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

FIRST PRESS

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 16 FRIDAY, NOV. 8, 2013

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Nov. 11, 10 a.m.
WIC morning circle.

Nov. 13, 11 a.m.
The ladies meet at FPC for lunch at the **Crystal Grill**. The men will eat left-overs at home.

Nov. 17, 10 a.m.
The **Lord's Supper** will be observed in morning worship and **Christmas Shoe Boxes** are due.

Nov. 17, 6 p.m.
Community Thanksgiving Service at **Haven UMC**; Ryan is preaching.

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From the Pastor's Pen. . .

On Monday Georgia sent me a whole list of dates of activities for our church community, and let me say things are really ramping up for the end of the year! Here are just a few of them (there are more to come):

Dec. 2 WIC Meeting at 5:30 p.m. to assemble baskets for our "shut in" members as well a gift box for Courtlyn Hathcock.

Dec. 10 Community Service at 6 p.m. our church will get to host the "reception" consisting of finger food following the annual community service of Lessons and Carols. The reception will be in our fellowship hall.

Additionally, we don't yet have a date for it, but we'll also have a program celebrating Christ's Incarnation later in December as we've done in year's past.

At the end of the year, it's customary to specifically remember the Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To aid you in doing that, we'll be taking a break from our ongoing series in Bible Study on Wednesday and in Sunday School.

On Wednesday Nights, we'll look at some of the classic hymns of the faith that celebrate Christ's incarnation and what they teach us:

Dec. 4, 5:15 p.m.
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Dec. 11, 5:15 p.m.
Joy to the World, the Lord is Come
Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

In Sunday School, we'll look together at a few of the cardinal Old Testament texts that foretell the coming of the Messiah:

Dec. 1, *Gen. 3:8-19 - "The First Promise"*
Dec. 8, *Gen. 22:1-18 - "The Reign of the Seed"*
Dec. 15, *Isa. 9:1-7 - "The Coming Saviour"*
Dec. 22, *Isa. 11:1-10 - "The Righteous Branch"*
Dec. 29, *Zech. 14 - "The Day of the Lord"*

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

Last week we looked at the *particular* transgression that brought sin into and death upon the human race. This week we consider why the consequences of Adam's sin affect all of mankind.

Q16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.

A few weeks ago we said that God relates to man through covenants, His relationship to us is always within the context and framework of a divinely instituted covenant.

In the Covenant of Works, Adam was not only acting for himself in the Garden of Eden, but also for those who come after him as their covenant head. Adam *represented* all of his children who would inherit either the benefits of his obedience or the consequences of his disobedience (original sin).

Adam was a superbly qualified representative for our race, far better than you or I would be. His mind, will, and affections were untainted by sin. By virtue of his sinlessness, Adam possessed a clarity of thought that we can only dream of in our fallenness today!

In spite of all of these advantages, Adam still succumbed to the temptation and fell into sin, and all of us who come after him share in the consequences of this.

There is hope for us because Adam only represents those who come after him through *ordinary* generation (birth). The Lord Jesus Christ's birth was anything but ordinary! Born of a virgin, Christ was born without sin and able to succeed where Adam failed.

Christ is the second Adam, the mediator of the covenant of Grace. Is He your *covenant representative* or is Adam?

Spotting the Spirit's Work

In our Wednesday Night Bible Study we began the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. The First Article focuses on the work of God the Father, the Second on God the Son, and the Third on the particular work of God the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does not draw a lot of attention to Himself, but is very busy in the Church today. It is the Holy Spirit who "regenerates" (or gives the New Birth) to sinners so that they may by faith repent to turn and serve the living God. It is the Holy Spirit who brings people into the church and works in them to make them holy.

Every Christian is sealed by the Holy Spirit. Eph. 1:13-14 says, "***In him [Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory***."

It is not that only "super Christians" receive the Spirit or that Holy Spirit is some "second blessing" or an additional baptism, but *all* God's people are the dwelling place of God's Spirit. Some religious groups, whose origins go back to the19th Century, erroneously teach that the Holy Spirit works today through extraordinary gifts such as speaking in "tongues" or "healing miracles" or additional "prophecies."

The Holy Spirit gave extraordinary gifts to the Church during the days of the Apostles, prior to the completion of the New Testament, as a way of furthering the message of the gospel and attesting to it. For example, at Pentecost, the disciples spoke in foreign tongues (i.e. languages) to declare the "mighty works of God" to the many foreigners visiting Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2).

Today the "perfect" has come (the completed New Testament) and so the "partial" things such as tongues and prophecy have passed away (cf. I Cor 13:8-10). Because we have the full Scripture, we are able to discern (i.e. *judge*) whether someone is a believer or a teaching/doctrine is truly biblical with clarity not possible before.

The Apostle John teaches us how we may know whether someone is a Christian. He writes, "we know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning" (I John 5:18). John is not saying that Christians will never sin, but he is teaching us that the Christian's life will be characterized by a continual turning from sin to further and more faithful obedience. This is how we spot the Spirit's work: obedience to Christ's commands.

Sermon Snapshot: "You People?"

Everything about the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ topples mankind's quest for self-sufficiency and sovereignty. Mankind's attempts at "playing God" are nothing new to 20th Century eugenics, but date back to our earliest history.

Paul is writing to people in a culture that prided itself on the many erudite philosophies of life that various wise men had concocted. These philosophies promised the adherents a balanced life, serenity, and personal peace if they were followed. Some in the church at Corinth wanted to convey the gospel in those kind of terms, the terminology and language of worldly wisdom and philosophy.

Paul is trying to emphasize that the gospel is not compatible with worldly wisdom and philosophy. The message, as we saw last week, is repulsive by the world's standards. This past Sunday we considered I Cor. 1:26-31 where Paul points out that by its recipients, the gospel overturns the world's standards of wisdom.

In saving Christians, God further confounds the wisdom of this world by not choosing necessarily to save the ones who are influential, powerful, intelligent, or wealthy. Sometimes God does save people who match that description, but His salvation has no regard for what the world considers important or beneficial. God saves what the world considers "low and despised" because He is nullifying every part of worldly wisdom and man's attempts at self-importance and justification by works.

The great orators in Corinth, the philosophers and proponents of wisdom schemes in the large Roman metropolises wanted to be received by the rich and powerful. But the gospel of Jesus Christ gives no preference to a person based on what he or she can offer to God or God's Kingdom.

It's as if Paul says to the Corinthian Christians, "one of the ways you know that the gospel is not like any wisdom or idea that is circulating in the public forum, is that God saved *you people*!"

The Corinthian Christians serve as a testimony of the greatness of God's grace. God saves people who do not deserve His salvation. God, through His Holy Spirit, reveals His grace to people who are too caught up with their own righteousness and vanity to see their own unworthiness and wretchedness.

We are just like the Corinthians. If it were not for God's grace opening our eyes to our sinfulness, we would be involved in all manner of foolishness and evil. God displays His wisdom and power in rescuing us from our sin.