

A LAMPSTAND

FOR MOUNT AIRY

COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PASTOR SCOTT WILLET

FEBRUARY 2024

Inside and Outside of the Cup

Jesus' harshest criticism is leveled at the Pharisees, those whose concern for proper outward standards of living was contradicted by their lack of concern for the righteousness of their hearts. Though they gave tithes of their riches, Jesus condemned them because they "have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith." Jesus' point is plain: "These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." He continues, "Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matthew 23:23,26-28)

The reality is that as believers, we must give attention to both the inside of the cup and to the outside; in other words, we must give attention to the condition of our hearts as well as to the actions lived out in our lives. It can never be one or the other, such that external conformity to some defined standards of conduct would be sufficient or would cancel the duties of our hearts—things such as humility and kindness. Neither can a right focus upon our the motives and desires of our hearts negate the obvious outward and external requirements of God's law. It's never one or the other, one against the other. God looks upon the heart (the inside of the cup) and the heart is reflected in our actions (the outside of the cup).

Welcome!

To our visitors,
we welcome you to
Covenant Reformed
Presbyterian Church.

Visitors, please take a copy of
the burgundy colored
Welcome!
folder located on the foyer
table next to the bulletins.
Please fill out a visitor's card
and either give it to an usher
or put it in the offering plate.

"But now God has set the members,
each one of them, in the body
just as He pleased."
(1 Cor. 12:18 NKJV)

It is easy to miss that balance. It is easy to emphasize only what is outward in the Christian life, what is seen by others. It is also easy to so emphasize the intentions and motives of the heart such that too little stress is place upon the external duty of our responsibilities before God. It must be both, as it is with Jesus. As it is in all of Scripture. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45)

In that context, I want to note several outward things of importance in this newsletter article as well as in the coming months. Outward things that rightly frame our Christian life and duty, but only as they proceed from the love and delight of the heart. Things that outwardly define our discipleship and sanctification, but only as the demonstration of the love and devotion of the heart. Things like tithing, Bible reading, and going to church.

First, here, a focus on going to church. The Bible is clear about this responsibility: "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is

the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25) It is such a simple thing, such a clear biblical example. God’s people meet together, they gather together to worship. And God has given us one day each week to devote ourselves to that practice, a day called the Lord’s Day in the New Testament, identified as the Sabbath Day in the exposition of God’s moral law. It is a day set aside, set apart to be holy. To be special, sacred. A day for us to delight ourselves in the Lord with the enjoyable freedom of being released from most of the normal obligations of the other six days. Thus it is a day of blessing, conditioned upon our willingness to obey the fourth commandment of the law God gives to his people: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8)

The prophet Isaiah emphasizes the blessings attached to the keeping of this commandment with these refreshing words:

If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Please hear what the Lord is saying to his people, to us! As you delight in the Lord in your heart, let that delight be expressed in the most practical definition of your weekly life. Let the first day each week be devoted to Him, a day intended not for your own pleasures or for your ordinary work, but a day in which you are free to assemble yourselves together. Our Elders have determined that the best time to do so is at 11 AM and 2 PM. We worship together twice each Sunday, setting apart that time to express outwardly the commitment of our hearts. Please don’t neglect that opportunity to call the holy day of the Lord a delight! Unless there are legitimate reasons in God’s providence which would hinder you (sickness certainly included), please set aside the time each Sunday, morning and afternoon, for the blessings of corporate worship and the duty of honoring the Lord. Please don’t let other things in your life, common to the other six days, cause you to be negligent in that outward responsibility. Please consider how you might best be able to delight yourself in the Lord as you call the sabbath a delight, especially if you are not already in the habit of attending both worship services on Sunday.

I’m not interested in attendance for attendance’ sake (i.e., just the outside of the cup), but neither do I want you to neglect the Word of God when it describes our Christian lives—structured since creation on the pattern of God himself, who enjoyed one day of refreshing rest along with the other six days of work. For us, since the fall, that work is now toilsome for us in a way it never was for God. Yet even God was refreshed on the seventh day of creation, and the Sabbath day remains a sign of our covenant relationship with Him. (Exodus 31:17) Therefore we read that “[t]here remains therefore a [sabbath] rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.” (Hebrews 4:9-10)

The delight of the sabbath is also for us now, in this age, a foretaste of the delights of heaven. Our weekly sabbath celebration is a foretaste of our eternal rest, our eternal glory. Thus as we have opportunity to worship together each Lord’s Day in the morning and in the afternoon, the word of blessing from God is ours: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” (Rev. 19:9)

Yours with a pastor’s heart,

Schedule of Preaching

February 11

AM Genesis 18:1-15
PM Matthew 11:16-24

February 18

AM Genesis 18:16-33
PM Matthew 11:25-30

February 25

AM Pulpit Supply: Earl Blackburn
PM Pulpit Supply: Earl Blackburn

March 3

AM Genesis 19:1-29
PM Matthew 12:1-14

March 10

AM Genesis 19:30-38
PM Matthew 12:15-21

March 17

AM Genesis 20:1-18
PM Matthew 12:22-32

March 25

AM Genesis 21:1-21
PM Matthew 12:33-37

Women's Fellowship

Next Event

Monday, March 11

1:00 PM

Devotion and snack at the church building

*Please contact Charlotte Johnson
for additional details*

Wednesday Night Bible Study

Everyone is invited and encouraged to come to our weekly Bible study
each Wednesday evening at 7 pm.

We are studying the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.

Meeting at the home of Marvin and Susan Kaye, 419 Spring St., Mount Airy

Men's Reading Group

Each Friday, 9:00 AM
at the church

studying the book *The Glorious Body of Christ*
by R.B. Kuiper

All the men and young men of the church are invited
for a time of study, prayer and fellowship.

Help!

If anyone is experienced and able to work with WordPress,
and willing to help keep our church website fresh and updated,
please speak to Pastor Willet.

Also, if anyone is willing and able to keep our church FaceBook
page current and up to date,
please speak to Pastor Willet

Deacons Fund Offering

We receive an offering designated for the Deacons Fund following the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of every month.

The Deacons Fund (currently administered by the Elders) is used to meet specific financial requests of those in need, with a priority given to members of the church but with a willingness also to help those outside the church. (Galatians 6:10) This monthly offering will give everyone who wishes to do so the opportunity to contribute to this fund. Please give generously as you are able, as we care for one another in love.

Live Stream and our Website

Please be aware that a LiveStream is available for all our Sunday morning and afternoon worship services and our Wednesday Bible study, for those who are unable to attend in person.

The website address is: www.mtairyopc.org

The Live Stream is available as a single click on the home page, or directly:

<https://mtairyopc.org/live-stream/>

Recent sermons are available as a single click on the home page, and a full archive of all sermons and worship services is available as a click on the Live Stream page, or directly:

<https://mtairyopc.org/sermon-archive/>

Session Meetings

The Session meets approximately every six weeks, at the conference room of the Vigilant Cyber Systems, 1326 N. Main Street in Mount Airy.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, February 17 at 10:00 am.