

The Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God

*1 Timothy 1:11 – “. . . the glorious gospel of the blessed God,
which was committed to my trust.”*

An excerpt from the sermon delivered by John L. Girardeau
for the installation of the Revs. F. P. Mullaly and J. H. Thornwell
as co-pastors of First Presbyterian Church,
Columbia, South Carolina

May 4, 1860

. . . the Gospel is the representative of the glory of God, as it reveals all the attributes of the divine nature harmonized in the person and work of the glorious Redeemer. The glory of God is the collective result of all His perfections meeting in unison in His own most blessed nature, and shining forth in perfect harmony in the fullness of their manifestation to His intelligent creatures. If it be asked, where this effulgent glory is the most conspicuously and illustriously displayed, I answer—in the wonderful person and atoning work of the incarnate Savior of sinners. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” There is no attribute of the divine character of which we have any knowledge from nature, from Providence, from the law, or from the Scriptures themselves, which is not gloriously magnified by the great Mediator; but above all do the redeeming grace and mercy of God, which are nowhere else displayed, shine in the face of Jesus Christ. The plan of redemption has its foundation in the mercy of God. Sinners might have been left eternally to perish and divine justice would have been glorified in their destruction. But God, having, in infinite mercy, determined to save them, there were formidable difficulties opposing the fulfillment of that purpose, growing out of the insulted perfections of His nature and the claims of His violated law. It was in meeting and removing these difficulties, that the eternal Son of God at once magnified the holiness, the justice, and the veracity of God, and secured the end which was contemplated by free and unmerited mercy.

Erskine Theological Seminary (Columbia Campus)
and
First Presbyterian Church

Welcome you to the **John L. Girardeau Lectures** 2014

Bondage or Freedom? Questions in Early American Reformed Theology



Rev. Thabiti Anyabwile
First Baptist Church in Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

Wednesday, February 26, 2014
6:15 p.m.
Jackson Hall

Thabiti Anyabwile

It is our privilege this evening to welcome as the our John L. Girardeau Lecturer, Rev. Thabiti M. Anyabwile. Mr. Anyabwile is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands. He is author of *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*, and the newly released *Captivated: Beholding the Mystery of Jesus' Death and Resurrection*.

Mr. Anyabwile is a native of Lexington, NC. He is the happy husband of Kristie and the adoring father of two daughters, Afiya and Eden, and son, Titus.



Schedule of Events

6:15-7:10 p.m.: Lecture 1

"Reformed Theology and the Status Quo"

7:10-7:30 p.m.: Break

7:30-8:30 p.m.: Lecture 2

"Reformed Theology and Social Change"

John Lafayette Girardeau

John Lafayette Girardeau's name is intimately connected with both the old Columbia Theological Seminary and the history of First Presbyterian Church.

Born on James Island, South Carolina, in 1825, Girardeau lost his mother when he was only seven years old, and within a few years went to school in Charleston, later graduating from The College of Charleston. He served thereafter for a year as a tutor on a local plantation (and became engaged to the owner's daughter!). From 1845-1848 he studied at Columbia Seminary, and attended First Presbyterian Church, where Dr. Benjamin Palmer was minister. Already his compassion for the needy and his zeal for evangelism were evident. Beginning his ministry in rural South Carolina, in 1854 he came to a mission church in Charleston at Anson Street. He would remain there during the great harvest years of the Second Great Awakening. The descriptions he gives of the services, in which the vast majority of the worshipers were slaves, are profoundly moving.

In 1856, the then Session of First Presbyterian Church nominated him to the congregation as senior minister. Thornwell himself gave an impassioned speech urging the church to call him. But the congregation declined—perhaps because at the time Dr. Thornwell himself was supplying the pulpit. They probably could not have imagined a more effective communicator of the gospel than Thornwell himself!

But Girardeau was. The church he served in Charleston grew from 36 to more than 600 members in a few years and—what is more impressive—had an attendance of around 1500 people.

In 1875 he returned to Columbia to become Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology in the Seminary. He supplied the pulpit of First Presbyterian Church and was also heavily involved in the church plant which we now know as Arsenal Hill Church.

Girardeau remained in Columbia for the rest of his life. He died in 1897 and is buried in Elmwood Cemetery.

Girardeau's ministry bore extraordinary fruit. He was sometimes known as "The Spurgeon of America" One of the few people to hear them both thought Girardeau was the greater preacher.