



Westover Reflections

January 2025

Williams' Wanderings

“We saw His star as it rose, and we have come to worship Him.”

Matthew 2:2

The dawning of a new year is causing me to ponder the old. More than a few of us may have turned the page of the old calendar with a sense of gratitude, **Auld Lang Syne** wistfulness, or with more than a few regrets, or even remorse for opportunities missed. For some, I know, the old year brought crushing sorrow; for others, incandescent joy.

I can't help but wonder how the mother of the Baby Jesus must have felt at having three rather important visitors come into her abode, bow down before the infant's crib, and offer priceless gifts.

Funny thing about gifts: We confess who we are in the giving of them. Consider the gifts you gave this past Christmas. What did they say about your feelings toward the recipient? What does the mind's eye-**the heart's faith**-see when you look upon the gift of the Child come from Heaven's throne?

Mary sees the Son of God, dependent upon her for the most basic of needs: a mother's milk. The eyes of faith see the Son of God in many forms. I suppose it is all based on one's need...our life-story. Mary sees Him as her Baby. The Magi see Him as a ruler-to-be, wrapped in swaddling clothes, someone still to honor with gifts galore. The thief on the Cross sees Him on the gibbet, the One with pierced hands. The centurion comes to see Him as life in death.

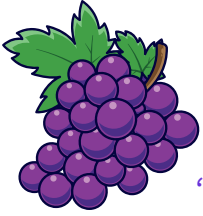
They recognize the power of God in the weakness of a young child...and as the Supreme Spirit as He breathed His last.

The Magi recognized the Word of God is a speechless baby-whatever the others confessed by their words, expressions, utterances, they confessed by the gifts they brought. The thief pronounces Him a king; the centurion sees both the Son of God and a human being. The gifts of the Magi declare all these.

So, I wondering what it is that you see. What do your gifts profess? I pray that the coming year brings a strength of witness that enables others to see in us the faith we profess.

Still in His Peace,
Pastor William





First Fruits of Worship

by Bruce Smith

Minister of Music

"Let Everything that Has Breath"

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!" Psalm 150:6

Why were we created? Is that a question you have heard before? We can easily think of all the secular reasons, right? – to be successful – to raise well adjusted children – to make a difference in the world... But in God's economy, (and after all He is our creator, is He not?) why did He create us?

The Bible sheds a great deal of light on this subject for us. The Psalms especially give us a glimpse of God's plan for us and the purpose of our life. Psalm 30 gives it to us pretty directly

"You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. LORD my God, I will praise you forever."

Psalm 30:11-12

The most significant word in those verses is the word "THAT" – which in our more modern English might also read "so that". Why did God turn our mourning into dancing? "So that" our hearts "may sing your praises". Everything God does on our behalf is "so that" we may fulfill our purpose in this life. To praise God!

So, why does God want us to praise Him? Is He on some universal, colossal ego trip? No! He created us to praise Him because we NEED to praise Him. Just like we need water, food, and rest to survive physically, we need to praise God to survive spiritually. So what happens within our spirit and the world around us when we praise Him?

First, praising God reminds us that He is God and we are not! When we give Him all of our attention and focus, we remove it from ourselves and thus recognize that He is the Lord of life and place

Him upon the throne. In our "selfie" culture of today, this is a challenge for us – but a necessary one. He deserves the attention and the credit for great things that happen in our life and in the world around us. And when things go wrong in our life and the world, turning to Him for direction and peace is what we are called to do.

"For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise." Psalm 47:7

Second, praising God gives us confidence and joy. Just like a coach gives the team a pep talk before the big game by encouraging the team of their capabilities – we, too, give ourselves confidence by boasting in the Lord's capabilities. When we declare His power, love, might, and miraculous plan for us, we embolden ourselves to face every situation in our lives.

"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." Psalm 43:5

Finally, praising God makes us evangelists to the world of the love and power of God. Someone is always watching us – particularly in the difficult times. And when the world sees the effects of a life of praise to God, it convinces them of His "realness" for them. Giving God credit for everything empowers us to speak the truth to others around us of God's goodness. This can literally change lives!

"He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him." Psalm 40:3

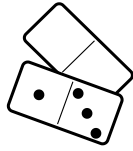
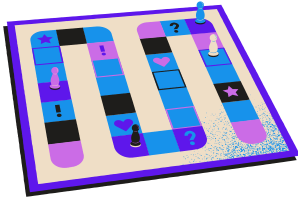
So, don't be embarrassed to give God the fervent praise He deserves! He actually created you to do just that. This is why the final psalm in the Bible concludes the chapter about using every instrument to give Him glory. But, He saves the best instrument for last –

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!"

Game Night

There will be no movie night this month. Instead, we invite you to Westover family game night! We have some fun things planned, so come join us on Friday, January 17 in the Fellowship Hall. Dinner will be provided, so the time has been changed to 6:30 PM. Bring a friend! If you have a favorite game you would like to share, feel free to bring that, too.

LET'S PLAY!



*A great big thank you
for the Christmas love
gift! I love my
Westover family.
Susan Denny*

Thoughts from your newsletter person

The start of a new year is a great time to reflect on Westover's blessings over the past year. We've had so many fellowship opportunities with movie nights, covered dish meals, yard sale, UMM bbq and service projects. We've crafted, made blankets and cards. We've sent blankets and flood buckets to Western NC and carry-on bags to Peru with Crosswaves. We've hosted children for our Easter egg hunt, VBS, trunk or treat and Christmas party. We've beautified our campus with benches as well a lending library and blessings box. We have new lights in the education building. It's been quite a busy year! Thank you to everyone who made gave of their time and talents to make these things possible. We're looking forward to more chances for fellowship and His service in 2025.



Congratulations and best wishes!

We are so happy to share the news that three of Westover's young men have recently gotten engaged! We are thankful for the gift of love that God's has blessed you with. We pray His blessings for you,

Max Danskin and Ercilia Hernandez,
Sam Danskin and Victoria Riege and
Justin Gibson and Tempest Thomas.



Adult Sunday School

We expect to finish our study of 2 Peter by mid January, We've decided to complete our study of the books of the New Testament. Currently we plan to start the study of Matthew on January 19. There's a seat for you in our class, come learn with us!

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United Methodist Men will be hosting a Fat Tuesday pancake dinner on March 4. More details coming soon.

UWF and Craft Circle

United Women of Faith and Craft Circle will not meet in January, but will resume in February. Watch your February newsletter for more information. See you then!

Blessing box

A huge thank you to Ed Worsley for building our beautiful new blessing box! We can tell the box is already being used by those who need it. Please consider helping us restock with non-perishable food next time you are shopping.

Happy January birthday to :

6 Fran McDonald
7 Der Ksor
9 Adam Holt
14 Aaron Jones
14 Joni Medlin
17 Andrew Mitchell
27 Max Danskin
30 Hayleigh Denny



If you have feedback or information for the newsletter, please contact Sharron Gibson at sharron.gibson9194@gmail.com.