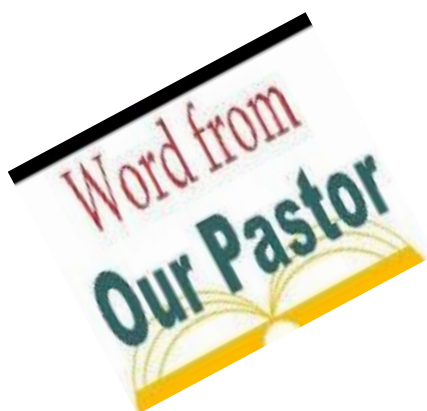


February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Rev. James H. Lee, Pastor

Dear NCFA Family and Friends,

We had a wonderful time in the Lord on Tuesday. We were blessed to have guests from Covenant Presbyterian Church and students and staff from Austin Seminary to join us for food, fun, and fellowship.

Abraham Weaver came home and it "showed out." It was a joy to reconnect and to sing familiar songs with an ole friend. As his pastor, I had the joy of commissioning him for the work he's called to do in the city of Austin.

Please join me in celebrating our Deacons, who organized the event, served us a great meal, and came out in full force! Between the generosity of each person and the donors/purchasers of items in the silent auction, we were able to raise additional funds to help with emergency needs.

I'm grateful for Rev. Jeff Saddington, who covered Ash Wednesday while I was in San Antonio. We have a great group of leaders who are very capable of honoring God and blessing our church family and community with your gifts. Thank you for serving.

Please remember that the Lenten season is supposed to draw us closer to God. God desires our hearts more than the sacrifices we make throughout the season.

I have asked you to identify your goals so that you know why you are sacrificing and struggling during this season and year. The outcomes and accomplished goals make the challenges more worthwhile.

On Sunday, seminarian Sam Okyere Mireku will preach at the 8:15am chapel service. Worship will take place at the NCFA Chapel on the Perry Estate.

We will have a child-friendly, family-friendly worship service on Sunday. We will be blessed by the NCFA Children and Youth Choir singing and Nikkie Shubitz providing a Time with our Children. After worship, you are invited to go into Rm. 7 for the continued Belhar Confession conversations. Childcare will take place in my office and be supervised by Ms. Utopia Williams. Please pray for our Session as we deliberate over important matters with regard to our church and its ministries.

Pray for the women of our church, who will be leading us in worship next week as a part of "Celebration of the Gift of Women Sunday. Rev. Lydia Hernandez will preach at 8:15am and CRE Estela Sifuentes will preach at 10:15am on the 8th.

2 Thessalonians 1:11

"To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,

February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE BELHAR CONFSSION

Sundays February 22 and March 1
12:30 – 2:00pm

A lively study of the “Belhar Confession”
Deacon Ashley Phillips, Convener
Soup and sandwich lunch and childcare provided.

The “Belhar Confession” is the first confession from the Global South to be considered for inclusion in *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church USA. For a copy, see pcusa.org/resources/belhar.

Childcare will take place in Pastor Lee’s office. NCFA, we need to make sure that we picked up our children and cleaned the Nursery prior to 12:30 p.m.

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL STUDY

**Six-Week Study Hosted
by Genesis Presbyterian Church**

**Curriculum: Austin Seminary
Lenten Devotional
Led by: Seminarian Cliff Frederick
cliff.frederick@student.austinseminary.edu**

**Where: GPC Library
When: Morning/Evening options
Thursdays, 10:30-11:30am
- Feb. 19, 26, Mar. 2, 12, 19
OR
Tuesdays, 7-8pm - Feb. 24,
Mar. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31**

Please note: These events will not have child care or meals provided. Please plan accordingly.

February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNE~~X~~ION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



To ensure that we best support the Lenten Devotional hosted by Genesis and led by Cliff, the Rev. Jeff Saddington will offer the 6-class series on the Gospel of Mark after Easter and starting April 9th.

He will facilitate the class using the book Mark's Gospel from Scratch, by Griggs and Myers.

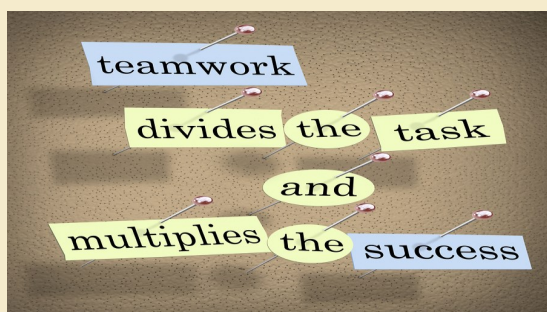
The study will take place on Thursday evenings April 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th, May 7th and 14th.

Please express your interest so that we can coordinate space with Genesis. Please note, this event will not have child care or meals provided. Please plan accordingly.

"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. Continuing to emphasize Market-place ministry and identify the various ministries within our church and community.



February 21, 2015

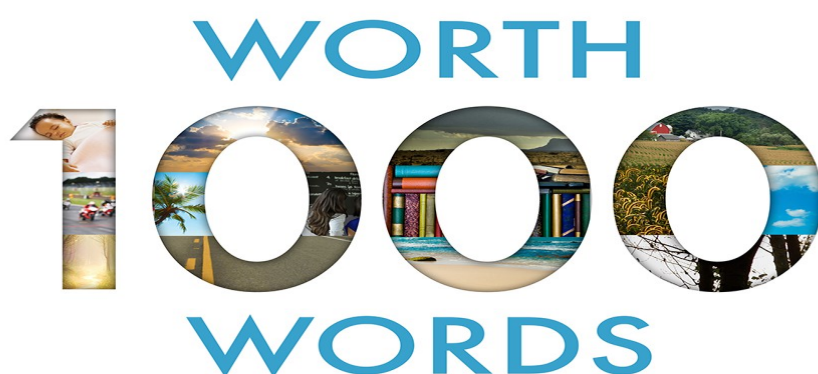


NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Leaders from 10 of the Austin area Presbyterian Churches have been working on a sermon series for the Lenten Season. The theme is “Worth 1000 Words.” As Pastor Lee and others preach sermons throughout the Lenten Season, please consider images that help you express your faith, illustrate your emotions, and draw you closer to God.

Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.” Francis of Assisi



A VISUAL JOURNEY THROUGH LENT

Coming up: Chiapas Mission Trip

March 18-25, 2015

**Minute mission and fundraising
will be February 8th.**

**Please see Elder Caly Fernandez
and Rev. Lydia Hernandez**

**Please continue to pray for all of our
Mission and Evangelism efforts:**

**Austin Club House, Austin Presbyterian Seminary,
Cabo, Café Justo, Chiapas, Patterson Park Commu-
nity Gardens, Cuba, Mo-Ranch, NCFA Health Fair,
Summer Food Program, and Sudan**

Crop Walk — March 1st

February 21, 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

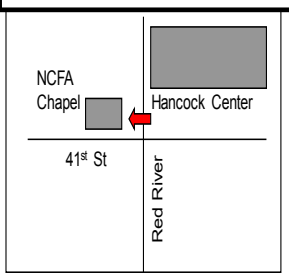
10:15am - Worship Service
1507 Wilshire Blvd.
9am Adult Sunday School
10am Fellowship
10:45am - Children's Church

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

February 22 — Sam Okyere Mireku

March 1 — Sam Mancillas

March 8 — Rev. Lydia Hernandez

March 15 — Estela Sifuentes, CRE

March 22 —

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 Wil-
shire Campus starting at 10:15 a.m.



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 encourage
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

February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



2/1 Tim Lenz
2/6 Rey Mojica
2/7 Gina Cox
Tracey Lenz
2/8 Angel Hernandez
Yejae Shin
2/9 Mary Ann Akujor
2/11 Pastor James Lee
2/12 Destiny Edwards
2/14 Reece Listach
“ MaryAnn Ramirez
2/17 Ashley Phillips
2/20 Nikkie Shubitz
Eli Smith
2/26 Navy Dajae Shin
Oliver Smith

2/24 Mary and Randy Mojica

Session Members

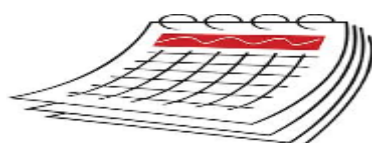
***Rev. James Lee**
Pastor/Moderator
***Elder Kathy Smith**
Clerk of Session
***Rev. Bill Harris**
Administration & Personnel
***Elder Tim Lenz**
Buildings & Grounds
***Elder Mary Jo Mojica**
Congregational Life
***Elder Randy Mojica**
Children and Youth
***Elder Cathy Angell**
Discipleship & Women's 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

New Covenant Fellowship

FEBRUARY



Study of the
Belhar Confession
Sundays February 22 & March 1
12:30 – 2:00pm

February 22
Family Friendly Worship
NCFA Session Meeting

February 24 6:30 –9:00 pm
Men's Ministry Dinner and Bible
Study, in the NCFA Kitchen

February 25 6:30pm
Churchwide Potluck Dinner, in
the NCFA Kitchen

February 26 12noon Bible
Study at Connie Jones's home

February 28 8:30am
4th Saturday Morning Bible Study
in the NCFA Kitchen

February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

PRAYER AND PRAISE

February 15, 2015

- **PRAISE THAT BEN'S MOTHER ANN FINISHED SIX WEEKS OF REHAB! THANKSGIVING FOR HER JOY IN BEING ABLE TO ATTEND OUR ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE.**
- **LIFT UP JERRY'S MOTHER MARY ANN WHO IS IN THE HOSPITAL WITH PNEUMONIA. LIFT UP DISCERNMENT AND RESPECT AS THE SIBLINGS DISCUSS HOW BEST TO HELP HER GOING FORWARD. PRAISE THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME IMPROVEMENT IN HER CONDITION AS OF MONDAY.**
- **LIFT UP STACIE FOR COMFORT, STRENGTH, AND PEACE. LIFT UP HER MOTHER AND JAMES AS THEY ASSIST HER.**
- **PRAYERS FOR THIS WORLD'S OVERWHELMING ISSUES AND THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INTERVENTION.**
- **LIFT UP OUR CHURCH AND OUR FRAGILE CONGREGATION FOR STRENGTHENING AND BEING REMINDED OF WHAT A SPECIAL PLACE AND SPECIAL PEOPLE WE HAVE.**
- **LIFT UP TRAVELING MERCIES AND GOOD GYMNASTICS COMPETITIONS FOR THE MOJICA FAMILY.**
- **LIFT UP BALANCE AND GUIDANCE FOR MARY AS SHE DISCERNS WHEN TO SAY YES AND WHEN TO SAY NO.**
- **PRAISE FOR HONEST CONVERSATIONS WITH NCF CHILDREN AND THE GREATER APPRECIATION THEY GIVE TO THE ADULTS. PRAISE FOR THE BLESSING OF SEEING RESULTS OF PRAYER FOR EACH CHILD.**
- **PRAISE FOR REY'S DAUGHTER BEING IN WORSHIP WITH HIM.**
- **LIFT UP HEALING OF AN UPPER RESPIRATORY AFFLICTION FOR VI.**
- **LIFT UP JENNY AND HER FAMILY AS THEY GRIEVE THE RECENT DEATH OF HER GREAT AUNT.**
- **LIFT UP THE DISCUSSION CONCERNING THE BELHAR CONFESSION THAT THE PRESBYTERIES ARE VOTING THIS SPRING ON WHETHER TO INCLUDE IN THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS.**
- **PRAISE FOR THE DIVERSITY WITHIN NCF.**

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

PRAYER AND PRAISE

February 15, 2015



- LIFT UP A RESOLUTION FOR A DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN CALY'S MOTHER AND A NEIGHBOR.
- PRAISE! DAUGHTER CHERYL HAS A JOB! LIFT UP HER ABILITY TO PERFORM HER DUTIES.
- LIFT UP TIFFANY'S STEPFATHER WHO HAS TAKEN ON INCREASED RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE UNITED METHODIST DENOMINATION ON TOP OF PASTORING A CHURCH. THE EXTRA WORK WILL TAKE HIM AWAY FROM HOME DURING THE WEEK AND HE WILL ONLY BE HOME ON WEEKENDS. LIFT UP STRENGTH, FLEXIBILITY, AND LOVE TO SUSTAIN HIS MARRIAGE.
- PRAISE FOR THE FRIENDSHIP REUNION OF TRISH, JIM, AND JANELLE.
- PRAISE FOR ANSWERED PRAYER THAT SAM M.'S SISTER'S TEST RESULTS ARE NEGATIVE. ALMA SENDS THANKS TO NCF FOR ALL PRAYERS ON HER BEHALF.
- PRAISE GOD THAT JOHN H. IS FINDING "THE WAY BEING MADE CLEAR" FOR MINISTRY AND THAT HE PASSED ALL OF HIS ORDINATION EXAMS!
- THANKSGIVING FOR THE FREEDOM TO DEMONSTRATE ALL SIDES OF ISSUES IN OUR COUNTRY. LIFT UP ONGOING IMMIGRATION CONCERNS AS WELL AS PRISON REFORMS.
- LIFT UP JAMES FOR LIGHTENED BURDENS AND THE STRENGTH TO "RUN THIS RACE WITH PERSEVERANCE."
- LIFT UP PAM N.
- THANKSGIVING FOR SHANE B.'S SERMON, "THE VEIL AND THE UNVEILING," AND THE REMINDER THAT WE NEED EACH OTHER. LIKE NCF, WE CAN REACH ACROSS RACIAL DIVIDES TO LIVE AS GOD WANTS US TO LIVE.



February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!



Friends, we need your help. We are our best when we serve together. Please consider ways you can help our ministry leaders and ministries.

- Buildings & Grounds is in need of persons to help one or more days a month with light cleaning and set up for Sunday worship. This would typically be done on a Friday or Saturday and require between one and two hours of your time. *For details see Tim Lenz, Chairperson Buildings & Grounds*
- Congregational Life is in need of folks with the gift of hospitality and/or planning events. Contact Mary Mojica at maryjomojica@yahoo.com

After worship: Enjoy fellowship. Put away the Bibles and Hymnals. Collect the brown baskets and attendance sheets. Throw away our trash. Empty waste baskets in the classrooms, restroom, and kitchen.

**Coming together is a
beginning;
keeping together is
progress;
working together is
success.**

Henry Ford



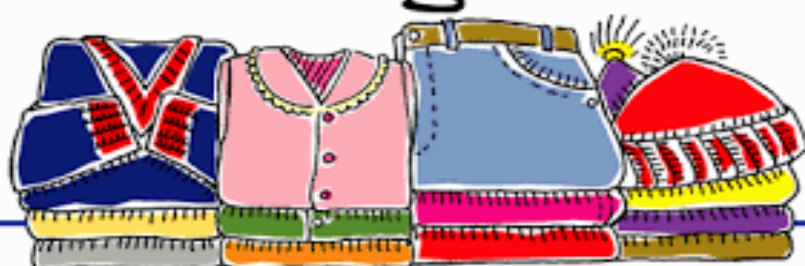
February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Clothing Drive



Greater Hope Center

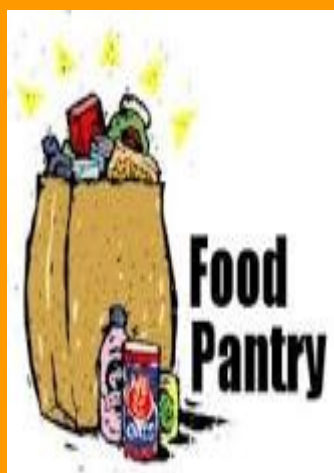
Clothing donations can be delivered to our boutique located at 4136 E. 12th, Austin, Texas 78723.

We accept all clothing donations during the hours we are open: Tuesday and Thursday 4:30 p.m. until 7 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

We will also make special arrangements for donations at other hours.

Free clothing for those who need it.

FOOD PANTRY AVAILABLE TO ALL



The New Covenant Fellowship Deacons are now providing a free to all food pantry each Sunday. This is to help anyone who needs a little help in the obtaining of groceries. The table at the back of the church will have canned goods and other non-perishable food each Sunday. If you or anyone you know needs some help with groceries, please feel free to partake of the items available.

If you are able to donate food items to this table, please feel free to do so and bless you for your contribution. Paper bags with handles are also needed and if you have extra ones of these, please put them on this new food table.



February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think.

• Martin Luther King, Jr.



Did you know the most effective Christian education takes place in homes where the adults are growing in their faith?
Check out one of these opportunities for growing in 2015:

Tuesday Evening Men's Bible Study - 6:30pm - Kitchen

Men are finishing up a study on the book of Judges by Tim Keller. The next topic will be selected by the Men's Ministry.

Thursday Noon Bible Study, 12 noon –1 pm at the home of Connie Jones – 5107 Edenborough Ln.

(north of 290 East, just past Springdale) A study of the writings of the Apostle Paul.
All welcome, bring a bag lunch as desired.

4th Saturday Adult Bible Study, 8:30 am

Chapter 3 of "Reconciling Paul: A Contemporary Study of 2 Corinthians"
by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty

Sunday Morning Adult Sunday School - 9:15am - Rm. 7

This class is studying a book by Bill Hybels and John Ortberg on the Sermon on the Mount, the Passion story, "The Lord's Prayer," and several parables. The scripture is read together and then questions in the guide are discussed, making it real to current life.

NCFA Women's Ministry

Important Dates and Opportunities

February 25, Wednesday The Wednesday Noon Bible Study will be held at the home of Connie Jones, 5107 Edenborough Lane. They will study Horizons, "Reconciling Paul: A Contemporary Study of 2 Corinthians" by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty.

February 28, Saturday The 4th Saturday Morning Bible Study group (formally the 4th Wednesday Evening Bible Study) will be held in the kitchen at 8:30 A.M. Lesson 4 of Horizons, "Reconciling Paul: A Contemporary Study of 2 Corinthians" by Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty will be studied.

March 1, Sunday CROP Walk, Camp Mabry.

March 6, Friday Church Women United will meet at 9:30 AM at Crestview United Methodist Church, 1300 Morrow. The program will center around World Day of Prayer.

February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Qualified to Run”

Psalm 30:1-12; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Mark 1:40-45

Pastor James H. Lee

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

February 15, 2015—Transfiguration Sunday

Psalm 30:1-12 ¹*I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. ²O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. ³O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. ⁴Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. ⁵For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. ⁶As for me, I said in my prosperity, “I shall never be moved.” ⁷By your favor, O Lord, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed. ⁸To you, O Lord, I cried, and to the Lord I made supplication: ⁹“What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? ¹⁰Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!” ¹¹You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, ¹²so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.*

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 ²⁴*Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. ²⁵Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. ²⁶So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; ²⁷but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.*

Mark 1:40-45 ⁴⁰*A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” ⁴¹Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” ⁴²Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, ⁴⁴saying to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” ⁴⁵But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.*

As I thought about the sermon title, I was caught with Corinthians and the image of the race or journey—the faith journey that all of us are on. Have you ever been part of a group and had everyone be chosen but you? Have you ever found yourself in one setting being glad that you ARE the one who was chosen and looking back and seeing the heartache of one who was not? As we continue to live in this world and to relate with each other, so much of the structures set in place almost keep it so that we don’t have to experience that heartache and pain of one who is dejected, or rejected. Then sometimes we fail to remember that being on the inside can be painful as you look on the outside and see those who are not included.

I wanted the sermon today to be ***“Qualified to Run”*** because Jesus has qualified every one of us to run the race, Amen?! Whereas everyone may have looked and said, “You are disqualified because you’re this,” or “You’re disqualified because of that,” Jesus says, “You are qualified because I gave my life for you. You are qualified because I love you. You are qualified, and I’m putting my righteousness upon you. Will you receive this gift that is yet for you? And when you run the race, run the race with the destination already assured because you have received me and I have received you.” Isn’t that a good thing? It’s something when the race is already fixed!

February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNE^XION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Qualified to Run”

Psalm 30:1-12; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Mark 1:40-45

Pastor James H. Lee

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

February 15, 2015—Transfiguration Sunday

I know, we’ve got to go up, go down, and go through some tough situations; but at the end, right when you pass through, it’s glory. It’s Glory! And to be with him, and even as he prayed that prayer so that those who would remain, when it is time for them to leave, that they would come and they would be where he is, and that’s our destination. That’s where we’re called to go. And I’m going to let you know, there may be some things that you’re not qualified for here on this side of glory; but on the other side of glory, oh yes, the crown of righteousness is already yours. Amen!

As we work through the sermon, I want us to think about “Compassion,” “Cleansing,” and “Choices.”

Compassion: ¹*I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me.* ²*O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.* ³*O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. (Psalm 30:1-3)*

You hear the compassion coming powerfully from the psalmist as he cries out to extol the Lord. Sometimes we want to get out of our suffering so quickly that we forget what it was like to be in it and then to come out of it. The psalmist says he goes through the whole process and gets to a place where he is able to rejoice in the confidence of a God who has compassion. Our God has compassion. Over and over and over again, God forgives. God gives chance after chance after chance....Even the God of the Old Testament again and again shows compassion. Even in the ugliness of Revelation there is still compassion and grace. Compassion is shown. When the leper is there and comes before Jesus, he says, “If you choose to, you can heal me.” And it says that Jesus shows compassion. The Greek word for showing compassion illustrates a sound or gesture that Jesus makes. The sound is like “Uuugh” or a grunt coming out of Jesus. They are not really sure why. Some would say the grunt is because the leper is calling on him again, again, and again. To show compassion requires Jesus to get past himself and not say “I keep cleansing or healing you. When are you going to get it?” Or there’s that grunt when you know there’s a force, there’s a system, there are things that happen that keep perpetually binding up people and families, and you say, “I’m tired of it!” Or Jesus could be grunting at leprosy, this disease devastating this leper and so many others, who were outcast.

Lepers would have been in a colony. To prevent others from becoming ceremonially unclean by touching them, lepers would have to warn people of their condition by saying, “Unclean, unclean.” Jesus could have grunted in response to a system that wouldn’t solve a problem. It wouldn’t transform or liberate people. The system and people in it would protect their positions or status. They would let things remain the way they are----status quo, laissez faire. But yet Jesus has compassion. There’s a call for us to model our Master, having compassion. I know we can easily get “compassion fatigue.” You’re not called to be Christ or have a Christ complex; but I want to invite us not to harden our hearts. There are some times when I have to roll down the window and give, not because the other person has a need, but it’s because I have a need. Because I’ve gotten my heart a little hardened to what I can’t do and still realize, “You know what, Lord, you can. You can.” And so the act of compassion is not for them, it’s for me. And the way God is, God will make what is from me for them. And then we can continue to live out our core value, “Blessed to be a blessing.”

February 21, 2015



NCFA CONNEXION!

Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Qualified to Run”

Psalm 30:1-12; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Mark 1:40-45

Pastor James H. Lee

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

February 15, 2015—Transfiguration Sunday

Cleansing

The cleansing is a powerful piece because when Jesus heals the leper, he tells him to go and show himself to the priest. That would have been the way that the priest can now declare that he was clean, and that having been declared that he was clean, he could now be a part of society. Otherwise, he was still an outcast, one saying “Unclean, unclean, unclean.” There are those who don’t have a skin disease who found themselves walking around saying, “Unclean, Unclean.... I made a mistake then; I made a mistake, and God can’t forgive me. God can’t forgive me. You see why I am here? I made this mistake, and this is God’s judgment. This is why I’m here—for this reason...for that reason...and it ever lingers over me. Unclean, unclean, unclean.”

And I know we don’t like talking about blood, and some have differentiated between what does it mean for “atonement”; and I need us to understand he gave his life once and for all, and he’s never going back to the cross again. That blood was shed for the payment of our sin. There was a cleansing that took place, and in **Mark**, Mark wants to remind us that Jesus has authority; all the way through these last couple of readings, these pericopes, he’s reminded us Jesus has authority...authority over life, authority over death, authority over things above and below. And it’s something when you recognize his authority in your life that transforms you in ways you would have never thought. And sometimes that cleansing is not just for what’s on the outside, it’s for what’s on the inside. Oh, to have the Lord cleanse your heart from brokenness, cleanse your heart from pain that you’ve experienced, cleanse your heart from relationships that have hurt you, cleanse your heart from experiences with people, whose faces you see again and again. A cleansing. A cleansing for the times when you are a victim and you get to be made a victim again, or then a villain. “If you only had, it never would’ve.” Cleansing, cleansing.

Go show yourself to the priest. “But wait a minute, I know I have to do something to get this cleansing, right? I know I should do something—let me give you some money.” No. Jesus didn’t make him do a thing because he had already done the right thing when he came to Jesus and recognized his authority, his power, all at once.

Now if we had read the Old Testament reading, it would have had a ruler named Naaman who had come to Elijah the prophet, and he just told him to go wash in the dirty river, dip himself seven times.... And the brother was offended! How much are we offended when someone would tell us, “If you really want to be cleansed, if you really want to be liberated, forgive.” How dare you! You don’t know what he did to me. You don’t know what she did to me. Would you rather pay the money or pay with health issues, because we’re holding onto some stuff? Is it easier to dip seven times in some dirty water to be made whole and to be cleansed, or is it better to hold onto it and carry it with you? Go and show. Oh, and by the way, when you do, don’t tell anybody. You’re going to see it over and over in the gospel of **Mark**. Every time Jesus says don’t tell anyone, what do they do? They tell it. You know what, Jesus, there’s a lesson I need to learn. ’Cuz every preacher tells folks, “We need to go and share the Good News. We need to let folks know that God loves them and they’re forgiven.” And yet folks stay within the four walls. We say, “I don’t know what to say.” “They may ask me a question I don’t know.” “Maybe you ought to keep the news to yourself....Don’t tell anybody they’re loved. Don’t tell anybody they’re forgiven. Let’s hold the gospel and not share it.”

Choices:

We all have choices. The choice that we see evident in the Psalm deals with his prosperity. The psalmist said, “I shall never be moved.”⁷ By your favor, O Lord, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed.” Sometimes in our prosperity we choose to relish in it and fail to recognize that God made it possible for us. It isn’t until we are in trouble or fail to sense God’s presence that we realize that how reliant we are upon the God. It is then that the psalmist is moved to prayer and asks,

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“Qualified to Run”

Psalm 30:1-12; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Mark 1:40-45

Pastor James H. Lee

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin

February 15, 2015—Transfiguration Sunday

⁹“What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? ¹⁰Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!” ¹¹You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, ¹²so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.”

¹⁰Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!” ¹¹You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, ¹²so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

The psalmist chooses praise God and not to be silent. The psalmist chooses to give thanks to God regardless of his circumstances. It is hard when you’d rather be a mourner than a rejoicer. Because the pain is what we know. The liberty is what we don’t know. To break that cycle? Oh, my God, I find joy when I’m with some other folks. I know I talked a couple months ago about the “testiphony,” but I do love the testimonies. I love when people try to out-tell you about the goodness of the Lord. Because we’re so good at telling the bad stuff—“The Lord didn’t do this,” and “The Lord didn’t do that.” “If God did this, then why would God not?” Instead of saying, “No, God did. And God is doing. And I’m thankful to God for that.” The choice.

The choice was that the leper had a choice to listen to Jesus or not. Guess what? He didn’t. He went around telling everyone, and because he did, everyone came running to Jesus. At one point that’s good, because we want everybody to run to Jesus. But it limited the capacity in which Jesus could minister. You see, there are times when people want to run from miracle to miracle, from revival to revival, from pinnacle to pinnacle. I’m going to let you know, we’ve got to come down off the mountain.

This is Transfiguration Sunday, when Jesus brought the folks and they were on the mountaintop. Peter saw Moses, saw the prophet, and knew that Jesus was the fulfillment of the law, and he said, “Let’s make some tabernacles, we could stay up here!” No, we have got to come on down. He was trying to move them again from a concept of miracle to miracle so that you can live. Having faith means I’ve got to learn how to live when I’m up and when I’m down. Up, Down; Joy, Sorrow; Pain, Despair, Doubt, Distraught, Hopeful; Faithful, Faithless—every extreme—and choosing still to say, “Yes, Lord, yes to your will, yes to your way; oh Lord, with your help I will obey.”

Then the last choice, the choice that came from Paul. Paul begins to remind us about a race; you’re on a race, and I’m on a race, and our destination has already been chosen. You see, somebody else may have disqualified you, but God says, “I have qualified those whom this world disqualifies.” And so now you need to run. I want to let you know, if you’re running track, you’ve got to run in your lane...run in your lane.

What are your gifts? What are your passions? What are your joys? You may say, “Well, James, why are you asking me that?” Because you are not called to run someone else’s race. You’re called to your race. You’re not called to exercise someone else’s gifts. You’re called to exercise your gifts, your passions; and when you do, you make a choice to say, “God, I value what you have poured out in me.” You will not allow anyone outside of you to devalue that gift, and you won’t allow yourself to devalue the gift. You know we do that sometimes, don’t you? You tell God “Thank you.” Let’s do it together: Lord, thank you for the gifts you have sown in me. Lord, help me appreciate what you have gifted me to do. Lord, help me to appreciate what you have gifted me to do. Lord, help me to not listen to other people but to listen to you.” It’s a choice.

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Now, I know you all believe I don't know how to say "No." And I do. I say no to more than folks think I say no to. But I also want you to know if you have the disease of people-pleasing which keeps you from saying no, that every "Yes" is a "No." Pause. For every Yes is a No. So you will not please someone by saying Yes. You will disappoint someone by saying Yes. And you will disappoint someone by saying No. So every Yes is a No. You need to ask God to help you make the best choice out of many goods. A Yes to church seven days a week can mean No to family seven days a week. Amen.

That's why I push for us to do what we're going to do on Sunday, and on either Tuesday or Wednesday....I want us to be intentional about the time we spend here so that we can go home and practice what it is that we've learned here. That's the best discipling. We can read as many books as we want; but until we live out what we have learned, it's just tickling our ears and stimulating our brains. Paul says that the athlete disciplines him or herself. That's what we're called to do: Discipline ourselves, disciple ourselves, in ways of reading, praying, saying "No," maybe hitting the snooze button twice and then getting up and doing a little something.

As we get ready for this Lenten season, it's going to be a time of discipline. And I've asked us to decide: Are we going to take away or are we going to add to? I'm going to try to drink a little less Coke and a little more water. Find what it is that you can choose to do that will help you during this season. I want to also let you know that the moment you say what it is you won't do, you will start to crave it like you never did before. There's something in our bodies that reacts when somebody or something says we can't have something, and we think, "I've gotta have it!" In choosing, you'll have life, and you'll have it more abundantly. Choose to continue to run this race, knowing that you're not going to be disqualified but that you've got a prize, you've got a crown of righteousness on the other side, Amen?!

Compassion: There's compassion in the *Psalms* as the Lord ministered to the psalmist, and the response is praise and gratitude. Compassion in the gospel as Jesus ministers to a leper, an outsider, to let you know you're on the inside.

Cleansing: God declares that we are clean because of Jesus. Jesus cleanses the leper and tells him to go show himself to the priest so that he can be declared clean and restored to society. Part of the cleansing being the leper's reality is that he recognized Jesus' authority. 40A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." How many of us have an entitlement mentality and are angry if God doesn't act according to our plans. The leper was humble and the Lord cleansed him.

Choices: We get to choose how we will respond to God and respond to life. We get to choose whether to minister or to look the other way, to choose to discipline ourselves and run our race. I want you to run your race because you know when your gifts are shining and you're excelling; and then guess which way our church goes? FORWARD! Our church rises up! We're blessed when you're blessed. It's just a byproduct. And where did God call you? Did God call you over there to another church? No, God called you here to this church, so we need you here, walking in your giftedness; but it's a choice that only you get to make because this is a volunteer opportunity.

Let us pray:

Lord, we thank you, we praise you. Thank you for your Word. Thank you for a congregation where, God, I can share things you have placed in my heart, not that I do not value my theological education, but that I can pastor the people that you have placed under my care as an undershepherd, those whom I love, whose heart I hear, who I desire like you desire to excel, to prosper, even as their soul prospers in Christ. Lord, keep reminding us of your love, keep cleansing us of our pain, keep giving us hope to get up each day and join others in the race so that we may be ready when you call us from this side of glory to the next, when we can be in your presence and wear our robe and wear our crown and rejoice in you. It's in Christ's holy name we pray. Amen.



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