



FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Mar. 29, 9 a.m.

Sunday School:
Num. 25, "They
seemed like such nice
girls..."

Mar. 29, 10 a.m.

Morning Worship:
Mark 3.1-6, "A Con-
spiracy against the
King"

Mar. 29, 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Night Study,
Psalm 18, "Surprising
Song"

Mar. 30, 6:00 p.m.

Diaconate Meeting

Apr. 1, 5:15 p.m.

Wednesday Night
Bible Study, "What
are the Sacraments?"

From the Pastor's Pen...

We had a nice week of weather for much of this past week, but the storms and rain that threatened the latter part of the week have delayed the start of roof reconstruction. As you may remember, the dome over our sanctuary needs to be completely reconstructed in order to preserve our historic worship space.

This work and preservation is not a cheap task, but few things worth doing are cheap anyway. Thank you to those of you who have given already to the capital improvements fund. As you know, the church officers have created a special fund to help pay for the rebuilding of our dome. The hope is that we can minimize the amount of the principal from our reserves that needs to be allocated to the dome repair. If we continue to deplete the principal of the reserves, it will drastically reduce the church's ability to earn income from

the reserves and imperil the congregation's financial stability in the very near future.

If you have not given to the capital improvements fund, please prayerfully consider if you can *increase* your giving to meet this need. A situation such as this is an opportunity for God's people to give *sacrificially* to the needs of His Kingdom. Remember that Jesus doesn't commend the wealthy who gave small fortunes out of their excess, but rather the poor widow who gave to God simply out of what she had. Jesus comments that the rich gave what they didn't need, but the poor woman gave what she had as an act of self-sacrifice because she loved the Lord (Mark 12).

I pray that many of us at FPC will be moved out of love to God to increase our giving such that His Kingdom becomes the number one priority over everything else.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

The Fourth Commandment concerns God's Holy Day, the Sabbath.

Q59. *Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly sabbath?*

A59. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian sabbath.

Q&A59 of our Shorter Catechism addresses a rather significant issue regarding the Sabbath: the reason we observe it on Sunday rather than Saturday. After all, God instituted the Sabbath on the seventh day after beginning creation. Why, then, do Christians observe the Sabbath on Sunday?

The principle of the Sabbath day is woven into the fabric of God's moral law in creation. The particular day of the Sabbath is ceremonial and could be changed at the Resurrection

without altering the moral principle taught in and by the Sabbath.

As the catechism explains, the reason for the change of day - literally - hinges on the Resurrection of Christ. Very early on in the days of the Apostles, Hebrew Christians began gathering notably *not* on Saturday, the day they had gathered in the synagogue as Jews, but on Sunday. This shows the significance of the Resurrection to the Church as well as the whole order of all things: the resurrection changes something that had been so since the very beginning, even the fabric of creation!

The change to the Sabbath day is not simply something that the Apostles did because of their preference or inkling, but by Christ's authority as King and Head of the Church.

The Scripture acknowledges a number of times that the saints gathered together for worship not on Saturday, but on the first day of the week, which they called the Lord's Day.

The Communion of Saints

Each Lord's Day we confess our faith together, typically using the Apostle's Creed, which affirms that we each believe in "the communion of saints" (COS). We say those words, but do we really know what they mean? Jesus warns against using empty phrases and words we don't understand in worship. God seeks worshipers who will worship him in Spirit and Truth, not folks who simply use 'right' words or forms (Mt. 6, Jn. 4).

Contrary to what you might think, the COS is not simply about the Lord's Supper. The COS is intimately tied up with each individual believer's union with Christ. Union with Christ is both the culmination and foundation of salvation. God saves sinners *in Christ*, Christ gives to His people the benefits of His victory over sin, and Christ's people share in all that He has. Likewise, Christ shares in all the experiences of his people (II Cor. 12).

In salvation, the Christ's Spirit dwells upon believers (Eph. 1) and believers become a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6). If a person is *in Christ*, s/he is indeed intimately and forever in fellowship with Christ in all things.

Christ even promises that His redeemed people will sit on His throne with Him (Rev. 3) and that we are joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8). The union between Christ and His people is such that God always sees believers in Christ, in fact when God looks upon believers, He sees Christ and His righteousness and His obedience.

Jesus Himself describes the relationship between Himself and His people as that of a vine and branches (John 15): Christ giving life and nourishment to His people; by

His grace, His fate (so to speak) is bound up intimately with His people. From the Christian's union with Christ, we begin to understand the communion of saints.

Since Christ is always united to all His people, all Christ's people are also united to one another through Him and by His Spirit. This truth profoundly impacts how we live our lives. We see immediately, that the welfare of one of God's people is of concern to all of God's people; if we are in Christ, we are obliged to have concern for the needs of our fellow Christians. We see how the early church took up collections across different towns, races, and language groups to help Christians in need.

We also see that the COS shapes the way we speak about and to other believers. It should never be said that church members talk negatively or complain about other church members behind their backs. If you have a problem with what one of God's people is doing or what is happening, Jesus outlines how to deal with that in Matt. 18. Sadly, Jesus' command there is often ignored and rejected by those in the church. Our union with Christ confronts us with the union and communion each of us has with all His people and forces us to think about who our eternal family is. We have more in common with those in Christ - even if Christ is the only thing we have in common - than with any who are outside of Christ.

When we better understand the COS, we see many more areas of our own lives that we need to come to repentance and seek God's forgiveness. We must love all those in Christ because they are loved by Christ.

Sermon Snapshot: "The Lord of the Sabbath"

Last Lord's Day in Mark 2:23-28, Jesus was confronted by Pharisees who intended to charge Him with profaning the Sabbath and lawlessness. Jesus rebuffs their charge showing that their own view of the Sabbath Day violates God's Law and intention for His Sabbath.

Some have argued that the Sabbath is an Old Covenant practice and is not something Christians need to observe or can enjoy. Presbyterians, by contrast, have embraced the Sabbath under the New Covenant with the added significance of it being the Lord's Day.

Jesus, as he responds to the charges of the Pharisees, does not at all say anything that would lead us to believe He abolishes the Sabbath, but quite the opposite. ***The Lord Jesus Christ restores the Sabbath Day to its original purpose as given by God for mankind to rest themselves, to give rest to others, and to reflect in worship on God's salvation and greatness.***

The Pharisees had made the Sabbath Day a prison and drudge, dominated by what one may not do; Jesus shows how the Sabbath day can be a delight (Isa. 58). Particularly here, Jesus makes clear that *works of necessity* such as

eating do not profane the day, but in fact must be done in order to enjoy the Sabbath rest. The Pharisees, it seems, preferred people to go hungry rather than to take up food that is readily available and eat it!

While Jesus rejects the Pharisees' additions to the Law of God, He affirms God's Law about the Sabbath. ***Jesus loves the Sabbath so much that He even claims the Day for Himself proclaiming, "the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."*** So to reject the Sabbath is to reject the One who is the Lord of the Sabbath.

You can only love and delight in the Sabbath day if you are in Christ. That is one reason there is so much opposition to Sabbath keeping; those outside of Christ see no need to set apart one day in seven and see the Sabbath only as a hindrance to what they want to do.

In Christ, however, we are able to love the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath, because of all that it frees us to do! The Sabbath is the "market day of the soul" when we are free to put aside so much of our worldly cares and concerns to find deeper rest - both physically and spiritually - in Christ as we worship Him all the day.