestly labor, and those hypocrites who make promises they don't keep.

But let's think more particularly about the command, *go and work in the vineyard today.* Note 3 things about that command:

1. **There is work to be done.** That should be obvious, and yet sometimes we seem blind to it. There is work to be done in meeting the physical needs of others; there is an even greater need in spiritual matters. As an easy example, did you know that (pre-COVID) the average attendance at churches of Christ across the country on Sunday morning was only 94? That's alarming when you consider that there are several 1,000+ member congregations that bolster that number. 54% of congregations average just 34 people on Sunday. That means we are right at par here right now—that's good!—but there is still so much to do. And we should note for those who fail to do, 58 churches a year closed their doors forever in the 2010s. I am not aware of any comprehensive work completed yet post-COVID, but we can imagine all of those figures are trending in the wrong direction.

2. **Go work in the vineyard.** There is not merely work to be done, but it's God's work. Many people are eager to work, but not in the Father's vineyard. We are pretty good about working in our own vineyard for our own benefit. But how many of us work consistently for God? How many of us are willing to teach Bible classes? How many of us bring friends or neighbors to church? How many of us even pray or read our Bibles much? Sometimes we think about work in the church and imagine we aren't capable of much, but many of these are simple things. Jesus seemed to think he was working in the vineyard even on his knees: the only work we know of that made him sweat was prayer! We are not all skilled to do the same kind of work. But God does call us to work.

3. **Go work today.** The need is now. We aren't needed in some indefinite future. God calls us to work today. Like the case of the two sons, this is the only day that exists. All that is necessary to waste our lives is to waste today.

Won't you recommit yourself to getting involved in this new year? We have been meeting on Wednesday evenings again now for going on 3 years; many of you who used to attend regularly have still not returned. We have our small groups program that is a vital part of our spiritual health that some are not part of. We have needs for teachers (and for parents to bring their children again!) and for volunteers on workdays and the list goes on.

There are so many opportunities for fellowship, for study, and for service inside and outside the church. Anybody can do it. Everybody should. Don't let it fall to Nobody.

Bryant Perkins