TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor / Opening Prayer by: Ken Coleman
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Bobby Rader

#286 Wonderful Story of Love
#387 Tell Me the Story of Jesus

Scripture Reading by: Parker Balch
#354 I Gave My Life for Thee

Communion Devotional by: Jerry Mallernee
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#587 Sing and Be Happy
Sermon: "The Songs of Christmas:Mary"
Luke 1:46-55

#903 There Is Power In the Blood
#755 God Be With You
Closing Prayer by: Don Lynn

Our small groups will meet today.
Don Taylor'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

Dec. 15, 2024

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

What Hast Thou Giv'n?

I confess that I am behind on my Christmas shopping this year. Normally, I have begun by Thanksgiving and often have it finished by the beginning of December; this year, I am still working on it as I type this. I think that the lateness of Thanksgiving in the calendar this year has thrown me off my usual routine.

But it reminds me that this is the time of year when we are concerned with choosing just the right gift to give to the special people in our lives. Consider this: have you ever received an indescribable gift? A gift that was simply beyond explanation? What kind of gift would it have to be to be called "indescribable?" Would it be one that you open and look at and say, "This is just beautiful…what is it?" Or maybe it is a gift that carries a great deal of emotion with it. It was given to you by someone very special, and it was a complete surprise when it was given. You'll treasure it always because of its sentimental value. Would that make it an indescribable gift? Or maybe it would be a gift that you cared so little about that you wouldn't even bother to find words to try to describe it.

In **2 Corinthians 9**, Paul is writing about human gifts. The church in Corinth is taking up offerings to send to the poor saints in Jerusalem. He commends them for their eagerness to help and reminds them that those who sow sparingly will also reap sparingly, but that those who sow bountifully will reap bountifully. That prompts him to expound upon the way that God so generously blesses us, supplying our needs, until he comes to His greatest gift: sending Jesus to earth for us. But he cannot find words to describe that. So he abruptly exclaims "*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"*

At this time of the year, people do their best to depict how wonderful God's gift in Christ is. Musicians have composed some of their greatest music on this theme: Handel's "Messiah," the beautiful hymns, "Joy to the World," "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "Silent Night." Poets and painters and sculptors have taken up the tools of their trade to pay tribute to Jesus, the gift of God's love. We have preached and written about it frequently.

But what are we giving to God in return for his generosity?

Our Time
Our attendance for most of this year has been 100-110, with occasional dips below that due to holidays or illness and intermittent spikes because of special weekends here. But over the last 6 or so weeks, it has been consistently in the 60s, numbers we have only previously experienced here during the pandemic.

There are 128 people pictured on our bulletin board; that does not count the handful of members who do not have their picture up, nor does it account for regular visitors or those who have moved into our

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Bubba Pearson is at home recovering from surgery.

Susan McCain is recovering from surgery.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Dr. Hugo Thomas, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Linda Frank, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas

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, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Dec. 16th at 3:00 p.m..

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, Dec. 19th at 8:-00 a.m.

Small Groups will meet this Sunday for the last time for this year. We will resume the meetings on January 5th.

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

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community since those photos were taken earlier in the year. That means that less than 50% of our ostensible members have been here lately—no amount of regular travel or sickness accounts for that. And that does not even get into the poor showings at Sunday School or Wednesday night.

Attendance at the assembly is far from the sum total of the Christian life, but it is certainly a good baseline. Some of us are simply not giving our time.

Our Wealth

Remember that the original context of Paul's statement is motivation for the church in Corinth to give financially. The elders recently put together the budget for this next year and are planning to present it after services Sunday; there was a shortfall of several hundred dollars per week this year.

I wrote and talked about this after the first quarter of the year, and urged everyone to increase their giving by just a few dollars a week. I know that some of us did in response; I also know that, quite evidently, most of us did not, or we would have made that up easily.

Some of us might be giving the widow's mite already. But if you can afford hundreds of dollars in extravagant gifts this holiday season, frequent vacations, multiple vehicles, but "can't afford" to increase your contribution by $10, then you are not giving generously.

Our Commitment

This relates to both of the above, but it runs deeper. If you are signed up for the small group program, you have made a commitment; you should be present if at all possible. If you have said that you will teach Bible class for a quarter, you should be there for every session if at all possible. If you are in a leadership position of any type in this congregation, you have made a commitment—more than that, the church has entrusted you with it; you should be hard at work if at all possible. If you are a member of this congregation, and you are presented with opportunities for service or fellowship, you should get involved if at all possible.

If we can always find time for recreation or travel or work or family or whatever it may be, but can never seem to be concerned about the work and worship of the church, it is evident where our priorities lie, what we are committed to, and what we truly worship: ourselves.

I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou mightst ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead;
I gave, I gave My life for thee,
What hast thou giv'n for Me?
I gave, I gave My life for thee,
What hast thou giv'n for Me?

Bryant Perkins