

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER



THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

April 26, 2020
10:45 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas
Link to worship videos available at: www.fpcbryan.org

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP The Perfect Wisdom of Our God Keith Getty; Stuart Townend
O grant me wisdom from above, to pray for peace and cling to love, and teach me humbly to receive the sun and rain of Your sovereignty. Each strand of sorrow has a place within this tapestry of grace; so through the trials I choose to say: "Your perfect will in Your perfect way."

WELCOME AND OPENING SENTENCES adapted from Psalm 121:1-2
We welcome you to worship this third Sunday of the Easter season.
The psalmist has written, "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

HYMN NO. 462 I Love to Tell the Story HANKEY
¹ I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true; It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.
REFRAIN I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.
² I love to tell the story; 'tis pleasant to repeat What seems each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet.
I love to tell the story; for some have never heard the message of salvation from God's own holy Word.
REFRAIN
³ I love to tell the story; for those who know it best Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song, 'twill be the old, old story, that I have loved so long.
REFRAIN

PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

Let us pray ... You have created us with degrees of diversity, uniqueness, and difference, O God. You have also created us from the common elements of the universe for a common purpose of serving in the way of your love. We bless your holy name and offer ourselves humbly for you to employ us in your service. Yet we realize how we have sinned and fallen short of any qualification to represent you fully and consistently. Where you desire contrition and commitment to your perspective, we have preferred arrogance and an instinctive accounting and protection of our own interests. *(pause)*

Where you desire working together for the well-being of all, we have hidden behind the walls of partisan arguments, old resentments, and requiring that others pass purity tests of our own making. Forgive us this and all our sin. *(pause)*

Amid the brokenness of our own making, make known again your presence. In our degrees of separation, restore the unity you desire. Wherever we are in life, from your eternal grace, may the way and spirit of Jesus Christ make us new for living boldly as you call us by name and as you beckon us for glad and respectful serving among your people, near and far.

Friends, let us hear and share with gladness the blessed news of the Gospel:

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

HYMN OF RESPONSE NO. 581

Glory Be to the Father

GLORIA PATRI

SOLO

O Love

Matheson; Hagenberg

O Love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee; I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be. O Joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain, that morn shall tearless be.

GOSPEL READING

II Corinthians 4:7,10-12,16-18

Pew Bible, N. T., pp. 180-181

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

Delivering the True Message of "Death in Us" and "Life in You"

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray . . . We thank you, O Holy One, that from all the ways and in all the situations we are cast down and downcast in life, you lift us up. With your forgiveness, mercy, and grace, you place a song of rejoicing within us. We also thank you for the sacrifices of so many, for long hours in noble purposes, for risks taken, and losses shouldered. Help us daily to share in facing and engaging the challenges before us and others. May courage and wisdom from you prompt our partnering and outreach. May songs of your amazing grace and boundless love be the refrains which come to our lips because those truths are alive in our memories. Hear each one now, in a few moments of silence, offering personal prayers for self and others . . .

In the spirit of all those who have lived and died before us in their serving you, receive our voices together praying as Jesus taught:

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. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

HYMN No. 749 (St. 1 & 2)

Come! Live in the Light!

WE ARE CALLED

**Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom of the city of God.**

REFRAIN **We are called to act with justice;
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

**Come! Open your heart!
Show your mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless
so hatred and violence will be no more.** REFRAIN

DISMISSAL AND BLESSING

GOING FORTH IN SONG

HYMN No. 749 (St. 3)

Come! Live in the Light!

WE ARE CALLED

**Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of that great day when all will be one!
God will reign, and we'll walk with each other
as sisters and brothers united in love.**

REFRAIN **We are called to act with justice;
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

POSTLUDE

“The Old Rugged Cross” with “Down At The Cross”

arr. Douglas Briley

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Especially in this time, visit the church website, www.fpcbryan.org, for the newsletter, announcements, worship bulletins, devotionals for children and adults, updates, etc.

Like us on **Facebook** at: www.facebook.com/FPCBryan

NEW!!! on **Instagram**: www.instagram.com. Search for and follow **fpcbryantx1867** and/or **fpcbryan_youth**

Help FPC-Bryan's YouTube channel achieve 400 subscribers to be eligible for a custom url!

On www.youtube.com, search for First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas. Click **SUBSCRIBE**

Our newsletter, **The Chimes**, continues to be available online, emailed to FPC-Bryan friends, and mailed to local FPC-Bryan members with the printed bulletin and sermon to those without technology.

Until further notice, it will not be mailed to its full distribution list. The deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is **NOON, SUNDAY, MAY 3**, and will be distributed on **WEDNESDAY, MAY 5**.

This newsletter will cover news from May 14-27.

STAY CONNECTED! with others in this community of faith at Church Updates—FPC-Bryan's online tool for church-related announcements, ways to serve, and current prayer needs. This online tool is **“REAL TIME,”** and users receive a weekly reminder email on Thursdays to view new posts.

Login and create your password-protected account at <https://fpcbtx.churchupdates.org/login>. For more information, contact Karen in the church office, 979.823.8073 or office@fpcbryan.org.



A WARM WELCOME!

We are delighted to have you worship with us today.

WORSHIP NOTES

PREACHER

Rev. Ted Foote

LITURGIST

Rev. Emily K. Béghin

Rev. Dr. George E. Klett

MUSICIANS

Michelle Lassiter, *pianist*

David Kipp, *Director of Music Ministries*

COVER ART

from <https://bethwillismiller.blogspot.com>

CHANCEL FLOWERS

In loving memory of
Betty & Tom Mahoney
by the families of
Debbie & Carl Senter
and Marsha & Cliff Miller

Easter arrangements
by Nicole & Bill McKinley

AUDIO/VIDEO

Emily K. Béghin

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Glory to God:
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THIS WEEK AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER, APRIL 26

10:45am ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit www.fpcbryan.org

5:45pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-DIGITAL

(Watch your inbox for details via email!)

MONDAY, APRIL 27

TUESDAY, APRIL 28

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

THURSDAY, APRIL 30

FRIDAY, MAY 1

SATURDAY, MAY 2

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, MAY 3

10:45am ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit www.fpcbryan.org

5:45pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-DIGITAL

(Watch your inbox for details via email!)

For regularly scheduled meetings/gatherings,
please be in touch with your group's
moderator, leader, coordinator, or facilitator
to determine alternate meeting options/platforms.

Delivering the True Message of “Death in Us” and “Life in You”

Second Corinthians 4:7-18

April 26, 2020

Ted V. Foote, Jr.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

Sometime in 2018, David introduced the choir to an arrangement of George Matheson’s lyrics from 1881, “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go,” except that the musical setting was by Elaine Hagenberg, from 2017. I’ve asked David to sing and Michelle to play that arrangement again this morning. Words from 1881 by George Matheson. Music from 2017 by Elaine Hagenberg ...

Sometime when my mother was in her mid-70s, she told me that one of her favorite hymns was “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go” and that she wanted it sung at her memorial service. Not long after that, I saw it magnet-fixed on the front of her refrigerator. Less than ten years later we did sing it at her memorial service. Remember George Matheson’s lead phrase: “O Love that will not let me go ...” It’s been almost 50 years since I first remember seeing these verses from Second Corinthians, chapter 4, specifically verse 12, “So death is at work in us, but life in you.” For clarification, the “us” to whom the Apostle Paul refers is himself plus Timothy, a young disciple of Jesus working with Paul when the letter is written. I have never preached from this verse until today, because it has not made sense to me. It seems backwards. If the Apostle Paul was a great theologian and teacher of faith in Jesus, it always has seemed to me that he would be saying, “The life of Christ is alive in me, and I am teaching you in this letter – I am teaching from my greater experience in faith – because spiritual death is more prominent in your life than in mine.” If that were the case, he’d be writing, “So life is at work in us, and death in you.” Yet that is not what he writes. He writes, “So death is at work in us, and life in you.” I’ve not preached from this verse because, I could not figure it out to my satisfaction. And let me give you fair warning, I still may not have figured it out. But an adequate amount of helpful memories and thoughts has come to my mind so I’m ready to try.

To begin, I remember one of my ministry and preaching mentors, Bob Shelton, saying numerous times, “Just because something is accurate, it may not be true. And just because something is true, it may not be accurate.” Bob’s goal was to encourage students to think beyond literalism and assumed logic in Bible interpretation and theology. Let me try an example from the field of astronomy: It is accurate to say, “I observe the sun moving across the sky during the daylight hours from east to west.” But that is not true, because, actually, the earth spins clockwise on its axis as it orbits counterclockwise in the sun’s gravitational pull; so, while it may be accurate descriptively to say the sun moves across the sky each day from east to west, it is actually true to say, “The earth is moving a certain way, and the sun only seems to move in relation to the earth’s movement.”

In reading certain episodes from Scripture, someone accurately might say, “People have believed God desires the slaughter of the enemies of God’s chosen people.” That is accurate. Religious people have believed this. The greater question, however, is: “Is it ‘true’ of God’s Being that God desires for any people who feel ‘chosen’ or ‘special’ to slaughter their enemies or discriminate against their rivals in God’s name?” It is accurate to say, “People have believed God desires the slaughter of the enemies of God’s chosen people.” It is accurate to say that, but – if Jesus is the embodiment of God’s love and Jesus teaches “Love your enemy” – isn’t it “true” to say of God’s self, “God is love” (as is written at First John 4:8b)? You may not can easily find evidence in many situations in the world related to people’s conduct that “God is love,” but it still can be true that “God is love.” Here is where Paul and the Corinthians come into this discussion. Here is where you and I come into this discussion. How might it be true that there is death in us and life in others? And that be genuinely positive? I sometimes confuse helpful experience and accumulated knowledge as “life,” and loss or error or embarrassment as “death.” Loss, error, and embarrassment are never fun. We may feel in some ways like we are dying when and after these occur.

22 years ago, when Joanie's and my older son, Kendall, was 11, I was asked to be his Little League baseball team's coach. I told the League Coordinator that I had no experience. He said, "We'll pair you with an experienced coach as your assistant, but this year he's also coaching a young teens' ice hockey team for one of his sons, so he can only be your assistant." I reluctantly agreed. That season the team won games we should have lost, and we lost games we should have won. In one of the games we lost, we were leading 10 to 1 after three innings before we fell apart defensively. The other team closed our lead to a single run, and they loaded the bases with 2 outs in the bottom of the last inning. A good hitter came to the plate. He scorched a ball with ferocious topspin on two hops toward our second baseman. A high school second baseman might not have made the play, to say nothing of an 11 year old. The ball bounced off the heel of his glove and landed behind second base. Both the runners on third and second scored. The other team won 11-10. That was 22 years ago. I still second-guess myself about the end of that game, because, before the game-deciding hit, I sat in the dugout thinking about switching our second baseman with our left fielder. They had different strengths, but were of similar talent. Of course, the left fielder, if moved to second base may well not have played the spinning bouncer successfully either. I've wondered for years if my second guessing myself and my inability to forget the whole game doesn't represent a form of "death at work in me."

Don't we all have errors, losses, and embarrassments much weightier and more consequential than any sports contest? You and I know this is true and accurate about each and all of us. I'll remember my errors, losses, and embarrassments. You remember yours. I now am convinced, however, that while loss, errors, and embarrassment are never fun, they are not the "death" of which Paul is speaking. Death is at work in us, I now believe, because we all have only so many days to live. Every day which passes is a day that lies behind us. Whether we have only ten more days before we die, or whether we have ten or more years, death is always at work within us, even when our lives are touched by God's grace. But when God's grace is at work in us day by day – even though physical death is at work in us – true life is also coming to life within us.

John Prine died of COVID-19 on April 7 of this month at the age of 73. He had been married to his third wife Fiona for the past 32 years, and 2 years ago he recorded a song he co-wrote with two colleagues, influenced by his relationship with Fiona: "I woke up this morning to a garbage truck. Looks like this old horseshoe's done run out of luck. If I came home, would you let me in, fry me some pork chops and forgive my sin? Surround me with your boundless love. I was drowning at sea, lost as I could be, when you found me with your boundless love. Sometimes my old heart is like a washing machine. It bounces around 'til my soul comes clean. And when I'm clean and hung out to dry, I'm going to make you laugh until you cry. Surround me with your boundless love. Confound me with your boundless love. I was drowning lost in the sea, lost as I could be, when you found me with your boundless love." Aren't we all always drowning, lost at sea in the days we have left, until realizing how God's boundless love finds us, claims us, and takes us with loss, errors, and embarrassment – changing us for true life through that grace from God at work within us?

John Prine was "discovered" on accident by film critic Roger Ebert. Prine was 24 years old, working as a mail carrier, and "on the side" was playing and singing in the back room of a bar and restaurant on Chicago's near west side. In 1970, Ebert wrote a surprise review of him in the Chicago Sun-Times, entitled, "Singing Mailman Delivers the Message." The Apostle Paul writes of having only so many days – however many that might be – "death is at work in those who encourage you in the Gospel of Jesus," but "life by grace from God's boundless love is alive in you for sharing with all others, those familiar and those unfamiliar to you." So like a young singing mailman in Chicago once up a time, with your life – losses, errors, and embarrassments all – deliver the message! Whether you can sing and/or play the guitar, or not, God's world is counting on you. And it's true: God's love will not let you go. – All honor and praise be to God.