

Back to Bethel

Homecoming Sermon

October 4, 2009

Celebrating and Remembering
Pope's Chapel
Methodist Church
1786-2009

The 223 year anniversary

by Rev. Dan White, pastor
North Columbia Church, Appling, GA

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\$2.00

I am indeed honored to have been invited by William Wansley, president of this year's homecoming service, to preach for this service. Thank you William for this invitation.

And I want to thank those from my congregation, North Columbia Church, who traveled to this event and chose to move our services to Pope's Chapel to join you on this noteworthy day.

The congregation of Pope's Chapel and their circuit riding pastors have a long and distinguished history of faithful service to our Lord, this community, and to this community. The influence for the kingdom of God from these faithful people has spread far and wide throughout our state and nation.

I pray that the historical anecdotes used to illustrate this sermon about Jacob's return to Bethel will enrich your worship and experience today.

Rev. Dan White

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BACK TO BETHEL

Genesis 35:1-8

We gather and worship today at our Bethel, the place where God appeared.

God said to Jacob, "Go back to Bethel where I first appeared to you."

Jacob was in serious trouble when he first went to Bethel, built an altar to Almighty God, and prayed.

His brother, Esau, was chasing him. He was hot on his trail.

Jacob feared for his life and for his family's life. As a young man, he implemented the plot to deceive his father, Isaac, that his mother had concocted to steal the blessing of the birthright that rightfully went to the eldest son, Esau, Jacob's brother.

But the day of reckoning came when he had to face Esau. That day always comes.

Jacob made plans to follow God's command to go to Bethel. He told his family and servants, "Put away the foreign gods you made and bury them. Make yourselves clean. And, change your clothes."

You too have come back to Bethel. You have put away the foreign gods and buried them. You have put away all distractions to show your priority to worship here again. Some have driven a long way. Some of you men will miss the football game. You give of your time to be here, and you spent money in gasoline and other expenses to be here.

You all have made yourselves clean. I don't see anyone who just got out of their work

clothes covered with dust and grime. You all look pretty clean and smell nice.

And, you all have put on clean clothes. My wife even made me wear my suit for today.

You come to Pope's Chapel, a sacred place like Bethel, a place sanctified by those gone before us and dedicated for the worship of our Lord Christ.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

What brought Jacob back to Bethel? Why did God command that Jacob go back to Bethel? What brings most people to Bethel? What brings us to God?

I have found in my life that trouble brings me to the Lord. I call upon Him in my pain and loss. I commune with Him as Friend and Brother. I lean upon Him like a football player who blew his knee out playing the game leans upon the trainers to help him off the field. I can't stand on my own power in trouble.

Isn't it in trouble that we find our deepest relationship with the Lord? Isn't trouble our common lot?

Jesus told us that this life is full of trouble and trials. He said, "In this world you **will** have trouble" (John 16:33 NIV). That's a promise from Jesus. You will have trouble.

If trouble brought Jacob to Bethel, and if trouble is our common lot, then I can say that trouble brought us to Pope's Chapel today. Troubles bring us back to worship God and honor Him.

And just as God gave Jacob the victory over his troubles at Bethel, so God gives us the victory over our troubles when we gather here to

worship, to remember the old times, to fellowship together, to renew acquaintances, and to honor and remember those who have left us.

What are the troubles that bring us to this holy place to worship and honor the Lord? They are the same troubles that brought Jacob to Bethel.

Troubles come from our deceitful ways. Jacob's very name means "deceiver." His character flaws caused him trouble.

Jacob deceived his father, Isaac, into giving him the birthright that was due Esau, Isaac's eldest son. Jacob ran away in fear. Years and years passed by, but that fear of Esau confronting him and killing him for his trickery always lurked in the back of Jacob's mind.

When strangers came to visit his Uncle Laban, where Jacob lived with him in far away Mesopotamia, his heart raced with fear. "Suppose it's Esau. Has he finally found me? What will I do? Where will I run to next?"

That's the way it is with deceit. We are always looking over our shoulder. What if my spouse finds out about my secret relationship, my secret affair. Friends, that's trouble. Ask John Edwards. Ask Bill Clinton.

What if my boss finds out I have an alcohol problem? What will become of me? Deceit is always trouble. It is embarrassing to get caught, and most if not all of the time, we do get caught. Relationships can be destroyed. Jacob's deceit certainly destroyed the brotherly relationship between him and Esau.

Trouble from deceit brought Jacob to Bethel and to God. There, he wrestled with the angel of the Lord.

Change is hard. Admitting our deceit and confessing our sin is difficult. We wrestle with the Lord and justify our deceit just like Jacob did.

But, God gave Jacob the victory. Jacob held on to the Lord. He wanted to change and renew his relationship with his brother, Esau. He wanted the Lord's protection from Esau.

Jacob was afraid that Esau would kill him, take his family, and take his possessions. That's when Jacob prayed the hardest. Hear his earnest prayer from his troubled heart. "Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children" (Genesis 32:11 NIV).

And God answered Jacob's prayer after the angel "touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled" (Genesis 32:25 NIV). From then on, Jacob walked with a limp.

I walk with a limp too. Oh, I don't mean a physical limp, but an emotional and spiritual limp.

That limp humbled Jacob. Every step he walked he was reminded that he was no more filled with deceit, pride, and arrogance. God changed him forever at Bethel

That's what a limp does for you. The Lord brought me down a notch or two and humbled me under his mighty hand.

I'd rather walk with a limp than continue on with the character faults that I once had.

Not only did God put a hitch in Jacob's gait, He also changed Jacob's name from "deceiver" to "father of nations." God changed his name to Israel.

That, dear friends, is victory. Trouble from a deceitful heart brought Jacob to Bethel. God

gave Jacob the victory over deceit, and told Jacob to return to Bethel again to remember, worship, and honor the Lord. And so, we return to this place today.

Did you know that this church was almost killed by deceit? A man like Jacob was charged and ordained by Bishop Francis Asbury to preach and establish Methodist congregations in Georgia around the Broad River.

Who was Asbury? He had been sent by John Wesley to the American colonies to preach and establish Methodist churches. Historians consider Asbury to be the founder of American Methodism.

Rev. Beverly Allen, ordained by Bishops Asbury and Thomas Coke, and his brother, William, moved to this area in 1785 along with thousands of other migrants from Virginia when the back country of Georgia opened for settlement after the Revolutionary War.

Rev. Allen was elected an elder in absentia at the Christmas Conference in 1784 at the Lovely Lane Chapel, in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Christmas Conference gave birth to American Methodism. Later in 1785, Beverly Allen was ordained an itinerate preacher in the new Methodist Episcopal Church and sent as a missionary to Georgia by Asbury to preach the gospel and establish Methodist Churches. Rev. Allen was in the first group of ordained men in American Methodism.

During this time, 40% of Georgia's population was centered in Wilkes County as reported in the 1790 census.

Rev. Allen preached dynamic sermons and the records show that seventy people came to

Christ through his ministry. He traveled around this area and diligently worked the fields. The fields were white unto harvest for souls, and Rev. Allen had the evangelist's gift to bring them into the barn.

Rev. Allen left this area and moved across the river to South Carolina to preach and establish churches there. But his deceit and duplicity caught up with him. His criminal activity in Carolina caused him to run just like Jacob ran from Esau. Rev. Allen ran back across the river to Georgia, to this area and settled in the newly formed Elbert County which was carved out of Wilkes County.

Back in Georgia, Rev. Allen and his brother, William, opened a mercantile business. Rev. Allen continued preaching as well in the Georgia back country and in this area of Pope's Chapel. So far, so good.

But, Rev. Allen's deceitful character flaw led him and his brother to again practice unscrupulous business methods. On a business trip to Augusta in 1795, the U.S. Marshall had a warrant to arrest the preacher because of unpaid debt. Rev. Allen warned the Marshall not to enter his hotel room.

The Marshall entered any way and the fiery Methodist preacher would have none of that. He reached for his pistol and shot the Marshall stone cold dead. The Marshall's son, John Forsyth, was only 13 when his father was murdered. He went on to be educated at Springer Academy in Washington, Georgia, and rose through the ranks to become Secretary of State for President Andrew Jackson.¹

Like Jacob fled, the murdering preacher fled back home to Elbert County to escape the law. However, he and his shiftless brother were arrested and jailed.

Now, how is this for supporting your preacher? A mob of Rev. Allen's followers, two hundred strong, gathered at the Elbert County jail one night and busted out the Allen brothers.

Fleeing for his life like Jacob, this bad preacher fled to Kentucky and his brother fled to South Carolina.

In Kentucky, the miscreant preacher opened a school and tutored Peter Cartwright who became one of the most notable pioneer preachers in the West and established Methodist Churches in that part of our nation.

With the kind of scandal in Georgia by Rev. Allen, the Methodists got off on the wrong foot.

Asbury wrote in his journal about this preacher of deception.

Poor Beverly Allen, who has been going from bad to worse these seven or eight years, speaking against me to preachers and people, and writing to Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke, and being thereby the source of most of the mischief that has followed, is now secured in jail for shooting Major Forsyth through the head. The major was marshal for the federal court in Georgia, and was about to serve a writ upon Allen. The masterpiece of all is, a petition is prepared declaring him to have shown marks of insanity previous to his killing the major! The poor Methodists also must unjustly be put to the rack on his account, although he has been expelled from among us these two years. I have had my opinion of him

these nine years; and gave Dr. Coke my thoughts of him before his ordination. I pity, I pray for him, that, if his life be given up to justice, his soul may yet be saved.

Not all ministers are shysters, thank God! But the ones that are out there do great harm to the cause of Christ and to the reputation of the church.

Like God overcame Jacob's flaws, so the Lord would overcome the flaws of Rev. Allen and the trail of destruction he left behind for Bishop Asbury, the church and the work for Christ.

How did this happen? In 1785, two other Methodist ministers in addition to Rev. Allen were sent by Asbury from Virginia to this area of Georgia to spread the gospel and start new churches. These preachers, Thomas Humphries and John Major were as good as gold.

In the early part of 1786, the two pastors, Rev. Humphries and Rev. Major held services in Henry Pope's home. In August of 1786, Rev. Thomas Humphries held services in James Marks' home located in what is now Elbert County about 1 and 1/2 miles Northeast of Old Baker's Ferry on the Broad River. Pope's Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church was born. The church was named for Henry Pope who supplied most of the lumber for the church building after it was moved from Elbert County back into Wilkes County. They built the church on land owned by John Landrum adjoining his home place on the east side of Baker's Ferry Road. Bishop Francis Asbury preached the dedication sermon in 1805.

Henry Pope later felt the call of God upon his life to enter the ministry. He was ordained by

Asbury and became the first itinerant Methodist preacher from Georgia.

So while one Methodist preacher lived by deceit, two others lived for Christ. Pope's Chapel and many other Methodist Churches in Wilkes County and the surrounding area were born. Plus, Henry Pope entered the ministry.

The Lord always gives the victory. The gates of hell fall before the onslaught of love, mercy, forgiveness, and the grace of God in his people.

Troubles brought Jacob to his knees. You can be sure that the troubles caused by Rev. Allen and the disgrace he brought upon the church brought Bishop Asbury and the Reverends Thomas Humphries and John Major to their knees too.

Trouble brings us to Bethel, brings us here, but the power of Christ on the cross gives us the victory.

Another trouble that would always cause Bethel to be a place of endearment to Jacob was the death of his mother's nurse, Deborah.

Long treated a member of the family, Deborah's death pained Jacob much. He buried her at Bethel.

Rebekah did not hide that Jacob was her favorite son. She spoiled him. She plotted for her favorite son to steal the birthright from Esau. She would do anything for Jacob. She helped plan his escape from Esau and told him where to go. "Go and live with my brother, Laban, your uncle, in Padan-aram in Mesopotamia."

Only Deborah and Jacob could talk and reminisce about his mother. Deborah understood their relationship. Jacob was holding on to his

mother through Deborah. When Deborah died, the hole in his heart from the loss of his mother, grew even larger.

There is always intense pain and loneliness in the death of a loved one. That's why we put up monument stones in the cemetery, save pictures, and keep the keepsakes of our loved ones.

Some of you have ancestors, family, and loved ones buried in the cemetery of Pope's Chapel. Part of your return to Pope's Chapel is like Jacob's return to Bethel. You can be sure Jacob went over to visit Deborah's grave, the nurse of his dear mother.

There is comfort in this. Comfort from the Lord and from those who surround us in love. To remember the happy times, the loving relationship, all of these are gifts from God when we return to our Bethel.

And while we grieve over our loss, we have the great hope and assurance that all of those who die in the Lord have gained a life beyond anything we can ever imagine in heaven.

Our hope is in Christ to be with Him forever and forever and to once again be reunited with those we love in the heavenly palaces build by the hand of God.

Another thing about death and tragedy is that it sometimes comes right after we have had our return to Bethel experience. That's what happened to Jacob. After Bethel came death, the death of his dear wife, Rachel.

The Bible says that death is the last enemy to be overcome. Death is an enemy. It robs us of our children, our parents, our brother and sister,

our spouse, and our friends. Death troubles us and causes the heart to sigh and our eyes to cry.

After leaving Bethel, Rachel gave birth to Benjamin. In giving Jacob his last son, Rachel gave her life. She died in childbirth after going to Bethel.

And some of you since your last return to Pope's Chapel have lost a loved one. After Bethel came death. Who would have ever expected that?

Again, let us be reminded that the Christ of the cross defeated the grave and walked away from death, the grave, and hell on that Easter morning causing us to shout, "He is risen! He is risen indeed!"

In the resurrection of Christ, we too will live forever.

Let today's walk through the cemetery remind you of that. Let the walk through any cemetery where your loved one is buried remind you of that.

All of the tombstones face East for it is from the East that the Scripture tells us that Christ will come again just as surely as the sunrise causes the eastern sky to glow with new life each morning.

So turn and face East, face the hope of Christ's soon return and the glory of our Lord.

A third trouble that comes upon us is the trouble caused by despair. Fear can grip and paralyze us.

Jacob's fear of his brother's confrontation with him caused him great fear. Jacob even tried to bribe his way out of trouble as a panic attack overcame him fearing that Esau would hurt and even kill him out of revenge.

Fear is real. Sometimes, there are reasons to fear. Sometimes, fear is irrational. Regardless, it is real.

When I was a little boy, I loved going to Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, in the summer time to visit my aunt and uncle who had a beach house there. The Cooper River connecting Charleston to Mt. Pleasant was spanned by a bridge built in 1929 with tiny lane width. In the 1950's, the only way to Sullivan's Island was through Mt. Pleasant and across that three mile bridge.

My mother had a great fear of heights. As dad drove across the narrow bridge, mother would scoot over from the door which was next to the railing of the bridge as far as she could get. She would panic, and scream, "M. H." (my father was called by his initials), "You're too close to the rail!"

Her panic and fear gave me panic and fear. I dove down in the backseat to the floor and hid behind the front seat praying to get safely to the other side. It was a long fall into the river underneath.

After I married Joyce in 1984, at age 33, we would go to Sullivan's Island and visit my aunt and uncle. Would you believe that when we began our ascent up the new bridge, the one built in 1966 with plenty of lane width, that my hands got sweaty, my heart pounded, and beads of sweat popped up on my forehead.

For Pope's Chapel and the Methodists - well for all churches in this area, they went through a time of fear. There was a time when attendance waned and people lost interest in the Lord and in church.

I think I know the reason why.

The Second Great Awakening spanned the years from about 1790 to 1830. From 1786 to 1791, Great camp meetings of two weeks or longer were held in Georgia. Churches were born. People were saved. Churches grew like Kudzu in the summer Georgia heat.

Then, there was a great fall away from church, all churches including the Methodist Churches. The year 1794 was a bleak year for the kingdom of God.

Political strife was high. The leading men of the State were duelists and infidels. The whole State was in a blaze of angry fury, because of the sale of Georgia land in Mississippi on the Yazoo River sale. It was a fraud that later cost Georgia all land west of the Chattahoochee to east of the Mississippi.

Asbury and leaders of the Methodist Church met in conference on January 1, 1795, deeply concerned about the decline in interest and membership of the churches in Georgia.

Asbury left the Charleston Conference and headed to Georgia. Here is an account of his trip from Augusta to the back country and Pope's Chapel.

Asbury crossed the Savannah River not far from Augusta, and rode through the city, whose streets, he mentions, had been ploughed into deep gullies for two miles by the angry waters of the Savannah. On this visit, for the first time Asbury preached in the city in the old St. Paul's Church, which was, at that period, free to all. His congregation consisted of 400 hearers. He rode on through Columbia County, and after preaching at White Oak, was forced to ride fifteen miles after his sermon before he could get his dinner.

He swam Little River in Wilkes, and on Friday was at Combs' Meeting House, and that evening at Gartrell's. The next day he rode to the school at Coke's Chapel, three miles from Washington. Here Hope Hull had his academy. He then preached at Pope's Chapel, and crossed the river into South Carolina at Petersburg. There was but little change, and no improvement in the condition of things this year.

Whatever it took, even swimming the Little River, Asbury was dedicated and determined to get the gospel out and revive the churches.

His great fear that people were leaving the church caused his great commitment to minister in Georgia and in this area including Pope's Chapel. Fear and compassion motivated him.

Friends, fear is real whether it is rational or irrational!

What did Jacob do in his trouble caused by fear. God made Jacob swim the river of fear. God made him meet that fear and face Esau.

Lo and behold, Esau warmly received him. They hugged and passed the peace to one another. Unbelievable.

And what about Asbury's efforts brought on by the fear of declining church membership? On a beautiful fall, October day, much like today, Asbury returned again to Pope's Chapel. This time, over 1,000 people from the surrounding area came to hear him preach, sing the great songs of faith, and worship the Lord. I am sure they must have had plenty of fried chicken and other good eats after the service.

And that's what we have to do in the strength of the Lord. Face our fears that trouble us. Cross that old rickety bridge that frightens us.

Jacob overcame his fear at Bethel. Francis Asbury met fear and overcame it.

Pope's Chapel is a place to overcome fear. To remember and enjoy the renewal of relationships, the experiences of closeness with the Lord that drives out all fear.

So the next time fear grips you, think of the pleasant experiences here at this sacred place. You will find that God will calm your fears and give you peace.

Finally, troubles are caused by difficult circumstances. Jacob was going through a rough patch. His brother hunted him. His mother's nurse died. His beloved wife, Rachel died in childbirth. And, he was crippled.

That's enough to cause the strongest person great stress and anxiety. That's trouble with a capital T.

Like Jacob, sometimes our troubles squeeze us like a boa constrictor squeezing the life out of its prey. Despair sets in. The gray dog of depression follows us every where we go. He's there when we get up, when we go through the day, and when we go to bed.

That was certainly true for Pope's chapel at the turn of the 19th century.

In 1811, the Methodist Episcopal Church reports that there were 1400 members in the churches of the Broad River Circuit and 700 members in the Little River Circuit. This area was filled with fervent Methodists.

Granted, many people were moving out of Wilkes County to migrate to the West as lands opened for settlement, but church attendance and commitment were in steep decline.

The churches including Pope's Chapel were being squeezed by difficult circumstances of declining attendance and membership.

Rev. Crawford Jackson, who was serving on the Broad River Circuit, preached at a conference on May 21, 1893. He said this about Pope's Chapel.

The church like most others is at a low ebb spiritually, but because there is an ebb - some life, we thank God and take courage. Many of our members take to read other papers, but few take our Church paper. There are many altars in our homes to other gods but few to our Lord. The Lord help us to see the need of a revival and to work to have it.

Part of the problem that sapped the spiritual energy of the churches here and beyond was a new game in town. Baseball. People in the late 19th century, took to the game in a rabid way. Every village, every little town, every county, and every city had a baseball team.

Like today, the church is in fierce competition with our culture. Parents take their children to athletic tournaments on the weekends. There is the lake, television, and all sorts of distractions that vie for church attendance and faithfulness to the church and to our Lord. Sunday is no longer a special, holy day reserved for the Lord and for worship in the church.

I remember when dad had to fill up the car on Saturday because no gas stations were open on Sunday. No stores of any kind opened on Sunday. Youth leagues dare not have games on Wednesday nights or Sundays. I remember when the pastor of either the local Methodist or Baptist church gave an invocation before Friday night's

football game. I remember having baccalaureate services that were required for seniors to attend in church sanctuaries that were rotated from year to year. I remember starting each day of school with a devotion, a reading for the Holy Bible, and a prayer.

Today, the levees have fallen and the flood waves of secularism wash across what once was sacred and holy to our nation.

The church and as a result, faith is surrounded by difficulties, and these difficulties cause trouble.

Homes fall in ruin. Drugs destroy our kids. Alcoholism shatters lives. Greed and graft wipe out our economy. Retirement savings disappear. People lose their jobs and savings vanish. Gambling losses are rampant.

All of us are surrounded by difficulties caused by these troubles. All of us are affected with family and friends touched by the breakdown and the falling away from the church and faith in Christ Jesus.

In 1899, the largest crowd ever to assemble up to that point in history gathered at Pope's Chapel to watch a baseball championship game. Yes, Pope's Chapel who had just built a new building in 1897 with two beautiful stained glass windows given in memory of Benjamin and Hannah Oglivie Fortson. A field next to the church was a baseball diamond complete, I guess, with a real bullpen.

The Pope's Chapel field was the perfect neutral location for the game between the Washington Cozarts and the Elberton Beaverdam Roughs. Washington had mowed down opponent after opponent. Crawfordville, Sparta, the War-

renton Rough and Ready club, Thomson, the Atlanta Mutuals, Centreville, the renowned Harmony Grove "Arps," and others. They all lost against the powerful Washington nine.

At the game in the shadow of Pope's Chapel, it is estimated that over \$1500 was openly wagered by the fans in attendance on the baseball contest. I did a little research and found that \$1500 in 1899 is close to one million dollars in today's dollars. Imagine a million dollars being gambled on any game in Wilkes County today.

The game was of such magnitude that the *Augusta Chronicle* sent a reporter to cover it and gave a report on the big game in the next day's edition.

The Washington pitcher struck out sixteen Elberton Roughs. That's quite a feat then or now. Washington won the championship destroying the Elberton team with a score of 18-6.

Baseball and gambling reached a crescendo. The church suffered and declined. This church and others were in trouble as time ran out on the 1800's with the dawn of the new century on the horizon. There were other things that grabbed the community's interest.

In the late fall of 1899, talk of the new century stirred an interest in Bible prophecies. The talk of the new century brought with it the talk of Christ's return and the end of the age much like we remember the anticipation of turning the page to the new millennium, 2000 in our own lifetime.

You remember Y2K. Preachers made fortunes with their alarmist doom and gloom books and videos. My mother was so alarmed, that she filled her bathtub with water, bought a supply of

non-perishable food, and prepared for the Y2K catastrophe. She was not alone.

In June of 1900, Rev. Simeon Shaw, pastor of the Broad River Circuit began holding revivals throughout this area. At a September meeting that year held here at Pope's Chapel, over 1000 attended a Sunday revival meeting. Seventy-five people were saved and added to the church.

Rev. Shaw went from there and preached all over Wilkes County. People everywhere flocked to hear the Word of God preached by Rev. Shaw who was said to have an "enthusiastic style" of preaching.

In Washington, the records show that 101 were added to the church as a result of that revival preached by Rev. Shaw. In total, over 500 came into the churches of the county as a result of these revivals.

The Pope's Chapel congregation not only survived the difficulties surrounding them, but emerged with new vigor and strength.

There is a great lesson there for us. When our faith wanes and we grow discouraged, let us go back to our Bethel. Go back to Bethel even as Jacob did and left their renewed and revitalized after worshipping the Lord and the Lord meeting Jacob in a love relationship which gave him hope and courage to keep on keeping on.

A phenomenon occurred in our rural counties including Wilkes County. Where once in 1790, forty percent of Georgians lived, in the 20th century people migrated to the cities to find work and to live. Nothing is left of these little villages, churches, and schools but precious memories. They and Pope's Chapel have become our Bethel.

By 1927, the membership of Pope's Chapel had dwindled down to 127, and finally, only four faithful people remained. The North Georgia Conference made the sad decision to close this formerly powerful church visited by Francis Asbury and where God met hundreds of seekers who sought the salvation of the Lord.

But, you continue on coming back to this little church in the wildwood to worship where your ancestors worshipped, to fellowship, and to remember loved ones gone before.

Finally, let us remember that going back to Bethel is really going back to the cross where it all began. There, our Lord poured out his blood, suffered, and died so that we might be saved.

So, it is really the cross we return to today. And at the cross, we are changed from our deceitful ways to the way of truth. We look to the resurrection for the sure hope of being united with our loved ones who died in the Lord and to see them again in heaven. At the cross, we know we have nothing to fear, not even death for we are more than conquerors through Christ, and no matter the difficulties and trials of a hostile culture against faith and the church, we prevail in the unity and spirit of Christ.

Let us leave this place revived, renewed, and recommitted to live for Christ and share His Good News in love and in deeds. Amen.

¹John Forsyth's career:<http://www.usgennet.org/usa/ga/topic/news/AugustaCro/johnforsythe.htm>

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Pastor Dan White is available on Sunday nights and weeknights to preach revivals, conferences, or to speak to your church or civic group. Contact information:

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