



APRIL 15 - APRIL 21, 2020

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH - - TYLER, TX WWW.FCCTYLER.ORG

JOYS & CONCERNS

JOYS: 30+ cars came for Communion & Blessings Easter Sunday. We've had almost 3,000 views of our various services through YouTube and Facebook. Finally, 11 volunteers delivered 37+ Easter lilies to our retirement homes, nursing homes, and home-bound members last week.

PRAYERS FOR OUR CHURCH FAMILY: Eva Denson, Jennifer Diotallevi, Charlotte Halbert, James Hardage, Bob Hunt, Ray Hunt, Aliece Keithly, Michael Lewis, and Beverly Wood

PRAYERS FOR FRIENDS & FAMILY: Norman Copas (Copas), Abram Drake (Garvin), and Becca Saunders (Graham)

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Friends, Our Congregational Meeting will be Wednesday, April 22 at 7 p.m. on Webex. Those of you who can access the meeting via the internet should receive an email with instructions. THOSE OF YOU WHO CANNOT ACCESS THROUGH THE INTERNET...are invited to call 408-418-9388 around 6:55pm (this is a toll call, so use your cell phone if possible). On the phone, you will be asked for the "meeting number" (may be called "access number"), enter 297 196 328. You should then be "on the call" (you will hear voices talking at 7 p.m.). Mute your phone to allow those who are leading the call to be heard. Unmute to speak if necessary. You should not need a password, but if you do, the PW is 627 527.

Thank you for dipping your toe into the world of technology as we navigate a necessary new way to hold our meetings.

EASTER HURRAY!

Just a note to thank all those that helped to make our 2020 Easter Season Celebration special. Starting with Palm Sunday, five noon day services, Good Friday U2Charist, and ending with the Drive Thru Communion following two online services Easter morning. Shout outs to our theologically prepared: Dr. Chris Pulliam, Rev. Ginger Brandt, Rev. Vanessa Bostick, Rev. Ron Byrd, Kyle Graham, and Dr. Phillip Chacko. Big applause for the army of performers and technicians: Dr. Cameron Rose, Emeline Rose, Vicki Graham, Mike and Stephanie Hazeltine, Rob Mason, Irene Duran, Jared Cockrum, Jim Lowell, Tricia Anderson, Dave Hill, Tiffany Damskov, Dave Maland, Austin Henninger, Emily Lininger, Kevin Barnard, Owen Brandt, Daniel Espindola, John David Creamer, Lynn Pinkerton, Marilyn Covey, Jonathan and Kimberly Benedetti, Nathan Caffey, Chris Knight, Caleb Rackley, Amy Anderson, Jeremy Brewer, Percy Wang, Miriana Mason, and the safety team members serving throughout the week.

AND THANK YOU, FCC...

...for your generosity even in times of uncertainty...even when we don't get to come to church! Giving for March was down somewhat (3 of 5 Sundays we did not meet for worship on campus). FCC received several "over and above" gifts that helped our bottom line. Additionally, our expenditures are down, since our campus is closed, and we are operating under a spending freeze, to allow only essential expenditures. Special thanks to the leaders of our financial areas of ministry. They have done careful work in keeping FCC in the best possible position.

ONLINE PROGRAMMING

Join us for weekly programming

- 1) **Monday Musings:** Airs live Mondays from 9-10am, featuring Rev. Ginger Brandt from her back porch.
- 2) **Church Check-in:** Look for a live video usually Thurs. at 11am (next check in airs Tue., April 14)-- sometimes with one or both Rev. Ginger Brandt and Dr. Chris Pulliam
- 3) **"Connection Class":** Laura Hedrick of Cana Class is providing prompts 5 days of the week, and some storytelling on Saturdays. The week's devotional material will be sent as an email (print mail as needed), as part of our Worship With Us Instructions, each Friday. Look for posts on our main Facebook feed -- and find it as a Group on our Facebook page.
- 4) ***Bonus* Upper Room:** If interested in a copy of Upper Room, call and request to have one mailed to you.

“Your Best Moment”

Mark 3:13-19

April, 19, 2020

Dr. Chris Pulliam

What's one of your best moments in life? Let me clarify a bit, I'm not talking about a moment when something good happened to you, but a moment when you made something good happen? (pause) When God worked in/thru you?

Your answer doesn't have to be life-changing, it could be a well-timed hug, a word of encouragement, or a last second shot to win the game. It could be a performance or accomplishment or visit or meal. Giving birth! Wow! I've missed out on that one.

I realize this isn't an easy mental exercise because we don't often “go there.” Instead, where do we go? ...to our worst moments. I guarantee not a one of us needs extra time to come up with a worst moment. Am I right?

Pearl Kelty was a 90+ year old woman I used to know and visit. One of Pearl's best moments was when she joined Amelia Earhart in an all female piloted Air Show not long before Earhart became the first female to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean.

SLIDE: pic of Earhart

Know how I learned about that moment in her life? Her son told me as we met to plan Pearl's Memorial Service. I just shook my head, all that time together, and we never once talked about her best moments.

After that I tried to start asking that question... but too many accused me of pre-planning their funerals, so I stopped.

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Lord knows I've had some “worst moments” the specifics of which would be hurtful to share. We've all had “worst moments”... failures, missed opportunities, lapses of judg-

ment, hurtful words/actions, STUPIDITY. It's called sin!

SLIDE: It's true, “**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**” (Romans 3:23). No one gets a “pass” on that one.

SLIDE: But it continues, “**They (all who sinned) are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**” (Romans 3:24).

In other words, we don't have to stay in our worst moments.

During Holy Week, I spent a lot of time in the stories that surrounded Jesus' last week. One of those characters was none other than Judas Iscariot.

I read in my daily Bible study in Mark 3 (Linda Dorsey read for us a few minutes ago), Mark's listing of the twelve disciples of Jesus.

How many disciples can you name? Extra points if you can name the disciple who replaced Judas (Matthias).

Here's what struck me in our reading for today...the last verse,

SLIDE: “**and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him**” (Mark 3:19).

This is the very first time we hear Judas' name and he is already tied to his betrayal...tied to his “worst moment.”

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One commentator suggested Jesus was a lousy judge of character...and should have never chosen Judas to be one of his disciples. I DON'T THINK SO!

Rather I believe Judas was not foreordained to betray Jesus. When Judas was called as one of Jesus' disciples, he had great potential and, evidently, a sincere devotion to Jesus.

2 In other words...a fine choice!

But he didn't stay the course...he didn't work out. We've all known those people in our workplaces, businesses, families, Mahjongg groups, right? We've all probably been those people...who didn't fit, didn't work out, didn't stay the course.

A side note here...it is a solemn thought that one can fall away from sincere devotion.

“So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall” (1 Cor 10 :12)

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In my study, I noted even from the very beginning of the gospel story, Judas was tagged as “the betrayer.” I don't mean from the moment he came on the scene, they tagged him that. I do mean, that having betrayed Jesus later in life, Judas' story always includes mention of it...and not just a footnote. Nearly every verse that talks of Judas refers to his betrayal. Judas is somewhat of a “One trick pony,” and his trick isn't a good one.

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Harold Hendricks lived in his small town for too long (apparently). Every name I would bring up, he had a negative story about. Made me wonder what he said about me when I wasn't around. !!

From Harold, I learned that we can have too good of a memory when it comes to others around us.... We want what all great golfers have..."a short memory!"

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Last weekend, I got to have a good long visit with my two sons. They both told me about a book they are reading that says,

SLIDE: “People will always act according to who they see themselves to be.”

(understand themselves to be, envision themselves to be).”

...And, the book says, that image (the image we have of ourselves) is almost always nega-

tive...almost always based on our “worst moments.”

Then around the kitchen table, we got into a conversation about, “Why not live by our best moments?” Then, “What are some of our best moments?”

Again, by “best moments” I'm not talking about a moment when something good happened to you, but a moment when you made something good happen. (God)

So, what are some of your best moments? (pause) I promise I'm going to tie this to the gospel and the mind of God.

How does this tie in to our lives today...with COVID 19, and “stay at home” orders?

One “up-side” to all this is that we all have more time to think, pray, read, ponder, evaluate, and re-evaluate. What a healthy exercise it is to invest some time doing some “soul searching”...positive “soul searching.”

Now, before you dive in to this, recognize that this process may be humbling or down-right discouraging. You may discover, as I did, that these “wonderful moments” may not come flooding in. That's the disappointing part. I believe it's there (your moments of victory, success, being at the right place at the right time, saying the right thing at the right time is there) maybe not by the bucket loads, but little by little.

To my knowledge, none of us have saved the planet...but I know each one of us has helped someone, changed someone's life even if in a simple way. Those are great moments.

If nothing else, this shut down is giving us time to ponder some of the deeper things in life. Time to re-prioritize our lives...to evaluate our lives and how we are investing our time.

Don't like it...now's the time to change...to think thru what you want to see, what you want to be doing. Like my Dad told me when I went off to college..."If there's anything about yourself, you want to change, now's the time!"

It is so worth it to take a few minutes to think deeply on your best moments. Again, not moments when something great happened to you, but moments when you made something great happen.

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So, "best moments"/"Worst moments" that's just a bunch of self-help jargon...unless it can be grounded in scripture and theology (our understanding of God).

Let me ask you a very personal question. We can do this since you're in the comfort of your home. I want to look you right in the eye and ask, What do you think God thinks of you? Or more precisely, how do you think God thinks of you?

You may know of some of those "cheesy" sayings, "If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it...a wallet...pic within it!"

What do the scriptures say? SLIDE: "**You are fearfully and wonderfully made**" (Ps. 139:14).

On the 6th day of Creation, right after God created humankind, SLIDE: "**God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good**" (Genesis 1:31a).

You may be familiar with the story of woman caught in adultery. Watch very carefully how this unfolds.

The Pharisees bring to Jesus a woman caught in adultery. They remind Jesus of the law that states such a person should be stoned to death. Then they ask him, "What do you say?"

Jesus says, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." (...imagine hearing stones drop to the ground...then the footsteps of those leaving the scene). Then Jesus asked her,

SLIDE: "Where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one sir."

...Neither do I condemn you, Go and sin no more."

Arguably the woman's worst moment! Is that what Jesus wants to focus on? I'd say not.

When God looks upon you, do you imagine God seeing you as beloved, forgiven...as trying? Does God see us as loved even in those times when we are not trying (let's be honest). Worthy?

Or do you imagine God to be frowning on you, unworthy, thinking you are prone to sin and therefore not very serious...not worthy of God's love, grace, mercy and acceptance?

I'm going with the first choice. And I believe Scripture backs it up. Beloved, forgiven, worthy. And that's why I want us all to spend some time thinking about our best moments because I believe God sees us just as we were in those moments.

And that's why I want us all to spend some time thinking about the best moments in those around us. We are not "the worst thing we have ever done." In God's eyes, in fact, we may be the best thing we've ever done and more. Imagine...then go and act accordingly!

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