



August 23, 2020

Ordinary Time, Proper 16

First Christian Church 1609 East Ash St. Goldsboro, NC 27530

Minister Rev. Dr. Tom Millay

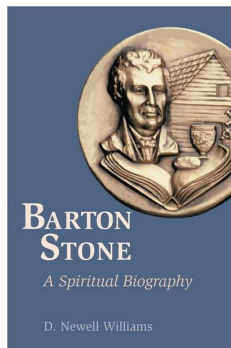
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Weekly Conference Calls every Wednesday at 6:45 PM. Here is all you do:
Dial 712-770-5505 and then wait for instructions to enter access code, which is
300904#.

Church Re-gathering

If we were ever tempted to take gathering at church for granted, I am sure we do not do so anymore! Praise God: We will continue to have outdoor services this Sunday. Church will begin at **9:30am** and last about 30 minutes. Masks will be encouraged, and we ask that you bring your own lawn chair. For those not able to attend, our worship services will still be available online. We will still have our **Sunday conference call at 10:45am**.



Pastor's Library No. 6

The pastor's library video series continues this week with a reflection on Newell Williams's biography *Barton Stone*. Though many of you probably know about Barton Stone, I hope to give a brief introduction to the most important aspects of his teaching and spirituality. You can look for the video to be posted Monday afternoon (pending there are no technical difficulties, which happened last week!), on the church's Facebook and website.



Music

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing" (Ps. 100:1-2). We will be worshiping the Lord on Sunday. We will be entering the Lord's gates with gladness and the Lord's courts with praise. **Tom Casey** will continue playing LIVE music during the Sunday service, and there will be a special musical surprise during the service. More piano music from Tom Casey can be found online on the church's Facebook. Be sure to check out the online music, and feel free to share it with your friends!

United Church Ministries Special Offering

Each year in August we receive a special mission offering for United Church Ministries of Wayne County. United Church Ministries is a community outreach program serving the emergency needs of people here in Wayne County. Assistance is provided for rent, food, utilities, medicine, and transportation. United Church Ministries is primarily supported by member churches. First Christian has been a member since the beginning. By supporting this special mission offering, **we answer Jesus' command to love thy neighbor and feed his sheep.** The Missions Task Force invites and seeks your generous participation in this special mission offering. In addition, if you would like to volunteer with UCM, you may contact Mary or Ronnie Thompson and they will put you in touch with the UCM Director.

Racial Equity Orientation Workshop

Update: I attended our region's first Racial Equity Orientation Workshop on Saturday, August 15. It was a very good conversation, especially on what differences there are between prejudice and racism. The spirit of Christian love was undoubtedly present amongst us, for which I give thanks to God. The second Racial Equity Orientation Workshop will take place **Thursday, August 27, 7-8:30pm**. Registration is required but will be accepted up until the event begins. The registration link is as follows: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSftPHaIN76X_jqS1kvpJh_EIAIOZII5zoR9yRO3k02Sfa7p8Q/viewform. Racial inequity is not something a Christian should accept, and thank God the Holy Spirit empowers us to work against forces of oppression. I will be at the workshop, and I hope to see you too!

Christmas Cards: Special Request

Tanner Bjork is currently in Room 201 of the residential side of Kitty Askins. Sisters Jenny Bjork Moore and Heather Bjork Hill ask that you keep him and, if you like, to send Tanner a Christmas card. He loves Christmas and his room is decorated with a tree, wreath, cards, and other special decorations. Write to Tanner at: Kitty Askins Hospice Center, 107 Handley Park Ct., Room 201, Goldsboro, NC, 27534.

Eloise Kleinert

Praise God: **Eloise** has arrived safely and is settling in well to her new home. She has particularly enjoyed getting to visit with family, including great-grandchildren. If you would like to write, you can now reach her at: 3616 Waxwing Court, Wake Forest, NC, 27587.

Worship

Welcome to worship, whether in person or online! Visit us in person at 1609 E. Ash St. in Goldsboro, or online at www.firstchristiangoldsboro.org for several videos posted by 9:00 AM each Sunday: our Sermon, our Old Testament and Epistle Readings by Elders. Our lectionary readings this Sunday are: Exodus 1:8-2:10; Psalm 124; Romans 12:1-8; and Matthew 16:13-20.

Sermon

"With Smiles and Good Cheer"

When two scriptures come together on something, we should listen: God is telling us to pay attention. Our epistle lesson for the day speaks of the renewal of one's mind (Rom 12:2); it then goes on to speak about humility before others, exercising "sober judgment," not thinking of oneself more highly than one ought (Rom 12:3). There is another passage from Scripture that also speaks to the renewal and transformation of the mind: Philippians 2. There Paul tells us to have the "same mind" "that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Phil 2:5-8). Here Paul is giving us the image of Jesus as a way to illustrate what it looks like to obey his command to "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves" (Phil 2:3).

I find it striking that Paul uses the word "mind" in both of these passages. When I think of the renewal of the mind, I think of education and study. I think of the reading of books and thoughtful reflection and intelligence. I think of winning an argument. But when Paul thinks of the mind, for him something else comes up, a different kind of image. For Paul, the mind—when it is sharpened and disciplined and educated by the gospel message of God's love for all—is directed toward humility. The mind's proper functioning is found in achieving humility. For humility is not something that just happens; it requires constant effort and imagination. Paul is talking about the effort required to maintain a posture of humility in Philippians 2, when he speaks of regarding "others as better than yourselves." In Romans 12, our passage for the day, Paul is talking about imagination as a necessary part of humility.

In Romans 12, Paul does not command us to "regard others as better than ourselves." Instead, he is trying to get us to see the gifts of others. The Christian with a renewed mind uses her imagination to see and name how others are contributing to the good of the body of Christ. It is human nature to only recognize in others the virtues you yourself have and value. It takes imagination to recognize that someone is very different than you, that such a difference is a gift, and that the body of Christ depends on its members having a variety of skills and vocations.

So Paul says in Romans 12 that "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness" (Rom 12:6-8). If we are to "be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord" (Phil 2:2), then our minds must be activated toward seeing gifts in others. This is what it means to have a renewed mind, to see with eyes of charity, to have an imagination vivified by the Spirit, so that you become humble in enough to see good in others that you yourself do not have. It's only then that we may be one as the Father, Son, and Spirit are One, our God whose everlasting life is nothing other than mutual recognition and appreciative love.

Today I'd like to highlight just one of the gifts Paul mentions in Romans 12. According to Paul, there are those who are "compassionate," and they have the gift of "cheerfulness." Of all the gifts Paul mentions—prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading—the gift of compassion, manifested in cheerfulness, is the most often overlooked. It's not as flashy as some of the other gifts. We can probably all think of someone we consider a prophet. We all know a good teacher, and some people are famous for their lavish giving. But someone who is compassionate, who exists in those daily small acts of care, like thinking to call or write someone who may need it—this is the kind of work that doesn't get much attention. There are prophets who call us to see the dire state of things, and often they gain great renown for doing so. But what about that person who always says 'hi' to you, always smiles at you, and leaves you feeling better than before you ran into them? This person—a cheerful person—is generally always thought well of. But maybe it takes a special act of the imagination to realize just how important they are.

My mother was one of these people. She was not famous; she did not hold any high office or have authority over others. Yet when you look back, you realize everything depended on her.

She was known for her smile—her *constant* smile. Those of you who've known me before the pandemic and could actually see my whole face know that I'm quite a smiler as well. But I am nothing compared to my mother. And it was a genuine smile. It came out of deep-rooted cheerfulness. It was a smile of joy, not of happiness. She had found the pearl of great price, she had found the one thing needful—and so she was found to be smiling.

As I grew up, I discovered that this smile was my mom's way of evangelism. This was how she spread the gospel. To everyone she met, she shared a bit of the joy that was so firmly planted in her.

These are the sort of gifts we don't appreciate enough. These are the sort of things the kingdom depends upon. These are the sort of people that without them, the church would grow cold, fall apart, fade away. They bring us together.

You often hear the phrase that someone 'lost their battle with cancer'. But my mother lost no fight. For her, cancer was another chance to show that the joy God had given her could not be defeated. She continued to share her smile with everyone: every doctor, every nurse, every patient in the cancer ward waiting room. Paul promises that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8:37). Because of my mom, I can stand here today and tell you that is undoubtedly true. She may not have been a "leader" blessed with the gift of "leading". But she is the reason that I have faith, and I suspect I am not the only one.

Let us love our brothers and sisters in Christ by seeing how much they have to give. Notice someone today you haven't noticed before. Give thanks to God for them, and pray that this way leads to us all being one. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Prayers of the Parish: A special prayer for students, teachers, and parents comes to us this week from Reverend David Finnegan-Hosey, chaplain of Barton College: "God of wisdom and of Grace, we offer you our gratitude. For educators and learners of all kinds: thank you. For teachers, staff, and administrators: thank you. For students and for parents: thank you. For opportunities for learning, growth, and friendship: thank you. For all of the places we have come from, and all of the journey that is still to come: thank you. Pour out your blessings upon all schools, colleges, universities, and institutions of learning. Give protection, health, and safety to all who gather in person, connection and wholeness to those who learn remotely, and peace, assurance, and well-being to all. Grant that those who teach and those who learn discover that truth which comes from you, for You are the Source of all truth. God of Light and Life, it is in your Name and Spirit we pray. Amen."

Let us lift up our weekly requests. We ask especially and continue to ask that you protect also all those who in danger today because of the pandemic, for those who provide essential services of all kinds. Visit especially: doctors, nurses, and all those working in health care; those who are in nursing homes, hospices, and long-term care facilities who are feeling isolated in these long weeks of distancing; schoolchildren, teachers, and administrators in a time of great uncertainty, and especially those students, teachers, and administrators who are now or are soon going back to school; we pray for childcare workers; for those who process food and those who stock and sell in grocery stores; visit delivery drivers and visit all Your churches, their pastors, their deacons, their elders, and their congregations. Visit all those who cannot find safe work in these moments and who are feeling more threatened than ever this week. Mourn with those who mourn. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Grant us Your peace.

Please hear our prayers for:

Grace Price, Eloise Kleinert, Mary Ethel Lewis, Kathy and G. A. Spain, June Anderson, Willie and Faye Rogers, Rick Rogers (Faye & Willie Rogers' son), John and Becky Selzer, Rebecca Daniels, Lorraine Loch, Val Watkins (Brantley's sister-in-law), the Spain's great granddaughter Katie, Molly McEldowney (Sharon Jones' daughter) and her brother, David Reynolds, Robert Strader (June Anderson's son-in-law), Jodie Hudson, Eddie Stewart, Linda Hilburn, Lee Summerlin, Gary Bartlett, Bill Smith, Gordon Aycock (friend of June Anderson), Chuck Allen, the Kleinert Family, Family of Dennis Horne in the death of his Aunt Linda Sides and Family of Ruby Santee in the death of her sister, Margaret Medlin, Melissa Acres, Mary Anne Cowley, Ruby Santee, Linda McCoy, Ken McCoy and family, Jay and Kelley Pittmann, a praise for Dennis Isenhower's son Dennis, a praise for Ray Price, Tanner Bjork and family, and Jana Blackman.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Communion You may pick up individual communion packs at the entry table at the parking lot entrance Mondays from 10 to 12 or Tuesdays from 10 to 12 or use your own bread and juice at home. You may also drop off your offerings at that time.

A Moment for Meditation

We are gathered here around the table because we share Peter's confession, coming to us from our Gospel reading this week, that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16). Peter receives Jesus' commendation for his confession; Jesus says to him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven" (Mt 16:17). Lest we start feeling self-satisfied, that we like Peter have everything figured out, we do well to remember that it's just a few verses later that Peter tried to talk Jesus out of embracing his future suffering and Peter hears Jesus tell him: "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mt 16:23). Sometimes, we confess Jesus as Messiah, but want him to conform to our idea of what the Messiah should be. It's all too easy to forget that Jesus was poor, marginal, homeless, and a criminal. Let us remember today him who invites us to the table. Jesus is in charge of the seating arrangement; and as someone who himself was poor, marginal, homeless, and a criminal, he will make the last in our world first and the first in our world last. Let us approach the table today with heads bowed in humility, not only to God but to our neighbor, considering them as better than ourselves (Phil 2:3).

Preparing the Lord's Table with Our Offerings - Let us prepare the Lord's Table with our Offerings. Thank you for your faithfulness in sharing your offerings during this time. You may drop them *by the church office from 10 to 12 on Monday or Tuesday of each week, by calling Wanda for another time, or by mailing in.*

Offering Prayer - I continue to thank my God constant in my prayers for all of you faithful givers to First Christian. May these gifts be sanctified and sent out through the Holy Spirit, to spread the gospel to all the world, and especially to where it is needed most. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, and from whom every good and perfect gift comes down. Amen.

Confession - As Christians, we recognize we are not perfect. Join me in a moment of silent confession, for things done and for things left undone.

Let us rejoice: our sins are forgiven through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the power of the Holy Spirit draw us all more closely to God in the week to come. Amen.

Communion Prayer - "Be present, be present, O Jesus, our great High Priest, as you were present with your disciples, and be known to us in the breaking of bread; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen" (Book of Common Prayer, 834).

Words of Institution - On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my Body broken for you. Eat this in remembrance of me." In the same manner after supper, Jesus took the Cup and when he had blessed it, he gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my blood of a new covenant, poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink it in remembrance of him."

The Gifts of God for the People of God. *Thanks be to God!*

The Lord's Prayer Let us now pray together the prayer our Lord taught us, saying:
Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction Prayer As we go forth into our weeks, I pray that God would grant us the humility needed to see the glory of others. Lord, you have given your one body grace upon grace; you have caused us to be the bearers of innumerable gifts into the world. Make us truly appreciative and fill our hearts with praise. To the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Announcements and Calendar

Outdoor Church Service, Sunday, August 23th, at 9:30 AM (see information above)

Stewardship Task Force Meeting, Monday, August 24th, at 6:45 PM via conference call