



The Visitor

First Christian Church
900 South Ennis, Bryan Texas 77803

January 15, 2019

Minister's Moment

Friends and Disciples:

Sunday sermons are a bit like icebergs. Only a little bit of any subject is visible (covered in the message.) Last Sunday's sermon was a classic example. The 17 minutes I used very likely represent the upper limit of our contemporary attention span. As we are conditioned by television programming, beyond a quarter of an hour, sermons begin to be less and less effective. Unfortunately, the subject of any conceivable Sunday morning message would be deep enough to fill a scholarly career. As a result, the typical sermon is no more than a sound-bite. Preachers are often torn between making effective use of limited time and the desire to say more so as not to leave out significant points. Unfortunately, no matter how much is said, much more remains unsaid. Mostly, sermons function as invitations to further reflection.

The subject last Sunday was the Holy Spirit. A useful summary can be found at the end of the manuscript: *"Many try to live as Christians, and be the Church, without divine assistance. Well, it takes more than water. Just as Peter and John prayed for those Samaritan Christians, we too must pray that the Spirit will come and complete our faith as we work to build our Lord's Church!"* An obvious question, one that is beyond the scope of this message, nags at me. If the Spirit is essential to faith, then how does one connect with it?

Unfortunately, that too, is a subject broad enough to occupy careers and fill libraries. Consider this sound-bite. Properly understood Christian spirituality is a journey that begins at the outset of one's faith walk and continues until this life's end. One never masters the subject; instead, it is a discipline that is practiced. Each day we take up the disciplines of spirituality that we might be receptive. Mostly the basics are well known. Personal prayer. Scripture reading and study. Reflection. Devotional reading. Journaling, worship, and service. Our personal practices can serve to lead us to share our spiritual journey with other believers: with prayer partners, in group Bible study, corporate worship, and reflection with faith partners. *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."* (Pr. 27:17) Personal disciplines lead to shared reflection, which in turns feeds back into personal reflection; and then the cycle begins again. This we are to do day by day to create fertile ground in which the Spirit can move and grow.

Yours in Faith,

Jesse

Last Sunday's Sermon

Title: "The Real Thing: It Takes More Than Water"

Scriptures: Luke 3:15-22; Acts 8:14-17

[Click to Listen to the Sermon](#)

Imagine the scene: "A camera pans across row upon row of joyful young people singing in the morning sun. "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. I'd like to hold it in my arms and keep it company." They are from virtually every nation, and each holds a familiar greenish glass bottle. It's a vision of hope based on love, peace and acceptance. It's about what could be. After spinning the vision, the camera pulls up away revealing 200 singers aligned in the shape of a fan on a green hillside. Then comes the hook: "I'd like to

buy the world a Coke..." That commercial sold a lot of Coca-Cola. After all, the scene was compelling. Who wouldn't want peace, love, and acceptance? Well, it takes more than clever marketing to make it real.

Remember that as we turn to the infant Church in Jerusalem. The hope given birth at Pentecost quickly found expression as a community of love and acceptance. Just read Act 2:42-47. But that peace soon was tempered by the reality of outside opposition, human failings inside the Church, and the struggles that inevitably come with growth. Clearly, they had compelling vision and sense of purpose from the very beginning. They had the teachings of Jesus and the witness of those who knew him well. Many were led to baptism, but water alone doesn't make anyone a disciple of Jesus. Water alone isn't enough. Water alone won't create Christians who are dedicated to the discipleship of Jesus Christ. And water alone, whether sprinkled on, dunked in, or poured over every single member of a faith community, is not enough to make that community truly Christian.

That statement is less theological than it is the witness of history and personal observation. Historically, the Church's shortcomings are well documented. Faith became a tool used to control the masses. Faith was wrapped in power politics as the Church became a political entity complete with all the compromises and corruptions. The group that was at one time persecuted, became a source of persecution. Dissent and difference were met with threat and violence. Torture and execution were tools used to fashion and protect church power. All that is documented historical fact. As for personal observation, I suspect most of us have known people, knowledgeable and dedicated Christians, who when judged by their behavior, seemed to be missing some key ingredient. And when we examine ourselves honestly, we are aware of our own lapses. We enter the Church through baptism, but it takes more than water to power the Church or to live a faithful Christian life. Without God's presence, without that touch of divine power, without a deep connection, followers of Jesus, no matter how dedicated or well-informed, simply cannot succeed in living as faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

This is the truth upon which the Church was founded. And, from the very beginning the Church had that key ingredient: the power of God made available through the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost the Spirit swept through the house where the Apostles were staying. Filled and animated by the Spirit, the Apostles burst into the street. It loosened their tongues and guided Peter's preaching. By the end of that day 3000 were baptized; but water, whether dunked in, poured over, or sprinkled upon, was never the key ingredient. The human decision to receive it and the ritual used to celebrate it are not enough. It takes more than water to make anyone Christian. It requires a connection with God because human strength and human wisdom are never enough.

The early Church, though thoroughly human even during its infancy in Jerusalem, had that key ingredient. The Holy Spirit equipped them to face opposition. It preserved them when internal struggles threatened. It comforted them when Stephen was martyred, and it remained with them when persecution pushed them. That caused some to flee Jerusalem. Taking their faith with them, the Church began to spread. That's where the reading from Acts 8 picks up. The Church in Jerusalem was cautiously joyful when they heard that Samaritans, formerly viewed as hated enemies, had accepted Christ. Peter and John were dispatched to check and verify! Though the text is brief, it presents an essential truth. Those newly baptized Samaritan Christians did not receive the Holy Spirit. Faith is not complete without a connection to God, without a spark to ignite it, without wisdom to guide it, without understanding to correct it, without God's Holy Spirit to power it. It takes more than water!

The early Church was filled with and led by the Holy Spirit! In our modern, enlightened world, a great many people seem to not understand the limits and failings that come with our humanity. Many try to live as Christians and be the Church without divine assistance. Well, it takes more than water. Just as Peter and John prayed for those Samaritan Christians, we too must pray that the Spirit will come and complete our faith as we work to build our Lord's Church!

Next Sunday's Message

Title: "Signs, Spirit, and Power"
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-11; Exodus 14:31
Starting Point: In the familiar story of the miracle at the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee, an important, yet easily missed thread is presented in the background details of the story. The miracle that Jesus performed, turning water into wine, was not a public demonstration but was done privately. Jesus' mother and the household servants witnessed the act, but others (bridegroom, master of the feast, and guests) did not. In the background, however, another group is present. The disciples collected after Jesus' baptism (would-be disciples?) presumably were also privy to the miracle. The story ends with these words in verse 11: *"What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."*

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed for the first Sunday communion preparation slot. This slot has been empty for a few months and other preparers have been filling in, but another person is needed so that no one has the duty more than once a month. Please talk to **Cheryl** or **Mary** if you feel called to do this. The preparation is not difficult, and instructions will be provided. We also need volunteers for Sunday morning refreshments.

Congregational Meeting, January 27

There will be a congregational meeting on Sunday, January 27 immediately after church to review the proposed budget for 2019. The General Board met January 13 and approved it for forwarding to the congregation. Later this week, the draft budget will be sent out by e-mail and in hard copy for those who do not receive e-mail.

Prayer Concerns

While we believe everyone needs prayer, those named on our list have specific and ongoing needs:

Evelyn Lively
Polina Rouland
Bob & Liz McGee
R. J. Bozeman
Roger & Emily Nichols
Mark Stadelman
Hector Cortes
Caton Milstead
Jim Conway (cousin of Bob Richards)
Brad Slocum (brother of Stacy Atterbury)
Christopher Cravey (Jeanette Phariss's nephew)
Diane Andrews (friend of Cheryl Aufderheide)
Elaine Pruett (Tonya Chandler's grandmother)
Leatha Jeffrey (Calvin Jeffrey's mother)
Cathy Deason (friend of a colleague of Karl Aufderheide)

Ellie Erin Albrecht
Julie Atterbury
Terry Hart
Gerry Hart
Jim & Stacy Atterbury
Kevin Rodgers
J.C. & Delores Shaw
Cherry Chandler
Rose Bowden
Richard Stadelmann
Shorty Kindt
Lois Kindt
D'andre Fleeks
Bob Chandler

Shut-ins

Henry & Rosemary O'Neal
Gene Holt

Nancy Wright
Marge Sheppeerd

You Are Invited

Habitat for Humanity's

“A Night of Building Hope”

Our church is one of the sponsors of a unique concert featuring a wide range of performances from classical and sacred to Broadway and Jazz in a coffee house setting. The event is Saturday, January 19th from 7:00-9:30p.m. at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 1001 Woodcreek Drive, College Station. (Doors open /silent auction begins at 7, concert begins at 7:30.) There will be free coffee, food, and a silent auction. You may give a donation at the door. The funds raised will go toward building a house for a family in need of affordable housing. This concert is being put on by Habitat's Faith in Action Committee (of which our church is a member.)

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH B/CS						
JANUARY 2019						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<i>1</i> New Year's Day OFFICE CLOSED	<i>2</i> Choir 7:30 PM Elders Meeting 6:00 PM	<i>3</i> Cub Scouts 6:00 PM	<i>4</i> OFFICE CLOSED	<i>5</i>
<i>6</i> CYF/Youth 3: PM Disciples Men Hosting Breakfast 8:30 AM Moming Worship 10:45AM Sunday School 9:30 AM	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i> House Church 6:00 PM	<i>9</i> Choir 7:30 PM Disciples Women 9:30am	<i>10</i> Cub Scouts 6:00 PM	<i>11</i> OFFICE CLOSED	<i>12</i>
<i>13</i> CYF/Youth 3: PM General Board Mtg (after Worship) Moming Worship 10:45AM Sunday School 9:30 AM	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i> House Church 6:00 PM	<i>16</i> Choir 7:30 PM	<i>17</i> Cub Scouts 6:00 PM	<i>18</i> OFFICE CLOSED	<i>19</i> Habitat for Humanity Concert Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 1001 Woodcreek, CS 7:00 PM
<i>20</i> CYF/Youth 3: PM Moming Worship 10:45AM Sunday School 9:30 AM	<i>21</i> Martin Luther King Jr.	<i>22</i> House Church 6:00 PM	<i>23</i> Choir 7:30 PM	<i>24</i> Cub Scouts 6:00 PM	<i>25</i> OFFICE CLOSED	<i>26</i>
<i>27</i> CYF/Youth 3: PM Moming Worship 10:45AM Sunday School 9:30 AM	<i>28</i> Young Life SFA 7:00 pm	<i>29</i> House Church 6:00 PM	<i>30</i> Choir 7:30 PM	<i>31</i> Cub Scouts 6:00 PM		

