

October 2, 2022

The View

“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God’s word, including respecting its silence.

We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly “headquarters.”

The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don’t understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God’s word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

**Please fill out a visitor’s card and put it in the collection plate when is passed.
We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.**

Schedule

The Lord’s Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

New quarter begins today

See page 3 for details on adult classes.

Auditorium: “Timothy & Titus”

Room 15/16: Relationships: Love (agape)

Room 12: Young Adult Class: “Be ready to give an answer” (1 Peter 3:15)

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today: David Posey

“Going Out with Abraham”

Livestream at 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class @ 5 PM — Praying the Psalms (Auditorium)

High School Class, 5 PM @ David & Christie Posey’s home

Middle school class: monthly (contact Dan Stegall at 818-209-9810)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes for all ages

Auditorium: Timothy

Room 15/16: Relationships: Love

Room 12: Young Adults Class: “Be ready to give an answer” (1 Peter 3:15)

November 13-16

How We Got Our Bible (Mike Wilson, Santa Clara)

See page 4 for the schedule

How Oxford and Peter Singer drove me from atheism to Jesus

SARAH IRVING-STONEBRAKER, WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

[Sometimes all our efforts to teach apologetics fall flat. At times, another approach may be better. This article was published in the View in 2020, during the chaos of Covid-19. Some may have missed it, so it bears republishing. I encourage all of you to read it (again). dp]

I grew up in Australia, in a loving, secular home, and arrived at Sydney University as a critic of “religion.” I didn’t need faith to ground my identity or my values. I knew from the age of eight that I wanted to study history at Cambridge and become a historian. My identity lay in academic achievement, and my secular humanism was based on self-evident truths. As an undergrad, I won the University Medal and a Commonwealth Scholarship to undertake my Ph.D. in History at King’s College, Cambridge. King’s is known for its secular ideology and my perception of Christianity fitted well with the views of my fellow students: Christians were anti-intellectual and self-righteous.

After Cambridge, I was elected to a Junior Research Fellowship at Oxford. There, I attended three guest lectures by world-class philosopher and atheist public intellectual, Peter Singer. Singer recognised that philosophy faces a vexing problem in relation to the issue of human worth. The natural world yields no egalitarian picture of human capacities. What about the child whose disabilities or illness compromises her abilities to reason? Yet, without reference to some set of capacities as the basis of human worth, the intrinsic value of all human beings becomes an ungrounded assertion; a premise which needs to be agreed upon before any conversation can take place.

I remember leaving Singer’s lectures with a strange intellectual vertigo; I was committed to believing that universal human value was more than just a well-meaning conceit of liberalism. But I knew from my own research in the history of European empires and their encounters with indigenous cultures, that societies have always had different conceptions of human worth, or lack thereof. The premise of human equality is not a self-evident truth: it is profoundly historically contingent. I began to realise that the implications of my atheism were incompatible with almost every value I held dear.

One afternoon, I noticed that my usual desk in the college library was in front of the Theology section. With an awkward but humble reluctance, I opened a book of sermons by philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich. As I read, I was struck at how intellectually compelling, complex, and profound the gospel was. I was attracted, but I wasn’t convinced.

A few months later, near the end of my time at Oxford, I was invited to a dinner for the International Society for the Study of Science and Religion. I sat next to Professor Andrew Briggs, a Professor of nanomaterials, who happened to be a Christian. During dinner, Briggs asked me whether I believed in God. I fumbled. Perhaps I was an agnostic? He responded, “Do you really want to sit on the fence forever?” That question made me realise that if issues about human value and ethics mattered to me, the response that perhaps there was a God, or perhaps there wasn’t, was unsatisfactory.

In the Summer of 2008, I began a new job as Assistant Professor at Florida State University, where I continued my research examining the relationship between the history of science, Christianity, and political thought. With the freedom of being an outsider to American culture, I was able to see an active Christianity in people who lived their lives guided by the

gospel: feeding the homeless every week, running community centres, and housing and advocating for migrant farm laborers.

One Sunday, shortly before my 28th birthday, I walked into a church for the first time as someone earnestly seeking God. Before long I found myself overwhelmed. At last I was fully known and seen and, I realised, unconditionally loved – perhaps I had a sense of relief from no longer running from God. A friend gave me C.S. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity*, and one night, after a couple months of attending church, I knelt in my closet in my apartment and asked Jesus to save me, and to become the Lord of my life.

From there, I started a rigorous diet of theology, reading the Bible and exploring theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Ramsey, and F.D. Maurice. Christianity, it turned out, looked nothing like the caricature I once held. I found the story of Jacob wrestling with God especially compelling: God wants anything *but* the unthinking faith I had once assumed characterized Christianity. God wants us to wrestle with Him; to struggle through doubt and faith, sorrow and hope. Moreover, God wants broken people, not self-righteous ones. And salvation is not about us earning our way to some place in the clouds through good works. On the contrary; there is nothing we can do to reconcile ourselves to God. As a historian, this made profound sense to me. I was too aware of the cycles of poverty, violence and injustice in human history to think that some utopian design of our own, scientific or otherwise, might save us.

Christianity was also, to my surprise, radical – far more radical than the leftist ideologies with which I had previously been enamored. The love of God was unlike anything which I expected, or of which I could make sense. In becoming fully human in Jesus, God behaved decidedly unlike a god. Why deign to walk through death’s dark valley, or hold the weeping limbs of lepers, if you are God? Why submit to humiliation and death on a cross, in order to save those who hate you? God suffered punishment in our place because of a radical love. This sacrificial love is utterly opposed to the individualism, consumerism, exploitation, and objectification, of our culture.

Just as radical, I realized, was the new creation which Christ began to initiate. This turned on its head the sentimental caricature of “heaven” I’d once held as an atheist. I learned that Jesus’ resurrection initiated the kingdom of God, which will “bring good news to the poor, release the captives, restore sight to the blind, free the oppressed.” (Luke 4:18) To live as a Christian is a call to be part of this new, radical, creation. I am not passively awaiting a place in the clouds. I am redeemed by Christ, so now I have work to do. With God’s grace, I’ve been elected to serve – in whatever way God sees fit – to build for His Kingdom. We have a sure hope that God is transforming this broken, unjust world, into Christ’s Kingdom, the New Creation.

Sarah Irving-Stonebraker is a Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at Western Sydney University in Australia.

NOTES & QUOTES

Stuff to ponder and critique.

Morality & Maturity

Our eternal destiny depends, among other things, on our ability to discern right from wrong. How do we know or have reason to believe an action is wrong?

1. It is stated plainly in scripture.
2. It violates a plainly stated principle in scripture. For example, while the Bible doesn't specifically mention drug abuse, spousal or child abuse or pornography, all of those are clear violations of clearly stated biblical principles (e.g., pornography violate the principle of avoiding sexual immorality — in fact the Greek word for sexual immorality is *porneia*).
3. You are enslaved by it; it dominates your thoughts, your time or your finances (I Corinthians 6:12).
4. It violates your conscience (Romans 14:23)
5. It may lead someone to sin (I Corinthians 10:23-29; Romans 14:13-17)
6. It demonstrates an inexcusable lack of growth (Hebrews 5:11)

On Baptism

"This assurance (of faith) is delivered satisfactorily, adequately, classically in the gift of baptism. Where baptism becomes questionable, other signs are inevitable (e.g., speaking in tongues by those who question the gift of the Spirit in the what they call "water baptism"). Where there is doubt about whether baptism does anything (except symbolize) the search will be on for deeper assurances, better baptisms and clearer experiences so that we can be really sure that we are truly sons and daughters of God." — Emil Brunner, *Commentary on Romans*

Who's REALLY Addicted to Social Media? Not just young people.

I read this quote recently...

"One of our church members who counsels children said, '100% of the teens I work with say their parents' consistent use of social media or constantly being disregarded because they're on their phone is the most discouraging and deflating behavior they see from their parents.'" The myth is that it's the kids who are on their phones all the time. But just look around. It's not just the kids. The use of social media is just as common among adults and if it's getting in the way of interacting personally with your kids, then that's a huge problem.

Regardless of your politics... this is blasphemy

Governor Gavin Newsom is twisting Jesus's words to promote killing babies. His billboard ads, posted in other states, reads: "Need an abortion? California is ready to help. . . . 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these.' - Mark 12:31."

One the high value of mothers...

After his wife, Abigail, passed away and people would approach John Adams and say he must be very proud of the success of John Quincy Adams, he would say, "He had a mother."

CLASSES

Fall Quarter Begins Today

Sundays at 9:30 AM and Wednesdays 7 PM — Bible Classes for All Ages

Adult Classes

Room 12: Young Adult class: "Always Be Ready to Give an Answer" based on I Peter 3:15.

Auditorium: Letters to Timothy and Titus: "A Guide to the Continuous Growth of the Lord's church" (see Introduction below).

Room 15/16: "Relationships: A Deep Dive into Agape (Love)" – I Corinthians 13, and others.

(Check with David Posey or Ben Woodside to see if there is room)

Sunday Afternoon: Various classes in homes (please check bulletin board, or ask)

Every Sunday at 5 PM

Auditorium: Praying the Psalms • **Room 12:** First Principles (begins October 9th)