



The E-Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Winona, Mississippi

# FIRST PRESS

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 2013

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Aug. 11, 9:00 a.m.**

Ryan preaches at the Winona Community "Friends of Immanuel" Service held at the old Episcopal Church building.

**Aug. 11, 4:00 p.m.**

Ryan's installation and ordination service; the ladies are providing a reception following the service.

**Sep. 21, 5:00 p.m.**

Please join us for a church picnic at the Manse. We will also celebrate Mrs. Barnett's birthday.



[www.facebook.com/FPCWinona](http://www.facebook.com/FPCWinona)

## From the Pastor's Pen...

The day of ordination is finally upon us! Ann and I wish to thank all of you who have done so much to help get us and the church facility ready for the celebration. As I write this, the ladies are here hard at work dusting, polishing, scrubbing, and cleaning.

On Tuesday of this week, the presbytery approved my call to be your pastor as and examined me in the final areas prior to ordination. They have stated this Lord's Day at 4:00 p.m. to formally ordain and install me as your pastor.

That service will be a very special time for me, Ann, and my family, as it is the culmination of a long process of pur-

su-ing a call to the ministry. I hope it is the beginning of a long process of growth together in holiness here in Winona, and a day that we all look back on with thanksgiving and praise to God.

The ordination and installation will occur in the context of a worship service. As you know, we Presbyterians try to do everything "by the Book" (the Bible, that is), and so we are simply following the pattern that Paul established with Timothy and recorded in 1 Tim. 4 when the presbytery laid hands on young Timothy ordaining him.

In the ordination service, we will worship God to-

gether; we will sing together, pray together, and hear the word preached together. Following the sermon, the elders will formally ordain me by the laying on of hands and with prayer. After that two men known to you will each deliver a "charge;" one to the whole congregation and one to the minister. The "charges" are exhortations for how we are to carry out our mission, the mission that Christ has given us together.

I hope and pray that you are able to join us for the service (and reception!!) and that it will be a blessing to you and an encouragement for our whole church.

## Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

We saw last week that the only way we can learn how to please God or do what He desires is by studying His word. This week we consider a summary of the whole Bible in WSC 3:

*Q: What do the Scriptures principally teach?*

**A. The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.**

How would you summarize the whole teaching of the Bible? The Catechism explains to us the Bible teaches us first, **about God: who He is, what He has done, and what we**

**are to believe about Him** as well as second, **what God demands of us as our Creator and our King.**

In our day, many see the Bible as a collection of sweet sentiments separated by chapters of inscrutable sayings. But that's not the case at all. We see the result of such a view when people approach the by Bible asking "what does this mean to me?"

Instead, we should ask ourselves when we read the Scripture, "what does this teach me about God?"

This catechism question is reminding us that the Scripture teaches us both things

the we must know and things that we must do.

You see, Christian doctrine and Christian living are inseparable. In order to live as a Christian, you must know the Bible. Christianity is not - and never was - simply a matter of *doing* the right things, but also believing the truth about God.

This question is another reminder that the Bible is the only way you can know how to live a life pleasing to God. The Scripture teaches that the way to please God begins with repentance and faith in His Son. Thanks be to God for telling us how we are to please Him.

# A Gospel of Offense

Since the very beginning, Christianity has been offensive. The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian church, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...." Growing a church by proclaiming Christ is foolishness by man's standards. Many in our day and in Paul's hate the idea of the crucifixion of Christ the Saviour because of what it means.

People hate the Cross because it means there is a God who has wrath against sin and has the right to judge His creatures for their actions. But what is even more "troublesome" about Christianity is that it teaches us

that the only way to be saved from sin is to accept God's forgiveness and mercy.

People always want to "do something" to make it right, to "make it up," but God in His word has told mankind that there is nothing that we can do put ourselves right before God, we must find our rest in what He provides, His way.

That is the why the gospel is so offensive, counter-cultural, and *odd* because it proclaims to people that they cannot help themselves. Instead of simply trying to "do right," the Bible teaches that we must begin by acknowledging that we cannot, and we need God's grace to help us.

Today, the gospel is even more offensive because it teaches that there is only *one* way to God. Celebrities such as Oprah balk at the notion that there is a *right* way and a *wrong* way to commune with our Maker. In our culture, "pop-religion" proclaims that as long as a person is sincere and tries to do right, God will accept him.

Our message is the exact opposite, that God accepts only those who see that they cannot do right unless God Himself changes them, saves them, and forgives them. We trust that God will accept people not for anything in them, but only because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone that they receive by faith.

## Sunday's Sermon Snapshot

As we have watched the lives of Ruth and Naomi, we've seen the Lord do great works of transformation first in Ruth and now in Naomi. We first met Naomi when she – along with her husband – was quite confident that she could make a bright future for herself and her family in Moab away from God's people and by living contrary to God's Word.

When her plans failed, and Naomi was left a widow, her response was bitterness and resentment toward God for making her life so hard and "punishing" her so severely.

As we saw these past two Lord's Days, Naomi has come into fuller and fuller knowledge and experience of God's mercy and forgiveness. When Ruth came home that first day with so much food, she realized that God was not "out to get her" after all. She came to see her sin and was able to turn to God in repentance and faith. Her response as recorded in Ruth 1:17-2:5 is **first to praise and worship God**, and then **second to care for and serve others**.

This is an important illustration of what saving faith does. Of course, our

account is abbreviated, but we see in this episode those two very important aspects of the Christian life – and the order is instructive.

Naomi begins by praising God for His covenant faithfulness, His kindness to those to the undeserving



(2:20). She recognizes His grace to her, and she is brought to worship Him. Worship is the primary function of God's people, and worship is what will occupy us in eternity.

As the weeks go by, Naomi grows in her faith and we see she is transformed from one self-absorbed over her own pitiful condition to now

showing concern for Ruth's needs. Her faith is still immature and young, yet it brings her to act on behalf of and seek the welfare of others.

We should not overlook the fact that it is only *after* she begins to worship God, only *after* she experiences and knows God's grace that we see this change in her behavior, concerns, and affections.

This illustrates for us the way in which the Christian gospel works; God brings people to faith in His gracious mercies and transforms their minds and will so that they are continually dying to sin and living to righteousness, which begins by worshiping God privately everyday and with His people gathered on the Lord's Day.

Such a change in behavior cannot happen apart from the working of God's Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture. It is impossible to move beyond the bad things that happen in life, the hardships, the sins that we have committed until God has dealt with our dead heart that is enslaved to sin by bringing us to repentance and seeking forgiveness that God offers through faith in His son.