



The Branch NewsLETTER

"I am the vine, you are the branches" John 15:5

Volume 60/61

November & December 2024

Number 44/45

From Your Pastor's Heart

The holiday season is here and what a joyful time of the year it is! With Thanksgiving and Christmas time, true believers can truly rejoice. Within our homes and our church, our lives are filled with excitement and activities every day.

Thanksgiving gives us the opportunity to focus upon what we have to be thankful for and to remember also the thankfulness of the pilgrims that made up that first Thanksgiving. All of our blessings come from the Lord who truly blesses us beyond measure.

At Live Oak FBC, we will celebrate Thanksgiving on Sunday, November 24th following the morning service with a catered, traditional Thanksgiving meal. Donations will be received for the meal and everyone is asked to bring a desert as well. The recommended donation, per person, is \$15.00, however, all donations will be appreciated. We look forward to a great time of fellowship.

There will not be any services on Wednesday, November 27th.

Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus who is the author of our salvation. In celebration of Jesus' birth our church calendar is filled with a variety of activities that remind us of the true meaning of Christmas.

Wednesday, December 4th from 5:00 PM until 7:00 PM we will enjoy a time of decorating the church for Christmas. Along with this time of fellowship, we will also have vegetable beef soup and corn bread available for all of our helpers.

Sunday, December 15th, the choir will present their annual Christmas Cantata; This year's story through music is titled "Hope Awakes In Bethlehem", and will be a part of our morning worship service. We are grateful for all of their labors to make this time of worship and celebrating Jesus' birthday. Please bring some one with you to this Christmas celebration.

December 24th at 6:30 pm we will have our Annual Christmas Eve Service: The Christmas Story, Christmas Carols, Hand Bells, Candlelight... a wonderful, spirit filled evening.

There will not be any Wednesday evening services on December 25th or January 1st. Please have a wonderful Thanksgiving and Christmas season.

Pastor Cooper

NOVEMBER 2024

Church Life

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|-----|-------------------|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 Rummage Sale |
| 3 Daylight Savings Time Ends | 4 Scouts Meet | 5 Scouts Meet Election Day | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 Veterans Day Scouts Meet | 12 Scouts Meet | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 Samaritan's Purse Christmas Boxes Due | 18 Scouts Meet Newsletter Articles Due | 19 Scouts Meet | 20 Quilters 10:30 Stewardship Committee Meets 5:30 pm Church Conference | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 Stewardship/Thanksgiving Banquet after Worship | 25 Scouts Meet | 26 Scouts Meet | 27 No Services | 28 Thanksgiving Office Closed | 29 | 30 |

Happy Thanksgiving! God Bless You!

DECEMBER 2024

Church Life

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|--|--|-----|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 The Lord's Supper | 2 Scouts Meet <small>Lottie Moon Week of Prayer ...</small> | 3 | 4 Decorate the church for Christmas 5-7 | 5 | 6 | 7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day |
| 8 Lottie Moon Offering | 9 Scouts Meet | 10 | 11 <i>Quilter's Christmas Celebration</i> | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 <i>Christmas Cantata "Hope Awakes In Bethlehem"</i> | 16 Scouts Meet <i>Newsletter Articles Due</i> | 17 Scouts Meet | 18 Stewardship Committee Meet 5:30 pm Church Conference 6:30 pm | 19 | 20 SCOUT/LOFBC GIFT WRAPPING FUNDRAISER | 21 |
| 22 | 23 Scouts Meet | 24 No Scouts Christmas Eve Community Candlelight Service 6:30 pm | 25 Christmas Day Office Closed No Services | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 Scouts Meet | 31 Scouts Meet | 1 <i>New Year's Day</i> <i>No Services</i> | | | |

Merry Christmas! God Loves You!

אֵשֶׁת חַיִּיל

Eshet Chayil

As Christmas Day begins its approach, I reflect on the type of person I am regarding this precious Holiday. I can best be described as a person who keeps Christmas in my heart all the year through. I stay in wonder at the birth of Christ, His miraculous coming, and the purposes of God to show us His love by sending His only Son. I think of the far and deep reaching love of Jesus, of His influence, without which we would all perish. Even as a babe that influence was life changing to those he encountered. From the womb to the tomb, from His walk and His talk, He Is Lord, Master and King.

When teaching, I have always loved the use of analogies to bring home a point or objects to help recognize a truth. I had recently been thinking of my Father, Warren Redding. During the last few years of his life, I had the privilege of having a weekly Bible Study with him. One of the most poignant studies we ever shared was from the scripture in Proverbs 31:10. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." My father asked of me this question: "Why Rubies? Why not diamonds or some other gemstone?" The answer came in the form of the object itself, the ruby, AND in the answer as to Who we have in the scriptures that are our shining examples of a virtuous woman; one of the most important being Mary, the mother of Jesus.

First, the ruby. When light enters a ruby it is refracted, meaning it bends as it enters the gemstone, due to the density between air and the ruby crystal, causing the light to split into two beams because rubies are "double refractive" and this splitting combined with the absorption of certain wave lengths (mainly green light) results in the characteristic red color we see in a ruby. The specific way the light interacts with the facets of the cut stone further influences the brilliance and sparkle of the ruby.

We, in this analogy, are the rubies. Christ is the light of the world. As believers, when the light of Christ enters us we are able to truly see the depth and complexity of His love. The color and beauty of His nature is intensified and other people are, literally, able to "see red"...to see Christ, to see that it is His precious blood that atones for our sin and that He is to be glorified. A single light ray entering the gemstone splits into the two rays travelling at slightly different angles. When the light of Christ is in us, that light is also represented in the forms of the Father and the Holy Spirit. He, Christ, being bent and yielded to their work...all three members of the God Head at work in our lives. The Holy Trinity aglow in us. The cutting of the gemstone represents the molding and shaping of ourselves to Christ as we become more like Him.

So then, let's look to the characteristics of a virtuous woman as seen in the context of Proverbs 31. The key to understanding the character of a virtuous woman is in the Hebrew word chayil; which means "might", "bravery", or "success". Being a virtuous person is about letting God show himself through how you interact with your family, take care of your house, your mind-set toward the poor, and in helping your community prosper. And, instead of attributing your success and strength to your own efforts, you give glory to God and praise to Jesus for His sacrifice and work in you. Yet another example of the ruby analogy. Trustworthy, diligent, compassionate, prepared for the future, a good teacher, dedicated to family, the fear of the Lord, brave, generous, competent...are all characteristics of a virtuous person! In the case of Mary, the mother of Jesus, we see through her example deep faith, humility, obedience to God's will, and unwavering love for her son. Recall with me that she, when accepting God's plan, said "Let it be done to me according to your word." She was the first and longest disciple of Jesus! The term Eshet Chayil is generally translated as "Woman of Valor" but applies to all persons when we look at the intent of the heart. So, as we enter into this Season of Holidays, it is my hope we will have the mind-set of being a "ruby" in the sight of our Lord, a precious jewel for His crown and, too, the person of virtue he has called us to be, dedicated to His service, committed to His calling, and glorifying His name.

Lois Filleman