

💡 "A Legacy of Faith: Building God's House Together"



Scripture Reading

Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 1 Peter 4:10, and Matthew 16:18**

Deuteronomy 10:12-13**: "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and

with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?".

1 Peter 4:10**: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms".

Matthew 16:18**: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it".

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we gather here today with grateful hearts, acknowledging our need for Your grace and presence. We thank You for the many blessings You have poured out on this church throughout its existence. We praise You for Your faithfulness and the strength that

comes from our community. We ask for Your continued guidance and protection, and we pray that You open our hearts and minds to receive Your Word. May we be open to Your leading, sensitive to Your voice, and alert to Your calling as we reflect on the rich history of Little Zion Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sermon: A Legacy of Faith: Building God's House Together

Good morning, beloved congregation! It's a special day, isn't it? We're celebrating 132 years of God's faithfulness here at Little Zion Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church. Can you believe it – 132 years! That's a long time, filled with countless stories, prayers, and lives touched by the grace of God.

Our story began way back in 1884, when Reverend Makey and Deacon Clarence Young built a small frame church building. This was a place

where people could come together, worship, and hear the good news of Jesus Christ. But even before that, a group of African Americans founded what was then called Little Zion Missionary Baptist Church in 1900. The Ray family, guided by their faith, saw a need in Hungerford and the surrounding communities, and they stepped out in faith to establish a place where people could worship the one true God. Imagine the courage and vision it took to plant a church in those early days! Their dedication laid the groundwork for this incredible legacy we celebrate today. It was their belief in the "Great Command" – to love God and love our neighbors – that spurred them to create this sacred space.

As we heard in ****Deuteronomy 10:12-13****, God asks for our complete devotion: to fear Him, walk in obedience, love Him, and serve Him with all our heart and soul. This deep commitment is not a burden but a path to genuine fulfillment and righteousness, just as the early founders of this church understood.

Over the years, many faithful servants followed in the footsteps of the Ray family. We remember Pastor E.T. Gillis, Pastor Charlie Drayden, and all the ministers and deacons who came before them. These were men and women who persevered, ensuring that the vision of a place where souls could be saved remained alive and strong. They understood that God had a plan for this church, and they dedicated their lives to it.

Pastor Gillis, along with the deacons, even picked out the perfect spot for a new sanctuary. But the timing wasn't quite right, and the building wasn't built yet. Then came Pastor Drayden, who, with the deacons, sketched out what the new sanctuary would look like, even framing a picture of it and hanging it on the walls of the old church. It was a vision, a promise of what was to come, but still, the time was not yet.

And then, God raised up another pastor, a man named Larry Collins, who loved God more than life itself. It was Pastor Collins whom God

directed the deacons to appoint, to lead them, and to finally build this sanctuary we gather in today. What an amazing journey of faith, vision, and patience! This church is a testament to the fact that every house is built by someone, but the ultimate builder of all things is God.

And truly, as **Matthew 16:18** reminds us, Jesus promised to build His church, assuring us that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This promise underpins our entire history, giving us confidence and hope that this church stands on an unshakeable foundation, sustained by divine authority and an enduring purpose.

Now, let me share a little story, something that happened a few years ago, right here in Hungerford. You all remember that big ice storm we had, the one that knocked out power for days and brought down that old oak tree in front of some of our neighbors house? It was a mess, wasn't it? Roads blocked, folks without electricity, and a lot of worried faces.

But what did we see? We saw folks from this very church, young and old, pulling together. out there with chainsaws, clearing branches. Ladies' from area churches made sandwiches and hot coffee for everyone who was working. The youth went door-to-door, checking on our elderly neighbors, making sure they were safe and had what they needed. It wasn't about who got the credit or who had the fanciest equipment. It was simply about serving. It was about seeing a need in our community, our neighbors, and stepping up to fill it. That's the spirit that built this church 132 years ago. It's the same spirit that keeps it alive today, making sure that the gospel isn't just preached from this pulpit, but lived out in the streets and homes of Hungerford, just like the Ray family envisioned.

Today, as we honor the past and present pastors, and give thanks to the Ray family and their ancestors, we also give thanks to each and every one of you. You, the loyal congregation, have made physical and financial sacrifices to ensure that the great command of preaching the

gospel, continues to be a reality. Your dedication to serving God and sharing His love with others is a living testament to the legacy of this church. We are called to serve God with all our heart and soul, and to use our gifts to help others.

Call to Action

My dear brothers and sisters, as we celebrate this milestone, let us not forget the purpose of our gathering: to serve God and live out His mission. This isn't just about showing up on Sundays; it's about how we live our lives every single day. We are called to embody God's compassion, to show His endless love and care to everyone we meet.

Remember ****1 Peter 4:10****: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." This means each of us has a unique role to play in

extending God's grace to the world around us. Your gifts, no matter how small you perceive them, are vital for our community and beyond.

How do we do this?

Be a Good Listener**: Take time to truly hear what others are saying, not just with your ears, but with your heart. When you listen without judgment, you show them they matter, just like God listens to us.

Offer a Helping Hand**: Whether it's volunteering at a local charity, helping a neighbor with a chore, or simply opening a door for someone whose hands are full, these small acts of kindness reflect God's love. Every kind gesture, big or small, can make a difference.

- ****Practice Forgiveness****: Just as God forgives us, let us extend that same grace to others and to ourselves. Holding onto anger or grudges only hurts us; letting go opens our hearts to more compassion.

Let us go forth and shine His light into the darkness, making a difference in our community and beyond. Let us be an example to others in our speech, actions, and attitude, reflecting the light of Christ in all that we do. This means equipping ourselves with biblical truth and actively participating in God's mission, both within and beyond the church walls.

Invitation to Discipleship

As I close, the doors of Little Zion Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church are always open, not just to members, but to everyone seeking a deeper relationship with God. We invite you, whether you are a long-time member or a first-time visitor, to join us in this transformative journey. Discipleship is an open call to follow Jesus Christ, to learn from Him, and to imitate His values. Come, join our Christian fellowship, and experience the new life that Christ offers. Our church team is here to support you and answer your questions, so do not hesitate to reach out. If you have never accepted Jesus Christ into your life, and would like to

accept him in your life, whether you are here in the sanctuary, or out in social media, join me in repeating the sinners prayer.

Sinner's Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and ask You to be my Lord and Savior. Fill me with Your Spirit so I can live for You. Thank You for Your love and for forgiving my sins. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, send me an email from social media and if you are in the sanctuary, let me know on the way out.

Final Prayer

Lord, we thank You for Your abundant love and care for us, and for forgiving our sins, even those we do not realize we commit. We are grateful for the legacy of Little Zion Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church and for the faithfulness of all who have served here. Continue to make Your love known among us and give us a zeal for mission. Help us to look beyond our walls and reach those who do not yet know You. Guide us and shower us with Your blessings. We pray that You knit us together in the bonds of unity and love as members of Your body. Amen.

Departing Words

Church, as we leave this place, may we carry God's light into the darkness, shining brightly for all to see. God will be with us, every step of the way. Let us continue to live out our faith and commitment to serving God in our daily lives. We pray this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.