



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH FAIRDALE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2024



The holiday season is a time of year that can't just "sneak up" on someone. It would be difficult to miss all the signs of Christmas that pop up after (or sometimes before!) Thanksgiving. Despite this, we may not be fully ready to focus on and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. The classic Christmas song "Joy to the World" instructs "every heart [to] prepare Him room" and our church has several things available to help prepare room in our hearts to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

We begin our church celebration of Christmas well before Christmas Day every year by incorporating Advent into our schedule. Each Sunday leading up to December 25, we light an Advent candle and celebrate

what it represents. We will sing songs that focus on the coming of Christ and the hope, peace, love, and joy that He brings.

During our Sunday evening service on December 8, our Ekids will be presenting a special program, *The Christmas Story: Jesus is the Same - Yesterday, Today, and Forever!* Please come support our kid's ministry and be reminded about the true meaning of Christmas!

On December 14, we look forward to our annual Ladies Christmas Culture Exchange. All ladies are invited to enjoy brunch and fellowship while learning about and praying for God's work in the lives of three of our church families called to spread the gospel among the nations. Along with

this, we are collecting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering during December and January. All donations go directly to support international mission work. We hope that this focus on God's work among the nations will help you remember that Jesus came for all people.

Finally on Christmas Eve, we will have our traditional Candlelight Service at 6:00 PM. The candlelight service is designed to focus our minds on the Lord before the celebration of Christmas Day. Through all the events, programs, and activities of the Christmas season, may you make every effort to prepare room for the Savior who has come - to know Him, to worship Him, and to love Him even more!

Salvation from God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Josh Wamble | Pastor

During the Advent season, our focus is (rightly) on Jesus. We read about prophecies given to Mary and Joseph, we see angelic appearances, we read about Jesus' miraculous conception and birth. In the shadow of all of this is the purpose of Jesus' coming - He will be named Jesus because he will save his people from their sin. Sometimes we might get the wrong idea that Jesus loves us and is gracious toward us in contrast to the Father who is upset with us and angry over our sins. Some people have the idea that Jesus came to convince the Father to save us.

This is absolutely not the case! Our salvation is rooted in the Father's heart as much as in Jesus'.

Salvation is the Father's Plan

The cross is not a reaction or a response to anything that happened to Jesus after his birth. The cross was planned by God from before the foundations of creation. The Father sent the Son to be our savior. His whole reason for coming was to die for our sins, and he was sent on this mission by God the Father.

Salvation is Founded on the Father's Grace and Mercy

The Father sent the Son to be our savior when we were dead in our sins and powerless to do anything about it. There is no transaction here—no deals being made. Jesus' work for our salvation is fully, completely, totally and only because of God's grace and mercy toward us.

Salvation is Rooted in the Father's Love

God doesn't love us because of Jesus' death on the cross. The opposite is true. Jesus was sent to die for us because the Father already loved us. Salvation is a result of God's love not a cause of His love.

Salvation is Accomplished by God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Just like the work of creation and revelation and so much more, the work of salvation is a trinitarian work. We can rightly say that we are saved by God the Father, we are saved by Jesus, or we are saved by the Holy Spirit. The Father plans and calls and sends. The Son comes and obeys and lives a perfect life and dies in our place and overcomes death through the resurrection. The Holy Spirit convicts of sins and gives us new life and empowers us to live a life of faith and repentance and obedience.

As we celebrate and enjoy this Advent season, let's focus on Jesus and the work that he has accomplished for us. But let us also remember that salvation is a work of the trinity and that as true as it is that Jesus came to save his people from their sins, it is equally true that the Father sent Jesus to save his people from their sins and the Holy Spirit awakens people to trust in the work that Jesus has done to save his people from their sins.

Truth from Song: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Andrew Crawford | Minister of Music

If I were to survey, over the course of church history, the deep well of hymns and spiritual songs, two names would emerge, not only as my personal favorites but also perhaps as the greatest of all time: Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley. I do not presume to partake in a Jordan/Lebron-esque discussion of who the greatest hymn writer of all time is. Rather, it seems fitting that since last Christmas I highlighted a hymn of Isaac Watts (Joy to the World) in my newsletter, this year I should choose a Charles Wesley hymn: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.”

It is a great shame that one of the richest Christological songs is reduced to a mere four weeks of Advent. Nevertheless, I want to highlight three theological themes about the incarnation of Christ that are found in this song: Christ is the blessing to all nations, Christ embodies the fullness of God, and Christ is the firstborn of the resurrection.

***Joyful, All ye Nations Rise,
Join the Triumph of the Skies***

Haggai 2:7-9 says “*And I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the desirable things of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,*” says Yahweh of hosts. *‘The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,’ declares Yahweh of hosts. ‘The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,’ says Yahweh of hosts, ‘and in this place I will give peace,’ declares Yahweh of hosts.*” While Haggai is writing about the second temple, this passage is often understood through a Christological lens. Particularly, that Christ is the desire of every nation. He is the one who brings light and life to all peoples. Christ is the

fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham that through his offspring, all nations would be blessed (Gen. 22:18). The glory of the covenant that Christ ushers in for all nations is even greater than the first covenant between God and Israel.

***Veiled in Flesh the Godhead Be,
Hail the Incarnate Deity***

The word “Emmanuel” means “God with us.” The beauty of the incarnation is that God took on the form of flesh and dwelt among us. Colossians 2:9 teaches us that “in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily.” The incarnate Christ is both fully God and fully man - being of the same essence and nature of God the father.

***Mild He Lays His Glory By,
Born that Man No More May Die***

Philippians 2:5-11 reveals the humility of Christ in the incarnation - that even though he was in the form of God, he humbled himself to the point of death. His death and resurrection is what brings eternal life to those who believe. Colossians 1:18 refers to Christ as the “firstborn from among the dead,” meaning that Christ is the first to rise in victory over death, and in His resurrection all who believe will be resurrected. In his book, *The Death of Christ*, John Owen writes, “By death Christ did deliver us from death, and that actually, so far as that the elect are said to die and rise with him.”

When we sing this Christmas, let’s not just sing for the sake of tradition, carols, or nostalgia - but let us sing of the rich theological treasures of the incarnate Christ.