

The Visitor

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 900 S. Ennis, Bryan, TX

April 17, 2017

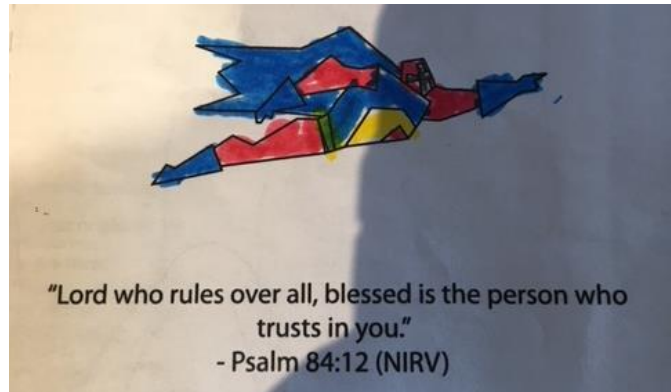
Last Sunday's Sermon

Title: "Moving Toward Trust"

Scriptures: 1 John 3:1-7; Luke 24:36-48

[Click Here to Listen to the Sermon](#)

I'm still in the lectionary, still in John's first letter, and still dealing with complications. But that's the way of things. In response to the complications, this week I'm going to borrow from Isaiah 11:6 and let a little child lead me. Oh, not the baby Jesus, as implied by Isaiah but my own, not quite so little anymore, grandson **Gavin**. During choir practice a week and a half ago, he called to share a Bible verse. It was part of the lesson at church that night. Psalm 84:12 (NIRV): "*Lord who rules over all, blessed is the person who trusts in you.*" He was pretty charged up about it, and of course that made me feel good. So, I shared a favorite scripture of mine. Proverbs 3:5: "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence/insight/understanding.*" (Final word quoted from: NIRV, NRSV, NIV versions.) I shared that one because it fit very neatly with Psalm 84:12.



Gavin's take-home page for Ps. 84:12

We open ourselves to the blessings of God by trusting the Lord. That much came through Gavin's verse. And the verse I added defines the trust we are asked place in God. Don't rely on your own intelligence when it comes to living as a child of God. Don't blindly follow the ways of this world, don't go with human convention, or let personal experience trump God and God's way. If there is a gap between the two, between your way and God's way, yield to God and do it his way. That's where purity begins. Forget perfection! Pure means unmixed, unadulterated, uncontaminated. For us, purity begins with the choice to trust God and trust God's ways without reservation, without division!

Strangely enough that leads back to the passage from 1 John 3. John begins by telling us that we are God's children because God's love has been given to us in Jesus Christ. Accepting that involves a degree of trust, but then John admits to a bit of uncertainty. He tells us that we do not know the whole story yet on what is to come, but he assures us that when Christ returns we will be like him. And that is our hope: that somehow, in some way, when he returns we will be like him.

That much goes far enough to offer a bit of context, but my scriptural exchange with Gavin points to verse 3: *And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.* If we hope to be more like him, now and at that indefinite point in the future; then purity is the place to begin. And once again, don't equate the word "purity" with perfection. While I do believe that in the eyes of God, Jesus was perfect and without any sin, that is a hopeless standard for us. There is no halfway or almost, when it comes to perfection. Either you are or you're not. And at least in this life, we are not.

Instead of perfection, purity means being undivided in our relationship with God. That is the place to begin. And of course, Jesus set the standard. He was completely pure.

He was undivided in his relationship with God. We see that in his teachings. We see it in his compassion for the sick, the poor, the needy, the oppressed, and those rejected by others. It's seen in his refusal to give in to human convention. It was displayed in his unwillingness to yield to human authority. Ultimately, his refusal to bow to the power structures of the day led him to a Roman cross. In all things Jesus trusted God, so he did not withhold anything. He didn't fence off any portion of his life, any idea or any relationship. Instead, he trusted God enough to submit his whole life at every point to God. With God he was undivided; he was pure! In all things he trusted God completely.

While perfection is an either/or proposition, purity is measured in increments. If you read labels carefully, you will find that as with our own hearts, almost nothing we buy is 100% pure. But the purity of our relationship with God while not 100% pure, can be improved. We can make choices that reflect trust in God, and in this world so many things undercut our trust in God. It is so easy say the words, "In God we trust." We may trust God, but we still build bigger bombs, more planes, and better missiles. Oh, we make compromises everywhere in our relationship with God. We can say "I trust God" but if we are unwilling to follow God's ways, then our words are nothing more than self-deception. Lack of trust introduces so many impurities into our relationship with God. For instance, how much money do we need? Financial security is a good thing, but how much is enough? We are quick to say that we believe God will provide, but our lack of trust makes money seem awfully important.

We seldom say it in blunt language, but our internal struggle to remain pure and undivided before God is balanced at a single point. Just how far can I trust God? What can I afford to do? What can I afford to do without? What precautions should I take? Money is an easy example to cite, but there are many other aspects of life that drive wedges between us and God. But in my grandson's verse, the psalmist's praise is simple enough. Lord, blessed are those who trust in you! And the Proverb I answered with hits the mark as well. Instead of relying on human insight, trust God without reservation.

The final sentence in the reading from 1 John 3 comes in verse 7: *"The person who practices righteousness, is righteous in the same way he is righteous."* (CEB) Jesus' righteousness as a living man grew out of his undivided heart for God. He trusted God completely and without reservation. We are a long way from the standard he set, but our faith can grow. Our understanding can grow. Little by little we can identify the places where we remain divided in our relationship God. And as that happens we can make the choice to trust God!

Next Sunday's Message

Title: "If Our Hearts Don't Condemn Us"

Scripture: Acts 4:5-12; 1 John 3:16-24

Starting Point: The gospels paint a clear picture of the human suffering and tremendous need Jesus faced in first century Palestine. At points it threatened to overwhelm him. We see the same dynamic in the early church as the Apostles tried to follow Jesus faithfully and meet the same needs. (See: Acts 5:12-16) The love commandment of Jesus (Jn. 13:34-35) places the same burden on his followers today. Verse 17 in 1 John 3 is quite specific in addressing this: *"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?"* With modern mass communications and information technology it is virtually impossible to ignore the great level of human suffering and need. If Jesus was nearly overwhelmed by the crowds of needy people who pressed in upon him, who are we to respond faithfully to the world of need made visible to us by technology?

Minister's Moment

Friends and Disciples:

As is always the case on Monday, which is my day for newsletter writing, a new week means new scriptures to wrestle with. As has been the case the past two weeks, the reading from the First Letter of John troubles me. One verse stands out: *"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?"* (1 Jn. 3:17) Most of us have more than enough of the "world's goods" to meet our own needs. The verse places an ethical and moral dilemma in our path precisely because we do have more than enough. But what needs are we called meet? Whose needs can we faithfully ignore? Even Jesus said that the poor will be with you always. (Mt. 26:11) But he also said: *"You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me."* (Mt. 25:41-43) That places a great deal of tension on those who strike to maintain a clear conscience before the Lord?

The questions bite harder when we recognize that these are not isolated threads, but a consistent message woven into scripture. For instance: *"If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?"* (James 2:15-16) *"If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard."* (Pr. 21:13) *"...learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."* (Isa 1:17) To borrow words from Pentecost's convicted listeners as they felt the sting of Peter's words: *"What must we do?"* (Acts 2:37)

As I sit here on Monday morning, I can think of no easy answers. I suspect there are none. It could be that we are meant to wrestle with this one. Given that possibility, I invite you to reflect on the issue in prayer this week.

Yours in Christ,

Jesse

Youth Sunday/ Picnic on the Grounds

Don't forget, May 6 will be a special Sunday. We will be honoring our May graduates and having our "Picnic on the Grounds" Sunday. Lunch will be provided by our youth. Contributions will be used to help offset summer church camp costs and other activities for the youth. **Collin Chandler** and **Taylor Rasco** are planning on going to CYF Summer Camp June 10.

Bryan High School –**Keenan Rogers**, Rudder High- **Hunter Graalum**, College Station High-**Sabrina Lancaster**, University grads are **Jennifer Hoyle**, **Allison Pittman** and **Cameron Beisegel**(masters)

Serving Sunday, April 22

Elders:

Ron Colbert
Anita Foley

Deacons:

Cheryl Aufderheide
Jane Colbert
Calvin Jeffrey
Steven Myers

Lay Leader:

Sharon Jeffrey

Communion:

Ben Tedrick

Choir Director:

Karl Aufderheide

Pianist

Karen Smith

Prayer Concerns

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

Evelyn Lively
Mary Anna Franke
Liz McGee
R. J. Bozeman
Gerry Hart
Vicki Couvillin
Kevin Rodgers
David Hahn
Diane Andrews (friend of Cheryl Aufderheide)
Christopher Cravey (Jeanette Phariss's nephew)
Bill Green (brother of Larry Green)

Ellie Erin Albrecht
Julie Atterbury
D'andre Fleeks
Brad Slocum (brother of Stacy Atterbury)
Roger & Emily Nichols
Mark Stadelman
Megan Myers
Jim Conway (cousin of Bob Richards)
Jim Carter
Leatha Jeffrey (Calvin Jeffrey's mother)

Shut-Ins

Henry & Rosemary O'Neal
Nancy & Art Wright

Eleanor Kindt
Marge Shepperd

Gene Holt

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH B/CS

APRIL 2018

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| <p>1</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Early Easter Service 8:00 AM Dishman Park</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Morning Worship Service 10:45 AM</div> | <p>2</p> <p>Young Life SFA 7:00 pm</p> | <p>3</p> | <p>4</p> <p>Choir 7:30 PM</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Elders Meeting 6:00 PM</div> | <p>5</p> | <p>6</p> <p>OFFICE CLOSED</p> | <p>7</p> |
| <p>8</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Morning Worship Service 10:45 AM</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Sunday School for all ages 9:30 AM</div> | <p>9</p> <p>Young Life SFA 7:00 pm</p> | <p>10</p> | <p>11</p> <p>Choir 7:30 PM</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Disciples Women 9:30am</div> | <p>12</p> | <p>13</p> <p>OFFICE CLOSED</p> | <p>14</p> |
| <p>15</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Morning Worship Service 10:45 AM</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Sunday School for all ages 9:30 AM</div> | <p>16</p> <p>Young Life SFA 7:00 pm</p> | <p>17</p> <p>House Church 6:00 PM</p> | <p>18</p> <p>Choir 7:30 PM</p> | <p>19</p> | <p>20</p> <p>OFFICE CLOSED</p> | <p>21</p> |
| <p>22</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Morning Worship Service 10:45 AM</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Sunday School for all ages 9:30 AM</div> | <p>23</p> <p>Young Life SFA 7:00 pm</p> | <p>24</p> <p>House Church 6:00 PM</p> | <p>25</p> <p>Choir 7:30 PM</p> | <p>26</p> | <p>27</p> <p>OFFICE CLOSED</p> | <p>28</p> |
| <p>29</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Carriage Inn 2:00</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Morning Worship Service 10:45 AM</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Sunday School for all ages 9:30 AM</div> | <p>30</p> <p>Young Life SFA 7:00 pm</p> | | | | | |