



FIRST PRESS

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 54

FRIDAY, JAN. 30, 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Feb. 1, 9 a.m.

Sunday School:
Num. 16, "Coupe in
the Camp!"

Feb. 1, 10 a.m.

Morning Worship:
Mark 1.21-28, "The
King's Author-
ity" (Lord's Table &
lunch to follow)

Feb. 2, 6:00 p.m.

Session Meeting

Feb. 3, 6:30 p.m.

Informational Meet-
ing: Child Evangel-
ism Fellowship

Feb. 4, 5:15 p.m.

Wednesday Night
Bible Study, "The
Worship of God"

Feb. 5, 6:00 p.m.

Revitalization &
Evangelism Commit-
tee meeting

Feb. 9, 10:00 a.m.

Circle meets @
Ann Biese's home

Feb. 9, 5:30 p.m.

WIC Meeting

From the Pastor's Pen...

Through the Fall and Winter last year on Lord's Day evenings we went through Ralph Davis' book on the first twelve psalms. Starting Next Lord's Day evening, we'll be looking at the next dozen psalms in his second volume, *Slogging Along in the Paths of Righteousness*.

Dr. Davis, who was a pastor in Hattiesburg for years, takes us on a quick tour of a psalm each week. The psalms are rich literary treasures and filled with imagery; they are so rich and full that we might sometimes get lost in the beauty of the poetry that we lose sight of the meaning. Davis' book helps us to see the "forest through the trees" and understand both the context and the message of each psalm.

Most of the psalms we considered last quarter were dealing with godly people in a whole mess of trouble; sometimes it was trouble of their own making, but oftentimes it was trouble at the hands of wicked people.

The psalms teach us how to deal with suffer-

ing, biblically. The psalms provide a pattern for prayer. The psalms teach us a lot about the *kind* of God that we have. All of which are essential when dealing with trouble and hardship.

One of the things that became increasingly clear each Lord's Day evening as we looked closely at a particular psalm was how relevant the Old Testament psalms are for us today. That's no doubt one reason that up until the 20th Century Presbyterians (and others) typically sang many psalms in worship.

The psalms were written by our ancestors in response to the trials and joys, sorrows and victories of life in God's Kingdom. The psalmists consistently convey the faithful response to all of life's ups and downs: hope in God, trust in God, cry out to God, thank God, praise God, worship God. It's the same for us! I hope you will join us Lord's Day evenings at 4:00 as we grow and learn more about God as He is enthroned on the praises of His people.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

We are now considering the third commandment, which concerns our use of God's Holy Name. Since God's Names reveal His character and nature, the third command is much broader in scope than we might otherwise think.

Q54. *What is required in the 3rd commandment?*

A54. The 3rd commandment requireth the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, and works.

All of God's Word generally teaches us that we are to approach, consider, and speak of God with the greatest amount of reverence; He is, after all, not only our Creator and the Judge of All the Earth, but also our Father. The third commandment in particular presses home the truth that we must exercise great care about the way in which we treat God.

Q&A 54 remind us that God's names are not only terms by which he is called, but His names reveal what He is like and what He has done.

The society in which we live treats God and all

that is associated with Him with great flippancy and irreverence. God is often the butt of jokes; He is the punch line of sappy, sentimental emails; His holiness is mocked; His word and judgments are accounted as outdated and optional.

This command confronts particularly Christians with the truth that we must think very carefully about the way we speak of God and all that He is and does. Many of us are not accustomed to weighing carefully and being deliberate with our words, particularly on spiritual matters. But this is yet another area of our lives that we must come to God in faith and repentance.

The culture may tell us that religion is "whatever feels right in your heart," but the Bible tells us true religion is only found by looking to God in His Word. This command, as all the others, show us just how well adapted we are to the world and unsuited we are for heaven; this makes all the more clear how greatly we need the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit.

Looking Forward to Heaven

In recent years there have been a number of books by folks who claim to have died and gone to heaven or hell. From the very beginning Presbyterian pastors and scholars (and other evangelicals) were highly skeptical and critical, citing biblical inconsistencies with the reports.

One of books, the account of Alex Malarkey (yes, that really is his last name!) was recently revealed to be entirely fictional, i.e. *malarkey*. He wrote a letter confessing that he lied about his experience to get attention. He said, “when I made the claims I did, I had never read the Bible.” Alex bravely admitted his own sin and went on to call everyone to repent of their sins and to read the Bible for themselves!

Admittedly, and obviously intentionally, the Bible doesn’t tell us much about heaven and the afterlife, but the Bible does tell us some things. We spent a few minutes last Lord’s Day evening thinking about and reflecting on what the Bible says about Heaven, the Afterlife, and Eternity.

After a Christian dies, he or she goes to be immediately “with the Lord.” Jesus tells the thief on the cross, “today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23.43) and Paul confesses that to be “away from the body” is to be “at home with the Lord” (II Cor. 5.8). After death, the Christian’s spirit (i.e. soul) is unnaturally ripped away from his or her body and goes to be in the presence of Christ in Heaven. The saint’s soul is immediately “made perfect in holiness” (WSC 37, cf. Heb. 12.23) to await the final day of Redemption and return of Christ to the earth. This period of time, is called the **Intermediate State** (a very handsome and descriptive name for sure!). It is the period between our death and the

final resurrection. Even though we are “with the Lord,” that period of time will nonetheless be characterized by a longing to be vindicated and have our spirits (*souls*) once again united with our bodies.

The “intermediate state” will be suddenly concluded by the return of Christ to the earth as Conquering King and Judge (I Thes. 4). It is on that day that all the bodies of the dead shall be raised; the bodies of the people of God, the saints, shall be raised gloriously to everlasting honor and transformed “to be like His glorious body” (Phil 3.21).

When Christ returns to the earth, he will judge the whole world, vindicate His saints, and make all things new: a new heavens and a new earth. That is why God promises a new, a resurrection body to His people, because we will dwell with God on the new earth (Rev. 21.1-3).

When the saints die, we go to the “intermediate state” in heaven (that is, the *present* heaven), but that is not the *final state*. **The final state comes only after Christ Himself returns to the earth and brings in the New Heavens and the New Earth.** Many of the visions John saw in Revelation were in the present heaven, but also he got a few glimpses of life on the New Earth: God dwelling with man, being worshiped and glorified by the redeemed mankind.

Sin did not thwart God’s original purpose for Creation; He graciously and sovereignly brought it about, sending Christ to die for sin and defeat sin so that God could one day make “all things new” and dwell intimately with His people forever. That has been the trajectory of the Scripture in spite of our sinfulness.

Sermon Snapshot: “The Inconvenient King”

This past Lord’s Day in Mark 1.16-20 we witnessed the Lord Jesus Christ call His first four disciples: James, John, Simon (Peter), and Andrew. As we saw, they are fishermen and in the midst of their everyday activities. Andrew and Simon are busy fishing; James and John are getting their nets ready so they can go out again.

Onto this scene walks the King and Creator of all, Jesus of Nazareth. He already had an acquaintance with at least some of the men; they were eager to learn about the Kingdom, God and His ways. But they did so as laymen with other fulltime callings. Jesus, however, is about to call these men to fulltime ministry. He commanded that they drop *whatever* they were doing to sit at His feet and learn from Him so that He could transform them into evangelists.

Jesus doesn’t call everyone so dramatically to leave their jobs and become “fishers of men,” but His call is always transformative and always reorders our priorities.

Sinclair Ferguson well summarizes what the call of Jesus Christ means for every Christian, “**Christ’s call and His**

kingly reign over our lives ... mean that from then on our lives are no longer at our disposal... family, occupation, business partnership all must now be at the disposal of Jesus Christ.”

Many people are happy to be a Christian when it is not troublesome or doesn’t get in the way of things, **but that’s not the Christian life that Jesus calls people to.** The life Jesus redeems and saves us to is one of dying to self, dying to sin and living to Christ, living to righteousness. The Christian life means not only having Jesus Christ as your Saviour, but also as your King.

Jesus is no figurehead like the Queen of England; He reigns, He takes priority. In your life, what is your priority: family, business, success or the Kingdom of God? When faced with a choice of what to do on the Lord’s Day which do you choose the King or someone or something else? Jesus can make these powerful, audacious claims because He offers salvation to sinners, eternal life, reconciliation with God: what He offers is better than anything in this life; if only we could believe that!

The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel



The Gospel of
MARK

the crown and the cross

First Presbyterian Church | Starting Jan. 4 | Sundays 10 a.m.