

Lenten Worship / Sermon Series: Spring Cleaning		
February 22	First Sunday in Lent	<i>“Spring Cleaning: Past”</i>
March 1	Second Sunday in Lent	<i>“Spring Cleaning: Present”</i>
March 8	Third Sunday in Lent	<i>“Spring Cleaning: Future”</i>
March 15	Fourth Sunday in Lent	<i>“Spring Cleaning: Here”</i>
March 22	Fifth Sunday in Lent	<i>“Spring Cleaning: There”</i>
March 29	Sixth Sunday in Lent/ Palm Sunday	<i>“Spring Cleaning: Everywhere”</i>

“Spring Cleaning: Future (Remembering Fred Craddock)”

Sermon for First Christian Church of Decatur, Georgia
 Season of Lent, Sunday, March 8, 2015
 James L. Brewer-Calvert, Senior Pastor

Holy Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 1: 18-25 John 2: 13-22

1 Corinthians 1: 18-25

¹⁸ For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire

wisdom, ²³ but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

John 2: 13-22

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

In the Midst of Spring Cleaning our Future, We Pause a Moment to Remember Fred

We honor and cherish the life and love
of the Rev. Dr. Fred B. Craddock (April 30, 1928 --

March 6, 2015)

who passed away this past Friday morning.
When Fred Craddock was a teenager in Humboldt,
Tennessee,

he confided in his pastor that he, too, wanted to be a
minister;

his pastor said that Fred was too short and his
voice too high,

and to look elsewhere for his vocation.

Determined and undeterred, confident in his call from
Christ,

Fred went out into the fields and preached to the
cows,

telling them the parables and stories of Jesus.

He completed college and graduate school, served
pastorates, earned a Ph.D.,

and became a preaching teacher,

emphasizing the value of one sentence themes,
scholarship,

storytelling and telling the story of God's
love.

He never raised his voice or stepped away from the pulpit;

he barely moved a finger; stood about yea high; spoke
with a unique voice;

yet was internationally & deservedly recognized
as belonging in the list of Top Ten Living

Preachers.

He was so prolific a writer, so profound a thinker, and so
prodigious a storyteller

that most every pastor, church, and denomination
claimed him.

Our congregation knew Fred well and he loved us right back.
He and Nettie and their children were active members of this
congregation

throughout the 16 years that he taught Homiletics and New Testament studies

at Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

During the years they worshiped God here, Fred served as an Elder;

our stories became intertwined and will be so forever.

One day someone in our church took two wooden Coca Cola boxes,

covered them with red carpet, and christened each one “The Fred Craddock Box.”

The next time Dr. Craddock preached in this same pulpit,

he looked down, mentioned the box’s existence,

and thanked whomever made it for the spirit in which the gift was given.

After retiring from teaching,

Nettie and Fred Craddock moved to the north Georgia mountains,

where he co-founded Cherry Log Christian Church

and the Craddock Learning Center, both in Blue Ridge, Georgia.

Circa 1998, very early in our tenure together as pastor and parish,

Fred Craddock was invited back

to First Christian Church of Decatur

to speak here during a Saturday morning breakfast program.

Being the storyteller that Fred Craddock was,

he shared us with a narrative of a young minister

who started out in a local church

with a burst of energy and pizzazz,

caused quite a ruckus,
 drew in new people and started fancy
 programs.

However after a brief period of time
 the new preacher burned out, faded out, and moved
out.

Fred Craddock went on to compare that with pastors
 who may move at a slower pace
 yet are steady and remain present over a
greater period of time.

He used an analogy that struck us at the moment
 and has remained a constant memory and challenge,
 almost like a spiritual talisman.

I'll paraphrase his comments from that morning in our
Fellowship Hall.

*“Some people are like a comet.
They come on the scene with great fanfare and flash,
streaking across the sky with a bright light and a sparkling
trail.
As quickly as they arrive they are gone.”*

*“Some people are like the Moon.
They're not very fancy.”*
He paused to glance up and contemplate an imaginary moon
in the sky.

*“Yes, there it is, again.
Guess it will be up tomorrow as well.
Steady, dependable, constant source of comfort.
Comes up every night and reflects back to us the light of the
sun.”*

Then he paused and gently asked his listeners one question

before sitting down.

*“Are you like a comet,
sparkly and bright and quickly done?
Or are you like a moon,
steady, constant, comforting, reflecting the light of the Son
of God?”*

It is very possible that some of us are like a comet in some arenas

and like a moon in other areas of our lives,
yet the analogy is most helpful
when we pause to reflect on how we
enlighten those around us.

How we behave in our present context,
how we reflect back to the world the light of the
Son...of God,
has much to do with our theme for the day,
Spring Cleaning.

God Can Cleanse Your Future, Which Begins Today

Let Jesus cleanse your anxieties of what the future might or might not hold.

A good friend, a God-fearing Christian, as they say,
pulled me aside one Sunday morning.
She pointed at her two children, one of whom was in 4th
grade, the other in 2nd,
and said, *“I’m worried about high school.
Those kids are so big and rough and tough.
My babies won’t be able to cope.”*

Living so far ahead enables us to neglect our present realities and relationships.

Live in such a way that you aren't so forward looking
that you miss what is going on around you.
A buddy took countless photos of his son's soccer game
in an effort to preserve it for the future.
Guess what: he got so wrapped up in preserving it
that he missed cherishing the event, the moment, the
experience.
Suddenly the match was over, and all that remained are
photos.
He realized that he had no real memories or emotional
attachment or connection.
They say, "Stop to smell the flowers."
And they are right.

**Let Jesus cleanse you of the angers that overshadow
tomorrow's light.**

Spring cleaning for our lives is to happen before we go one
more step into the future.
Jesus said, "*So if you are offering your gift at the altar,
and there remember that your brother has
something against you,
leave your gift there before the altar and go;
first be reconciled to your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.*" (Matthew
5: 23)

The Apostle Paul said, "*Be angry but do not sin;
do not let the Sun go down on your anger.*" (Ephesians 4:
26)

This is hands down the best advice you can give to a
newlywed couple;
this is also a great spiritual practice for every
relationship you have.
Resolve today's troubles, disputes, arguments and conflicts
today.

Deal with them, resolve them, and get them over and done with

so they don't fester and gnaw at your soul,
lest they grow and take on an unhealthy life of their own.

It is really tough to have a bright future when we don't practice the spiritual disciplines of accountability and authenticity, forgiveness and grace.

Neglect to do so and one's future becomes cloudy and congested with yesterday's woes and an unresolved past bogging you down.

Do so, and tomorrow you will awaken with a fresh start, a fresh attitude, a fresh outlook, and a fresh way of being.

Let Jesus cleanse you of fears that extinguish life's sparks.

The band Blue Oyster Cult surprised themselves and their fans

with a huge hit record called "Don't Fear the Reaper." Saturday Night Live poked fun at the band's choice of instruments in the song

with a skit featuring Christopher Walken saying, *"I have a fever...and the only prescription...is more cow bell!"*

The song itself was inspired by the love between Romeo and Juliette.

They loved without fear of death, of repercussions, of social stigma.

Be so bold and brave

as to live with love in the here and now.

Release your fears of the future so that you may be where

your body is.

When we fear the Grim Reaper,

when we are paralyzed with fear of death or social stigma or what others think

or whatever unknown dangers might await us in the future,

then we lose out on the here and now,

and we don't make tomorrow any better or brighter.

Living in mortal fear, in deep dread, of what might be is like death in itself.

Living in paralysis by analysis of what might or could possibly happen

dampens and lessens and even strangles

our present joys and opportunities

for growing into a bright future with God and one another.

Jesus calls us to a different, healthier approach.

Jesus said, *“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;*

they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you,

even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field,

which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven,

will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying,

‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’

...indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness,

and all these things will be given to you as well.

*So do not worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.
Today's trouble is enough for today.” (Matthew 6: 28-34)*

Let Jesus cleanse your temptation to have false or misguided expectations.

Live without misguided expectations of the future,
expectations that are such a pipedream
as to dissuade you or prevent you
from truly living into the future that
might be

Along the same lines, just as Fred Craddock was told he
would never be a minister,

be free from other people's smallness.

Trust in God and trust those you deem trustworthy to help
guide you into tomorrow.

Let Jesus in so that you may live in peace.

Live with the faith that God is already where you are headed.
Live with the faith that God's will is for you to have a bright
future, starting today.

Live with the faith that nothing can separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You are called into being to find and discern what brings you
joy,

and then to pursue it.

Cleansing our attitudes about the future before it comes into
being

will open the door to living into the fulfillment
of God's will for you,

for the Church of Jesus Christ,
for the City around us,

for the Global Village we
call home.

Live into what brings you a deep sense of gladness
and makes a world of difference.

Please don't get ahead of yourself.

Please don't fear the Reaper.

Please don't let false expectations or senseless anger or
insecurities

weigh you down or drag you under or defeat you
before tomorrow's sun has arisen.

Please do know that God is with you now,
and has already gone wherever you are headed.

We give the late, great Fred Craddock the last word:

Fred was on a long flight during which breakfast was served.
The gentleman next to him reached up

and pushed the signal button for the flight attendant.

When she arrived he said to her,

"I want you to know that I ordered the Special Breakfast."

*"Yes, sir," she said. "We will serve everyone else first and
then bring you yours."*

He was satisfied with her answer and settled into his chair.

Fred Craddock's meal was soon placed in front of him.

He found before him a lovely arrangement of fresh fruit with
cottage cheese

and a croissant roll and fresh coffee and juice.

After all the rest of the passengers were served,

the attendant brought his seatmate a meal.

He found before him a lovely arrangement of fresh fruit with
cottage cheese

and a croissant roll and fresh coffee and juice.

Fred said that he looked at his meal, looked over at Fred's
meal,

looked back at his,

and then reached up and punched the signal
button.

When she arrived he said to her, "*I ordered the Special
Breakfast.*"

"Yes, sir," she said. "*that is the Special Breakfast.*"

Fred observed that what his neighbor really wanted was not
a Special Breakfast;

he wanted to be Special.

My friends, you are Special.

You don't need a fancier meal or a spiffy car or McMansion
or new suit of clothes.

In the eyes of God, in the eyes of Jesus Christ, in the eyes of
your church family,

you are already special, unique, amazing,
extraordinary, beautiful creation.

Some days you may move like a comet,

blazing a white hot trail across the sky for others to
follow.

Other times you may be more meditative and reflective
of the light of the Son...of God,

a steady and sure presence in many, many lives
and dreams.

Either way, comet or moon or an entire galaxy of stars,

we can't wait to bear witness and walk with you

to wherever God is guiding you in the next
moment.

*All power be to the Creator, the Son, and the Holy
Spirit. Amen!*

Call to Communion

One day Jesus of Nazareth gathered his followers in the Upper Room for what would be their last supper together. Jesus prepared his followers for what was to become of him as well as what was to become of them. Jesus shared with the disciples about being prepared to follow the way of God. Disciples of Christ must choose this path, this journey, in our own way. Each follower of God is reminded that everyone is to choose the Way of God, a choice we make daily, confident in the loving, ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit.