

The Vine

I am the vine; you are the branches...John 15:5

A publication of Valley Falls Christian Church

December 2014

CHRISTMAS TRAVELERS

Christmas recalls the story of travelers propelled by the unhurried rhythm of their animals:

We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

Why did these wisemen undertake such a journey?

A tall astronomer, advisor to the Persian king, springs from his midnight vigil in the palace courtyard. "Casper, come! Look along the rod I've sighted toward the constellation of the Jews." Casper peers into the blackness. "Do you see it? That brilliant star is new tonight! It must signify the birth of a mighty king."

A soft whistle escapes him as he spots it. "There it is!" He's talking rapidly now. "I've read ancient Hebrew scriptures which tell of this ruler's star." Rising, he announces, "We must see him. We must go!"

Traversing the caravan routes of Persia, Babylon, and Syria for 1,200 miles, they ford broad rivers, pass ancient cities, cross barren deserts. Three months they trek westward, day after day, "following yonder star."

In Jerusalem they inquire, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him." Worship? So the Babe is more than a king!

Now they follow the shining star till it rests over a simple Bethlehem home. At early dawn neighbors gather to watch the richly-robed travelers dismount. Joseph meets them at the door.

"We've come to see the child, the King." The wise men fall before the Babe, faces to the floor, royal counselors doing homage, worshipping the Christ child. Outside, their servants unload weighty chests from the camels and set gifts before the King. Heavy fragrances of frankincense and myrrh to fill the room as one by one the boxes are opened.

A touch of the boy-child's tiny fingers, a final longing look, and the men rise to go. Camel bells soon fade in the brisk morning air.

We, too, travel at Christmas, visiting family and friends. Yet, like the wisemen, the most important journey we make these hectic holidays is to draw nigh Jesus himself with the gift of our hearts.

The Marks of a True Christian, Part 4

Romans 12:9-13 (ESV) *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*

This is the final installment in which I expound on the marks of a true Christian. In this series, we have talked about what the true Christian looks like on the outside, for want of a better description. The first article touted our Christian service with the focus being mostly within the body of believers, but also in the community.

The second edition referenced giving and generosity. The third offering pointed out that a true Christian is thankful.

This month I write about the love of the Christian. If the Christian life is a package of abundant generosity, enthusiastic service and an attitude of thanksgiving in our hopes, trials and prayers, then the wrapping paper, ribbon and bow that hold it all together is our love.

Romans 12:9-10 (ESV) *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

First we read that **love should be genuine**. How do we do that? First, realize that love is not an emotion that changes with the environment. Love is an act of the will. We must love others even when we do not 'feel' like it. We determine that we will love someone and decide our proper actions based on that relationship.

Genuine love means you love without hypocrisy. You don't love to make yourself look good nor do you love to get someone to do something for you. A fake outward sign of love will hurt the other person and is really hatred (or in the very least, selfishness) in disguise.

Abhor what is evil. Hold fast to what is good. We should be repulsed by anything wicked that goes against God. This refers to actions and ideologies, to philosophies. We must still love the person. Jesus is full of grace and truth. Grace toward individuals but truth about their actions and whether or not someone is truly in His kingdom. You don't call it loving to allow someone to continue behavior that harms them physically without at least

telling them. Nor is it love to allow someone to ignorantly continue in sin that separates them from God. They have to make a choice, but we are called to show them the good, life-affirming alternative presented in the Bible. We must gently and lovingly present truth when the Holy Spirit gives us opportunity.

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Love is not self-seeking. In humility, consider others better than yourselves and give them honor. Love puts other's needs (spiritual, physical, emotional) above our own. If everyone tried to outdo one another in showing love and affection with no concern for self – we would all be loved sufficiently.

Why is love a mark of a true Christian? Because Christians are to be like Christ, and Christ loved us before we even knew what love was. **1 John 4:19 (ESV)** *We love because he first loved us.*

The love of God came to earth in the birth of Jesus. That was God's plan from the beginning. The right time, the right culture, the right people in Joseph and Mary all come together to make God's perfect gift of love available to all. **Galatians 4:4-5 (ESV)** *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. Through Christ we are brought into the family of God, and it wouldn't have been possible without the very first Christmas over 2000 years ago.*

John 3:16 (ESV) *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

Loved. Gave. Those two words are eternally linked. You cannot love unless you are willing to give. Completely, self-sacrificially, unconditionally give of yourself.

Jesus was not concerned about what he would get; he just gave and gave and gave. He gave to the point that he sacrificed his very life. He gave his life for his church and for each person individually.

(continued on the back page)

Recipe Swap

CREAM CHEESE CHRISTMAS COOKIES

- 1 c. butter, softened
- 8 oz. cream cheese
- 1 c. sugar
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 2 ½ c. flour
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ c. chopped pecans
- ½ c. green sugar crystals
- ½ c. red sugar crystals
- 1 c. pecan halves

Cream together the butter and cream cheese. Add sugar and vanilla; beat until light and fluffy. Combine the flour and salt; gradually add to creamed mixture, beating until well blended. Stir in chopped pecans. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 15 minutes. On four sheets of aluminum foil, shape dough into four 6 inch rolls, 1 ½ inches in diameter. Wrap each roll tightly in foil and refrigerate overnight. Preheat oven to 325*. Line cookie sheets with foil. Remove rolls of dough from refrigerator one at a time. Coat each roll with red or green sugar crystals; cut dough into ¼ inch slices. Place on prepared cookie sheets; top each cookie with a pecan half. Bake for 15-18 minutes or until bottom of cookie is lightly browned when lifted.

PRAYER REQUESTS

OUR SOLDIERS: Curtis Mitchell, Brandon Miller, Ryan Myers, Luke Cummings, Greg Morales, Ryan Kirby, Zach Stiffler, Josh Lackey, Dan Cook, Rick Heuertz, Steve Heinen, Ammin Spencer, Gates Kobuszewski, Leslie Bolz, Austin Everhart, Noe Garza, Brandon Hammons, Ruth Churchill, Jason Cherry, Aaron Cook

Cooper Taliaferro has shingles in his eye again.

Carolyn Starkey- upcoming surgery
The building project; God's vision and provision. Unity within the body as we proceed.

COPIES OF THE SERMONS ARE AVAILABLE ON CD UPON REQUEST: If you would like a copy please see Mike. You can also listen to them online at www.valleyfallsc.org.

POCKET CHANGE FOR PROGRESS: This will be a special offering every 3rd Sunday during church. The money will be split between Mission Lake Camp and the School Supply Giveaway Fund

RECYCLING: We have a recycling box beside the copier in the office.

COLLECTING FOR ALPHA: Alpha Christian Children's Home can use Campbell soup UPC labels and lids, Best Choice UPC labels and General Mills Box Top Symbols coupons (Box Tops for Education.) We will have a box in the hallway outside the nursery under the mailboxes.

SISTERS OF STRENGTH (S.O.S.)-

(Mission Statement: We are a lifeline to glorify God through service to the church and community and to build personal relationships with our Christian Sisters.)

We will not be having our regular meeting in December.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

- 1 Shirley Harris
- 4 Allison Thomas
- 5 Elijah Phillips
- 8 Rachel Arnold
- 11 Kacie Welborn
- 14 Chuck Toy
- 15 Mike & Gina Kirby (1984)
- 16 Bob & Linda Beightel (1963)
- 18 Janese (Farr) Temm
Jeff Starkey
Bud & Norma Bryant (1960)
Ray & Rhonda Mitchell (1982)
- 21 Dan & Janet Strang
- 23 Tom Brown
- 24 Marty Gatzmeyer
Ty Gatzmeyer
- 26 CHARLES WATKINS
- 28 Sean & Jennifer Guffey
Chad Spencer
- 29 Morgan Diane Jean Turner
- 30 Jacob & Kari Mitchell (2005)
- 31 Grayson Haag

(Names in CAPS in Mission Field)

Serving in DECEMBER

Congregational Prayer:

David Grove

Scripture Readers:

7-Carson- Matthew 27:45-50

14- Farr- John 20:10-18

21-Starkey- 1 John 4: 1-6

28-Durand/Matt- Acts 2:37-41

Nursery:

7-Debbie Gerstner/Libby

14-Linda Durand/Caitlyn

21-Glee Hosler

28-Nancy Gatzmeyer/Nik

Greeters/Ushers:

7-Carson

14- Farr

21- Starkey

28- Durand

Lord's Supper Preparation:

7- Carson

14- Farr

21- Starkey

28- Durand

Communion Table:

7-Stan, Jay

Steve Carson, Kevin Gatzmeyer

14- Jay, Stan

Dennis Tichenor, Curt Gatzmeyer

21- Stan, Jay

Clint Thomas, Matt Branam

28- Jay, Stan

Ray Mitchell, Jarret Mitchell

Musicians

Worship Leader: Mike Kirby

Organ: Leah Brown

Piano: Donetta Farr

Guitar: Mike Kirby, Clint Thomas

Mandolin: Erin Thomas

Church Offerings

Oct.26-\$2010

Nov.2-\$1603

Nov.9-\$2603

Nov.16-\$1603

Nov.23-\$2157

Our expenses average \$1500 a week.

Valley Falls Christian Church has a website!!

www.valleyfallsc.org

MEN'S BREAKFAST: There will be no men's breakfast in December.

BRIDAL SHOWER: There will be a bridal shower for Jarret and Aisha Sat. Dec. 6th at 11:00 AM. They are registered at Target and J.C. Penney. All the ladies are invited. Please bring a salad.

LADIES CHRISTMAS PARTY: this will be on Sunday Dec. 7th at 3:00 PM. We still need a hostess for this.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM: The kids will practice at 9:00 AM on Dec. 14th, then on Dec. 21st at 9:00 AM and the program will follow at 10:00 AM.

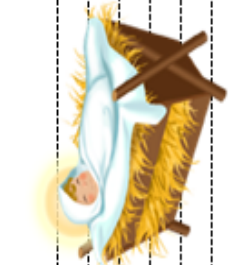






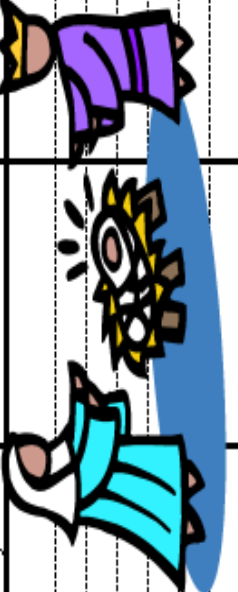
FOOD BOXES: We will do the food boxes after church on Dec. 14th. We need wrapped shoe boxes, and food items to put in them. Suggested items: fruit, homebaked goodies, individually wrapped, pudding, jello, teas, crackers, applesauce, cocoa etc. We will need some help delivering boxes.

CAROLING: Christmas caroling will be on Dec. 14th at 6:00 PM. Dress appropriately. Bring a snack for afterward.

ALL CHURCH CHRISTMAS PARTY: Game night at church on Dec.17th at 6:00 PM. Bring games and favorite snacks. We may even have some crafts for the children. (see Donetta to help out.)

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE: The Christmas eve service will be on Dec. 24th at 7:00 PM.

COUNT YOUR KIDS IN: The count your kids in will be using our church on Dec. 12th from 8:00 AM to 1:30 PM

2014				DECEMBER				2014			
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY					
	1	2	3	4	5	6					
			6:15 PM Worship Practice 7:00 PM Bible Study 8:00 PM Elders			 Bridal Shower for Jarret and Aisha at 11:00:00AM at church					
7	8	9	10	11	12	13					
2:00 PM Service at Midland Ladies Christmas Party at 3:00 PM 5:00 PM Youth Group			6:15 PM Worship Practice 7:00 PM Bible Study		Count your kid in screening 						
14	15	16	17	18	19	20					
9:00 AM Kids practice for program 11:15 AM food boxes 6:00 PM christmas caroling 5:00 PM Youth Group			 All church christmas party at 6:00 PM								
21	22	23	24	25	26	27					
 9:00 AM Kids practice for program 10:00 AM Christmas Program 5:00 PM Youth Group Christmas Party			 Christmas Day								
28	29	30	31								
5:00 PM Youth Group			 New Years Eve								

Valley Falls Christian Church

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Phone: 785-945-6757
Email: office@valleyfallsc.org
On the web: www.valleyfallsc.org
Find us on Facebook!

Mike Kirby, Pastor

You are welcome to join us!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Sunday Service times:

Bible Study (all ages) – 9:00 AM
Worship – 10:00 AM
Youth Group – 5:00 PM

Midweek Bible Study:

Wednesday 7:00 PM

(Marks of a True Christian continued)

It is Christmas – the season of love. Love openly displayed in the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. From his conception to his crucifixion and on into eternity, we have seen the love of Jesus Christ. Let us live as Christ lived; let us give like Christ gave. Let others look at us and see the love of Christ reflected in our lives.

*Love came down at Christmas;
Love all lovely Love divine.
Love was born at Christmas;
Star and angel gave the sign.
So worship we the Father,
Love incarnate Love divine.
Worship we our Jesus,
In this holy time (Rosseti).*

*And they'll know we are Christians by our love,
by our love. Yes they'll know we are
Christians by our love (Scholtes).*

Mike

