

REFLECTIONS

The death of the Cross - death's triumph hour - that was the point where God's gate opened; and to that gate we come again and again, as our lives unfold, and through it pass even on earth to our joyful resurrection, to a life each time more abundant, for each time the dying is a deeper dying. The Christian life is a process of deliverance out of one world into another, and "death," as has been truly said, "is the only way out of any world in which we are.

Lilias Trotter (1853-1928)
Artist and Missionary to Algeria

On [the Day of the Lord], Jesus Christ will be revealed both to believers and to unbelievers. Then unbelievers will realize that what they did not want to believe is in fact true. Believers will rejoice, finding that what they believed in is more wonderful than they had imagined.

Ambrosiaster (Early Church Theologian)

If I don't believe that there is a God who will eventually put all things right, I will take up the sword and will be sucked into the endless vortex of retaliation. Only if I am sure that there's a God who will right all wrongs and settle all accounts perfectly do I have the power to refrain.

Tim Keller
from *The Reason for God*

RIVERWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

T U S C A L O O S A , A L A B A M A

February 21, 2021 • 8:30 & 10:30 Services • Rev. Jeff Pate, Pastor

First Sunday in Lent

8:30am

Leader In Worship: Assisting Elder Gene Martin
Tindol Pate, piano

10:30am

Leader In Worship: Assisting Elder John Kim
Linda Graham, piano

WELCOME

Program all communication devices to be in silent mode. Thank you.

PRELUDE

Please use this time for prayer and meditation as we prepare to go before the living God in worship.

PRAISE

CALL TO WORSHIP: *from Psalm 89*

Pastor: I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever;
with my mouth I will make known his faithfulness to all generations.

**All: Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O Lord,
in the light of your face, who exult in your name all the day and in your
righteousness are exalted.**

Pastor: For you are the glory of their strength; by your favor our horn is exalted.

**All: For our shield belongs to the Lord, our king to the Holy One of Israel.
Blessed be the Lord forever!**

Pastor: Come, let us worship.

HYMN: 700 "Come, We That Love the Lord"

Come, we that love the Lord,
and let our joys be known;
join in a song with sweet accord,
and thus surround the throne.

Let those refuse to sing
that never knew our God;
but children of the heav'nly King
may speak their joys abroad.

The men of grace have found
glory begun below;
celestial fruits on earthly ground
from faith and hope may grow.

The hill of Zion yields
a thousand sacred sweets,
before we reach the heav'nly fields
or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound,
and ev'ry tear be dry;
we're marching through Immanuel's ground
to fairer worlds on high.

PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

CONFESSION

SCRIPTURE READING: *Malachi 4*

¹“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ²But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. ³And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts. ⁴Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. ⁵Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ⁶And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

CORPORATE CONFESSION OF SIN:

Almighty God, your Word declares to us the reality of your judgment. You tell us that a day will come when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be consumed like stubble in the fire. We tremble at your Word, because we are often arrogant and have done what is evil in your sight. Please have mercy on us and forgive our sins. Humble us. By your Spirit, write your law within our hearts and make your Word a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Your Word reveals that you delight in those who fear your name but we often treat you and your name with contempt. Please forgive us according to your steadfast love. Help us to delight in you and to be eager to proclaim your name and share your loving kindness with our children, our parents, our neighbors, our friends, and even our enemies. We ask this in the name that is above every name, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SILENT REFLECTION AND CONFESSION

CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE & PEACE OF GOD: *from 1 Thessalonians 5:4-10*

Pastor: But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day.

All: **We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.**

Pastor: For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

All: **For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.**

Pastor: The peace of Christ be with you all.

All: **And also with you.**

HYMN: 523 “My Hope Is in the Lord”

My hope is in the Lord who gave himself for me,
and paid the price of all my sin at Calvary.

Chorus:

For me he died, for me he lives,
and everlasting life and light he freely gives.

No merit of my own his anger to suppress,
my only hope is found in Jesus' righteousness.

(Chorus)

And now for me he stands before the Father's throne.
He shows his wounded hands, and names me as his own.

(Chorus)

His grace has planned it all, 'tis mine but to believe,
and recognize his work of love and Christ receive.

(Chorus)

COMMITMENT

OFFERING

**Tithes and offerings will be collected by deacons following the morning service as congregants leave the sanctuary.*

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:

The Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A # 46, 49, 52

Leader: What do you mean by saying, “He (the Lord Jesus Christ) ascended to heaven”?

People: That Christ, while his disciples watched, was taken up from the earth into heaven and remains there on our behalf until he comes again to judge the living and the dead.

Leader: How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?

People: First, he is our advocate in heaven in the presence of his Father. Second, we have our own flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that Christ our head will also take us, his members, up to himself. Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth as a corresponding pledge. By the Spirit's power we seek not earthly things but the things above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.

Leader: How does Christ's return “to judge the living and the dead” comfort you?

People: In all distress and persecution, with uplifted head, I confidently await the very judge who has already offered himself to the judgment of God in my place and removed the whole curse from me. Christ will cast all his enemies and mine into everlasting condemnation, but will take me and all his chosen ones to himself into the joy and glory of heaven.

RESPONSE: “Gloria Patri”

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen, amen.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

HYMN: 334 “Breathe on Me, Breath of God”

Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,
until my will is one with thine, to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly thine,
until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity.

PREACHING OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12

⁵This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—⁶since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor: The grass withers, the flower fades,
All: **but the word of our God will stand forever.**

SERMON: “Vengeance and Glory” Rev. Jeff Pate

I. For early Christians, suffering for the kingdom of God was expected and celebrated.

“One of the greatest paradoxes in Christian history is that the church is most pure in times of cultural hostility. When things are easy and good, that is when the church most often goes astray. When Christianity seems identical with the culture and even when the church seems to be enjoying its greatest earthly success, then it is weakest. Conversely, when the church encounters hardship, persecution, and suffering... then it is closest to its crucified Lord, then there are fewer hypocrites and nominal believers among its members, and then the faith of Christians burns most intensely.” Gene Edward Veith

II. The believer's steadfast faith and love in affliction is evidence of the righteous judgment of God.

“Those who suffer the same things from the same people for the same Person can scarcely not love each other.” C. S. Lewis

III. God's powerful work in us results in the declaration and manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus.

HYMN: 156 “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You”

O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?
 Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart's delight!
 O kindle, Lord Most Holy, your lamp within my breast
 to do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.

Love caused your incarnation, love brought you down to me;
 your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
 O love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace,
 in love all love excelling, our lost and fallen race!

Rejoice, then, you sad-hearted, who sit in deepest gloom,
 who mourn o'er joys departed and tremble at your doom.
 Despair not, he is near you, yea, standing at the door,
 who best can help and cheer you and bids you weep no more.

Sin's debt, that fearful burden, let not your souls distress;
 your guilt the Lord will pardon and cover by his grace.
 He comes, for men procuring the peace of sin forgiv'n,
 for all God's sons securing their heritage in heav'n.

RESPONSIVE READING:

Pastor: The bread that we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

All: We who are many are one body, for we all share the same loaf.

Pastor: The cup for which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

All: The cup that we drink is our participation in the blood of Christ.

Pastor: Congregation of Jesus Christ, the Lord has prepared his table for all who love him and trust in him alone for their salvation. All who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and who desire to live in obedience to him as Lord are now invited to come with gladness to the table of the Lord. The gifts of God for the people of God.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Riverwood Presbyterian uses wine in the celebration of Holy Communion. If you would prefer non-alcoholic grape juice, please take a cup from the inner circle of the tray.

BENEDICTION

HYMN: 324 “Christ Is Coming!”

Christ is coming! Let creation from her groans and travail cease;
let the glorious proclamation hope restore and faith increase:
Christ is coming! Christ is coming! Come, thou blessed Prince of Peace.

Earth can now but tell the story of thy bitter cross and pain;
she shall yet behold thy glory, when thou comest back to reign:
Christ is coming! Christ is coming! Let each heart repeat the strain.

Long thine exiles have been pining, far from rest, and home, and thee:
but, in heav'nly vestures shining, they their loving Lord shall see:
Christ is coming! Christ is coming! Haste the joyous jubilee.

With that blessed hope before us, let no harp remain unstrung;
let the mighty advent chorus onward roll from tongue to tongue:
“Christ is coming! Christ is coming! Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!”

BENEDICTION

DISMISSING HYMN: 263 “Lift High the Cross”

Refrain:

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim,
till all the world adore his sacred name.

Thy kingdom come, that earth's despair may cease
beneath the shadow of its healing peace.

(Refrain)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

COVENANT KIDS CLUB & YOUTH GROUP

Covenant Kids Club and Youth Group meet tonight from 5:30-7:00pm.

OTHER EVENTS THIS WEEK

Wednesday, February 24, 10:00am: Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, February 24, 3:30pm: Catechism

SNACK AND DRINK DONATIONS

Can you help with individual snacks (no nuts) and/or individual drink pouches (e.g. capri suns, kool-aid) for Catechism and Covenant Kid's Club? We serve approximately 40 snacks each week between these two programs. Donations may be delivered to the church office.

SPRING BREAK

During spring break (March 15-19), there will be no children's catechism classes and office hours will be intermittent. If needed, please feel free to contact church officers on their cell phones (numbers listed in the church directory).

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Riverwood is discussing the return of Sunday School classes for all ages in the next few months. Please be on the lookout for more details coming soon.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Through January 2021

Operating Income:	\$31,061.76
Operating Expense*:	\$30,259.27
Net Income:	\$802.49
Designated gifts:	\$1,721.00
Building loan balance:	\$703,641.70

**Includes the minimum monthly building loan payment*