
FIRST WORD



**The Monthly Newsletter of
First Presbyterian Church of Lenoir, North Carolina**

No. 2 of 2020, A.D.

February, 2020

WORD FROM THE SCRIPTURE

1 John 4:7-8 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.



MATTHEW 25 CHURCH

EMPHASIS

(Each month there will be an emphasis on what it means to be a Matthew 25 Church. For more information, you may go to presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/. If you don't have access to a computer, please let us know and we will print off the pages for you)

The theology behind dismantling structural racism

Racism is anti-Christian. In 2016, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved a comprehensive churchwide anti-racism policy called "Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community." The policy states:

Racism is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others. It is also a lie about God, for it falsely claims that God favors parts of creation over the entirety of creation. Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, the PC(USA) must stand against, speak against and work against racism. Anti-racist effort is not optional for Christians. It is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship without which we fail to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Structural racism is not only the "opposite of what God intends for humanity," but is also an example of how sin is systemic rather than simply personal. As the PC(USA)'s anti-racism policy states, "Reformed theology offers a nuanced understanding of sin. Calvin did not understand sin to be simply an individual belief, action, or moral failing (Calvin, 1960). Rather, he viewed sin as the

corporate state of all humanity. It is an infection that taints each of us and all of us. No part of us — not our perception, intelligence, nor conscience — is unclouded by sin."

Psalms 14:3 and Romans 3:10 remind us, "There is no one just, not even one." The PC(USA)'s policy also reminds us that this realization "does not mean that human beings are awful. Rather, it means that we must have humility about our own righteousness, and that we must cling to the grace of God in Jesus Christ."

Scriptures for study and reflection

Matthew 25:31–46
Genesis 1:1–31
Psalm 104
Acts 10:9–23
1 John 4:7–8
Ephesians 2:19
Isaiah 65:17–25
Micah 6:8
Mark 7:27–28



MATTHEW 25



The Bulletin Board

SUNDAY NIGHT BIBLE/BOOK STUDY will resume Sunday evening, February 2nd at 5:00 pm. We will be studying *Christ in Crisis: Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus* by Jim Wallis.

REV. WALLIS WILL BE SPEAKING ON HIS NEW BOOK, *Christ in Crisis: Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus*, and the ways in which Jesus' teachings speak directly to the heart of our moral and political crises in Hickory on Sunday, February 9, 2020 at 5:00 pm at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension. Any who are interested in attending this event are invited to meet and car-pool from here.



WE HAVE BEGUN A NEW ON-GOING MISSION PROJECT. There is a container in the kitchen where you can donate non-perishable food items to be distributed to residents of Koinonia that need this kind of assistance. You can bring your food items any time. When the container is filled it will be delivered to Koinonia to be distributed as needed.



COFFEE AND FELLOWSHIP

Not coming to Sunday School because you don't have time for breakfast on Sunday mornings? Have I got great news for you! Every Sunday between Sunday School and Worship there is a time of coffee and fellowship in the kitchen of the church. And now, Judy Beal has graciously volunteered to provide a snack as well! You all know that Judy is a fantastic cook and hostess, so you are aware of just what a treat this is. So, come on and join us in the study of God's Word and stay for coffee, food and fellowship before entering into a time of deep and reverent worship.

PASTOR'S WORD

In January we celebrated the Baptism of Jesus and we renewed our own baptismal vows. We pondered the words God spoke as Jesus' baptism, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with whom I am well pleased." It is powerful to remember that we are all God's beloved children. But our relationship doesn't stop there.

If our hope and salvation is only a "me and Jesus" proposition, then the temptation is great to nurture a private faith that cares most of all about our own future. But we are more than beloved children. We are part of a beloved community – the Church.

It is the life we share together that gives testimony to God's love for all the earth and all people. As a "beloved community" we invite others to experience God's unconditional love. The "beloved community" should be a living, breathing testimony to God's will for all humankind. More than ever, we need to be a loving, just, forgiving community.

The Lectionary for the next few weeks has us reading and hearing the Sermon on the Mount. This is the template for how we are to live as individuals and a community of faith. It is indeed, "countercultural, because the world we pray for, work for and hope for is the kingdom of God on earth as in heaven. I encourage you to read and reflect on these teachings of Jesus. (Matthew 5-7).

Love and God's blessings,

Beth Ann

The Beatitudes

- * Blessed are the poor in spirit;
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- * Blessed are those who mourn;
for they will be comforted.
- * Blessed are the meek;
for they will inherit the earth.
- * Blessed are those who hunger
and thirst for righteousness:
for they will be filled.
- * Blessed are the merciful:
for they will be shown mercy.
- * Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they will see God.
- * Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they will be called children of God.
- * Blessed are those who are persecuted
for righteousness' sake:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:3-10

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CALENDAR EVENTS

- 2 – Communion
Evening Bible Study resumes
- 9 – Jim Wallis to speak in Hickory
- 23 – 5-Cents-A Meal collection
- 26 – Ash Wednesday



WORD IN SONG

What Wondrous Love is This

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
what wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord
of bliss

to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my
soul,

to bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking
down,
when I was sinking down, sinking down;
when I was sinking down beneath God's righteous
frown,

Christ laid aside his crown for my soul, for my
soul,

Christ laid aside his crown for my soul!

To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing,
to God and to the Lamb, I will sing;
to God and to the Lamb, who is the great I AM,
while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will
sing,
while millions join the theme, I will sing!

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing
on,
and when from death I'm free, I'll sing on;
and when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful
be,
and through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
and through eternity I'll sing on!

Anonymous

Birthdays of the Month

- (2) Rev. Beth Ann Miller
- (5) Fred Flora
- (7) Beverly Beal
- (19) Cameron Scroggs



Our Prayer List

- Fred and Beth Flora
- Kelly Heafner (CJ Hartsell's niece)
- Silvio Martinat
- Bill and Wanda Neely
- Leo Schmidt (Carol Ann's grandson)
- Judy Scroggs
- Nancy Stevens
- Ron Sherrill (Becky Stevens' brother)
- Melanie Storie (West Caldwell teacher)
- Douglas Tilley (Dianne's brother)
- Anthony Uva
- Anne White (Lynda Renegar's sister)
- Joanne Triplette (Hickory Hills Rehab)

Call Joanne if you have other prayer
requests (828-757-8364).

