



Owl Creek Baptist Church

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OUR VISION: To be a continuing light in the world's darkness, inspiring people to love God and to love others.

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News and Announcements...

❖ **Blessed 12th Sunday after Pentecost!** This Sunday, Pastor Chapman will continue his series of sermons on the Old Testament prophets:

Sermon: "Does God Really Care?"
Scripture: Hosea 11:1-11

❖ **Oneta Debolt** celebrated her 80th birthday with nearly all of her local family members and other close friends on hand (a crowd of over 20!) on Sunday, August 16th at Tom and Oneta's home. Four generations of the Debolt family were present to eat a sumptuous meal (which Oneta did *not* have to prepare, thanks to the efforts of daughter, Peg Carpenter!) topped off with a beautiful chocolate birthday cake. Pastor Chapman was made to explain to the gathering exactly what he meant when he accused Oneta of becoming an "octogenarian"!



❖ **We continue our outdoor worship** at 10:00 a.m. In the event of rain prior to the service, members of the Executive Board will phone each household (by about 9:00 a.m.) to give notice of cancellation. If rain happens to occur during the service, participants will be invited to enter the sanctuary (masks and social distancing will be required) for the remainder of the service. Those who do not wish to join indoors are free to leave at that point.

❖ **The Buckeye Mission and Ministry Offering** is promoted and received in August at Owl Creek Baptist Church. The 2020 theme is "Sharing God's Hope for All Generations—Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministries." This offering provides significant support for the ministries of American Baptist Churches of Ohio (ABC Ohio).

❖ **The ABC Ohio Annual Gathering**, to be held on October 6th, will look very different this year. There will be a meeting at the Crown Plaza Hotel North in Columbus but social distancing and masks will be required. There will be no shared meals. As well, the meeting will be live-streamed via the internet. Stay tuned for details!

❖ **Send us your news items!** Phone or send an email to Bonnie Kohl or Pastor Chapman, telling us about the news events of your lives.

Let us lift up in prayer...



Our own beloved nation... That peace and civility would attend the national discourse in the midst of an election season, and that we would remember that we are all Americans together.

Our beloved nation, part two... That patience would reign in our hearts as we await medical solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the general public place trust in our doctors, nurses, hospitals and lab techs and local administrators who are sacrificing so much for our good.

Jerry Skeen, who will undergo another epidural treatment at the end of this month in the hope of relieving his continuous back pain.

Martha Robey and **Phyllis Rockwell**, our two retirement home residents, being kept safe within their living environments.

The Pastoral Search Committee, continuing their work with interviews and discernment, seeking the best candidate for Owl Creek's next pastor.



TEXT: John 19:16-37 (The crucifixion of Jesus)

The objective of crucifixion involved more than simply carrying out the sentence of capital punishment for convicted criminals. The ghastly spectacle was designed to make a public statement, a statement of terror. Its obscenity lay in the fact that this method of punishment delivered a slow, torturous death, in which the victim's agony was on full display, sometimes for up to four. Crucifixion was carried out to humiliate the victim and his entire family. I warn my readers...this was not a pretty picture.

Condemned criminals were made to carry the heavy, transverse portion of their crosses down public roads, as beasts of burden. Arriving at the place of execution, the victim was stripped naked, laid down upon the beam, and nailed through the wrists to the rough timber. His shoulders were typically tied with ropes to the beam. The beam was then hoisted, with victim attached, and placed atop a tall, sturdy post already dug into the ground, making a capital T-shaped structure. Then, the victim's ankles were nailed to the vertical beam, with legs slightly bent at the knees. No vital organs were damaged while placing a victim on a cross to allow maximum time for suffering. The hot sun produced skin burns, and cold nights offered deathly chills. Of course, the victim could not care for his bodily needs, and insects added to the misery. There were often taunts from passersby. Trapped on the cross, a victim suffered waves of cramps in his back and shoulders. He would try to push up on the nails in his ankles or pull from his shoulders to help himself breathe, all in vain. Thus, some died of suffocation, while others succumbed to exposure, sheer exhaustion, or dehydration. The only certainty was that it all happened very slowly, in utter public disgrace.

The Romans did not invent this form of capital punishment, but they "improved" upon that which they borrowed from other cultures. Crucifixion had been practiced by the Phoenicians to the north and the Persians far to the east, for several centuries. It must be reported that the Jewish Hasmonean king, Alexander Jannaeus, a notoriously brutal ruler, crucified 800 of his fellow Jews (mostly members of the Pharisees!) who had rebelled against him during the Jewish civil war around 65 BC. The Romans themselves reserved crucifixion for non-citizens—slaves, foreigners and other peoples who were absorbed into the empire. Only about a quarter of those who lived under the rule of the Caesars were fully recognized as citizens. Thus, Jesus was to be executed this way whereas the Apostle Paul, a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37-38; 22:25-28), would have been beheaded. The brutality of Roman jurisprudence was witnessed in the liberality with which they employed crucifixion even for the crime of theft. Crucifixions became a familiar sight in Judea as well as Galilee. For the Romans sometimes crucified thousands at a time, primarily as a deterrence against rebellion.

The crucifixion of Jesus, therefore, was part of a common occurrence in the empire. His was one among tens of thousands who suffered the same for violating the precious *Pax*

Romana (the "Peace of Rome"). The Jewish establishment, which did not have the authority to carry out the death penalty itself (John 18:31b), sought the death of Jesus because of blasphemy (John 19:7). Jesus was a threat to them because he posed as divine authority, in spite of the fact that he always deferred to the authority of the "heavenly Father" as opposed to his own (John 5:19, 30; 8:28). But the Roman governor, Pilate, placed a sign above Jesus' head that read, "The king of the Jews," evidence that the official charge settled on some form of high treason. Jesus was a threat to Rome because he posed as an earthly opponent of Caesar, in spite of the fact that he insisted that his kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18:33-36). Jesus thus suffered crucifixion based upon false charges, as evil and corrupt minds determined his fate, not law.

Jesus did not last long upon the cross. Crucified on a Thursday he was dead by Friday, no doubt due to the prior flogging and torture he received which severely weakened his body. But Jesus lived long enough to make remarks to his mother and to the "beloved disciple" (who was most likely John the disciple, the brother of James and author of this gospel). His tender words from the cross (John 19:25-27) united Mary and John in the newly emerging family of the Spirit. Luke's gospel shares a brief account (23:39-43) of Jesus' promise to the man crucified next to him that he would be with Jesus in paradise. We thus have two instances of Jesus ministering right up to his dying moment.

There are four critical components to the phenomenon of Jesus of Nazareth, each of which is vitally important to the truth upon which our faith is based. *First* in importance is the very advent of Jesus. His incarnation and his "dwelling among us" (John 1:14) demonstrated God's intention to foster an intimate love with the human community he had created. *Secondly*, the teaching of Jesus, supported by his good works, provides instructions for the church to carry out God's intentions through the power of the "word of Christ" (John 1:1; 15:1-11). *Thirdly*, although the death of Jesus was viewed by Roman and Jewish power-holders as an end to his influence, it proved to be the ultimate liberating force as Jesus defied (John 19:11) and conquered evil itself (John 12:31-33), atoning for human sin. *Fourthly*, it was in the resurrection of Jesus that God's triumph was fully manifest, as it transitioned Jesus' identity from that of Messiah and "son of God" to that of Lord, the sovereign of all creation and history. His was the authority to grant eternal life, then, to us (John 1:12; 3:16; 17:2-3).

Of these four critical components to Jesus' life, the one we meditate upon the least is his death. It comes off as far too ghastly to us modern Americans, for whom death has become the greatest taboo. We love to speak of his birth at Christmas, and his resurrection at Easter, and his teaching is the stuff of sermons and Sunday School lessons. But we do not dwell very often upon his death. However, each of these components is of equal importance to the very foundation of our faith. Reflecting upon Jesus' horrible death is therefore not just some morbid exercise. It is a way to grasp the depths to which God would go to demonstrate his love for and devotion to us. Jesus' love was great enough to endure that nearly unbelievable suffering. What greater expression of genuine love is there? All four gospels detail Jesus' death. We are therefore meant to embrace it. For by embracing it, and by actually proclaiming his death, we receive the promise of eternal life (1 Corinthians 11:26).