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SUNDAY SCHEDULE AT FPC

Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship, 10:45 a.m.
Evening Worship, 6:00 p.m.

Worship services
are available live online!

livestream.com/fpc-tv
facebook.com/fpchattiesburg

A CONQUERING PASSION

Rev. Darwin Jordan

Do not fret because of evildoers; do not be envious toward wrongdoers.

² For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb.

³ Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. ⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:1-4

⁸ They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.

Psalm 36:8

I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

Psalm 81:10

“How do you control your passions?” Is that even a good question, or at least, is that the best way to ask a question about passions?

How about this question, “Which passions should influence your life?” Yeah, I like that better. You know why? Because passion itself is a very good thing. There are so many passages like those above that encourage desire and pleasure. The Bible is always pro-passion.

But the catch, of course, is passionate for what? “Delight yourself *in the Lord.*” They “drink from the river of *Your pleasures.*” “Open your

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mouth wide and *I* will fill it.” God Himself is the focus of all this passion isn’t He? Our experience of Him is compared to eating and drinking. Notice the same thing in Psalm 34:8: “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!”

In fact, these passages teach that nothing less than this kind of robust, dig-in attitude is appropriate in approaching God. This feasting is commanded! We are told to open up our mouth wide for the biggest piece of delicious God we can manage.

Well, I got a bit carried away there, perhaps, but I hope it makes a point with you. *He is to be enjoyed.* It is only right to have a passion for God. It is only right to thirst and long for Him (My soul thirsts for you. My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water – Psalm 63:1), even to *pant* for Him (As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. Psalm 42:1)!

Let’s get this straight. Passion is commanded in Scripture! And in Psalm 37 this good passion is compared with the passions of evil. That is why he begins by saying, don’t be jealous over the abundance of the wicked. Don’t be jealous of their pleasures. Why? First, because everything they enjoy is temporary. An awful destruction awaits them in the end.

And second (v. 4), you don’t have to envy their pleasure because you can focus on your own pleasure. It’s pleasure versus pleasure, and we have the real thing. As Spurgeon wrote on this passage, “In a certain sense imitate the wicked; they delight in their portion – take care to delight in yours, and so far from envying you will pity them.”

You see? Passion is conquered only by passion. Self-control is best exercised when good passions push aside other passions. You can turn away from the ungodly pleasures of the world by immersing yourself in the godly pleasures that Christ provides. And anyone who has tasted them both realizes that going from disobedient “pleasure” to obedient pleasure is like moving from artificially flavored, artificially colored, artificially sweetened ice milk with freezer burn to Blue Bell Homemade Vanilla!

That’s because you were made for God. You are of such noble stuff that only God will do. His gifts will not do, all of His creation will not do, all the power, fame and money in the world won’t do, all the sex won’t do, all the people in the world won’t do. No, you’re better than that – of finer make than that. You are made for God and only God will do.

And as the Book of Ecclesiastes points out, without God at the center of our pleasure, all other pleasures will leave us empty. Apart from Him, all is vanity. But Ecclesiastes goes on to say that if God is at the center of all that we do, and if all our pursuits of work and leisure and community and family are at their heart pursuits of God, then all is not vanity. Life is satisfying. “Who can have enjoyment without Him?” (Ecclesiastes 2:25). Such deep enjoyment of life is “the gift of God” (5:19).

God is so eager to be known! He has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, the God-man. Eugene Peterson calls Him the “God Expression” who made God known “as plain as day” (his paraphrase of John 1:18). That is why Christ told his followers, “He who has seen me, has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Christ is “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:2).

So in inviting you to come to Christ, I invite you to come to God. Discover Him, explore Him, taste Him, enjoy Him, delight in Him, trust Him, give yourself to Him, adore Him, obey Him.

Only a conquering passion for God will lead all other passions to run their fruitful, satisfying and transforming courses. As the Psalmist says, if our chief delight is in God, then *all* our desires will be filled to the full.

So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth.

Hosea 6:3



ENCOURAGED TO SERVE

John Howell

In January, our church was encouraged to see six men ordained to the office of deacon, and an additional seven re-installed for another term on the Board of Deacons. The role of a deacon is well-understood to entail principal responsibility for meeting the physical needs of the members, overseeing the finances entrusted to the church, and—of course—making the coffee we all enjoy on Sunday mornings!

But I was particularly struck by Darwin's sermon on the morning those men were installed, in which he elucidated from the Word that deacons are also tasked with cultivating the spiritual gifts of service and mercy in the members of the body. In other words, deacons lead both by serving and by encouraging others to serve. I confess I had not fully grasped or fulfilled that aspect of being a deacon.

So in the coming months, be on the lookout as the Board of Deacons identifies and offers opportunities for the members of our church to engage in service, both at our campus and in the community.

Diaconate – 2024 Officers

John Howell, *Chair*

Rob King, *Vice-chair and Treasurer*

Will Morgan, *Secretary*

Joe Gibbons, *Inside Properties Committee Chair*

Weston Locastro, *Outside Properties Committee Chair*

Keith Reeves, *Duty/Service Committee Chair*

Randy Martin, *Mercy Committee Chair*



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND PCS PRESCHOOL

FPC Hattiesburg has partnered with Presbyterian Christian School to provide 3- and 4-year old preschool students with classroom, music, and recreation space for the past 15 years. PCS Preschool currently enrolls 53 students, including a number of children from our own church family.

These church members are working on staff at PCS Preschool—

Jenna Jones

Ruth Lewis

Renee Mangum

Teresa Mangum

Kathy McKellar

Whitney Middleton

Ashley Roberts

It is a privilege to participate in the ministry of PCS to families in our church and community!



**FPC STUDENT MINISTRY
SUPER BOWL WATCH PARTY!**

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

General Fund Receipts in January	\$112,555
Expenses in January	<u>134,853</u>
Net income	\$(22,293)
Line of credit balance at 01/31/24:	\$255,135



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EASTER AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Thursday, March 28

Maundy Thursday Communion Service, 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary

Sunday, March 31

**Sunrise Worship Service, 7:00 a.m. at Canebrake Country Club, 18th green
Worship Services, 9:00 a.m. and 10:45 a.m., Sanctuary**

No Sunday School or Evening Worship Service on Easter