



# FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, JAN. 17, 2014

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Jan. 19, 5:00 p.m.**

Bible Conference at FPC Kosciusko with Geoff Thomas preaching

**Jan. 21, 5:30 p.m.**

Men's Steak Supper at Westminster PCA in Greenwood. Brian Sorgenfrei is speaking.

**Feb. 9, 9:00 a.m.**

Ryan preaches at the monthly Community Service.

## From the Pastor's Pen...

This coming Wednesday marks the 41st Anniversary of the legalization of what has come to be called "Abortion" in this country. The legalization and normalization of such a practice presents a particular challenge to the way in which the church ministers to the society around her.

In such a culture, it becomes increasingly obvious that the world and its ways are perishing. It becomes more clear that we as Christians must put our hope not in a nation that allows the termination of its own children, but in the Heavenly Kingdom.

In such a culture, the stark contrast between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this World becomes all the more clear. In God's Kingdom, human worth and dignity are not based on convenience or intelligence or beauty or ability, but unconditional love.

So what is our Christian duty *in* such a society and *to* such a society?

The first is for the church as an institution to boldly proclaim the free offer of the gospel as the one way of forgiveness and redemption from sin. The forgiveness we proclaim is not just for "little sins" like white lies and laziness, but is for *all* who repent of their sins and trust in Christ's sacrifice on their behalf.

Second, Christians must know what the Bible says about life and death. As a Christian, you can't rest on what the politicians say, *you* must search the Scripture and see what God says about life.

Third, we in the church must show that we believe that all life is precious to God in the way we treat others and speak about them. This includes the "welfare queen" in front of you at SuperValu.

## Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

For several weeks now, we've been considering the Shorter Catechism's exposition of man's need for redeemer and then the person of Christ Himself. Now the Catechism turns to consider the *work* of Christ as the redeemer mankind needs:

*Q23. What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?*

**A. Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.**

Here the catechism deals with the three *offices* of Christ and His two *states*. Over the few next weeks we'll look more closely at each of his three offices and two states.

As our redeemer it was necessary for Christ to fulfill all three of the Old Testament offices (prophet, priest, and king). God gave those three offices to the church in ancient times to reveal the gospel to the Hebrew

people and to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah.

Throughout the Old Testament and the history of redemption, many men filled those roles (i.e. *offices*) with varying degrees of faithfulness and success. For example, David was a *good* king and Rehoboam was a *bad* king. But Christ came to be the *perfect* Prophet, Priest, and King for His people.

The whole Old Testament was preparing the world, but particularly God's people, to receive and understand Christ when He ultimately arrived.

Christ's work as our prophet, priest, and king does not cease now that He is highly exalted in the heavens. Some might want to limit his work only to his "estate of humiliation," but as we will see in a few weeks Christ continues to work on our behalf even as he is exalted in Heaven. Christ is our eternal and faithful prophet, priest, and king.



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# Does the Bible Have All the Answers?

Recently, I received an email from the priestess at a congregation my family attended while I was growing up. In her weekly email she made the point that the Bible does not, in fact, have all the answers.

She went on to say that since the writers of the Bible didn't know about "artificial intelligence or AIDS or the Human Genome Project or socialism or Big Box Stores," and so on it can't provide all the answers.

That view of the Scripture is very popular today, particularly in the mainline denominations. Such a view of God's word is tragic and, of course, man-centered and "sub-Christian."

As Presbyterians, we heartily believe that the Bible indeed *has* all of the answers to life's questions. Our Westminster Confession of Faith states that the Scripture contains "**all things necessary for [God's] own glory, man's salvation, faith and life**" as either "expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture."

When the authors of the Westminster Standards wrote those words they were making a bold stand against worldliness. They proclaimed that the Bible's authority and teaching does not simply tell us how to "get saved," but also how to live our daily life, as well as provides the answers to the "deep things" of life. As such, the Scripture is indispensable to a full life.

Now we are not saying that the Bible has an exhaustive index that includes a heading for every issue and topic known to man. Rather, principles of God's Word *speak* to every issue and topic and instruct God's people how to respond to and evaluate them.

Take for example, "Big Box Stores." Doesn't the Bible speak about materialism and the love of stuff? Jesus may not have told a parable featuring a clerk at Best Buy, but God's word speaks amply about the love of money, the accumulation of possessions, and concern for the poor and helpless (e.g. Chinese factory workers)?

Sometimes God's word will give an explicit command regarding an issue (e.g. Murder, Adultery), but more often God's word gives us principles that we must apply everyday to know how to live as His people.

It is by far much easier to simply assert that God's word doesn't have all the answers and then live as is fashionable than to read, study, and search God's Word to direct your paths.

The Bible does indeed have the answers to the questions of life, but to learn the answers God gives in His word takes a lifetime of devotion and prayerful *study* of the Scripture.

It is worth the time and effort to know God's Word, and it is far more rewarding than letting Bill O'Reilly and Rupert Murdoch tell you what to think!

## Sermon Snapshot: "Deacons Called by Christ"

In the sermon on Sunday we looked at the Bible's qualifications for the office of deacon in I Timothy 3. The Lord Jesus Christ sets a very high bar for those whom *He calls* to the office of deacon.

As we consider deacon nominations, it's important to remember that it is Christ who calls the deacons. The qualifications listed in the Scripture are there so we can distinguish the men that *Christ has already called*.

We should remember that Christ saves us all by grace alone through faith alone. We are not saved because of our works or how well we "do" as Christians.

Nonetheless, the men God calls as deacons (and elders) exemplify what it means to be a Christian. Typically, not every man in a congregation will be called as a deacon or an elder, in fact most will not be.

Simply because Christ does not call you to be a deacon or an elder does not mean you are excluded from service in the Kingdom and to the Church. Many today think that if they're not an "officer" they can't serve (whether it be in the WIC, the diaconate, or the session). Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The church in Acts 6 had about 20,000 members and only seven deacons. The relatively few deacons oversaw a much larger operation to which many members con-

tributed vitally even though Christ had not called them to a particular office.

The men whom Christ calls as deacons represented Christ to His people and lived lives that were models of godliness for the people to follow.

Deacons called by Christ not only have an exceptional knowledge of God's Word, but their reputation and character are flawless and "beyond reproach."

It is important to realize that Christ's qualifications for deacons do not include "sinless"! If that were the case, then no one (except Jesus) would be qualified.

But those who are qualified are quite aware of their sinfulness, quick to repent when they sin, speedy to seek the mercy of God for their transgressions, and do not delay in sincerely asking forgiveness from others whom they have wronged. Such men do indeed have the blameless character and reputation that is becoming of a deacon (and which *all Christians* are called to have).

The ones who know their need of Christ the most are the ones whom Christ gives to serve us, to help us to see all the better our own need of Him. It was, after all, the Apostle Paul who considered Himself to be the chief of sinners, and it was through Paul's ministry that God brought so many sinners to Himself.