



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS  
BAPTIST CHURCH**

*New Year,  
Same Lord*

Daily Scripture Readings for

December 26 - January 9

## **I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY!**

### **Monday, December 27 - John 1:1-5**

One of the wisest professors I ever had was Dr. Hulitt Gloer. Dr. Gloer was one of my preaching professors while at Truett Seminary. He would begin every one of his classes with a ten minute devotion/sermon for the class. It was a blessing to hear the heart and soul of this saint of a professor.

There are several aspects of my preaching that I attribute to Dr. Gloer, but one, in particular, is the sermon that I will preach on Sunday. Dr. Gloer lamented the fact that we do not preach the entire story of God regularly enough. We choose a passage from here and there every Sunday. If your Bible Study or Pastor is decent, he or she will take you through the entire Bible eventually. Dr. Gloer challenged us young pastors to tell the story of God once a year. I took that message to heart. I devote the first Sunday (or close to it) of the year to preaching the story of God, the entirety of the Bible, from “In the beginning...” (Gen. 1:1) to “the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen” (Rev. 22:21).

We begin this journey this week, not with the creation story, but with a message even before creation. Too often, in my opinion, when we consider the God who created the heavens and the earth, we only think of God the Father. We unconsciously think that God the Father was alone as a separate god. Then came God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. John 1:1-5 clearly says that this type of thinking is wrong. The Word (Jesus) was with God (the Father) in the beginning. The Word was God.

The story of God is a story of the Trinity. It is a story of three persons, one God, from the beginning. The story of the Bible begins and ends with God. God is found throughout the Scripture. This is His story. And the most amazing part of His story is that God decides to allow us to play a supporting role. Will you play the supporting role as God gave you?

## **Tuesday, December 28 - Genesis 12:1-4**

The story of God with the people of Israel begins with God calling Abram to have a special relationship with Him. The request that God makes of Abram is hard enough on the surface: leave your family and go to a place I will show you. Yes, God tells Abram that God will bless him, but we have all had that call of God in our life at one point or another to leave a place we were comfortable. It's hard to say yes in that moment. Now, we must realize that Abram is 75 years old. I don't know what to do with the ages of men and women in Genesis in general, but in particular, the Bible says that Abram lived to be 175 years old (Gen. 25:7). Do with that as you want. I can't explain it. Despite that aside, Abram is 75 years old when God calls him. By the time most people are 75, they are ready to settle down, not go on a journey as God is calling Abram to go on. This is a difficult task God is proposing to Abram.

However, we have not even covered the most difficult part! When we hear from the voice of God, we can turn to Scripture to determine if it is truly God's will. We have a community of fellow believers to confide in and discern God's will. Abram had neither. There aren't other God followers around. Abram can't go read the story of Abraham in the Bible. He's living it! Abram's relationship with God must be built completely on faith. That journey begins when God calls him to go with God to a land that He will show Abram.

What would you do if God called you to follow Him like he called Abram? I know what we say we would do but contemplate that question today. Will you go, uproot yourself, move away from your family, even at the age of 75 if that's what the Lord calls you to do? You are living in the story of God. Are you living out the role He has for you?

## **Wednesday, December 29 - Joshua 3:1-17**

We started with God, three in one, on Monday. We moved to the story of God with the family of Abram yesterday. Today, the story moves along as God

with the nation of Israel. It is a monumental day (literally!) for the nation of Israel as they cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land in Joshua 3. They have been in the wilderness for 40 years, enslaved in Egypt 400 years before that. Now, finally, the people of Israel which began as the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob become a people in the land which God showed Abram many centuries ago.

Part of God's story with His people is the Lord's protection for His people. Notice what happens when the Ark of the Covenant, the physical manifestation of God on earth, comes to the Jordan River. It stops flowing, gathering in a heap, so that the people can cross on dry land. This is what the Lord does for all of His people, then, now, and forever. Maybe not in a physical way such as he did in Joshua 3 or when the Israelites were escaping from Egypt, but he does protect his people.

The ultimate way he does this, of course, is by being self-sacrificial on the cross. Left on our own, we would all face condemnation when judged for our sin. But God provides a way for us to be justified, to be seen as righteous. God protects us from the punishment for our own sin by taking the punishment Himself.

God doesn't have to include any of us in His story, but God chooses to allow us to be part of his family as long as we accept Him as King and Lord of our life. Just as God chose Abraham, God chooses anyone who wants to be chosen. Pray for those who have not become part of God's family. Pray that they allow for God to choose them.

### **Thursday, December 30 - Nehemiah 8:1-12**

Up to today, the story of God has included more and more people. Today, however, is a reset. It is a remnant of people who devote themselves to God. What has happened between Joshua and Nehemiah is continued disobedience by the people of Israel toward God. Because of this, God punishes Israel by

allowing neighboring kingdoms to overtake the Promised Land. The Kingdom of Israel as it is seen in the Old Testament is forever gone because of their disobedience. The people are allowed to return, but the nation is never again as it used to be.

While it is lamentable that people have chosen to remain outside of the family of God, God's story moves on with those who want to have a relationship with God. Nehemiah 8 is a recommitment of God's people to God. They hear the Law for the first time in their lives; they commit to living as God desires, and they celebrate how God has provided for them.

As we play our part in the story of God, we all have a decision to make. Do you commit to being with God or not? We must also remember something the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 10:14: "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?" We have a role in the story of God to accept God as our Lord and King. We also have a role to proclaim and explain the message to those who need help. Notice in Nehemiah 8:7 there are 13 people mentioned who are among the crowd hearing Ezra read the Law. Then they interpret and explain to the hearers. We must go among the people and help the people understand the meaning of God's Word. Who can you go among and explain the gospel to?

### **Friday, December 31 - Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20**

The story of God and his people finds its climax in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Forty days after Jesus rises from the dead, he ascends into heaven to take his rightful place with the Father, just as he was "in the beginning."

The climax of a story is the most important part. It is the moment which the rest of the story is leading to. Every story after the climax is basically tying up loose ends. How can I say that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the

climax of the story when we have so much of the Bible after the Gospels and then 2000 years (and counting) of Christian history afterward? Simply put, the story of God and His people is clear once Jesus rises from the dead. Jesus is the Son of God, the long awaited Messiah. His death and resurrection conquers sin and death forever. The war has been won. All there is left to do is accept the salvation which Jesus offers so that we are included in the Kingdom of God. The church works toward the goal of bringing Christ's salvation to the world. We go and make disciples of all nations and we take comfort in knowing that God is always with us.

The people of God got smaller as of yesterday in Nehemiah. Today, in some respects the people of God grow fewer but also the people of God grow more. The way to God no longer goes through Israel or the Temple, but it goes through Jesus. This allows for anyone who wants to be a child of God to become one, but it also means Israel must accept Jesus as the Messiah. The Kingdom of God is inclusive and exclusive. Anyone who wants to come in can come in, but they must come through Jesus. He truly is "the way, truth, and life. No one comes to the Father except through [Him]" (John 14:6)

### **Saturday, January 1 - Acts 1:6-11**

Happy New Year! May you remember that while this is a new year, we worship the same Lord. Even when the calendar changes, God does not.

I include two versions of the Ascension this week not to focus on the event but the words of Jesus as recorded by Matthew and Luke. Here in Acts, Luke records the mission of the disciples. When God sends the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity which has been with God and is God since the beginning, the disciples are to be witnesses for Christ to all parts of the world.

The Book of Acts is when the church begins to play a role in the story of God. The story starts with God, three in one, transitions to a story of God and Abram's family, then moves to God and Israel, then to Jesus' birth, death,

resurrection, and ascension, then the church with the help of the Holy Spirit, being the hands and feet of God on earth.

As we embark on the year 2022, College Heights must focus on our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth. We look to be witnesses for Christ in Cleburne and our surrounding area (Jerusalem and Judea). We look to do our part of being the church around the world (the ends of the earth) by sending financial assistance and providing through the Cooperative Program. But you've probably noticed I've left out Samaria. Samaritans were the people the Jews did not like. They were neighbors who Israel wanted nothing to do with. We must be intentional about being witnesses for Christ to people who are near us but not like us. What can College Heights Baptist Church do in 2022 to reach our Samaria? Pray that question and wait on God to respond.

### **Sunday, January 2 - Revelation 21:1-4**

We hear the story of God in worship this morning. We read the end of the story in Revelation 21:1-4. What a beautiful picture of the new heaven and earth which awaits the people of the Kingdom of God. It is this picture which helps us persevere and endure the trials and tragedies of this life. We await a day where there is no more sorrow or tears. I think I speak for all of us when I repeat the words of John "Come, Lord Jesus, Come."

### **WHY DOES THE CHURCH EXIST?**

#### **Monday, January 3 - John 4:19-26 - Worship**

Why does the church exist? The focus of the first few months of the year will be the main emphases of the Christian life. Over the course of January - March, we will study in depth the habits of Bible study and prayer. This week, we take a bird's eye view of the above question by focusing on different elements of church life every day.

In the middle of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, the topic of worship is addressed. The Samaritans and Jews of the first century worshipped in different places. Ever since the kingdom was divided after Solomon, the two groups of people worshipped in different places. Perceiving that Jesus was a prophet, she asks “who is right? The Samaritans or the Jews? Where should people worship?” The answer that Jesus gives is essentially: a day is coming and is now here when where you worship doesn’t matter, but who you worship is of infinite importance. Jesus tells the woman, “those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The church exists to worship God. The people of God exist to give God glory and to be more like God every day. Our worship is not about where, but it is about who: who do you worship?

We are to worship God in spirit and truth. What I think this means is we are to not just “get it over with” or “punch the time clock” to get credit for going to church. Our worship must be authentic, a true representation of who we are. We allow the Holy Spirit to envelope our lives so that we can be remade in the image of God. We do not worship in body and action alone but in spirit and truth.

When you come to worship, are you fully present or are you distracted? Are you present to worship God or “be at church?” The church exists to worship in spirit and truth. Are you fulfilling your purpose in life?

## **Tuesday, January 4 - Ephesians 4:11-13 - Ministry**

Why does the church exist? To equip one another to be the hands and feet of Christ. There’s a phrase (not original to me) that I say a lot when speaking to people: ministry is messy. The church exists to minister to one another and to others, and that can get messy. There are some who are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers and together we build one another up so that the Kingdom of God can advance and people are taken care of.

But doing that work is messy. If you are helping people, necessarily the people who you are helping need help. They have needs which take time, effort, and money to meet. The needs that need to be met cannot be met on your schedule, but need to be taken care of as they happen. Sure, you can schedule a food giveaway for a particular Saturday, but who is to say that the people you are trying to help are hungry then? You may need to be inconvenienced by inviting them to dinner on a random Thursday night. The church exists to equip one another to be ready for that possibility.

The church exists to serve others as Jesus served others. He fed people when they needed feeding; he healed people when they needed healing. He taught people when they came to learn; he sacrificed for others because they needed a Savior.

### **Wednesday, January 5 - Romans 10:10-17 - Evangelism**

Why does the church exist? To tell others about Jesus. The most concise message of the gospel is found in Romans 10:13: “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But then it continues by saying how are people to call on the Lord if they don’t know and how are they to know if no one goes and how is one to go if no one sends them.

The church, the body of Christ, exists to send one another out into the world to tell the world that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” So how can we, as a church, help one another in evangelism? What help do you need when it comes to sharing Christ with people? Take some time to write down some items you need help with. Think also of ways you are proficient in evangelism. How can you help other people in the body of Christ share Christ with others? Take the rest of your devotional time to consider these two questions and pray for God to reveal to you how we, the church, can work together to tell our community about Jesus.

## **Thursday, January 6 - Acts 8:26-40 - Discipleship**

It was not until I wrote the date that I realized what this devotion would be about. One year ago was one of the darkest days in American History. And for too many people who were at the Capitol that day, they thought they were doing “the Lord’s work.” Some “prayed” when they made it into the House Chambers, “praising God” thinking this violence was the Lord’s will. How did so many Christians go astray?

The Ethiopian has a piercing reply to Philip after Philip asks if he understands what he is reading: “How can I,” the Ethiopian replies, “ unless someone guides me?” Why does the church exist? To disciple those who profess faith in Christ so that they live according to the words and teachings of Jesus. The church lacks discipleship today. I’m not talking about meeting one another on Sunday evenings as discipleship, but I’m talking about apprenticeship. I’m talking about opening up our lives to one another to help one another grow in the faith. I’m talking about mentoring one another and guiding people in the study of Scripture.

The church has abdicated the discipleship portion of the Great Commission. We are to make disciples, not converts. Disciples know the teachings of Jesus and follow them. The church exists to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything Jesus has taught us. Our people are not being disciplined in the church. They are being disciplined by radio and tv hosts, social media influencers, and other forms of propaganda. If we don’t disciple the people in the pews, they will be disciplined by someone else. Let us pray that we get this right and take the time to make disciples.

## **Friday, January 7 - Proverbs 27:17 - Fellowship**

*Christianity Today* produced a podcast last fall called “The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill.” It tells the story of a church in Seattle, which grows into a megachurch, then has satellite churches all around the country, then dies as

quickly as it grew. The story (and the church) centered around one of the founding pastors, Mark Driscoll. When pinpointing the problem which led to the downfall of Driscoll and the church, the podcast host repeatedly says “his celebrity grew quicker than this character.” In another quote from one of the interviews, a former staff member at Mars Hill relays a conversation he had with Driscoll. The former staff member confronted Driscoll about decisions he had made and said “you need to find someone, a mentor or someone, to submit to.” Driscoll’s response was “I can’t submit to anyone whose church is smaller than mine.”

I have watched and read about too many ministers who leave the ministry because of transgressions and improper actions. Too many Christians act with a non-Christian character and it leads to their downfall. What most of these Christians have in common is that they isolate themselves from other Christians. When you don’t have other Christians around you to give accountability, when you don’t have other Christians around you to be an example of how to live a Christian life, you find yourself in trouble. When you don’t submit to another Christian because you think “I’m better than them” you’ve got a problem.

This problem is remedied by intentional fellowship. Not a food and fun dinner party, but actual fellowship where you live out what Proverbs 27:17 tells us: “...one person sharpens the wits of another.” We must remain sharp because the Adversary is always ready to pounce. In nature, when wolves hunt their prey, they will watch the herd for days sometimes to wait for the right moment to make their move. When they go on the attack, they go after the weak or the alone. They will never try to attack an entire herd because one kick can kill the wolf. When elk and deer stay together and stay in the middle of the herd, they are safe from their adversary, the wolf.

When you and I stay together, we are able to work together to do great things. When we isolate ourselves, thinking ourselves better than one another, or that we don’t need each other, we are picked off one by one by Satan. Why does

the church exist? So that we can have fellowship and persevere and endure together.

### **Saturday, January 8 - 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 - Missions**

Why does the church exist? To fulfill the mission of the Lord. What is the mission of the Lord? I think Jesus sums it up nicely when he says “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. Second, love your neighbor as yourself.”

The mission of the Lord is bigger than any one individual, one church, or even one denomination. We are taught well by the churches in Macedonia in 2 Cor 8:1-7. Paul has been fundraising to collect an offering for the Jerusalem church who was being persecuted. The Macedonian churches gave “beyond their means” to help take care of fellow Christians who were in need.

We should not be forced to join the mission of the Lord, but we should want to continuously undertake this work as an act of love toward God and neighbor. Are you acting like the Macedonians? It tells us in verse 4 that they were “begging...for the privilege of sharing in this ministry...” When was the last time you “begged” to be part of the mission of God? Pray for the Spirit to possess you to be energized to do the work of the Lord. Pray that God gives you the Spirit of love for God and love for neighbor. Let that Spirit guide you to share in the ministry to the saints.

### **Sunday, January 9 - Psalm 118:19-29**