



FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, NOV. 22, 2013

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Nov. 30, 4 p.m.

Come decorate the church building for the holidays and/or join us for a potluck (burgers provided) at **5:30 p.m.** in the Fellowship Hall.

Dec. 2, 5:30 p.m.

WIC Meeting; please bring items for our shut-ins and for Courtlyn Hathcock.

Dec. 22, 4:00 p.m.

Annual Church Program followed by a light reception sponsored by the WIC.



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From the Pastor's Pen...

As I write this week's article, we are on the verge of the Thanksgiving Holiday. Even though the holiday was first instituted nationally by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, it is nonetheless a good practice to observe.

As Christians, we of all people have reason to be thankful. Not only do we enjoy many benefits that come from living in a Westernized Country, in a society founded upon the idea of liberal democracy, and a relative safety from war or harm, but we have an eternal inheritance given to us as a gift.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (21.5) recognizes the Christian's duty at various times to give thanks to God in special times of worship.

It is helpful to look to the Scripture to teach you how to give thanks to God. James Faris notes a number of themes of thankfulness in the Psalms. He notes that the psalmist:

Gives thanks for who the Lord is. He is righteous (7:17), holy (30:4), good (118:1) and so on. Do you give thanks to God simply for *who* He is?

Gives thanks for what the Lord does. "His wonderful deeds" (9:1), "His steadfast love" (107:31), that "He has...become my salvation" (118:21). Do you reflect on what God has done and render Him worship and thanksgiving as a response?

At this time when even the government recognizes the duty of mankind to give thanks to his Maker, it is a good opportunity for us as God's holy people to reflect on His manifold blessings to us in this life and the next.

This Thanksgiving, I hope your list of thanksgivings extends beyond such generalities as "friends and family, country, house, and food," but contemplates the specific gifts and mercies that God has shown you in this year.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

In the past few weeks, we've been considering the sin of our first parents and its effects.

Q. 18. *Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate where into man fell?*

A. The sinfulness of that estate where into man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

This lengthy question and answer considers the consequences of the first sin upon mankind as a whole. Not only did their sin rupture their relationship with God and bring death upon man, it corrupted man's nature itself.

Adam and Eve were created as perfect humans, but with sin their humanity was damaged and warped. It is safe to say that because of sin, every human born after Adam and Eve is less human than they were as originally cre-

ated. The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, was the *most human* person to ever live and die, since sin hadn't wrecked His nature.

Our innate sinfulness means that not only do we stand guilty in Adam from conception, but our whole nature is "corrupted." We are not "sinners" simply because we sin, but rather we sin *because we are sinners*. Sin is what comes naturally to us.

Even though mankind's whole nature is corrupted by sin, that does not necessarily mean that we are as bad as we possibly could be. God, in His common grace, mercifully restrains the effects of our sin through various means (such as His Law and civil government).

The only hope for mankind is to have a new nature, to be born again not through the natural means, but by a supernatural miracle. We can overcome "human nature" only by God's spirit breathing life into us and giving us a new heart capable of turning from sin.

Coming to God as He Reveals Himself

Nearly everyone you meet has some concept of the divine. There are very few actual atheists. Atheism as a belief system gained no respect or credibility until relatively recently because the evidence for the existence of a Divine Being is so overwhelming.

Simply because someone acknowledges a Divine Creator does not mean that he or she is actually a worshiper of the True and Living God. Many of the founders of the United States, such as Benjamin Franklin for example, happily acknowledged that there was a Divine Power in the universe, but stopped far short of worshiping the God of Scripture who sent His Son to die for man's sin.

God reveals Himself to us in the Bible. As we considered earlier, many of the psalms are simply proclamations of *who* God is and *what* God is like. The Hebrews worshiped God because they *knew Him* and treasured His word that revealed Him to them.

It is vital in order to have vibrant Christian piety that you know God as He reveals Himself in His word. The Bible is the only infallible source of information on God. It is always a temptation to make *assumptions* about what God is like; our pagan ancestors made gods in their image, and we are prone to do so as well!

This past Lord's Day evening at the Community Thanksgiving gathering, the representative from the host congregation opened the event with a prayer to a "mother god" and a "sister god." Such an attempt to reach the Divine in that way is a great blasphemy and insult to the true God.

The God of the Bible reveals Himself as many things - king, husband, spirit, lord, brother, comforter - and so on. Chiefly, God reveals Himself as *Father* and *Son* and *Holy Spirit*. God never reveals Himself as *mother* or *sister*.

While it is true that God sometimes uses analogies of a mother's love (Isa. 49) or a hen's concern (Matt. 23) to describe His love and concern for His people, He never invites us to come to Him as a mother or a chicken!

Many may want to avoid coming to God in the masculine because of bad experiences with males in the past. And while that is tragic, it does not give the creature the right to approach the Creator in a way that the Creator has not revealed.

In fact, when God reveals Himself as Father, he is teaching us about what real fatherhood is. He is providing an example for how human fathers are to care for their children. Additionally, He provides the perfect father for those who may have had a highly imperfect one.

Sermon Snapshot: "Triune Salvation"

It was my privilege and joy to bring the Word of God to the Community Thanksgiving Service last Lord's Day. I had hoped to cover more in the sermon, but when one is only beginning one's sermon 53 minutes after the start of the service, one does try to be brief!

We were looking at Eph. 1:3-14 in which the Apostle Paul praises God for the salvation that He enjoys along with the Ephesian saints. In that paragraph (which is actually *one sentence* in the original Greek!), Paul details how each member of the Trinity played a special part in saving the elect.

As we saw, it is God the Father who planned and purposed our salvation. Paul takes pains to point out that it was the Father who, from all eternity, particularly chose those whom His Son would die to redeem.

This is important for us to realize in our day, especially because many have been influenced by the erroneous idea that the Father wanted to destroy humanity and Christ persuaded Him to accept a substitute in our place.

Eph. 1:3-6 (and other Scriptures such as John 3 and Rom. 3) make it very clear that salvation and redemption were the Father's idea. He is the one, after all, who sent the Son to save, He is the one whose love and mercy are so deep that He gave His perfect and beloved Son to pay the price of our adoption.

The Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we typically associate chiefly with our salvation, is the one who had to die in our place. He agreed to come to dwell on this earth, to

humble Himself by taking on our flesh, and to shed His blood to cover our transgressions. He did this, chiefly, because of His love for the Father.

We don't want to, of course, minimize Christ's love for us, but His love for His Father far exceeds His love for those whom He redeemed. Christ came to earth because our redemption pleased the Father. Christ came not to do His own will, remember, but His Father's will (John 6).

The Holy Spirit might be called the "silent partner" because He does not draw attention to Himself. But it is quite inaccurate to describe Him as such because it is He who inspired God's word and illumines it to us now.

The Holy Spirit is given to all God's people by the Father and Son to as the *seal* and *guarantee* of our salvation. He begins the work of transforming the saints to look like their elder Brother as well as to enable us to endure the trials and tribulations of life as God's people in a world that is hostile to God.

There are a number of applications that we can draw from this section of scripture, but let us focus on just one: do you see the great motivation and invitation that we have to pray?

While prayer is not mentioned here, consider to whom we pray. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the Father: to His Father and ours. The Father's love for us was so great that he planned and purposed Christ's mission. Knowing the Father's love for us, isn't it almost *silly*, surely foolish, when we are reluctant to take our needs to Him?