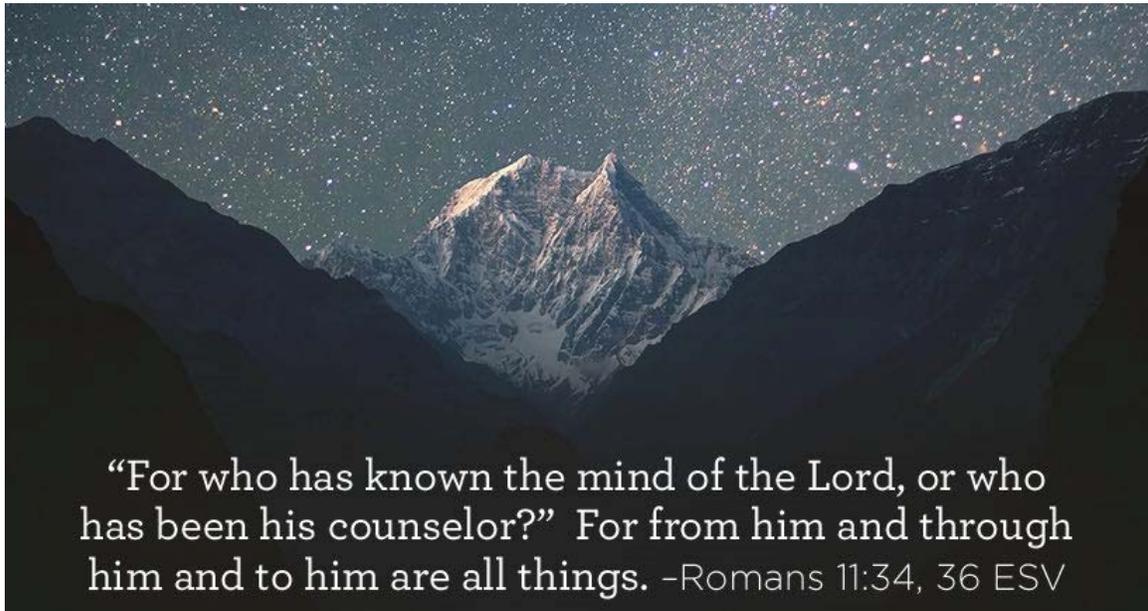


# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. –Romans 11:34, 36 ESV

## THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD’S DAY

June 21, 2020  
10:45 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas  
Link to worship videos available at: [www.fpcbryan.org](http://www.fpcbryan.org)

### WELCOME

We welcome you to worship today. We remember the words from Psalm 8:  
“O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”

### PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

This Is My Father’s World

music by Franklin Sheppard

### HYMN NO. 1

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!  
**Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!**  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.  
**Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!**  
**God in three persons, blessed Trinity!**

NICAEA

**Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore thee,**  
**casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;**  
**cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,**  
**who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.**

**Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide thee,**  
**though the eye of sinfulness thy glory may not see,**  
**only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,**  
**perfect in power, in love and purity.**

**Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!**  
**All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea.**  
**Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!**  
**God in three persons, blessed Trinity!**

## PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Let us pray ... From your throne and presence, O God, we are given life beyond our ability to imagine. Holy, holy, holy One: We praise you that you have made us and redeemed us, claimed us, and brought healing among us. Yet we wander still again from your ways and your love. Hear us now, as we come before you in a time of confession through silence.

We carry burdens, O Giver of mercy – burdens of guilt, estrangement, inadequacy, and more. Forgive us wherein we have failed you, failed ourselves, and failed others. Lift us again in love, so that – day by day – we faithfully serve you among all of your people in the way and spirit of Jesus Christ.

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

SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 11:32-36

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

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

A Low Bar for Human Religion Due to God's Positive Relating

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH IN SONG

No Man Is an Island

Ringwald

*No man is an island, no man stands alone,  
Each man's joy is joy to me, each man's grief is my own.  
We need one another, so I will defend,  
Each man as my brother, each man as my friend.  
I saw the people gather, I heard the music start,  
the song that they were singing, is ringing in my heart.*

## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us begin our prayers of thanksgiving and intercession this morning with each of us praying in silence for self and others . . .

How we thank you, O Blessed One, that you make us in your image for healthy community with others, that no one is created for being an island to oneself – alone. We thank you for love, respect, compassion, and tenacious faithfulness. On this day designated for recognizing and honoring fathers, receive our gratitude where they and others who have been like fathers to us, have modeled and shared sacrifice, service, courage, and joy. Place again your grace within us and within our relationships. Bring your health and wholeness to your children everywhere / of all ages. Grant rest for those who are weary, strength for those who are debilitated, patience for the anxious, comfort for the bereaved, guidance and helpful confidence for the discouraged. Grant welcome for the excluded. As we remember with profound appreciation those who have lived and died before us, we join our voices with theirs from eternity, 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.**

Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,  
 a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.  
 Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;  
 here the love of Christ shall end divisions: all are welcome,  
 all are welcome; all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone  
 to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.  
 Here the outcast and the laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace;  
 let this bring an end to fear and danger: all are welcome,  
 all are welcome; all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard  
 and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word.  
 Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace;  
 let this house proclaim from floor to rafter: all are welcome,  
 all are welcome; all are welcome in this place.

## DISMISSAL AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE "The Lord Is the Strength of My Life" with "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" arr. Cindy Berry  
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Especially in this time, visit the church website, [www.fpcbryan.org](http://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](http://www.facebook.com/FPCBryan)

**NEW!!!** on **Instagram**: [www.instagram.com](http://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](http://www.youtube.com), search for First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas, then 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, TODAY**, and will be distributed on **WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10**. This newsletter will cover news from June 18 to July 1.

**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](mailto:office@fpcbryan.org).



## A WARM WELCOME!

*We are delighted to have you worship with us today.*

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### WORSHIP NOTES

#### PREACHER

Rev. Ted Foote

#### LITURGISTS

Rev. Emily K. Béghin

Rev. Dr. George E. Klett

#### MUSICIANS

Michelle Lassiter, *Pianist*

David Kipp,

*Director of Music Ministries*

#### COVER ART

“who has known the mind of the Lord”

[www.truthforlife.org](http://www.truthforlife.org)

Allistar Begg

#### CHANCEL FLOWERS

In loving memory of  
my uncle Walter Wallace

by

Bunny Douglas

#### AUDIO/VIDEO

Emily K. Béghin

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*The Presbyterian Hymnal*

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### THIS WEEK AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST | FATHER'S DAY,  
JUNE 21, 2020

#### ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit [www.fpcbryan.org](http://www.fpcbryan.org)

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

*(Watch your inbox for details via email!)*

MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2020

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2020

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2020

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2020

FRIDAY, JUNE 26, 2020

SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, JUNE 28, 2020

#### ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit [www.fpcbryan.org](http://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.

## A Low Bar for Human Religion Due to God's Positive Relating

Romans 11:32-36

Ted V. Foote, Jr.

June 21, 2020

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

During the years of his faith-sharing ministry, his faith-community organizing, and his teaching the Gospel of God through Jesus Christ, from the years about 45 to 65 in the same century dated from Jesus' birth, Paul spent time writing letters of encouragement and theology related to life in Jesus' way and spirit. Several students of the Scriptures have said that the Letter to the Christians at Rome may have been Paul's last letter of record. Yes, it's the first one in the lay-out of his several letters in the Scriptures, yet, arguably, it is also the most highly developed in Paul's clearest style. The five verses we have read this morning may be the peak or the summit of this letter. The preceding 11 chapters rise to this point. The following five chapters descend from these verses. Many people might say that the core conviction of the letter to the Romans is found in chapter 8, at verse 39, "Nothing in all creation – in heaven or on earth – can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yet for the next three chapters beyond the chapter 8 statement of core conviction, Paul is answering a question such as, "Who is us?" Would that be Christians? If Christians, what about Jews – because God's covenant is said to have been shared centuries ago with Abraham through Isaac? And what about Jesus himself, who was a Jew? It's as if Paul senses that the word "us" in chapter 8 needs increased explanation.

Who is "us" that God will not separate from the type of love embodied and lived in Jesus? The "us" in the core conviction verse of Romans, chapter 8, verse 39, according to Paul, likely is "all of God's people," since, here at the end of chapter 11, when Paul has argued all through chapters 9, 10, and 11 about God's covenant promises all the way from Genesis to the present day and beyond, he then concludes: "All people stray from God's will for shared faithfulness" echoing Romans 3:23 – "All sin and fall short of God's glory." All! So who is included in the eternal promise? Are any excluded? Paul answers neither "yes" nor "no," but with a rhetorical question: "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" The answer to this crescendoed rhetorical question is "no one." "No one has known the mind of the Lord. No one has been God's specialty consultant." And then Paul pens a doxology, a statement of thanks and praise: "For from God and through God and to God are all things. To God be glory forever. Amen." End of symphonic movement. End of chapter 11. Then, at chapter 12, verse 1, Paul begins his descent from the summit of Romans: "So here is now the way God calls us to live and serve with one another – all of God's people together!"

Paul's reaching the summit of his letter to the Romans with a conclusion that all people are sinners before God, that no one has been God's counselor, and that all praise is due to God indicate that God has a high bar for God's self and a much lower bar for us, or something like that. Now, our "low bar" for life as Jesus' disciples is never easy. Paul is the first to argue that. Yet WE do NOT have to worry about being God! God can take care of that extremely high bar. We, rather, have our hands full at the lower level of being human together. What we have going for us is that God's high bar of wisdom, compassion, equity, respect, faith, hope, and love are alive as God is at work in the earthly theatre where we are: claiming us, shaping us, leading and guiding us. You and I pray this every week: "O God, Your kingdom come on earth, as it is in heaven." Jesus taught that: from God's high bar of eternal wisdom to God's engagement with people in the earthly theatre, including you and me and all others past and present. The truth is that we need not attempt to do God's eternal wisdom and love and justice work at the high bar

level, because we have our hands full following Jesus right here, right now, where God's will and ways still are unfolding in ways we expect and, quite often, in ways which truly surprise us.

Let me give you an example of how God surprises us when we may think we can guess how something will develop. Six weeks ago a question arose about the beginnings of our First Presbyterian Children's Center, so I pulled from the fireproof file drawer the First Presbyterian-Bryan Session minutes from 1964 to 1968. I did not find what I was looking for, but here's what I did find: April 7, 1968 – "Ernest Smerdon, Chairman of the Service Committee, advised the Session that a request had been received from a Negro girl for use of our church for her wedding." (At that point, I thought to myself, "Uh-oh. This is not going to turn out well." The minutes continue...) It was explained that her church in Wellborn is in poor repair, that she is a student at Texas A&M ... Mr. Smerdon moved that the sanctuary and parlor be made available to her and her fiancé for their wedding and reception on May 4. Seconded by Clark Munroe. Motion carried." (But it doesn't stop there.) "Mr. Smerdon then moved that the sanctuary be made available to First Presbyterian members and others who have no church home. Motion was seconded by Quinn Vance and carried." Friends, when I'm reading along about something happening in 1968 among God's people 72 hours after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis and the nation's cities were on fire, and I say to myself, "Uh-oh, this is not going to turn out well," yet openness and generosity and respect bloom like a time-sequence photo of a flower from bud to blossom, it shows that a given group of people were working their low-bar callings in Bryan, Texas, and God's high bar wisdom in the Spirit of Jesus Christ was working right among them. I can't guarantee you much, but I can guarantee you that Presbyterian elders don't make up Session minutes like that!

Four months later in Gatesville, two hours northwest of Bryan, I started my sophomore year at Gatesville High School. At the time, my dad was 45 years old. Mrs. Frances Bradley was around 60 years old. The two of them had been co-teaching an adult Sunday School class since 1950, for 18 years. In August of 1968, their First Presbyterian-Gatesville class began studying "Christian Doctrine," by Dr. Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr., a Presbyterian, and a 1945 graduate of Kilgore (Texas) High School. On one of my book shelves today is a tattered copy of that 1968 publication of the Presbyterian Churches in the U.S. from their adult studies' curriculum. It is my dad's copy from when he and Mrs. Bradley were teaching together. Fifty-two years after that, I pulled this volume from its bookcase shelf and found that my dad had underlined these sentences on the book's last page: (1) "No one knows exactly what lies ahead for Christian theology ... (2) We must hope not so much for sure conclusions as we should hope for faithful and intelligent searching ... (3) The church must always be reforming, because no person or group of people, in any period, can master the truth of God" (p.413). I don't read those sentences from Dr. Guthrie this morning because you should swallow what he wrote in 1968, or that you should swallow it because Presbyterian church members like Mrs. Bradley and my dad taught from it and underlined certain sentences. I read it to you this morning because it reflects what the Apostle Paul wrote nineteen hundred years before 1968: "Who has known the mind of the Lord or been the Lord's specialty counsel?" No one has. (It's above our pay-grade!) Yet to God – who is revealed in Jesus Christ – be all glory!"

Never bet against what God's high bar wisdom, compassion, respect, equity, faith, hope, and love can accomplish among any or all of God's people, even yet in this day and time, with you, with me, with others. – All honor and praise be to God.