



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

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FRIDAY, JAN. 10, 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Jan 12, 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Night Study Resumes

Jan 15, 5:15 p.m.

Wednesday Night Bible Study: *The Covenants of Christ*

Jan 19, 5:00 p.m.

Bible Conference at FPC Kosciusko with Geoff Thomas preaching

VERY SPECIAL THANKS

To Cat and Georgia for removing all of the holiday decorations this week!



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From the Pastor's Pen...

As you know, Deacon nominations are taking place during the month of January. This is an important time in the life of the church. Deacon is one of two offices in the church (the other being Elder) that Christ gave for the continued ministry and growth of His Kingdom.

As we go about the process of nominating, training, and electing deacons it is important for us as a congregation to consider the seriousness of what we are doing.

The Diaconate is not a human institution, but it is an institution of Christ. As such, Christ determines the qualifications for who gets to serve, that is *whom He calls to serve* on His Diaconate.

In His word, Christ has given His qualifications for deacons. The men whom Christ calls as deacons will look like what is de-

scribed in 1 Tim. 3 and Acts 6. It is our delight to search for, nominate, and elect those men whom Christ has already called. We must be faithful to God's word here as we nominate men to the office of deacon (as in every aspect of life). God does not bless a church that does not obey His word.

We could summarize what Christ says on this subject by saying deacons are wise, knowledgeable, and godly men who love to minister to Christ's church and Christ's saints.

A couple of procedural points to remember as we go forward with nominations:

1. **FPC is electing the entire diaconate.**
2. **Be sure you talk to the man before you nominate him.**
3. **Be sure to sign your own name on the nomination form.**

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

Last year (!) when we left off our look at the Shorter Catechism, we had just considered that the Lord Jesus Christ is the *only* redeemer of God's elect. Now the Catechism explains how that is possible:

Q22. *How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?*

A. Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

The catechism here seeks to briefly address a rather important conundrum: how can God redeem mankind? Remember, for redemption to take place a price must be paid. Mankind is due death from God's justice because of sin.

Only God could fully satisfy the penalty for our sin, but in order for Christ to redeem us He had to become a man so that the debt of

mankind could be paid by a man.

The fact that Christ took on our flesh has been challenged throughout church history, but the church has staunchly defended both the Humanity and Divinity of Christ.

It is interesting to note that the first heresies regarding Christ's nature did not deny His divinity, but His *humanity*. People had a difficult time comprehending (believing in) the love that God displayed in becoming a man. For God to take on human flesh in order to pay a debt that humanity owed displays the unfathomable depths of God's covenant mercies and compassion.

The Incarnation of Christ is the greatest assurance that God receives sinners and has mercy upon all who look to Him. If God were not merciful, if God were vindictive, He would not have sent Christ to become one of us so that He could welcome us into His family.

What is the Bible About?

On Wednesday nights we are studying together the Covenants of the Bible. A covenant, simply put, is a “solemn agreement between two parties.” In a covenant various terms of the relationship are outlined.

Everyone who has a relationship with God is in covenant with Him. When God makes a covenant, he does so as a “bond in blood, sovereignly administered.” We don’t get to negotiate with God the “terms” of our covenant with Him, He simply tells us what those terms are.

The first covenant that God made with mankind was the **Covenant of Works**, which governed the relationship Adam (and

Eve) had with God in the Garden. It was based solely on Adam’s obedience to God. If Adam obeyed and kept the covenant, he would be rewarded with life; if he disobeyed, he would be punished with death (Gen. 2).

As you know, Adam broke covenant with God and brought death upon himself and upon all who would come after him. Yet God was pleased to show mercy to Adam (and those who come after him) by making a sec-

ond covenant, the **Covenant of Grace**. In this second covenant, God pledges that He Himself will deal with the consequences of Adam’s sin and enable man to dwell with God again.

Through the whole Old Testament, God reveals this plan as he makes covenants with various individuals, all of which will ultimately culminate in Christ in the New Testament.

To Adam, God simply promised that from his wife will come a seed to destroy Satan.

As the Old Testament moves forward, the covenant promises become clearer and clearer. God slowly and progressively

“unfolds” or reveals the way in which He will bring mankind back to a right relationship with Himself as He makes greater and grander promises to successive generations of His saints.

With the sin in the Garden, mankind lost fellowship and communion with God. Through the Covenant of Grace, God shows how He will restore us to fellowship with Himself. That is the message of the Bible.

The Covenants of Christ: *God’s Faithfulness to His Promise*

Join us as we look at God’s unfolding plan of redemption to free humanity from bondage to sin and bring us to the Rest of God.

Wednesday Nights @ 5:15 p.m. in the Pastor’s Study

Sermon Snapshot: “Seven Deacons Ordained”

On the last Lord’s Day we were together we looked at Acts 6 and the creation of the office of deacon. We said that the church had been growing rapidly and with that rapid growth came problems.

By Acts Chapter Six, the church in Jerusalem had grown to about 20,000 members. With the church growing so quickly, it became hard for the church to properly care for those who had needs among her membership.

In fact, those who were being overlooked were disproportionately among the minority ethnic group within the Jerusalem church. This oversight had the potential to split or even destroy the church in its very infancy.

Christ, through His apostles, established the office of deacon particularly to address this issue. The apostles call for the church to elect men to oversee this.

It’s important to note that the apostles recognized that *not every man in the congregation would be qualified or gifted for this office*. For a church of many thousands, only seven would be called and ordained to this office.

Deacons are not simply good businessmen, nice people, or men we’d like to see become more involved. The Bible teaches that deacons are those who exemplify Christian living. The men whom God calls as officers are

those you can point to and say, “that is what a Christian looks like.” Deacons are the ones showing the very love of Christ to the saints. They are acting *for Christ* to His people and so it is logical that they would be the men in the church who are seen to most closely resemble Christ in their piety and daily living.

It is the duty of the church to care for saints in distress and deacons *enable* the church care for them.

After a congregational meeting, those men were elected and ordained to serve the church in this way. Their ministry allowed the apostles to devote themselves to the preaching and teaching of God’s word.

God’s word has preeminence within the church. It is God’s word that creates the church, sustains the church, and grows the church. No one is saved by having a warm bowl of soup and a heavy winter coat. No one ever turned from sin because he had a cot to sleep on at the YMCA. But people are saved and turn from sin *because they hear God’s word of promise, of pardon*.

An effective “diaconal ministry” is, however, essential to an effective “gospel ministry.” When the church cares for her poor and needy, she is showing that she understands God’s love for her, that she begins to comprehend the humility and service of Christ.