

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Anyone who is in Christ has been made a new creation! The old life has gone, a new life has come! Friends, trust the Good News of the Gospel, in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and made new! Alleluia!

*** GLORIA PATRI**

Blue Hymnal # 579

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>

*** SHARE THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

One: Peace be with you!

All: **And also with you!**

One: As God's forgiven people, share the peace of Christ with each other.

CHILDREN'S TIME

[Praise Ye the Lord](#)

Hear the Word of God

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Gracious God, we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth. Make us hungry for this heavenly food, that it may nourish us today in the ways of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, the bread of heaven. Amen

FIRST READING

[Isaiah 42: 1-9](#)

SECOND READING

[Psalms 29](#)

CHORAL ANTHEM

["Traveller's Tales"](#)

Choir

NEW TESTAMENT READING

[Acts 10: 34-43](#)

GOSPEL READING

[Matthew 3: 13-17](#)

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"Johnny Appleseed Christianity"
Written by The Rev Charles Hoffacker

Elder Fred Archer

The Epiphany Season is a time in the church year when we focus on many epiphanies, shining forth of the glory of Christ, among them his manifestation to Gentiles as an infant, the time at Cana when he supplied wine for a wedding, and his mountaintop transfiguration shortly before his death.

On this first Sunday of the season, we recall yet another epiphany, how Jesus declared his solidarity with suffering, sinful humanity by accepting baptism at the hands of John—not because he needed it, but because we needed him to be baptized for us.

This baptism is a manifestation, not only of Christ but of the Trinity. Jesus is there in the river. The Spirit descends on him like a bird. The Father's voice announces from heaven, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." God reveals glory at this baptism—big time.

God also looks to reveal glory through each of us, and to do so big time. Did you know that? To each of us at the font, the Father says, "This is my Child, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

In our baptism, God affirms us and commissions us and tells us to be fruitful. Go forth into the world and minister even as Jesus did. Make a difference. Let us consider two forms that this big-time ministry, this revelation of glory, can assume, whether we speak of persons or communities.

One form is Jack and the Beanstalk Christianity. Seeds are planted that seem to grow overnight, like the gigantic plant in the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk. Sometimes in the Christian life, wonders do happen suddenly.

But far more often, God's glory is manifested through our ministries in a form we can call Johnny Appleseed Christianity, named for one of the most popular figures in American folklore.

Do you remember Johnny Appleseed? Here is how folklorist Richard Dorson describes him: "Barefoot he wanders through the frontier forests of Ohio and Indiana, looking for likely places to plant his nurseries, clad in a mushpot hat and a coffeesack garment.

"Johnny never married, because his youthful love went west and died before he found her. He himself dies reading the Bible while apple blossoms swirl to the ground outside his door.

"A modern Saint Francis of Assisi, Johnny lived to befriend humanity and replenish the earth. The Midwest owes her lavish orchards to Johnny, and more than one starving pioneer blessed him on finding apple trees in the wilderness."

There really *was* a Johnny Appleseed. He was born John Chapman in Massachusetts in 1774 and died near Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1845. He spent his adult years traveling through what was then the wilderness of Ohio and Indiana, planting apple trees for future generations.

The historical Johnny Appleseed was not quite the romantic figure who appears in American folklore and popular culture. Although his contemporaries found his appearance odd, and he traveled alone, he became a fairly successful businessman, accumulating twenty-two parcels of land amounting to some twelve hundred acres. He did not plant the very first apple orchards in what was then called the West. Nor was he solitary by nature, but spent much of his time with his half-sister and her family.

Yet he had this in common with his legendary namesake: he planted countless apple trees and he kept moving west as the frontier receded. Both the legend and the man represented sweet fertility and the fecundity of the broad American wilderness. Johnny Appleseed has gained a secure and happy place in the American imagination.

Some years ago, Richard Donovan suggested Johnny Appleseed as an image for how we Christians live our lives.

So how is Johnny Appleseed Christianity practiced? We keep moving, always with our eye on the changing frontier. We plant seeds, lots of them. At the end of the day, the scene doesn't look all that different. But at the end of the month, the year, the decade, it may be that something is growing, something worthwhile: an apple tree that may bear fruit well into the future. Planting apple trees is an exercise in hope.

That is what we are here to do, most of the time at least. Keep moving. Plant seeds. Do not expect Jack's enormous beanstalk, but honor the big picture, the one that stretches through the generations. Tarfon, a rabbi from a long time ago, makes this same point when he advises us, "It is not up to you to complete the task. Nevertheless, you are not free to desist from it."

Much of the time, maybe all the time, ours will be Johnny Appleseed Christianity. We keep moving with the frontier, planting seeds whenever and wherever we can. We realize that God gives growth over time and others will enjoy the harvest, even if we do not. This Johnny Appleseed Christianity offers its own glory to God, for every apple is a miracle.

We find the Johnny Appleseed approach in how Jesus functioned. This is apparent throughout the gospels, but especially in his death and resurrection. There, Jesus is not so much the planter as he is the seed, broken and buried in the earth, awaiting the third day, the resurrection morning. He dies and is buried, even as we are in baptism, and we rise together with him.

We Christians are the fruit of Jesus the apple tree. We become Johnny Appleseeds in turn, scattering seeds so that there will be more trees, more apples. Thus, Christ multiplies and bears even more abundant fruit over the course of years. The land bears a surprising harvest.

What does this require? The apple seeds available to us and the places to plant them are limited only by our courage and our imagination. Plantings occur in the personal lives of family members, friends, and people we barely know. Plantings occur in neighborhoods, communities, and institutions. They happen as people from across the globe join together in worthwhile enterprises, day by day.

God's imagination is great. Consider all that exists throughout the vast canyons of space. Consider all life forms in their diversity and splendor. Consider especially how the Holy One entrusts to us the planting of seeds to bring forth good fruit. That this happens, that it happens even today, bears witness to the greatness, the audacity of the divine imagination. Not only Jesus is entrusted with seed to scatter across the broad earth – that task, that opportunity, is entrusted to us as well.

May we go forth, then, as people who leave the font and always keep moving with the frontier, people who plant seeds at every opportunity, and anticipate a harvest too big for our time alone. This too will amount to an epiphany, a shining forth of divine glory.

* **HYMN**

**"Brightest and Best of the
Stars of the Morning"**

Blue Hymnal #67

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wOnHRW0nX0>

Respond in Love and Service

OUR AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS AND HYMN OF INTERCESSION

Let us long for, and pray for, the light of God in Christ Jesus to drive back the darkness of human error, misery and evil.

Where people are lost and jaded in contemporary consumerism, where addiction to alcohol, other drugs, and gambling is causing ruin, we pray for the hope of epiphany.

Where dictators rule without mercy or wisdom, where democracies are manipulated by the rich and powerful, we pray for the justice of epiphany.

Where youth see no prospect in the future and so contemplate suicide, where the long-term unemployed exist without hope, we pray for the light of epiphany.

Where the church dodges its evangelical mission, where the church evades its social and political responsibility, we pray for the truth of epiphany.

Where the terminally ill face death fearfully, where people without purpose face life despairingly, we pray for the love of epiphany.

Most holy Friend, to you all souls are precious; please take from our eyes the scales of prejudice or indifference, that we may increasingly share your awareness of the neglected and abused people, and do all we can to make your love real to them. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen!**

— Bruce Prewer

***HYMN FOR OUR NATION**

"Heal Our Land"

Red Hymnal #800

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CHORAL AMEN

Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUsRdkXcOkQ>

PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Please, continue to support the life and work of Crestholme. You can mail your tithes, pledges, and offerings to...

CPC
PO Box 23919.
SA TX 78223-0901

Or you can save them and gather them until we meet again. Thank you! Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice

*** DOXOLOGY**

Blue Hymnal #592

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyg6-htOthU>

*** PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Loving God, We offer you our gold: The morning on the wing The glow on the faces of children at play The shining moments that brighten our lives.

We offer you our frankincense: The quiet reassurance of familiar things The grace of care and friendship The blessing of bread and our heart's yearning in prayer.

We offer you our myrrh: The ashes of our dreams
The bitter taste of our failures
The shadows through which we stumble.

Transform our inadequate gifts, that they may be an acceptable sacrifice of praise, and transform our lives to reflect more deeply your justice and joy
In the life of the world.
Amen.

* **CLOSING HYMN**

"God of Our Life"

Blue Hymnal #275

* **BENEDICTION**

Go in peace; love and care for one another in the name of Christ; and may the Spirit of God which filled John and Jesus, fill your hearts, souls and minds; may the power of God which upheld them, strengthen you for each day; and may the love of God which directed their every action be your guiding light and your shining star, both now and forevermore. **Amen**

. **The End of Today's Worship Service – The Beginning of Service
Announcements**

Welcome to worship with us this morning! We're glad that you're here! If you do not have a church home, we invite you to become a part of our compassionate church family... ask Carlos or an Elder about meaningful participation and membership!

Next Sunday our service will be led by Rev. Laurie Palmer, the stated clerk of Mission Presbytery.

Weekly Calendar

Tue & Thur	09:30-11:00 AM	Food Pantry
TBD	TBD	Clothes Closet
Sunday	10:00 AM	Sunday School
Sunday	11:00 Am	Worship Service

Holy Communion is observed the First Sunday of each month.

Crestholme Presbyterian Church Officers

Session

<u>Class of 2023</u>	<u>Class of 2024</u>	<u>Class of 2025</u>
Katie Lamb	Netsy Williamson	Dave Dobbs

Clerk of the Session: Dick Crist
Church Treasurer: Fred Archer

Trustees

<u>Class of 2023</u>	<u>Class of 2024</u>	<u>Class of 2025</u>
Tommy Rudwick	Penny Christoff	Jack Cobb

Crestholme Presbyterian Church Staff

Stated Supply Minister	Vacant
Pulpit Supply Preachers	Dr. Carlos Baladez
	Elder Fred Archer
Choir Director	Robin Bernhard
Organist	Cathie Owen
Secretary/Coordinator	Vacant/Katie Lamb

Membership in the Presbyterian Church is open to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Every member and officer will be more than happy to visit with you about salvation by faith in Jesus and membership at Crestholme.

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