

Pastoral REFLECTIONS

December 24, 2023

Gift Exchange

MERRY CHRISTMAS to you all!! So glad you decided to join us this Sunday for a birthday celebration of Christ.

A gentleman called me years ago and with urgency asked for me to come to the hospital because his pregnant wife could die within the next few hours. As I made my way there, I called others to join me so we could all work together to support the family and pray. Arriving, the gentleman quickly approached me and said I may have to decide between my wife and child. They already had three children so it was excruciating. He said I hope my wife will not wake up right now, even though we need to decide this together, because she is going to immediately, without a second thought, let the child live. He went on to say, "that is just the kind of woman she is." He knew his wife would choose her children first without a second thought.

The birth of Christ was not a second thought (Genesis 3:15; as soon as Adam signed, salvation was guaranteed) no matter how humiliating it would be for the Lord God who gloriously reigns over all (Colossians 1:15-18). To come from heaven to earth to a poor family; no place to lay His head (John 9:58), a holy God, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, to die on a Roman cross (the lowest way to die) with thieves on both sides. It did not matter how low He must go to win us back to God because what was foremost is 'God so loves the world.....' (John 3:16). His love is representative of His nature (1 John 4:7-8); an innate reaction to our need represents who He is; "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails....." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8; NASB) It did not matter the sacrifice, the poverty He experienced, and the rejection He encountered or the lack of respect from Jewish leaders (Matthew 12:22-29). What matters to God is one thing and that is to provide a way to win mankind back to Himself no matter the cost. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13).

Christmas is a vivid portrayal of God's commitment to do whatever it takes to have a genuine relationship with us. The question is what are we doing with the gift and do we offer our lives back to Him as a gift?

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!



UPCOMING Events



VOLUNTEER WITH THE URBAN MISSIONS TEAM TOMORROW ON CHRISTMAS DAY
The Urban Missions Team will be praying, serving, and distributing Packs of Love donations to the unhoused population in downtown Houston tomorrow on Christmas day. Meet at LWFC at 8AM to volunteer. For more information contact Natividad Smith at nds_smith@yahoo.com



HOLIDAY SHOP AT THE LWFC BOOKSTORE!
Get ahead of your Holiday Shopping. Visit the Living Word Bookstore for the perfect gift for family and friends! From books, to jewelry, to Living Word apparel and other items, the Bookstore has so many gift ideas for this season. **VISIT THE BOOKSTORE TODAY!**



The Church Fast

Join us as our church fasts and prays together beginning Jan. 7th through Jan. 12th.



Prayer Revival

Join us each night at 7PM, Jan. 9th-11th, for our annual Prayer Revival with guest speaker, Pastor Rodney Maiden. This will be 3 evenings of praise and prayer celebrating 30 years of God's faithfulness. See you there!



30TH ANNIVERSARY ADS/SPONSORSHIPS
Have you been blessed by Living Word? You can purchase a congratulatory ad in our 30th Anniversary program booklet. Share your congratulations, greetings, thanks, and well wishes for this momentous occasion. Purchase an Ad at <https://tinyurl.com/30thAnniversaryAds>
Also consider becoming a sponsor for the 30th Anniversary Gala. Sign up to become a sponsor at <https://tinyurl.com/30thAnniversarySponsor>
For more information visit the Anniversary Team in the Connection Center on Sundays.



ORDER OF WORSHIP

Announcements

Communion

Visitor's Welcome

Worship In Giving

Offering boxes are located at all perimeters under crosses

Special Music

"Love...So Amazing"
Philippians 2:5-8

Click "Sermon Notes" on the Website

Call to Discipleship
Please remain seated at this time

Benediction



Children are now required to check-in upon arrival. Please report to the registration desk located in the children's wing.

Infants—6th grade



Love ... So Amazing
Philippians 2:5-8

A. Not Self-Willed (vs. 5-6):

- 1. We are commanded to continuously understand the mindset that Christ has and had, so that we learn His affection for us.
- 2. Even though Christ, before coming to earth, lived in the very nature of who God is, and with all the privileges that come from being supreme in heaven, for the purposes of saving mankind, He did not desire to remain in heaven and as a result did not neglect the needs of mankind.
- 3. Jesus' existence on earth was fashioned, inside and out, with characteristics that no one else has ever had (begotten).
- 4. Christ laid aside His authority (Colossians 1:15-18), not His divinity and chose, once and for all, purposefully elected, on His own initiative, to not preside in a manner that makes Him equal with God even though He is (John 10:18, 28-29)..
- 5. Christ did not view His decision to come under the authority of God as an act that changes His status or who He is in the God-head. He can attain His position of authority anytime He chose (John 10:18, 28-29).
- 6. To come forth in the form of a man means that Christ viewed Himself as coming under the headship of God. He accepted that His complete commitment is to execute God's will for mankind (the Garden of Gethsemane; Matthew 26:36-46) no matter the cost.

B. It Is Sacrificial (v. 7):

- 1. Christ on His own initiative, based on His own power, willfully, once and for all, gave up the display of His glory (on the Mount of Transfiguration He put it back on for a moment; Matthew 17:1-13), at His incarnation but did not give up His deity. This means He is completely committed, for the sake of God's salvific agenda, to function in the form as God-man
- 2. Jesus' existence on earth was fashioned (begotten), inside and out, so that He possessed all the characteristics of a person who recognized themselves as being owned by God to completely surrender to fulfilling His Master's will (John 4:34; 6:38-39).
- 3. God, through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), created out of nothing the incarnation of Christ. Christ in the womb of Mary was shaped by the Holy Spirit to resemble, without diminishing His deity, all that mankind is.

C. Selfless (v. 8):

- 1. "His deity did not make Him more nor less than a Man, and His humanity did not make Him less than absolute deity." His outward appearance was completely that of a man but it did not change inwardly His deity.
- 2. Christ on His own initiative, decisively decided, to give up the manifestation of His glory, give up divine privileges, become a man who functions completely surrendered to God's authority, take on the appearance of a man, even though He knew it meant a life of poverty (Matthew 8:20).
- 3. Christ totally believed in all that God desired to accomplish to provide salvation to mankind (John 3:16), it did not matter if it included the death on a Roman cross.
- 4. Even though Christ knew His death would have been a shameful, humiliating, horrifying process and the lowest way a person could be executed, a Roman cross, He still fulfilled God's will to love us.
- 5. Christ submitted to die on a Romans cross because Christ, for the sake of His Father's agenda, emptied Himself of His glory and became the God- Man that He is, for the purposes of God died the lowest lows forms of death and between two thieves, because God so loved the world.

LIVING WORD
FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

30TH ANNIVERSARY
30 Years of Faithfulness

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BY LIVING WORD?

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LIVING WORD
FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

JAN. 9-11, 2024 AT 7 PM

Prayer Revival

Featuring Pastor Rodney Maiden

For More Information Contact
Pastor Duane Lawrence at
dlawrence@lwfellowshipchurch.org



PRAYER REQUESTS

Grieving: The family of Wanda Turk, the Randolph family, the family of Eric Pickett, and Joella Howard & family.

Health and Healing: Lurlean Lane, Florence Wiggins, Retha Amos, Cici Sharpe, Margaret Baptiste, Eunice Johnson, Jeffrey McQueen, Eric White, Pat Crawford, Lisa Roberts, Birdie Williams, Jon Heard, Rutha Patrick, Betty Goode, Latifah Brown, Tanisha Collins, Eric Prichett, Rufus Hadnot, Pat James, Kevin Carey, Lori Lee, Jessie Austin, Sherri Love, Elizabeth Clark, Betty Cunningham, Kathryn Ford-Cheatham, Clara Williams, Dorothy Price, Anthony Thomas, Beverly Austin, Joshua Williams, Elizabeth Bean, Ruby Hunter, Patsy Gatterson, Joyce Newsome, Arleatha Housley, and Patrina Johnson.

Merry Christmas

Love...
So Amazing

Philippians 2:5-8



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