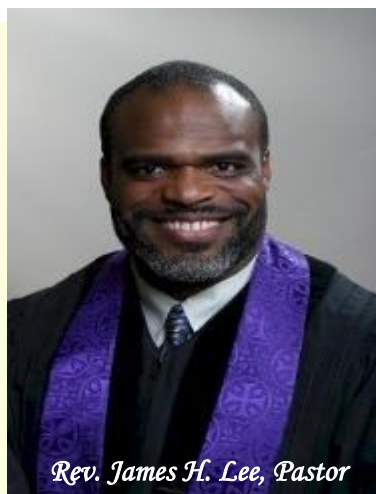
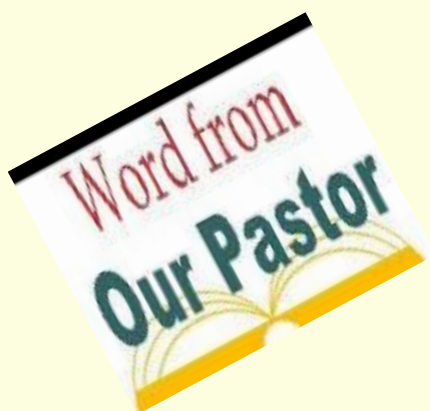


May 15, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Rev. James H. Lee, Pastor

Dear NCFA Family and Friends:

May and June continue to be very full months for many of our families. We have students and teachers racing to the end of the school year. We have families frantically planning on the care of their children while school is out. Camps are gearing up for registrations and welcoming new students into their programs. Churches are celebrating our Mother's Day, Father's Day, confirmands, and students graduating. It is an exhilarating, exciting, and exhausting time of the year.

It is my hope that we will take time to "pump the brakes" so that we can alert the folks around us that change is about to take place. Our pace and priorities are going to change, as we pause with purpose and prepare for what's ahead of us.

- What are you going to say to the college graduate heading to college, a new job, a graduate school, an internship, or back into your home?
- How will you order your house for the summer? I remember being told, "You kids need to shut the door behind you and stay inside or outside. I can't afford to air condition our house and the outside. Money doesn't grow on trees."
- Why should we take vacations if we have to work so hard to go on one and once we return?
- How are you exposing your family to the best of our world and engaging with other members of your families?

In ***John 17***, our Gospel reading for this week, Jesus prays for his disciples' best care as he prepares to ascend. Not only does he attest to the ways he has protected them, he also articulates how he has prepared them for their journey.

Let's pray: All-knowing God, thank you for your mercies, which are new each morning. Thank you for calling us out of the darkness and into your marvelous light. Thank you for transforming our hearts and minds so that we could know you and live more fully for you. Thank you for your Holy Spirit, who testifies to the truth and who rests, rules, and abides within us. Lord, we need your wisdom and for you to guide our steps. Give us the capacity to make the right decisions to best glorify you, care for our families, serve our country, minister to our neighbors, and to live purpose-filled lives, as those created, cleansed, called, and claimed by you. With humility and hope. Amen.

Friends, we have hope in difficult times because of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Amen? Amen! It was my joy to observe the moments of the last class on the *Gospel of Mark* led by the Rev. Jeff Saddington. Accompanied by Carol, the participants of the class from Genesis and NCFA sang "*Jesus Christ Is Risen Today!*" I love the second verse:

*Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!
Unto Christ, our heavenly King, Alleluia!
Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!*

May 15, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Thanks for indulging me. Now as we prepare for this weekend and next week, please prayerfully consider the following important information about these events:

- On Sunday morning, please join us for worship. The Rev. Lydia Hernandez will preach at our 8:15 Chapel service at 4100 Red River, and I will preach at our 10:15 worship on the Wilshire campus. Let's worship God!
- On Tuesday, May 19th, please plan to meet with the Rev. Charlotte O'Neil, our consultant from New Beginnings. We were able to take advantage of a grant made available through the Church Development and Evangelism Committee to engage in the New Beginnings program. We believe that our \$1,800 investment will help us to continue addressing our ministry needs within and outside NCFA. Please come for a light meal at 6:15pm and then plan to meet with Rev. O'Neil at 7pm with ideas, hopes, and dreams.
- On Sunday, May 24th, we will celebrate our loved ones who have joined the Church Triumphant during the 10:15 worship at Wilshire. Also on Sunday, May 24th, let's celebrate our graduating seminarians at 2pm in the sanctuary of University Presbyterian Church.

Finally, please help us to help you steward your financial resources. Our Session continues to implement the policy that individuals seeking assistance from the church should have participated in and implemented principles from Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace. Please plan to connect with one of the many opportunities in the city of Austin to ensure that you are eligible:

<http://www.daveramsey.com/fpu/classfinder/zip/78750/#center=30.414146,-97.807032>

We are willing to help you enroll in the course and reassess your budget and financial goals so that you can live a liberated life financially and spiritually.

Please continue to pray for our nation, our world, seekers, the sick, shut-ins, cynics, our mentally ill, hypocrites, politicians, our president, our world leaders, and those who are suffering and grieving.

Special thanks to the Saddingtons for hosting our seminarians and to Chuck Coffman for helping us to find a solution to our recent audio-visual problem.

Philippians 2:3-4

***³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit,
but with humility of mind regard one another as more important
than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests,
but also for the interests of others.***

God bless and keep you all.

Pastor James



May 15, 2015



NCFA CONNE^XION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



- 4th Anayah Mojica
- 5th Said Bohn-Hall
- 10th Dexter Lee, Sr.
- 11th Placid Unegbu
Dana Williams
- 13th Mallorie Munoz
- 16th Caly Fernandez
Kathryn Aldas
- 17th Luke Oglesby
- 20th Fortune Unegbu
- 21st Philippe (Jimmy) Bohn
Robert Booth
- 26th Lillie Daniels
Dexter Lee, Jr. (DJ)
Margaret Spinks
- 28th Alex Hernandez
- 31st Pam Nemir
Cathy Trifiro
Janet Masters

Session Members

- *Rev. James Lee
Pastor/Moderator
- *Elder Kathy Smith
Clerk of Session
- *Rev. Bill Harris
Administration & Personnel
- *Elder Tim Lenz
Buildings & Grounds
- *Elder Mary Jo Mojica
Congregational Life
- *Elder Randy Mojica
Children and Youth
- *Elder Cathy Angell
Discipleship & Women's Ministry
- *Elder Caly Fernandez
Evangelism
- *Elder Tracey Lenz
Finance & Stewardship
- *Elder Robert Booth
Lay Ministry
- *Elder Benton Hooks
Men's Ministry
- *Elder Vernon Bailey
Missions
- *Elder Charles Robinson
Worship & Membership

Deacons

- Connie Jones, Chair
- Kathryn Aldas
- Ulysses Cox
- Naomi Jones
- Samuel Okyere Mireku
- Lucy Oglesby
- Ashley Phillips
- Carol Saddington
- Cathy Trifiro
- Roxann Vallejo

MAY 2015



- 19th New Beginnings Gathering
6:30pm Light Meal
7:00pm Meeting with Consultant
- 20th 6:30pm Meal and Meeting
and Prayer and Praise
- 21st 12noon Bible Study at
Connie Jones's home
- 24th Day of Pentecost
8:15am Waller Creek Chapel
Rev. Jeff Saddington,
preaching
9-10am Adult Sunday School
10:15am Worship at
1507 Wilshire Blvd.
Pastor Lee, preaching
Sunday School –
K-5th during Worship

May 15, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

N C F A SUNDAY MORNINGS

NCFA Sunday Schedule

8:15am - Worship Service

Waller Creek Chapel
41st St. and Red River

10:15am - Worship Service

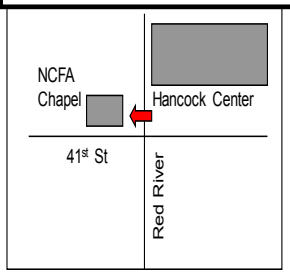
1507 Wilshire Blvd.
9am Adult Sunday School
10am Fellowship
10:45am - Children's Church

NCFA SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 8:15am -- Waller Chapel

Come rise and shine with us
at our **8:15am** chapel service
where we glorify God
through the Word, Prayer, Hymns,
and Communion.

41st and Red River, entrance gate on 41st.

In the words of Phillips, Craig & Dean,
"Come, just as you are, to worship."
All are welcome to this traditional,
intimate style of worshipping our Lord.



NCFA Waller Creek Chapel — Upcoming Preachers

May 17—*Rev. Lydia Hernandez*

May 24 — *Rev. Jeff Saddington*

Prayerfully seeking a musician called to join this worship service.

NCFA SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 10:15am

We would love to have you and your family
come share in the CELEBRATION OF
THE GOOD NEWS!



We are worshipping in the Fellowship Hall of
Genesis Presbyterian Church on the
Wilshire Campus starting at 10:15 a.m.

Real Church...
Real People...
Real Simple...

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin PC(U.S.A.) is a
racially diverse community informed by the Bible,
empowered by the Holy Spirit, and motivated to share
God's love with all. In response to God's love, we are
called to equip disciples to faithfully serve, to encour-
age seekers to joyfully commit, and to implore all to
worship our Lord, as we love our neighbors,
grow in grace, and live by faith.

JOIN US IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE GOOD NEWS

May 15, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



ARE YOU A MUSICIAN??
A pianist? A guitarist? A soloist?

Our 8:15 am service at the NCFA Chapel on the Perry Estate 4100 Red River is in need of a musician now, as Carol has retired from playing the piano at the early service. (She will continue to accompany the 10:15 service).

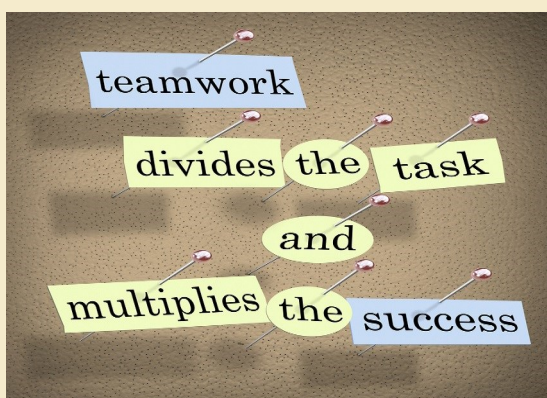
If you can help, or know someone who might be able to, please contact Trish Holland, 512-461-6250 cell

"You can do
what I cannot
do. I can do
what you
cannot do.
Together we can
do great
things."

- Mother Teresa

Four areas of FOCUS for 2015

1. Retain and minister to visitors and members through personal contacts, strengthening families, ministry-driven events, and identifying and utilizing the numerous gifts of our members.
2. Better utilize social media and other modes of communication to celebrate our ministry, share resources, and organize ourselves.
3. Enhance our Children and Youth ministries through mentoring, attending their extracurricular activities, utilizing their gifts in worship, and assisting in the Nursery and Church School.
4. Continue emphasizing Marketplace Ministry and celebrating the various ministries within our church and community.
Continue to reach out into the community like the Community Garden and our Health Fair in November



Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

PRAYER AND PRAISE

**FAITH and PRAYER
both are invisible,
but they make
impossible things
possible.!!!**

Get More Quotes @ thedailyquotes.com

- ⇒ LIFT UP A BROTHER, HIS WIFE, AND THEIR 2 YEAR OLD SON. THE FAMILY APPEARS HEADED FOR A DIVORCE.
- ⇒ LIFT UP STEPHANIE WHOSE THIRD CHILD IS EXPECTED IN JULY. SHE HAS TO REMAIN ON MODIFIED BED REST FOR ANOTHER WEEK. THIS IS DIFFICULT TO DO WITH TWO ACTIVE CHILDREN NEEDING HER CARE.
- ⇒ PRAISE THE LORD! A MEMBER HAS FOUND A PLACE TO LIVE AND ALL HER DEBTS HAVE BEEN PAID THROUGH A LOCAL CHARITY. A HUGE WEIGHT HAS BEEN LIFTED FROM HER SHOULDERS.
- ⇒ LIFT UP MOTHERS WHO HAVE LOST A CHILD. LIFT UP FRIENDS WHO RECENTLY ADOPTED A CHILD BUT HAD TO RETURN THE BABY TO THE BIRTH MOTHER AFTER SHE CHANGED HER MIND ABOUT GIVING UP HER CHILD.
- ⇒ LIFT UP A MEMBER'S SEARCH FOR A NEW PLACE TO LIVE AND FUNDS TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY SO THEY NEEDN'T GO BACK TO WHERE THEY USED TO BE.
- ⇒ PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW! PRAISE FOR BILL AND NANCY WHO YEARS AGO OPENED THEIR HEARTS AND HOME TO A GIRL IN NEED. BECAUSE OUR GOD IS A RELATIONAL GOD A NEW FAMILY WAS CREATED AND IT CONTINUES TO GROW. PRAISE FOR THE ARRIVAL OF A BABY GIRL, AVERY ELYSE, ON APRIL 30TH.
- ⇒ PRAISE FOR PASTOR LEE'S SERMON WHICH GAVE GEMS OF INSIGHT AND WISDOM THAT CAN BE SHARED IN AN UPCOMING WOMEN'S CONFERENCE.
- ⇒ PRAISE THAT REY AND FAMILY MOVED INTO THEIR NEW APARTMENT THIS WEEKEND. THANK GOD FOR NEW BEGINNINGS.
- ⇒ LIFT UP A DAUGHTER'S FIVE YEAR MARRIAGE WHICH MAY BE DISSOLVING TO DIVORCE. LIFT UP COMFORT FOR THE PARENTS AS THEY WATCH HELPLESSLY.

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NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

PRAYER AND PRAISE



- ⇒ LIFT UP FAMILIES WHO CANNOT BE TOGETHER ON THIS MOTHER'S DAY. MAY THE WORDS EXPRESSED OVER A PHONE BE ADEQUATE TO EXPRESS THEIR LOVE AND GRATITUDE.
- ⇒ LIFT UP JOHN'S MOTHER AS SHE EXPERIENCES HER FIRST MOTHER'S DAY WITHOUT HER MOTHER. ALSO, LIFT UP JOHN'S GRANDFATHER WHO HAS RECENTLY BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER. SINCE HE ALSO HAS ALZHEIMER'S THE FAMILY IS FACING DIFFICULT DECISIONS ABOUT HIS ONGOING CARE.
- ⇒ LIFT UP GEORGE'S UNCLE JULIUS WHO IS RECUPERATING FROM SURGERY FOR THREE BLOCKED ARTERIES. LIFT UP GEORGE'S NIECE AS SHE RECOVERS FROM THYROID CANCER SURGERY AND MAY BE FACING MORE TREATMENTS.
- ⇒ LIFT UP TRISH FOR RAPID HEALING FROM A VIRUS.
- ⇒ PRAISE THE LORD THAT LUKE DOES NOT HAVE CHICKEN POX!
- ⇒ HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO DEXTER AND ROBERT.
- ⇒ LIFT UP HELPERS FOR VBS WHICH STARTS JUNE 14TH.
- ⇒ LIFT UP ALL OF OUR PASTORS



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NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

NCFA CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY



**VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED
YOU ARE NEEDED**

**PLEASE CONSIDER WAYS YOU
CAN HELP SOLIDIFY OUR
MINISTRY:**

- ASSIST UTOPIA IN THE NURSERY
- ASSIST TEACHERS IN CHURCH SCHOOL
- BRING CREATIVE IDEAS
- SERVE WHEREVER YOU ARE NEEDED
- VOLUNTEER FOR OUR
2015 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
(JUNE 14TH-17TH, 21ST)

May 15, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

NCF FOOD PANTRY

All are welcome to participate
in our *FOOD PANTRY*,
a crisis ministry initiative of the *Deacons*.

If you or someone you know needs food, please take some.
If you can help replenish our supply,
UNEXPIRED NONPERISHABLES ARE WELCOME.

**THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL REQUEST:
PEANUT BUTTER and CRACKERS**



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“Love Thy Neighbor”

Presbyterian Women

May 23, Saturday The 4th Saturday Morning Bible Study will meet at 8:30 AM in the kitchen to discuss Lesson 7 in Horizons, “Reconciling Paul: A Contemporary Study of 2 Corinthians.”

May 26-28, Tues.-Thurs. Women’s Conference I, Mo-Ranch

May 29-31, Fri.-Sun. Women’s Conference II, Mo-Ranch

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NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Sermon
1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17
New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

Pastor James H. Lee
May 10, 2015-6th Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day

1 John 5:1-6

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, ⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? ⁶This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

John 15:9-17

⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. ¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Today we celebrate the mothers who brought forth our lives, the women who are spiritual mothers, who mentor others, and all the daughters. Amen!

We also celebrate this 6th week of Easter, and what we will know is that Easter is not a one-day event. It is a continuous process in which we are recognizing that that one day is a day that continues to give us hope.

And it is after Easter that we're getting an opportunity to see how Jesus revealed himself to the disciples. That was important because today we may read the Bible and understand the resurrection, but that was a new thing for them. You might say, "Well, there was Lazarus...." But when you *see* what it is that Jesus endured on that cross—and then he's dead, and he's buried, and he's resurrected, and then he shows himself in the resurrected body—it gives you hope to keep on.

As we celebrate Mother's Day, we know that it isn't just the day you gave birth. It's the traveling and the joy that came forth as the baby was born, and continues, and continues, and continues. (Brothers, if the sisters won't say Amen, I need *you* to say Amen!) Love is a wonderful thing...but it's not a one-day event: Good times, bad times, happy times, sad times! There are some times when there are three folks crying in the room at the same time—the mama, the daddy, and a baby. The baby won't quit crying, and you don't know whether to feed, or to burp, or what! It is just a continuous process and not a one-day event.

There are times that we get to go back and recognize things that were done, could have been done differently, and make that a part of the healing process. What we need to understand is that we serve a relational God. It isn't just enough for God to sit high and look low, and as we learned in seminary, just to be the immovable God. No, this relational God understands that relationships in a family are a way for us to better understand God's love, to better understand how it is that we are to relate with each other.

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Mother's Day

We serve a relational God. It is also important for us to understand that reconciliation recognizes that broken things need to be repaired. It is not just enough that Jesus reconciled us to God; that's a vertical thing. But there's a reconciliation that takes place from human being to human being. In our families there are times when reconciliation needs to take place. Imperfect people amongst imperfect people will lead to imperfect situations. And so reconciliation is not just about a one-day thing that Jesus did. It is because he reconciled us unto God that we can be reconciled unto others, and we live out what it is that we have experienced with God through Jesus Christ.

The other thing is we need to be reminded that redemption was not just about paying the price just once. The blood, the atonement that Christ did—it's a continuous process. A continuous process. I lift that up because there are some situations in our lives that need to be redeemed. You say there's a debt, there's a gulf, and I can't get past it, I'm stuck. Well, I invite you to invite Jesus to come and to redeem the situation. Why? Because he's already done it in Glory. So why shouldn't we allow it to become our reality here on Earth? Allow him to come and redeem some situation and say “Baby, you know what, that wasn't right. It shouldn't have been done that way. Will you allow me to take the debt that you've been carrying so that you can be free? Will you allow me to take that upon me?” But they deserve worse—they deserve.... “No, baby. If you continue to do that, you won't be free. Will you allow me to take the debt they owe you? Will you allow me to take it? Will you allow me to take the anguish, the pain, the hate—all you have—and allow me to have it so I can redeem it, so you can live a liberated life?” A relational God brings about reconciliation, moving forward for redeeming situations that are difficult in our lives.

I want you to know that Jesus was so compelled to do this that even from the cross—it talks about all that the guards had done—but even from the cross he looked down to his mother with his sisters, and he said to her, “Woman,” as he looks to John the Beloved, “your son,” and then he looks to John, “Son, behold, your mother.” See, Jesus was already trying to repair a breach. He's gone. Mom needs someone to care and love her, and who does he entrust? John. And the text will let you know that from that moment on, John took over the care for his mother. It's important; relationships are important.

As we look at the text, you say “James, what does all that have to do with the text?” It's an expression of love. Love is more than just what we use on Valentine's Day to buy roses and to get some chocolate and some gifts. Love is more than eros—you know, that mmm feeling you get when you see someone special—more than that. It's more than that brotherly love, that love you know with homeboys, that “ace boon coon”....No, it's *agapeo* love, love you to the depth. When I don't want to be with you, I still love you. When I want to be with you and don't want to be away from you, I love you. When we're going in the same direction, I love you. When it seems like we can't do anything but miscue with each other, I love you. When you're where you ought to be and do what you ought to be doing, I love you; and when you don't and you're not, I love you. You see, that's the kind of love that God has for us, and that is the love that you're hearing about in this text.

As you hear in *1 John*, Jesus says, “***Everyone who believes Jesus is the Christ has been born of God,***” and that's a powerful thing. Who gives us the capacity to believe God? Who gives us the choice to believe God? And then what he says is, if you choose to, and when you do, something incredible happens. There's a transformation that takes place in your life. And some people say that it happens instantly .

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May 10, 2015-6th Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day

That's why we had folks who could give us money so we can create bags so that we can give to people who are in need. That's why we have a group of people who go out as a part of Mobile Loaves & Fishes. That is why we have folks who will go to Sudan, go to Cuba, go to Chiapas, go to other areas of the world—so that we handle things *globally*, we handle things *regionally*, and we also do things *locally*.

And I choose to believe that we love each other because every one of you know that you could be at another church where it could be a whole lot easier. Somebody would be singing the songs you once heard, the preacher would stay with the text, the order would always stay right there and be decent and in order. But love is when we bear each other up, knowing that none of us is perfect and every one of us needs a time with someone who will say, “I know your mess, but I love you anyhow, and I'm with you; I'm with you until the end.” Amen.

And so those things were important, but I also love this part, and I know we're worrying about war and battles and all this, but hear this part that says “***For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.***” I said, “Well, I don't know about that one because there's been some times that I said ‘Well, should I? Could I?’—and the burden was released when I said “Yes.” Now, I didn't know how the outcome was going to be because normally it's going to tell you to do the very opposite of what you want to do, or what everyone else is doing, and that's enough to cause some issues in the inside where it does feel like a burden. But when you finally say “Yes” and you finally say “Whoo” and go, and you watch things start to come together, you're like “Okay, yeah, I like this thing. I now understand a little bit better.” Yet the next time comes, and you're back to the place of “I don't know about this, Lord. I'm trying to do the right thing, but evil is always present. The spirit is willing but my flesh is weak.” But when we do it continuously, it is not as much of a burden because it becomes a natural process, a natural way in which we act, and we do, and we believe, and we trust.

But this other part, and ya'll know the athlete in me, it says that we conquer. There are some things that we get to overcome because of what Christ has done.

- ◆ Fears: False Evidence Appearing Real. Why can I think I can overcome my fears?
- ◆ Remember these words from **2 Timothy**, and it says, “***The Lord has not given us a spirit of fear but of love and power and of sound mind.***”
- ◆ Only 10% of the things we fear actually ever happen. We get to running around like chickens with our heads chopped off over stuff that 90% of the time will not happen.
- ◆ Fear: Follow after these principles.. Love, mercy, grace, and forgiving others.

I can get to a place—and I'm still working on some things as it is a journey—but some forgiving as I start practicing it and working it out. “You know what, I've been good today, Lord. I conquered that.” And He says, “Well, that is good for today, but what about tomorrow?” We're gonna try with Your help.

But there are some things we could conquer. Well, how is it that you do it so you continue to stay in the Word? You continue to live out these principles that mean so much because they make a difference; they make a difference in how we can overcome, and we can do anything because the victory is already won. Now it's just a matter of our living it out so that others can experience it. Some would say, “How do you know it?” Because he gave us life. He came by water and blood. And he did

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The other thing is we need to be reminded that redemption was not just about paying the price just once. The blood, the atonement that Christ did—it's a continuous process. A continuous process. I lift that up because there are some situations in our lives that need to be redeemed. You say there's a debt, there's a gulf, and I can't get past it, I'm stuck. Well, I invite you to invite Jesus to come and to redeem the situation. Why? Because he's already done it in Glory. So why shouldn't we allow it to become our reality here on Earth? Allow him to come and redeem some situation and say “Baby, you know what, that wasn't right. It shouldn't have been done that way. Will you allow me to take the debt that you've been carrying so that you can be free? Will you allow me to take that upon me?” But they deserve worse—they deserve.... “No, baby. If you continue to do that, you won't be free. Will you allow me to take the debt they owe you? Will you allow me to take it? Will you allow me to take the anguish, the pain, the hate—all you have—and allow me to have it so I can redeem it, so you can live a liberated life?” A relational God brings about reconciliation, moving forward for redeeming situations that are difficult in our lives.

I want you to know that Jesus was so compelled to do this that even from the cross—it talks about all that the guards had done—but even from the cross he looked down to his mother with his sisters, and he said to her, “Woman,” as he looks to John the Beloved, “your son,” and then he looks to John, “Son, behold, your mother.” See, Jesus was already trying to repair a breach. He's gone. Mom needs someone to care and love her, and who does he entrust? John. And the text will let you know that from that moment on, John took over the care for his mother. It's important; relationships are important.

As we look at the text, you say “James, what does all that have to do with the text?” It's an expression of love. Love is more than just what we use on Valentine's Day to buy roses and to get some chocolate and some gifts. Love is more than eros—you know, that mmm feeling you get when you see someone special—more than that. It's more than that brotherly love, that love you know with homeboys, that “ace boon coon”....No, it's *agapeo* love, love you to the depth. When I don't want to be with you, I still love you. When I want to be with you and don't want to be away from you, I love you. When we're going in the same direction, I love you. When it seems like we can't do anything but miscue with each other, I love you. When you're where you ought to be and do what you ought to be doing, I love you; and when you don't and you're not, I love you. You see, that's the kind of love that God has for us, and that is the love that you're hearing about in this text.

May 15, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Sermon
1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17
New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

Pastor James H. Lee
May 10, 2015-6th Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day

We celebrate the baptism because of the fact that he aligned himself with us; and we celebrate talking about the blood piece, not only in his humanity but the atoning sacrifices that he made for our sake. And I love the fact that it says that the Holy Spirit is the one that will testify to the truth. When I said “what is this” early on, it's talking about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that rests, rules, and abides with us, and is that one who testifies to the truth that he is there with us.

But here is another thing that I needed us to hear in the Gospel reading. We hear Jesus telling his disciples that he wants them to abide in him and he will abide in them. The difference. I want us to think about abiding. I know I've said it once before, and I'll say it again: Is there a difference between a hotel and a house? You check into a hotel and you check out. But if it's your house, it's your home and you abide there. Jesus wants us to abide, stay there. And Jesus will not check out. As a thing about the Lord saying you abide with Me, I'm abiding with you—We check out, but God hasn't, and God is with us. He even gave us a promise: ***“I'll never leave you nor forsake you.”*** Even in the Great Commission He says, ***“Lo, I'll be with you until the very ends of the day.”*** He wants them to hear again the importance of abiding: ***“As the father has loved me so I love you, and I want you to abide in this love, and if you keep my commandments you will abide in me.”***

That's another thing, a lot of the times when I get mad at God it is because I'm wondering, “Why, God, haven't You done what You're supposed to do?—It's because somebody didn't do what he was supposed to do. Now you could say, “Well, James, you played with that “if.” Yeah, you're right, and I did because there are some principles behind that. There are some things that we need to do because they're the right things for us to do. Instead of doing our own thing and then getting upset at God for us having to deal with our mess or try to justify it. We're good at it. We can wordsmith better than anybody. But God didn't call us to wordsmith; God called us to obey. Obey. And I know some will say, “Well, I can find somewhere in the Scriptures where it tells you to do something crazy, and it doesn't match up.” That isn't where we're focusing. I always like to say follow the rules. Quit jumping after the exception and letting the exception be the rule. What is consistently across the base? What are their principles, what are these principles saying? And if that is consistent, stay with that. Stay with it. The faithfulness of God is there; the love of God continues to abide. But stick with that.

I love the fact that in ***1 John*** it says that it is not a burden, and then Jesus says, “I'm telling you guys this so that my joy and your joy may be complete.” It didn't feel like that in the beginning, but he's really saying, “I want your joy to be complete, and my joy is complete when you do it.” When you do it, it is something. Have you ever tried to do something that was so very hard, and when you finally did it, you looked up, and that “aha” moment was something brilliant and it blew you away, and you're like “You know, I can do this thing.” And Jesus is saying,

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And then I love this other thing. Jesus says, ***“I'm going to call you by another name.”*** Now I've been called out of my name. I've been called by my name, but I love this piece when Jesus says, ***“No longer do I call you doulos, slave, servant....I call you a friend.”*** I almost had us singing ***“What a Friend We Have in Jesus”*** and ***“I Am a Friend of God”***—“Who am I that Thou art mindful of me?” Jesus says you are my friend because you know what it is that I've come to do and what I want to do in and through you, because doulos, a servant, a slave doesn't know what the plan is.

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One might say, “Well, if Paul says he is a doulos, then what's the difference between this doulos and what Jesus is talking about?” Paul was saying that “I am such a committed servant to the Lord that I’ve got the ‘I can’t help myself’s.’” Anybody in the house got the “I can't help myself's sometimes?” Like why are you doing that? The church is here, and you’re doing this and you’re doing that? And you say, “I’m compelled.” Folks on the session they had to kick me out of the pulpit. I was just compelled; it's good for you, and I was compelled. They said, “No, you need to be propelled out of here.” Sometimes we need others to help us for our own best good. Amen.

Last piece: I love this last part, **verse 16**. “***You did not choose me but I chose you.***” Did you get it? Need to say it *r e a l s l o w*.... “***You did not choose me but I chose you.***” You didn’t even have to be the last in the line. He said “***I choose you.***” Wasn’t worried about Bubba, wasn’t worried about Bob, wasn’t worried about Suzy, and Joe, and Josephine. God knew your name and said “***I choose you.***” I need you to know you’re chosen by God. You’re called by God, and you can choose to say “Yes” or “No,” but know that you’re called and you’re chosen. You're not a mistake. You are a blessing, and God is pleased. And I want you to know your names are written on the hands of Almighty God! Can you imagine how many names are there and God knows you intimately? Knows the number of hairs that are upon your head (and in my case the ones that have left and have turned gray). But God is that kind of a God. Amen.

Finally, the last part, “***I appointed you to go.***” To sit in the four walls? No, to go. To stay around and debate and to read and to discuss? No, go. And then what? “***To bear fruit that will last so that the father will give you whatever you ask in my name. I'm giving you these commandments so that you will love one another. I appointed you to bear fruit.***” And again, if Jesus is the vine and you are a branch, a branch can’t do anything but what? Bear the fruit. You don’t have to do anything extra. Just bear, just be. Let it flow. Well, how does that happen? I let the Lord do what God does, and I quit doing what I do. Because ya’ll know when we do this stuff that we crimp up the branch; the load just kills the flow. The Lord says, “Baby, just abide in me and let me abide in you. Just let me flow so I can bear some fruit for you.” Amen?!

So as we leave, know that you may have said “Yes,” but God chose you just to know that God appointed you to bear fruit that will last. No strings attached, and it's something that happens from above, so nobody can take credit for it but God; and nobody can separate you from the love of God because it’s a God thing. And who testifies to what has taken place here? The Spirit. It's a good thing.

Let’s pray. Lord, thank you for our time. Thank you for your love. Thank you that it’s more than just a word, more than an expression. It was lived through Christ who lived and died for our sake. Lord, help us to love one another as you commanded us to do. We know how difficult it is, and you knew how difficult it would be, so you told us to allow your Spirit to abide in us. And you also told the disciples, “Wait until you will receive power. And then you can be the witness of me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the othermost parts of the world.” So we ask for your help, ask that your grace may abound; your mercies may continue to be new for us each morning; that you would bless our families; that you bless our neighborhoods; that you bless our nation; that you will bless our world through other saints who also were called and appointed to bear fruit. It’s to the glory of Christ we pray. Amen.

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